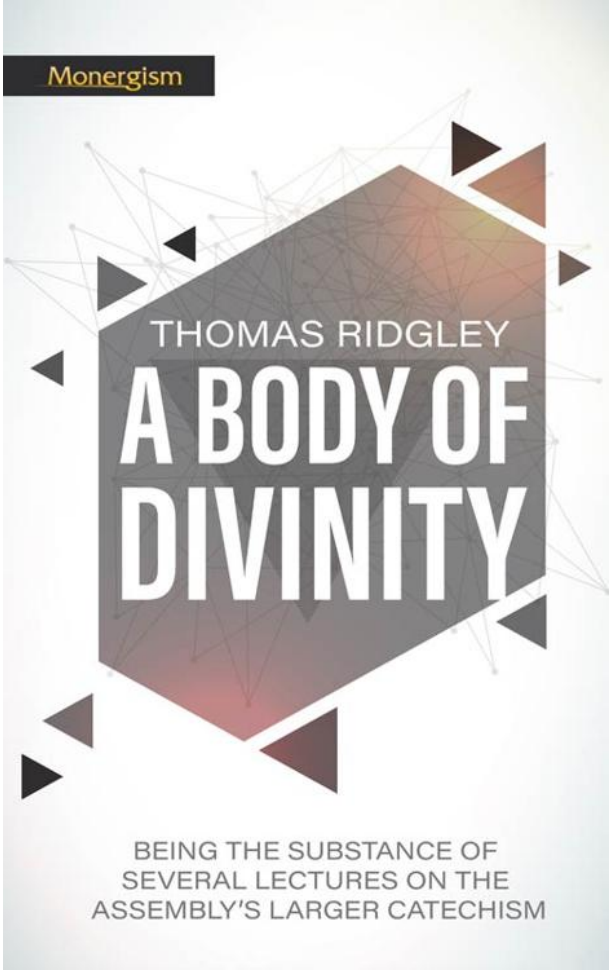
Monergism

THOMAS RIDGLEY

A BODY OF DIVINITY

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL LECTURES ON THE ASSEMBLY'S LARGER CATECHISM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A Body of Divinity

by Thomas Ridgley, D.D

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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE influence which the different sentiments of men, in matters of religion, have, for the most part, on their temper and behaviour towards one another, affords very little ground to expect that any attempt to explain or defend the most important doctrines of Christianity, should not be treated with dislike and opposition by some, how much soever it may afford matter of conviction to others. This consideration would have put a stop to my pen, and thereby saved me a great deal of fatigue, in preparing and publishing the following sheets, had it not been overbalanced by what I cannot, at present, think any other than a sense of duty, in compliance with the call of providence. I heartily wish there were no occasion to vindicate some of the great doctrines of the gospel, which are now from misrepresentation less generally received than in the last age, as though the method in which they have been explained led to licentiousness, and the doctrines themselves, especially those of election, particular redemption, efficacious grace, and some others which depend upon them, were inconsistent with the moral perfections of the Divine nature. These are now traduced by many, as though they were new and strange doctrines, not founded on scripture, nor to be maintained by any just methods of reasoning deduced from it; or as if the duties of practical religion could not be inculcated consistently therewith. If this insinuation were true, our preaching would be vain, our hope also vain, and we should be found false witnesses for God, and have no solid ground whereon to set our feet,—which would be a most tremendous thought. And if this be not sufficient to justify my present undertaking, I have nothing to allege of equal weight.

I must confess, that when, about two years since, I took the first step for setting this design on foot, by consenting that proposals should be printed, I reckoned it little other than an expedient to disengage myself from any farther thoughts, and my friends from any

expectation of it; which I could not well do, but by having a proof of the backwardness of persons to encourage, by subscription, a work which would be so very expensive to the undertakers. But the design being countenanced beyond what I could have imagined, and copies subscribed for with more expedition than is usual, I was laid under an obligation immediately to prepare my notes for the press, and set forward the work, which, through the Divine goodness, has been thus far carried on; and I cannot but take occasion to express my grateful acknowledgment of the respect that has been shown me, by those who have encouraged this undertaking. If it answer their expectation, and subserve their spiritual advantage, I shall count my labour well employed, and humbly offer the glory thereof, as a tribute due to God, whose interest is the only thing that demands all our time, strength, and abilities. If I may but have a testimony from him that I have spoken nothing concerning him that is dishonouring to his name, unbecoming his perfections, or has a tendency to lead his people out of the right way to the glorifying and enjoying of him, my end is fully answered. Whatever weakness I have discovered arising from my being unequal to the greatness of the subjects discussed, I hope to be forgiven by God, whose cause I have endeavoured to maintain, and to be excused by men, as I may truly say, I have not offered, to either him or them, what cost me nothing. I have, as far as I am able, adapted my method of reasoning to the capacities of those who are unacquainted with several abstruse and uncommon words and phrases which have been often used by some who have treated these subjects, and which have a tendency rather to perplex than to improve the minds of men. Terms of art, as they are sometimes called, or hard words, used by metaphysicians and schoolmen, have done little service to the cause of Christ.

If I have explained any doctrine, or given the sense of any scripture, in a way somewhat different from what is commonly received, I have

never done it out of the least affectation of singularity, or taken pleasure in going out of the beaten path; but have had as great a regard to the footsteps of the flock, as is consistent with that liberty of thinking and reasoning which we are allowed to use, who conclude nothing to be an infallible rule of faith, but the inspired writings.

As to what I have advanced concerning the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, I have thought myself obliged to recede from some common modes of explication, which have been used, both by ancient and modern writers, in discussing these mysterious doctrines, and which, if duly weighed, will probably appear not to have done any great service to the cause which, with convincing evidence, they have maintained. It is obvious that these modes of explication are what has principally given occasion to some modern Arians to fill the margins of their books with quotations from the writings of others, whom they have either, without ground, pretended to be on their side of the question, or charged with plucking down with one hand what they have built up with the other. Whether my method of explaining these doctrines be reckoned just, or not, I cannot but persuade myself, that what I have said concerning the subordination of the Son and the Holy Ghost, if it be considered in any other view than as an explication of the Sonship and the procession, will not be reckoned a deviating from the common faith of those who have defended the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity. And if it be an error to maintain that these Divine Persons, as well as the Father, are independent, as to their personality, as well as their essence, or to assert that the manner of their having the Divine essence, as some express it, is independent, as well as the essence itself, then what I have delivered on that subject is to no purpose; and when convinced of this. I shall readily acknowledge my mistake, and count it an happiness to be undeceived.

As to what respects the decrees of God, and more particularly those that relate to angels and men,—his providence, as conversant about sinful actions,—and the origin of moral evil, I have endeavoured to account for them in such a way, as, I trust, does not, in the least, infer God to be the author of sin; nor have I, in any instance, represented God as punishing sin, or determining to do it, out of his mere sovereignty, as though he designed to render his creatures miserable, without considering them as contracting guilt, and thereby originating their own misery. And in discussing the freeness of divine grace, and the Covenant of Grace, as made with Christ, and, in him, with the elect, and maintaining the absoluteness of grace, and its independence of the will of man to become effectual to salvation, I have said as much as is necessary concerning the conditionality of our claim to the blessings of the covenant, and the inseparable connection that there is between practical religion and salvation, and thus have defended the doctrine against the charge which is often brought against it, that it leads to licentiousness.

I could not omit to make this prefatory statement, that the reader might not entertain groundless prejudices against some of the doctrines discussed, before he duly weighs the method in which they are handled, or considers whether my defence of them against the popular objections be just or not. Some, it may be, will see reason to conclude that my defence of them is just; and others, who think that there are many unsurmountable difficulties to our view of them, may be convinced that there are difficulties of another nature as great, if not greater, attending the opposite scheme, which they themselves maintain. But this I rather choose to submit to the impartial judgment of those who are not disposed to condemn a doctrine, without desiring to know what may be said in its defence.

As to what concerns the work in general, it may be observed, that when I have occasion to illustrate an argument by making use of any criticism that may bear upon it, or to give the sense of ancient writers, either for or against what I have laid down, I have inserted my remarks in the margin, that they might not appear to be a digression, or break the thread of the discourse. I have also quoted at length most of the scriptures referred to in the margin, so that the words which are brought to prove or illustrate any particular head of doctrine, are connected with the discussion of it in one continued writing, and several repetitions of the same words thereby avoided.*

The work is large, but the vast variety of subjects will render it more tolerable. The form in which it appears is somewhat different from that in which it was first delivered, in a public audience, though that may probably be no disadvantage to it, especially since it is rather designed to be read in families than committed to memory, and repeated by different persons, as it has been. The plainness of the style may contribute to its usefulness; and its being less embarrassed with scholastic terms than some controversial writings are, may render it more intelligible to private Christians, whose instruction and advantage are designed thereby. It would be too great a vanity to expect that it should pass through the world without that censure which is common to all attempts of the like nature; since men's sentiments in divinity differ as much as their faces, and some are not disposed to weigh those arguments that are brought to support any scheme of doctrine, which differs from what they have before received. However, the work comes forth with this advantage, that it has already conflicted with some of the difficulties it is likely to meet with, as well as been favoured with some success; and, therefore, the event hereof is left in his hand whose cause and truth are endeavoured to be maintained.

I have nothing farther to trouble the reader with in this preface; but would only request, that, what thoughts soever he may entertain concerning the way in which I have endeavoured to state and defend some great and important truths, he would search the scriptures, and explain them agreeably to the Divine perfections, and not think the worse of the gospel on account of the weak efforts of fallible men who use their best endeavours to defend it. If we had not a surer rule of faith, than the methods of human reasoning, religion would be a matter of great uncertainty, and we should be in danger of being 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.' But our best security against this, will be our having hearts 'established with grace,' and rightly disposed to make a practical improvement of what we learn; and, if we are enabled to follow on to know the Lord with minds free from prejudice, and if, under a due sense of our own weakness, we humbly present our supplications to Him who is 'able to make us wise to salvation,' we may then hope to attain to that knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, which shall be attended with peace and comfort here, and crowned with blessedness and glory hereafter.

May the great God, in whose hand are the life and usefulness of all men, honour with his blessing what is humbly offered to his service, so far as it is adapted to it, and approved of by him, that hereby it may be conducive to the spiritual advantage of professing families, and the rising generation.

THE EDITOR'S PREFACE

DR. RIDGELEY's Body of Divinity, if viewed, not in any one point of light, but in all its aspects, will, probably, be pronounced the best book of its class. In criticism, in erudition, in polemical tact, in rhetorical beauty, or in some other solitary excellence, it has, no doubt, been surpassed; but, in the aggregate properties of a luminous and well-adjusted summary of didactic and controversial theology, it has lived through upwards of a century without meeting its equal. No book in the English language, or, so far as I know, in any other, will serve so efficiently the purposes of a daily companion to a reflecting Christian in his inquiries into Divine truth, or a guide to a candidate for the Christian ministry in introducing him to his theological studies. Its parts are in their due proportion, and its properties in their due degree. Subjects great and small are not set up in niches of equal space, but extended or compressed according to their relative magnitude in the system of Divine truth; nor are they treated agreeably to the scope they afford for displaying the writer's acquirements and powers, and gratifying a popular taste for eloquence or a popular admiration of scholarship, but discussed with entire reference to their own intrinsic claims upon both the writer's care and the reader's attention. Dr. Ridgeley has, on almost every topic which he touches, the happy but rare art of knowing when he has said enough; and never, even when drawn, in justice to his subject, into extended dissertation, does he appear to forget that his work demands due space for the whole circle of revealed truths. He is not tempted, by love of declamation or of oratorical flourish, to write a sermon instead of a disquisition; nor by keenness of controversial spirit, to write long and arduously when an opponent is in the field, and not to write at all when no opponent, or but an insignificant one, appears; nor by attachment to a party, or fondness for denominational peculiarities, to write munificently in favour of his sect, and write like a niggard when the interests of his sect are out of view; nor by aptitude for abstract thinking, or critical analysis, or

display of erudition, to array some topics in the glitter and gorgeousness of metaphysics and bibliographical scholarship, and either to append to minor or plain topics some trappings of learnedness, or to pass them undiscussed. His Body of Divinity is eminently distinguished by sound sense. We look in vain throughout its pages for any indications of the pedant, the bibliographe, the theorist, or the declaimer, and see only the labours of a sober, judicious divine.

But the prime excellence of Dr. Ridgeley's work is its simply evangelical character. He is, in all respects, what, in current phrase, is called a modern or moderate Calvinist; yet he calls no man on earth master, but draws his sentiments directly from the word of God. Though he uses the Assembly's Larger Catechism to give method and proportion to his prelections, he studies to explain, not any system of man, not Divine truth as moulded and superscribed by any human school of theology, but the doctrines of revelation simply as they present themselves in the sacred page. His book is not a tank, long, and laboriously filled with drainings from the roofs of human dwellings; but, in a great degree, the pure and pebbly strand conveying living water, limpid as it flows from the fountain of truth. He thinks on most subjects for himself, taking only the word of God for his guide; and is far from being a slave to the authority of great names among men, or to the influence of phraseology, which, though not found in the Bible, enjoys a prescriptive reputation of being orthodox. His general practice is to bring every mode of expression, no matter how generally sanctioned, to the test of scripture; and, though he brings out essentially the same results, or propounds radically the same doctrines, as are meant to be taught by language which he discards, he exhibits them with superior clearness and simplicity, and commends them with superior effect to the understanding and the heart. He is strongly averse, in particular, to

the bewildering refinements, the multitudinous distinctions, and the complex and metaphysical expositions of the scholastic theology. In some instances, when he conceives them to have seriously obscured the truth or sanctioned error, he carefully analyzes them, and exposes their tendency; in other instances, when he feels them to be merely an encumbrance, he silently throws them aside, and exhibits his topics through the lucid medium of simple scriptural illustration; and, in general, he strives to write as if Aristotle's dialectics had never been enthroned in schools of theology, and the philosophy of the heathens never empowered to communicate its aspirings and its diction to ministers of the Christian faith. His work, as a whole, is, in consequence, remarkable for its combination of the most grave discussion and profound reasoning, with great clearness of conception and simplicity of statement; and it not unfrequently makes a difficult or an abstruse subject easy of comprehension to an untutored mind, when a work written in the scholastic manner would make a plain or obvious one nearly unintelligible.

In its original form, however, Dr. Ridgeley's Body of Divinity is marred by several important blemishes. "His fitness for the office of theological tutor,' say Drs. Bogue and Bennet, in their History of Dissenters, "may be safely inferred from the lectures to his students, published in two folio volumes, composing a Body of Divinity. That they display soundness of judgment, extensive learning, and an intimate acquaintance with the sacred oracles, every impartial reader will allow. That he was a Calvinist, when we have mentioned his connexions, needs scarcely be told; but he differs, in several instances, from their commonly received opinions, and discovers a freedom of thought which shows a man determined to explain the scriptures for himself. Had his style but possessed neatness, elegance, and force, what additional value it would have imparted to his ample treasures of sacred truth!"* His style is certainly extremely

rugged. Had it but possessed a moderate polish, or had it even been free from great roughness and positive opacity, his book could scarcely have failed to command a lasting and most extensive popularity. But he offends readers of almost every class by his inelegancies, calls off their attention from his subject by his solecisms and grammatical inaccuracies, and not unfrequently perplexes or stultifies them by his ambiguities. One object of the present edition is to free his work from these defects. Every literary person—especially if he have had a little practice in preparing compositions by various writers for the press—is aware to what a great extent verbal alterations may be made upon an author, without, in the slightest degree, modifying his meaning, and even without perceptibly affecting his characteristic manner. To modernize an antiquated composition, or to beautify a vulgar one, is a very different process from pruning one, essentially correct and vigorous, of expressions which offend the taste or perplex the understanding. Dr. Ridgeley's style, exceedingly faulty though it was, required, in the Editor's judgment, no more than to be freed from its minor blemishes, and especially from its ambiguities, in order to appear, what Drs. Bogue and Bennet desiderate, "neat, elegant, and forcible." Nor has the Editor, in his attempts to improve it, made one-third the number of verbal alterations which, in the estimation of competent judges, might have fully comported with the preservation of its identity or distinctive character. He has substituted approved words for vulgar or obsolete ones; he has transposed adverbs and clauses so as to bring them into due collocation with the words which they qualify; he has repeated a nominative when it stood too far in the distance to be identified with a personal pronoun; he has broken up into consecutive order clusters of antecedents and relatives so hung together as to appear an undistinguishable mass; he has erased or altered expletives, lopped off redundancies, supplied obscure ellipses, and endeavoured to introduce a luminous punctuation; but,

after all, he has not interfered with the author's manner, but has only removed impediments to his being understood,—labouring to improve, not his elegance, nor what is rhetorically termed style, but simply his perspicuity. The Editor may state, too, that, in his verbal alterations and transpositions, he has faithfully and sedulously guarded against interfering, in the remotest degree, with any sentiment of the author, or even with a perceptible shading of the most subordinate idea. Frequently, in dealing with Dr. Ridgeley's multitudinous and very serious ambiguities, he read passages several times, repeatedly examined them in their contextual connexion, and even, in some instances, compared them with parallel or kindred passages in other parts of the work, before he allowed himself to be quite assured as to the precise ideas which were meant to be expressed; and whenever he did not obtain entire conviction, or whenever the least ground remained for doubt that persons of different views might contend for different meanings, he chose—especially as the aggregate number of such cases was very small—rather to let the ambiguities remain, than to incur even a remote risk of altering the sense, or shake the confidence of the most fastidious reader in the integrity of the work.

Another blemish in former editions of Dr. Ridgeley's Body of Divinity, was numerousness and intricacy of methodical divisions. He derived this peculiarity, indeed, from the custom of his age; but, probably, carried it a much greater length than any contemporary writer. Divisions, redivisions, subdivisions, and re-subdivisions sometimes expanded like so many concentric circles, and revolved before the eye each in its series of distinctive marks and figures, till they became as unmeaning and confounding to the reader, as the mazy movements of a complex machine are to a man ignorant of mechanics. So intricate, in fact, were the subdivisions, that some of them appear to have perplexed even the author, or at least to have

escaped from their due place, when he was reading his proof sheets; for, in the original edition of his work—which has been throughout employed in preparing the present edition—they, in some instances, are confounded with one another, or appear with inappropriate marks. Considerable care was requisite so to remove this heavy and compact scaffolding, as not to deface the edifice which it was employed to construct. By various devices, however, such as the introduction of sectional titles to the separable parts of a dissertation, and the substitution of particles of marked transition for a rapid series of minor figures, the Editor hopes that, without really altering Dr. Ridgeley's methodical arrangements, he has so simplified them as to render luminous what was obscure, and obvious what was bewildering.

But the chief defect of Dr. Ridgeley—at least in the estimation of plain Christians, who wish to see truth only in the simple garb of scriptural statement, and have no taste for the meritricious adornings of false philosophy—is his having failed to carry out to its due limits his own important and distinguishing principle of bringing fully to the test the distinctions and refinements of the scholastic theologians. "I have, as far as I am able," he says, "adapted my method of reasoning to the capacities of those who are unacquainted with several abstruse and uncommon words and phrases which have been often used by some who have treated these subjects, and which have a tendency rather to perplex than to improve the minds of men. Terms of art, as they are sometimes called, or hard words used by metaphysicians and schoolmen, have done little service to the cause of Christ." In his repelling scholasticism, and writing as if the Christian faith had never been arrayed in the trappings of heathen philosophy, he certainly shot far a-head of his age, and stamped upon his Body of Divinity a value which could not have belonged to it had it been written, like almost

every book of its class, in a technical and metaphysical manner; yet, on several very important doctrines, as well as on numerous subordinate topics, he retains, either altogether or to a considerable degree, distinctions and systematic phrases coined by scholastic or philosophizing divines out of the base metal of Aristotle's dialectics, which, however current or however proscriptively orthodox, do not bear the superscription of heaven, and cannot add to the wealth of a man who desires to know Divine truth just as it is taught in the Bible. In some instances, he appears not to have detected the purely scholastic origin of refinements which long and general currency seemed to have sanctioned as unquestionably scriptural; and, in other instances, while not unaware of the utter absence of Divine sanction, he is prevailed upon by courtesy, or by amiable but undue deference to prevailing opinion, to invent plausible interpretations of phrases and dogmas which, when severely or even slightly tested by appeal to the word of God, are entirely indefensible. Though he excels other writers of Bodies of Divinity in freedom from the trappings of system and technicality and metaphysics, he still wears, if not the full uniform, at least the badge and the collar of scholasticism. Bold, on many points, to think for himself, and to study and write only in the light of scripture; he is, notwithstanding, timid or blindfold on others, and shrinks from the singularity of being the first to break every bond of connection between the theology of the Bible, and the heathenized theology of the Middle ages. Had he kept steadily in view his own prefatorial declaration, that "terms of art or hard words used by metaphysicians and schoolmen have done little service to the cause of Christ," and had he been less complaisantly desirous not to ruffle the equanimity of his systematic and philosophizing theological contemporaries, he could hardly, with his fine taste for the simplicity of heavenly truth, and his intimate acquaintance with the sacred oracles, and his exquisite skill in making an evangelical doctrine appear tenfold more luminous

when viewed apart from technical definitions, have failed to roll away from before the doctrines of grace or of modern Calvinism those fogs which have long bewildered disciples, and prevented the friendly approach of opponents. Seeing, as he does, how unwarrantable it is to apply technical distinctions to the doctrine of the Trinity, or to speak of faith as the condition of justification, he needed but a further exercise of his spirit of humble but faithful scrutiny, in order to see the equal unwarrantableness of applying technical distinctions to the everlasting purposes of the Divine mind, or to speak of the economy established with Adam as a covenant, of the various kinds and actings of faith, or of vowing and covenanting as part of the right observance of the eucharist.

The Editor, it will be seen, has appended about one hundred Notes—some of the length of essays or short dissertations—to various parts of Dr. Ridgeley's work. Most of these are intended, like the best and most distinctive parts of the work itself, to exhibit simply in the light of scripture, truths which are usually seen in the flickering glare of the schoolmen's flambeaux. Such readers as are partial to the scholastic theology, and never think a doctrine soundly stated except when dressed out in scholastic phrases and distinctions, will, of course, think the Editor's labour worse than thrown away. These, however, are not the persons who are likely to have a taste for Ridgeley in any form;—though, should any of them look into the present edition, they may be reminded that, in the conviction of men who look at doctrines without peering through a human medium, to exhibit the economy established with Adam as, not a covenant, but a sovereign institution of the Divine will, and faith as, not of various kinds, but various only in its objects, is not to deny the doctrines of original sin and of faith being a divine and sovereign grace, but to place these doctrines in the strongest because the simplest light, and to recommend them with the most forcible because purely scriptural

evidence. Men who are attached to current extra-scriptural phrases, or who love to see a doctrine as complex, and profound, and prolific of distinctions as ingenuity can make it, are not likely, in the first instance at least, to relish either Dr. Ridgeley or his Editor; yet the moment they begin to see how much more beautiful a truth is when displayed in its own simplicity, than when disfigured by technical adornings, they will feel an incipient regret that Dr. Ridgeley's scrutinizing spirit did not circulate through every limb of his Body of Divinity, and, probably, may regard the present edition, with its appendage of Notes, as alive and energetic from core to extremity.

In writing Notes, whose object was not to discard scholastic refinements, the Editor's motives were various. In some instances, he presumed—very foolishly perhaps—to give fulness to an incomplete statement; in others, he supplied thoughts which the condition of science or of biblical criticism in Dr. Ridgeley's days did not enable him to possess; in others, he attempted, in brief space, to furnish an outline of definition and argument on topics which Dr. Ridgeley had omitted to notice; in others, he submitted views of important texts of scripture which he conceived more consonant with the context and with evangelical principles than those generally entertained; and in one instance—strangely enough—he saw Dr. Ridgeley, as he believed, mistaking that for a scholastic invention which is a fact stated by revelation, and felt himself incited humbly and reverentially to attempt to show, that, while "the eternal generation" of THE WORD and the modus of the Divine subsistence are matters on which the scriptures maintain silence, the fact of our Lord's divine Sonship, or of 'the Son of God' being strictly a Divine title, is an obvious and important part of a Christian's faith. Respecting the propriety, or even the doctrinal truth, of not a few of his Notes, conflicting opinions may probably be entertained. He has tried, however,—after the example of the eminent Author whom he has presumed to

annotate,—not to write in slavish subserviency to prevailing habits of phraseology, but, even at the hazard of being thought rash and unskilful, to carry reputed beauties in theological language from under the dim light of the taper, to seat them under the solar effulgence which beams from the page of revelation, and to invite attention to the claims which, as seen there, they have upon a Christian's admiration. His Notes, as nearly as he could judge and perform, have been constructed in keeping with the spirit and manner of the work which they accompany. He once thought of appending to Dr. Ridgeley's discussion of each doctrine directions as to the best writers, on both sides of the question, who might be read in order to attain a full acquaintance with the subject; but he was deterred both by the unpretending yet really effective style of Dr. Ridgeley's own bibliographical hints, and by the alternative of either furnishing a dry and almost useless catalogue of names and titles, or attempting such formal critiques as, no matter how condensed, would have amounted in the aggregate to a miniature Bibliotheca.

The Editor feels, with shame, that he has said enough, far more than enough, respecting his own dwarfish labours, and by no means any thing like enough respecting the gigantic toils of his Author. Yet as his claims to notice are, strictly speaking, those of the present edition of Dr. Ridgeley, and not those of the Editor, he may be allowed to add, that, besides the improvements which have been already mentioned, "the Body of Divinity" is now, for the first time, enriched with a biographical sketch of its distinguished Author,—that it is accompanied with copious, general tables of contents, adapted to the sectional divisions which have been introduced,—and that, though the additions to the work, in the form of Notes, Index, Sketch, and otherwise, would amount, in the usual style of publishing, to a considerable duodecimo, the preparation of them has not occasioned more than one-third of the labour which has been expended on

achieving results, which will not meet the reader's eye,—the correction of language and punctuation, and the simplifying of the forms or announcements of methodical arrangement. He may now leave the Publishers to speak, in addition, of a clearer type, a better paper, and a lower price than in former editions. In conclusion, he fervently and humbly expresses a desire that He who leads Joseph like a flock, may bless the work as an instrument both of bringing the lambs to be carried in his bosom, and of 'gently leading those which are with young;' of imparting elementary saving knowledge to youthful inquirers, and of guiding matured Christians and candidates for the pastoral office into a course of scriptural, devout, studious, theological investigation.

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

THOMAS RIDGELEY was born in London about the year 1667. He appears to have had his desires early turned to the office of the Christian ministry; and, at a proper age, entered a private seminary in Wiltshire, where he enjoyed a suitable training. After finishing his academical course he returned to London; and, in 1695, was chosen assistant to the Rev. Thomas Gouge, the pastor of an Independent church, now extinct, which met at the Three Cranes, near Thames-street. In 1697, the church was thrown into confusion, partly by some imprudent language of a preacher who delivered a weekly lecture in their place of worship, and partly by a dispute between them and Mr. Gouge respecting a person who was proposed for fellowship. They, in consequence, lost several of their members, and sank into a diminished and low condition. Mr. Gouge, worn by unremitting

application to study, and agitated by care and vexation, fell under a train of disorders, which, on the 8th of January, 1699–70, terminated in his death. Mr. Ridgeley now succeeded to the pastoral charge of the church, and to the arduous duty of repairing the disasters which had been laying it waste. Though, probably, not what is usually styled a popular preacher, and though certainly defective in those graces of diction which are pleasing to all persons and fascinating to many, he excelled in those qualifications which constitute a man 'an able minister of the New Testament,' and appears also to have possessed tact and discretion to work his way well through circumstances of difficulty and excitement. The church, at all events, speedily revived under his pastoral care, and, in the enjoyment of the Divine blessing, continued in a prosperous state, though never very large in numbers, during the whole period of his ministry. As a pastor, he was held in high esteem by his people; and, as a preacher, was in great reputation among discerning and judicious hearers. His ministry at the Three Cranes extended through the long period of nearly forty years, and, towards its close, was aided by the services of several assistants.

A few years after his pastoral settlement, Mr. Ridgeley was elected one of the six ministers of the Merchant's Lecture, which was delivered every Tuesday morning at Pinner's Hall; about the same time, he was elected to take part in the Thursday evening lecture, at Jewin-street; and during a considerable period of his life—in conjunction, first, with the Rev. John Billingsley of Crutched Friars, and next with the Rev. James Wood of the Weigh-House—he conducted an evening lecture, on the Lord's day, at the Old Jewry. His labours in connexion with these lectures seem to have been much appreciated, or at least were sufficiently noticed, to induce him to send to press some productions of his pen. He published, in 1717, "The Abuse of Feasting and Recreations, considered in a Sermon at

the evening lecture in Jewin-street;" in 1719, "The advantage of falling into the hand of God, rather than man; a Sermon preached at the evening lecture in the Old Jewry, on the death of Mr. Nathan Hall, who was found murdered by a highwayman;" and, in 1725, "The doctrine of Original Sin considered; being the substance of two Sermons at Pinnar's Hall; with a postscript." Previous to the last of these dates, he published also "A Sermon on the death of Mrs. Gertrude Clarkson," "A Sermon preached at the funeral of Mrs. Elizabeth Banks," and "A Discourse concerning the Origin and Superstitious observance of Religious festivals."

In 1712, upon the death of Dr. Chauncey, the first tutor of the oldest Independent college in Britain, Mr. Ridgeley succeeded him in the theological chair. The place where the lectures to the students were delivered, is said to have been Tenter-alley, in Moorfields. The successional college of the present day, however, is that of Homerton; quite as respectably presided over now by the revered Dr. John Pye Smith, as it was, in the days of its infancy and youth, by Drs. Chauncey and Ridgeley. Mr. Ridgeley's coadjutor in the classical department, while he himself taught theology,—and his successor, in his own office, after his death,—was the eminent John Eames, F.R.S., —an adept in literature, and an universal scholar, whom the celebrated Dr. Watts pronounced "the most learned man he ever knew." Mr. Eames taught the languages and mathematics, and delivered prelections on moral and natural philosophy; leaving the expansive and paramount subject of theology to occupy, as it ought, the undivided attention of his distinguished colleague. Whether Mr. Ridgeley delivered other prelections from the chair than those which compose his Body of Divinity, and what methods of training he adopted for maturing the knowledge and forming the pastoral character of his students, are facts not known; but, judging from the solicitude he displays to shut up every inlet of error, and his high

estimate of the qualifications which a Christian pastor should possess, his proceedings in the college must have been sedulously directed to the production of nice and practical results. As a theological tutor, not only was he fully versed in every subject which might be discussed, and in the principles of every criticism which might be required, and in the opinions of every author who might be in question, but he possessed conciliating manners, great aptitude to communicate instruction, an accurate judgment as to the adaptation of any means to its proposed end, and apparently also warm concern to make his professorial labours in every possible way efficient. Whatever were his particular practices in superintending and educating his students, he confessedly was honoured with much success, and enjoyed the happiness of sending out to the Independent churches many ministers who were distinguished alike for their intellectual acquirements and for their pastoral and personal excellencies. Mr. Ridgeley used care, not only that his own duties should be rightly performed, but that his students should exhibit a fair promise of becoming fully able, through the Divine blessing, to perform theirs. In consequence of a complaint lodged with him, that some young men, chiefly the sons of ministers or of eminent private Christians, after completing their studies for the ministry, had not preached the gospel in a sufficiently lucid and zealous manner,—and in consequence also, we may presume, of prompt measures which he adopted to respond to the complaint and to attack the evil to which it pointed,—a society of devout men, matured and discriminating Christians, was formed to encourage young men of decided piety and talent to aspire to the pastoral office, and to exercise vigilant care that none were admitted to the theological college who did not, in addition to displaying good natural abilities, afford convincing evidence of being savingly converted to God, and thoroughly sound in the faith. Who that reflects on this fact, and that marks the sensitive interest in the

honour of the house of God, apparent in every part of Dr. Ridgeley's writings, and especially in those portions of his Body of Divinity which treat of the constitution of a Christian church, and of the qualifications and duties of a Christian pastor, can doubt that, as a theological tutor, he zealously laboured, in dependence on the Divine blessing, to fashion the young men under his care into the mould, not only of systematic divines, and correct thinkers, and able expounders of the dogmata of theology, but of humble, affectionate, unctuous, heavenly-minded pastors of the sheep and the lambs purchased with the blood of Christ? There are altogether too much formality, too much of routine, too much of set-performance and of stiff adherence to rule and method, in many of the processes currently practised for training the rising ministry. Mr. Ridgeley was a stranger to these: at least, we utterly mistake the watchful, reflecting, practical, solicitous spirit which pervades his writings, and which breathes, and breathes most redolently, in the few surviving facts of his history, if he was not, just as truly, and in all the details of adapting his efforts to particular emergencies and to the peculiar circumstances of individuals, a theological tutor who dealt closely and searchingly with every student under his care, as, in his pastoral capacity, he was doubtless an overseer of souls who 'watched as one that must give account.'

While Mr. Ridgeley filled the principal theological chair connected with the Independent churches, Arianism or Unitarianism—that most rampant of all heresies, which, during the fourth century, threatened far more than all "the ten persecutions" to extirpate Christianity, and which, in modern England, rapidly reduced the presbyterian denomination from being greatly the ascendant body of dissenters to a state in which they had scarcely "a local habitation and a name"—broke out with a virulence which, by combined wiliness and energy, menaced the whole community of

nonconformist churches with destruction. To add to the confusion of the scene, the orthodox ministers were warmly divided among themselves as to the scriptural propriety of subscribing a summary of faith condemnatory of the menacing heresy. Some regarded subscription as a bowing to the Baal of human authority; while others regarded it—especially in the instance in question, when no human, and particularly no magisterial authority interfered to impose it, and when it was prescribed by the voluntary act of the parties concerned in it, and was virtually but a pious and solemn yet deliberate and most resolute declaration of opinion—as a salutary, scriptural, effective, and even necessary means of making a decided stand against ruinous error. Mr. Ridgeley took the part—and he took it boldly and firmly—of the subscribers. The distinction seems not to have been made before his days, and was but dimly seen by himself, and obscurely exhibited in his own writings, between a declaration and a creed, or between a profession of faith as decreed and made unalterable by man, and a profession of faith as simply stating the belief of subscribers at the moment of subscription, and as open to revision and amendment proportionably to increased acquaintance with the Divine word, and growing illumination by the teaching of the Divine Spirit. Mr. Ridgeley thought merely of the fearful heresy which seemed, like the bursting of a vast lake, to be silently, but with the force of a torrent, about to carry away before it the spiritual comfort and the religious homes of the evangelical nonconformist communities of England. His zeal—warm and inflexible, though calculating and based upon matured and heartfelt inquiry—was directed, not against any party system, but against what he knew, what he felt, to be doctrines dishonouring to God, and killing to the human soul. For once, perhaps, his usual and almost instinctive judiciousness forsook him. Believing the essential and saving doctrines of our Lord's true deity, and of his meritorious substitutionary atonement, to be in danger, he looked around him—

too much, possibly, with a querulous eye—for causes which had brought them into question; and he very readily, though somewhat hastily, concluded that the minute and metaphysical accounts which, first the schoolmen, and next orthodox protestant divines, in imitation of their example, had given of "the eternal generation of the Son," and "the procession of the Holy Spirit," and which men of bold temperament who attempted to comprehend the most sublime topics of revelation, and refused to credit whatever was too large for the grasp of their feeble reason, had ostentatiously quoted, and held up to condemnation, had been a chief occasion, possibly the only one, of the revival of Arianism. He hence was very naturally led to adopt extreme opinions in opposition to these scholastic refinements. Considering his admirable zeal for the cause of evangelical truth, and the peculiar circumstances in which theological science was placed—loaded with technicalities, trapped in innumerable distinctions, and encumbered, among the orthodox, with constant attempts to become 'wise above that which is written'—we need not wonder that he discarded the received doctrines of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, and of the Son being eternally begotten of the Father. But whatever may be thought of his judiciousness, or of the extent to which he carried his independence of thinking, and his dislike of philosophizing in religion, there can be but one opinion as to his ardent attachment to the doctrines which the Unitarianism of his day impugned. At the very outbreak of the heresy in 1718, and during the succeeding years of its attracting considerable notice, he appeared, both as a preacher and as a writer, in the van of its opponents, and was regarded by the subscribing part of the orthodox as a leader in their cause. Several Arians took advantage of the facility of non-subscription, to conceal their real sentiments, and to move unsuspected or at least unexposed among those of the orthodox who did not subscribe; and they possessed sufficient influence—aided by the unnecessary alarm of

the non-subscribing orthodox for the rights of spiritual liberty, and the danger of human authority in religion—to raise a noisy outcry against the testing of sincerity, and the pledging of orthodoxy, by subscription. Mr. Ridgeley, finding the subscribing party with whom he acted violently assailed, publicly assumed the championship of their cause, and defended their conduct from the press. In 1719, he published a tractate entitled "The unreasonableness of the charge of imposition exhibited against several dissenting ministers, in and about London, considered; and the difference between creed-making as practised in former ages, and their late conduct in declaring their faith in the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, stated and argued;"—and, in 1721, he published "An Essay concerning Truth and Charity, in two parts; containing, first, an inquiry concerning fundamental articles of faith, and the necessity of adhering to them in order to church-communion; and, secondly, some historical remarks on the behaviour of the Jews and primitive Christians, toward those who had either departed from the faith, or by any other means rendered themselves liable to excommunication; showing, also, what is that uncharitableness which discovers itself in the conduct of men towards one another." He, as a matter of course, encountered much obloquy, and even received ill-will; which, no doubt,—among the presumptuous of his opponents who writhed under defeat, or among the feeble who could not attempt even a plausible defence,—were proportioned to the decisiveness of his success. What he strove for in the by-play of the controversy, was not the cause of subscription to a creed in any such view or use of the practice as is current in the Established churches, but essentially the unmasking of Arians, and the vindication, from the charge of uncharitableness, of men who made a resolute stand against the wily aggressions of the Arian heresy. He must have been grieved that the orthodox were divided in opinion, as to the proper manner in which Arianism should be detected and repelled; and both because the mass of the non-

subscribers were as affectionately zealous for the truth as himself, and because he enjoyed a spirituality of temper which mellowed every thing controversial which he produced, he wrote on the question of subscription with a mildness and a glow of charity rarely exhibited in the unceremonious literature of his age. As a controversialist, indeed, he was gentle almost to a fault. When vanquishing and utterly spoiling an opponent, he appears as if shedding tears over his sad plight before he can take courage to carry away a trophy; and when meeting a doubtful foe, he usually gives him the benefit of every explanation which can be made favourably to his cause, and even at times directs him to a retreat which, if discovered and run to by himself, would be esteemed a mere subterfuge. His singular generosity, however, is displayed only on questions of comparatively minor importance, and does not interfere with a sturdy stanchness, which equally distinguishes his character, in stating and defending, in the face of all consequences, and down to the smallest detail, the great doctrines of revealed truth.

In 1731 appeared the first edition of Mr. Ridgeley's great work—that in connexion with which chiefly his name lives in history, and whose influence, as an instrument for good, will probably render him celebrated and useful for generations to come—his Body of Divinity. Whether this valuable production is in substance what he prepared for the instruction of his students when he was appointed to the professorship of theology, or whether it is the fruit or matured thinking, and of frequent emendation, suppression, and enlargement during the period of his filling the professorial office, is not known. For many reasons, however, especially on account of the exquisite symmetry and theological finish of the work, the latter is the more likely to be the fact. The Notes, a few of which are elaborate, while almost all are excellent, and add much to the value of the text, bear very decided marks of having been written after he resolved to

publish. Many portions of the staminal part of the work, too, are so nicely judicious, so ripe in thought, so mellow and odoriferous in matured reflection, that if they were not written, or at least revised, many years after he became a professor, he must have been, at an earlier age than is common with even great men, an accomplished scholar and a profound divine. On the supposition that he wrote his great work, and placed it in its permanent condition, immediately after his professorial appointment, what a grievous pity that he did not afterwards write some other work which might have bequeathed to posterity the rich accumulations of his subsequent experience and study! In that case, he must be ranked with many a brilliant but over-sensitive and over-modest mind which has lit up but one taper to shed light on generations, when it might have poured over them an illuminating stream from a cluster of burners. His Body of Divinity was published in two volumes folio, containing a likeness of the author, a preface explaining his plan and apologizing for his departure from the beaten but thorny track of scholasticism, and a long list of respectable subscribers, who encouraged him in his undertaking, and expressed their confidence in his eminent abilities, by pledging themselves to purchase copies. Flattering testimonies of approbation, immediately after the appearance of the work, were poured in upon him from all parts of England, and even from some places in Scotland. The University of Aberdeen, in particular, attested their appreciation of his worth, and of the service he had done to the religious public, by conferring upon him the highest literary honour they could bestow,—the degree of Doctor in Divinity. The first edition of his work having been rapidly sold, and encouragements of the most cheering kind having been given him to regard it as an instrument of good to many, he was induced to undertake a second edition—which, however, did not appear till the year of his death, three years after the publication of the first. In 1770, the work was, in a third edition, compressed into one volume

folio, and published in Scotland. Since that period, it has appeared in the dress of four octavos; but has, for many years, been scarce, and—except among the happy few who refuse to lay an antiquated but most instructive author on the shelf, in order to keep pace with the rapidly accumulating literature of our book-making age—comparatively neglected. A taste, however, for the racy and substantial theological writings of the days of Britain's moral giants has of late revived; and it will scarcely fail to adopt, as one of the richest dishes of its multifarious banquet for the intellect and the soul, Dr. Ridgeley's Body of Divinity.

As to the known facts of Dr. Ridgeley's history, few, exceedingly few, things remain to be told. Either he must have been a man of extremely retired habits—shrinking from the broad gaze of society, and clinging tenaciously to his desk and his post of prayer—or he must, as to the commemorating of his excellencies, have fallen between the stools of two friends who relied each on the other for doing him justice with posterity, and who one or both did not live to perform the wish of their heart. But the memory of the just is blessed. Though Dr. Ridgeley, notwithstanding all his eminence, does not figure in any lengthened biography, and fails—possibly through no fault of his own—to attract men by the storied picture of his excellencies, and instruct them by the recorded lessons of his. example, he doubtless is 'had in everlasting remembrance,' and 'shines as the brightness of the firmament' in heaven, and even on earth appears far more accurately portrayed and monumented in his writings, than he could ever have been by the united labours of the artist and the biographer. The mind, the thoughts, the workings of the heart and the conceptions of the soul, and not the outward circumstances, the vicissitudes in place and health, in relationships and temporal successes, evince the man; and these, as to any person who has written under the solemn influence of attempting to convey

or elucidate Divine instruction to his fellow-creatures, appear with incomparably more animation and fulness in his publications, than in the best story which even an impartial friend could narrate of his actions. Dr. Ridgeley appears to have deeply relished Divine truth for the sake of its own enjoyments,—its hallowing impressions on the soul, and its consoling power upon the heart; yet he possessed little of the ardour and impassioned unctuousness which so generally distinguished the nonconformist writers of former days, but was characterized rather by habits of calm, contemplative, intellectual meditation. He was strong in judgment, strong in purpose, and, probably, strong in the faith and the activities of Christian life, but feeble in what the phrenologists term "ideality." Though very far from being destitute of feeling, he seems, as a writer at least, to have, in general, been able so to keep down the sensibilities of his nature as to let them mingle in a much less proportion than is common among authors of his class with the effusions of his intellect. His writings, of course, derived, as to their didactic and controversial qualities, no small advantage from the coolness combined with the energy of his mind. Two eminent features stamped upon them are comprehensiveness and moderation. He was never so carried away by any impulse into the excessive pursuit of one prominent idea as to neglect the due exhibition of the thoughts with which it was naturally allied, or so excited in encountering an opponent, or disposing of a difficulty, as to lose sight, in any degree, of the systematic and illustrative parts of his subject; nor was he tempted, by respect for prevailing custom, to push any doctrine beyond the limits visibly impressed on it in the Divine word,—or, by attachment to a party or a theological school, to dress out a tenet in language studiedly or unnecessarily repulsive to its opponents,—or, by fondness for victory, to say more against the arguments of an errorist than was simply requisite to extract their sting and vindicate the truth. His entire dealing with opponents, in fact, usually displayed a

combination, rarely witnessed in such attractiveness among controversial writers, of courteous respect for their persons, and firm yet mild opposition to their errors. He was a man of extensive erudition, patient in his inquiries, and careful to examine a question in all its phases; and he hence felt pity rather than petulance for men of mistaken views, aware of the false media through which they gazed,—and was at once uncompromising and moderate in propounding disputed truth, experiencing the force of the wide range of evidence in its favour, and, at the same time, averse to expose it to the cavils of the prejudiced and ignorant. Altogether, he was a man well-qualified for the solemnly responsible labours which occupied the greater part of his public life, and will probably, in his Body of Divinity, continue to be read with undiminished interest when the more rhetorical writers of a later period shall have been forgotten. "The nominal, as well as intrinsic, value of Dr. Ridgeley's work," says the excellent author of the History of the Dissenting Churches, "is far from being depreciated by the injuries of time. His method of reasoning he has adapted to the capacities of those who are unacquainted with the abstruse terms made use of by metaphysicians and schoolmen, and when introduced into subjects of theology, have a tendency rather to perplex than to improve the mind. His scheme of divinity is evidently Calvinistic; but, then, he has explained his subjects with so much moderation and latitude, as to obviate many of the objections raised against the system of doctrines that passes under that name. Upon the whole, it is probable that the English language does not furnish a work of this nature that, for perspicuity of language, extent of research, accuracy of judgment, and judicious description of the numerous subjects that fall under examination, any way equals this work of Dr. Ridgeley." "The character of Dr. Ridgeley, and his ability for the different stations assigned him by providence, were highly appreciated by his contemporaries, and may be gathered partly from his writings. He

was a man of extensive and sound learning, of remarkable diligence, and a strict economist of his time. His skilful knowledge of the learned languages, large acquaintance with ancient and modern writers, and critical knowledge of the sacred writings, rendered him well qualified for theological controversy; and he was accounted one of the most considerable divines of his age."*

Dr. Ridgeley died on the 27th of March, 1734, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. He continued till the end of his life to fill the pastoral office at the Three Cranes. His mortal remains were probably interred in the burying-ground at Bunhill. In addition to the works already mentioned, Dr. Ridgeley published "A Sermon on the death of Mr. Thomas Tongey, preached at Fetter-lane, November 9th, 1729;" "A Funeral Sermon for the Rev. John Hurrion, who died December 31st, 1731;" and "A Sermon on the death of the Rev. John Sladen, preached at Horsley-down, October 28th, 1733."

THE

DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED

THE INTRODUCTION

BEFORE we enter on our present undertaking, we shall premise a few things leading to the general subject of it. And that we may begin with what is most obvious, let it be considered,

1. That it is a duty incumbent on all who profess the Christian name, to be well acquainted with those great doctrines on which our faith, hope, and worship are founded; for, without the knowledge of these, we must necessarily be at a loss as to the way of salvation, which none has a right to prescribe but He who is its author.

2. This knowledge of divine truth must be derived from the holy scriptures; which are the only fountain of spiritual wisdom, whereby we are instructed in those things that could have been known in no other way but by divine revelation.

3. It will be of singular use for us not only to know the doctrines which are contained in scripture, but to observe their connection and dependence on one another, and to digest them into such a method that subsequent truths may give light to those which went before; or to lay them down in such a way that the whole scheme of religion may be comprised in a narrow compass, and, as it were, beheld with

one view. This method will be a very great help to memory; and is what we call a system of divine truths, or a methodical collection of the chief articles of our religion, adapted to the capacity of those who need to be taught 'the first principles of the oracles of God.' When the design of this is to give the world a specimen of that 'form of sound words' which the church thinks itself obliged to 'hold fast,' and steadfastly to adhere to, we call it a confession of faith; and when digested into questions and answers, we call it a catechism. And though systems of divinity, confessions of faith, and catechisms are treated with contempt, instead of better arguments, by many who are no friends to the doctrines contained in them, and who appear to be partial in their resentment, in as much as they do not dislike those compositions which, by whatever name they are called, are agreeable to their own sentiments; yet we are bound to conclude that the labour, in what form soever it has been, of those who have been happy in the sense they have given of scripture, and in the method in which they have explained its doctrines, is a great blessing to us. At the same time, we are far from concluding that even the best composition is of equal authority with scripture, or that every word contained in it is infallible; nor do we regard it any further than as it is agreeable to, or sufficiently proved from, scripture.

4. Confessions of faith, and catechisms are not to be reckoned a novel invention, or not consonant to the scripture rule; since they are nothing else but a peculiar way of preaching or of instructing us in divine truths. And since scripture lays down no certain invariable rule concerning them, the same command which warrants preaching the word in any method, includes the explaining of it, as occasion serves, in a catechistical one. [See Note A below.]

5. As there are many excellent bodies of divinity printed in our own and foreign languages, and collections of sermons on the principal

doctrines of religion, so there are various catechisms, or methodical summaries of divine truths, which, when consonant to scripture, are of great advantage to all Christians, whether elder or younger.

6. The catechisms composed by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, are esteemed as not inferior to any that are extant, either in our own or foreign languages, the doctrines therein contained being of the highest importance, and consonant to scripture. And the method in which they are laid down is so agreeable, that it may serve as a directory for ranging our ideas of the common heads of divinity in such an order that what occurs under each of them may be reduced to its proper place. [See Note B, p. 3.] It is the larger of them that we have attempted to explain and regulate our method by; because it contains several heads of divinity, not touched on in the shorter. And if, in any particular instance, we are obliged to recede from the common mode of speaking (though it is to be hoped, not from the common faith, once delivered to the saints), we submit our reasoning to the judgment of those who are disposed to pardon minor mistakes, and improve to the best purposes what comes with sufficient evidence.

[**NOTE A. The authority of creeds**.—The controversy respecting the lawfulness or scriptural propriety of confessions of faith, has been much affected by looseness of definition. Dr. Ridgeley evidently contends that confessions are authoritative,—that 'though not infallible in every word,' they are, in some sense, a standard or test of the truth or falsehood of doctrines; and yet he speaks of them as 'but a peculiar way of preaching, or of instructing us in divine truths,' and as 'designed to give the world a specimen of that form of sound words which the church thinks itself obliged to hold fast.' Now most of the opponents of confessions admit the propriety of a declaration, oral or verbal, of the articles of an individual's or a church's belief.

They maintain that every Christian community ought to be one in faith, and to possess confidence in one another's soundness of religious views. Though they have no authorized and invariable symbols, all the details as well as the leading doctrines of which are declared to be of essential importance, they all possess some definite outline of principles, which they exhibit to the world 'as a specimen' of what they believe, and employ, as a test of eligibility to their fellowship. The question respecting confessions of faith, therefore, is not, Are they lawful? but, Are they simply declarations of what a church's belief is at the time when they are made? or are they criteria of what is true and what is false,—authoritative exhibitions of the sense of the divine word,—exact definitions of truth, to be received by all, and modified by none. Viewed in the former light, they may be of various length and expressed in various words, and they amount to nothing more than the aggregate of individual or private belief; but viewed in the latter light, they are expressed in fixed terms, and enacted and maintained by ecclesiastical or civil authority.

The earliest formal creed was framed, in the year 325, by the celebrated council of Nice. This was constructed with the view of condemning the doctrines and subtle devices of Arianism, and was occupied with minute, and, in some instances, unintelligible definitions of our Lord's true deity. In the form in which it has descended to modern times, it was completed, in the year 381, by the first great council of Constantinople. At Nice, all those clauses of it were enacted which refer to Christ; and at Constantinople, that part of it was added which refers to the Holy Ghost. During the interval between its commencement and its completion, many formal creeds —all of which soon were lost, or fell into disuse—were enacted in favour respectively of orthodoxy, of Arianism, and of Semi-arianism, by the numerous councils which were convoked during the prevalence of the Arian controversy. Several celebrated creeds,

especially those called the Henotieon, the Ecthesis, and the Type, were enacted, in the fifth and sixth centuries, by the Roman emperors: these were all designed to terminate prevailing controversies, and produce uniformity in faith; but they invariably created new disputes, and aggravated the evils which they were meant to remedy. A famous creed, usually known as the creed of Pope Pius IV., and containing a summary of the modern doctrines of Romanism, was drawn up after the close of the council of Trent, and enacted by Papal authority. Creeds, beautifully harmonizing with one another in doctrine, and very remarkable for their general orthodoxy, were framed by most of the Protestant churches immediately after the Reformation. These—amongst the latest of which, as well as the most esteemed, was the Westminster confession of faith—were enacted, and, for the most part, continue to be enforced, by the united authority of church and state; and though studiously constructed and professedly maintained with a view to the conservation of truth, they have, in our apprehension, been attended, throughout the greater part of Protestant Europe, with an influence the very reverse of that contemplated by their original framers. Some ecclesiastical bodies, indeed, either adopting creeds already framed, or constructing new ones of their own, maintain them only by the authority of church-courts, and regard them as subject to modification and amendment; but even these allow no further scope to the assertion of private judgment, than liberty, on the part of any minister or congregation, to solicit that the creeds may be reviewed.

Except as verbal statements of private belief, expressed in words and extending to a length entirely optional, creeds were unknown among the primitive Christians. What is usually termed the Apostles' creed, was of slow and gradual formation; it did not assume a fixed form till about the middle of the fourth century; and, in all its parts, it is merely a harmony of the verbal professions of faith which were made

by the early disciples on occasion of their being admitted to church-fellowship. The apostles and their coadjutors appear to have required from converts little more than a profession of belief that 'Jesus Christ is the Son of God,'—Acts 8:37. The early churches, wherever Judaism and heathen idolatry were the only systems which opposed the truth, demanded an acknowledgment of simply the unity of God and the Messiahship and divinity of Jesus; and when they had to conflict with Cerinthianism, Basilidianism, Valentinianism, Sabellianism, or other heresies, they expected such statements as should repudiate the various forms of novel or prevailing error. Either through prevailing custom, or by request of the churches, the converts used great brevity of expression. Any thousand of them, though perfectly at liberty to employ what words they pleased, could hardly have failed to utter similar expressions, and arrange their ideas in similar order. When renouncing Judaism, they might all say, 'We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God;' and when renouncing Gnosticism, they might all say, 'We believe that he was born of the Virgin Mary.' A fixed verbal creed, strongly resembling that called the Apostles', might thus have been framed by a sort of concurrent usage or general consent; and even had it existed at a comparatively early period, would have been no disproof that primitive confessions of faith were all optional and spontaneous. The immediate materials out of which the Apostles' creed was formed, were ten transcripts or reports of the consentaneous professions of the converts and the churches. Now the expressions employed, the arrangement of the clauses, the copiousness of statement, and the prominence given to respective doctrines, are all more various than might possibly have been expected. One of the ten transcripts is given by Ignatius, who wrote about the year 105; two by Irenæus, about the year 184; three by Tertullian, about the year 200; two by Origen, about the year 230; one by Gregory of Neo-Cæsarca, about the year 250; and one by Cyprian, about the year 252. As the errors protested against were

both more numerous and more subtle in the middle of the third century than in the days of Ignatius or of Irenæus, we might have expected the later creeds to be all more copious than the earlier; yet that of Gregory is shorter than any of four of the eight earlier, and the latest, or that of Cyprian, is the shortest of the ten, and only one-eighth of the length of the first of Irenæus. Though remarkable, too, for their doctrinal agreement, and though all existing in a harmony in the Apostles' creed, they are surprisingly various in their phraseology and in their omissions or expansions of articles. The church's public profession of faith—either as a specimen of what she held fast,' or as a test of fitness for admission to her fellowship—continued, till the civil establishing of Christianity, to be as strictly 'unauthorized,' and was as unfixed in the number of its articles, and allowed as free an option in the selection of words, as during the personal ministry of the apostles.

This glance at the history of creeds may afford instruction as to the light in which they ought to be regarded, and will evince the necessity of defining accurately in what sense they are advocated or opposed. If considered as optional expressions of private belief, they will be regarded by almost all Christians as 'but a peculiar way of preaching or of instructing us in divine truths;' if considered as fixed formulæ, from the dicta of which private judgment has no redress but by successful petition to an ecclesiastical judicatory, they will probably be rejected by all who 'call no man on earth master,' and who breathe the spirit of the noble Bereans; and if considered as standards of national orthodoxy, enacted by civil authority and maintained under the sanction of the civil power, they will be condemned by all who view the kingdom of Christ as spiritual, and the interference of the civil magistrate with religious matters as antichristian and corrupting.—ED.]

[**NOTE B. The Assembly's catechisms**.—The catechisms of the Westminster divines, 'are certainly,' as Dr. Ridgeley remarks, 'not inferior to any that are extant, either in our own or foreign languages.' They contain luminous digests of 'doctrines of the highest importance;' they are admirably constructed as to methodical arrangement; and they constitute altogether a fine specimen of theological skill and prowess. But excellent as they are, they must not be pronounced faultless. They were framed amid the bustle of political contention, by men who had not entirely emerged from the mist of the scholastic theology; and are marked with blemishes which indicate the absence of matured reflection, and the influence of prejudices derived from the dark ages. They are occasionally redundant or defective,—inaccurate in statement or censurable in phraseology. For example, they nowhere so state the important doctrine of regeneration as to bring it fairly before the mind of a reader; and, at the same time, they hint it both under the question of 'effectual calling,' and under that of 'repentance.' Again, they identify 'the work of creation' with 'the space of six days,'—excluding both the pristine creation of chaos, and the constant creation of human souls; and they speak of the benefits of redemption as 'purchased,'—overlooking both the spontaneity or unpurchaseableness of the divine mercy, and the uniform scriptural assertion that what Christ purchased was 'his church,' 'his people,' the souls and bodies of the saved. Such blemishes as these, indeed, when compared with the excellencies which surround them, are but like the spots on the disc of the sun; but they mark the catechisms as human and fallible compositions, and ought to moderate the unqualified and blindfold admiration in which they are extensively held. Persons who have been used to follow wherever ecclesiastical standards lead, would do well, even when the beautiful and generally accurate catechisms of Westminster are before them, to listen to the heavenly oracle: 'To the

law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'—ED.]

THE GLORIFYING AND THE ENJOYING OF GOD

QUESTION I. What is the chief and highest end of man?

ANSWER. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him for ever.

Man's chief End

IT is supposed, in this answer, that every intelligent creature, acting as such, designs some end, which excites endeavours to attain it. The ends for which we act, if warrantable, may be considered as to their degree of excellency, and, in proportion to this, are to be pursued by proper means conducing to the attainment of them. There is one end that may be termed the chief and highest, as having an excellency above all others, and a supreme tendency to make us blessed: this is composed of two parts, and consists, as is observed in this answer, in the glorifying and the eternal enjoying of God, the fountain of blessedness. If it be inquired with what propriety both these may be called chief and highest, the answer is obvious and easy: The former, or the glorifying of God, is absolutely the chief and highest end; for nothing more excellent or desirable than it can be conceived; while the latter, or the enjoying of God, is the highest or best in its kind, and is, at the same time, a means leading to the other. And both these ends, which, with this distinction, we call chief and highest, are to be particularly considered by us, together with the connection that there is between them.

The glorifying of God

I. We are to consider what it is to glorify God.

In order to our understanding this, let it be premised, 1. That there is a great difference between God's glorifying himself and our glorifying him. He glorifies himself, when he demonstrates or shows forth his glory; we glorify him by ascribing to him the glory that is his due,—even as the sun discovers its brightness by its rays, and the eye beholds it. God glorifies himself by furnishing us with matter for praise; we glorify him when we offer praise, or give unto him the glory due to his name. 2. Creatures are said to glorify God in various ways. Some things do it only objectively; as by them, angels and men are led to glorify him. Thus, 'the heavens declare his glory.' The same might be said of all other inanimate creatures which glorify God, by answering the end of their creation, though they know it not. Intelligent creatures, on the other hand, and particularly men, are said to glorify God actively. This they do by admiring and adoring his divine perfections. These, as incomprehensible, are the object of admiration; and as divine, are the object of adoration. The apostle, accordingly, admires the divine wisdom: 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'b God is to be admired in all the displays of his relative or manifestative glory; and 'his work, which men behold,' is to be 'magnified.' He is to be adored more especially for his essential perfections.

We are to glorify God, by recommending, proclaiming, and setting forth his excellency to others. What we have the highest value for, we desire to see regarded by others in the same way as by ourselves. Thus, as is narrated by the evangelist, when the disciples received their first conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, they communicated

it to others,—as Andrew to Peter, and Philip to Nathanael; and when the woman of Samaria received the same conviction, she endeavoured to persuade all her neighbours to believe in Christ, as she did.e Thus we glorify God by making mention of his name with reverence, proclaiming his goodness with thankfulness, and inviting others, as the Psalmist does, to 'taste and see that he is good.'

But since this is a very comprehensive duty, including in it the whole of practical religion, it may be considered under the following particulars.

1. We glorify God by confessing all the sins we have committed, and taking shame to ourselves on account of them. This is interpretatively to acknowledge the holiness of his nature, and of his law, which the apostle asserts to be 'holy, just, and good.' Thus Joshua advises Achan 'to give glory to God, by making confession to him;'h and thus the penitent thief, who was crucified with our Saviour, glorified God, by confessing that he received the 'due reward of his deeds.' So did the Levites, in their prayer recorded by Nehemiah, when they said to God, 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.'k

2. By loving and delighting in him above all things. This is to act as those who own the transcendent amiableness of his perfection, as the object of their highest esteem. Thus the Psalmist says, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none,' or nothing, 'upon earth, that I desire besides thee!'

3. By believing and trusting in him,—committing all our concerns, both in life and in death, for time and for eternity, into his hands. Thus Abraham is said to have been 'strong in faith, giving glory to God;' and the apostle Paul, to have 'committed his all to him.'n

4. By a fervent zeal for his honour;—and that either for the honour of his truth and gospel, when denied, disbelieved, or perverted; or for the honour of his holiness, or of any of his other perfections, when reflected on or reproached, by the tongues or the actions of those who set themselves against him.

5. By improving our talents, and bringing forth fruit in proportion to the means we enjoy. 'Herein,' says our Saviour, 'is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.'

6. By walking humbly, thankfully, and cheerfully before God. Humility acknowledges that infinite distance which is between him and us; retains a due sense of our own unworthiness of all we have or hope for; and owns every thing we receive to be the gift of grace: 'By the grace of God,' says the apostle, 'I am what I am.' Thankfulness gives him the glory, as the author of every mercy; and accordingly sets a due value on it, in that respect. And to walk cheerfully before him is to show that we do not repent having engaged in his service, and to recommend it as most agreeable: this is what the Psalmist intends, when he says, 'Serve the Lord with gladness.'q

7. By heavenly-mindedness, or cherishing a desire to be with him, to behold his glory.

In the ways which have been specified, we glorify God by yielding obedience to his commanding will; and we must, in all of them, do this in the name of Christ, our great Mediator, and by strength derived from him. But we must further glorify God,

8. By yielding an entire submission to his disposing will. In particular, we must, when under afflictive dispensations of providence, own that he has a sovereign right to 'do what he will with us, as his own,' and that these afflictions are infinitely 'less than our

iniquities deserve.'s And we must adore his wisdom and goodness in trying our graces by them, and dealing with us in such a way as is 'needful,' and that only 'for a season.' And we are to own his goodness in suiting our strength to our burdens, and overruling all events for our spiritual advantage. Submission consists also in an easy, patient, and contented frame of spirit, without the least murmuring or repining, concluding that whatever he does is 'well done;'u and, which is something more, in rejoicing that we are counted worthy to suffer the loss of all things, yea, even of life itself, if called to do so, for his sake;—of which we have various instances in scripture.

Moreover, we ought to glorify God in the natural, civil, and religious actions of life, all of which are to be consecrated or devoted to him. We enjoy the blessings of life to no purpose, if we do not live to the Lord, and thankfully acknowledge that we receive them all from his hand. And whatever the calling be wherewith we are called, we must therein abide with him, and see that we have his warrant to engage in it; and we must expect success from his blessing upon it, else our exertions in it will be to no purpose. Thus says Moses, 'It is the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth.' And, in all our dealings with men, we are to consider ourselves as under the inspection of the all-seeing eye of God, to whom we are accountable for all we do; and should be induced hereby, to exercise ourselves always to keep 'consciences void of offence towards God and man.'

As for religious duties—wherein we have to do more immediately with God—we are to glorify him, by taking up a profession of religion in general, as being influenced by his authority, encouraged by his promised assistance, and approving ourselves to him as the searcher of hearts. We must take heed that we do not rest in an outward form or show of godliness, without the power thereof; or in having a name

to live, without possessing a principle of spiritual life by which we may be enabled to perform living and spiritual actions corresponding to our profession. And all religious duties must be performed by faith; whereby we depend on Christ, our great Mediator, for both assistance and acceptance, and thus glorify him as the fountain of all grace, in whom alone both our persons and our services are accepted in the sight of God, and become subservient to his glory. We must act thus at all times; so that though our thoughts may not be directly conversant about any of the divine perfections—as often happens when we are engaged in some of the more minute or indifferent actions of life—we may yet glorify him habitually, by having our hearts right with him, and whatever we do, may refer it ultimately to his glory. As every step the traveller takes is towards his journey's end, though this may not be every moment in his thoughts, so the less important actions of life should be subservient to those which are of greater consequence, and in which the honour of God and religion is most intimately concerned. In this manner we may be said to glorify him in all our conduct.

Having thus considered, that it is our indispensable duty to make the glory of God our highest end in all our actions, we might add, as a motive to enforce this duty, that God is the first cause of all things, and that his own glory was the end he designed in all his works, whether of creation or of providence. It is certain, that the glory of God is the most excellent end we can propose to ourselves; therefore the most valuable actions of life ought to be referred to it, and our hearts most set upon it. If otherwise, we act below the dignity of our nature; and, while other creatures, designed only to glorify him objectively, answer the end for which they were made, we, by denying him that tribute of praise which is due from us, abuse our superior faculties, and live in vain.

The enjoying of God

II. The next thing to be considered is what it is to enjoy God.

1. This supposes a propriety in him, or claim to him, as our God. We cannot be said to enjoy that which we have no right or claim to, as one man cannot be said to enjoy an estate which belongs to another. So God must be our God in covenant, or we cannot enjoy him;—and that he is so, with respect to all that fear him, is evident, in as much as he gives them leave to say, 'This God is our God,' and, 'God, even our own God, shall bless us.'a

2. To enjoy God, is to have a special gracious communion with him, to converse or walk with him, and to delight in him, as when we can say, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' 1. This enjoyment of God, or communion with him, is such as we are blessed with in the present world. This is but imperfect; as we know and love him but in part. Our communion with him here is often interrupted and weakened, through the prevalency of indwelling sin; and the joy and delight which arise from it are often clouded and sullied. And we enjoy him here in at best but a mediate way, in and under his ordinances, as agreeable to the present state. 2. Believers shall enjoy him perfectly and immediately in heaven, without intermission or abatement, and that for ever. This is called 'seeing him as he is;' and 'being with him where he is, to behold his glory.'d In order to fit them for it, their souls shall be made capable of receiving it, by the removal not only of all sinful but of all natural imperfections, and shall be more enlarged, as well as have brighter discoveries of the divine glory. They shall also have a perfect freedom not only from all temptations to sin, but from all the consequences of it—such as sorrow, divine desertion, [See Note C, page 8,] and the many evils that attend us in the present life. Thus their happiness

shall be so confirmed and secured to them, that it shall be impossible for them to be dispossessed of it. This is certainly the most desirable end, next to the glory of God, that can be intended or pursued by us.

The connection between the glorifying and the enjoying of God

III. This leads us to consider the connection that there is between our glorifying God and our enjoying him.

God has joined these two together, so that one shall not be attained without the other. It is the highest presumption to expect to be made happy with him for ever without living to his glory here; for in as much as heaven is a state of perfect blessedness, they who shall hereafter be possessed of it, must be trained up, or made meet for it, by a right use of all the means of grace. How preposterous would it be to suppose, that they who have no regard to the honour of God here, shall be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, in his presence hereafter? A life of holiness is absolutely necessary to the heavenly blessedness. And since these two are so connected together, they who experience the one shall not fail of the other: for they have a security for both in the faithfulness of God, who has promised to 'give grace and glory.' Therefore 'he who begins a good work in them, will perform it,'f and will give them 'the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.'

From the connection that there is between our glorifying and our enjoying God, we may infer that it is a very preposterous thing for any one to assign as a mark of grace, that persons must be content to perish eternally, that God may be glorified. It is alleged indeed, in favour of this supposition, that Moses and the apostle Paul seem to give countenance to it; the one by saying, 'If thou wilt forgive their sin,—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast

written;' the other, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh.'i But Moses, in desiring to be blotted out of the book which God had written, must not be supposed to be willing to perish eternally for Israel's sake; he is content simply to be blotted out of the book of the living, or to have his name no more remembered on earth; he seems to decline the honour which God had offered him, when he said, 'Let me alone, that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation;' he desires not the advancement of his own family, if Israel must cease to be a people, to whom God had promised to be a God. As for the apostle Paul's wish, it is either, as some suppose, a rash and inconsiderate flight of zeal for God, and so not warrantable, though in some respects proceeding from a good principle; or rather, as I humbly conceive, he could wish himself accursed from Christ so far as is consistent with his love, or he is content to be under the eternal marks of God's displeasure, or deprived of the comfortable sensation of his love, or of many of those fruits and effects of it which the believer enjoys in this life. I cannot, in the least, think that he desires to be deprived of a real interest in the love of God, or on any condition whatever to be eternally separated from Christ. [See Note D, page 8.]

Since the eternal enjoyment of God is one great end which we ought to have in view, it is no sign of a mercenary spirit to have an eye to the heavenly glory that we may be enlivened to duty. 'Thou shalt guide me,' said Asaph, 'with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.' Promises occur in many scriptures, which are designed to excite our desire and hope of heavenly blessedness; therefore the exercise of Christian graces, from these motives, is far from being unlawful,—yea, it is commended in the saints, who are said to 'desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.'m And Moses is commended for having 'the recompense of reward' in view, when he preferred the

'reproach of Christ' before the 'treasures of Egypt.' When however this respect to future blessedness is warrantable, it must be considered as an incitement to our glorifying God, by means of our beholding his glory; and when we consider it as a reward, we must not look upon it as what is merited by our service, or conferred in a way of debt, but as a reward of grace, given freely to us, though founded on the merits of Christ.

[NOTE C. Divine desertion.—Dr. Ridgeley evidently regards 'divine desertion' as an evil incident, in the present life, to believers; and he is joined in this opinion by many eminent theological writers. But is he correct? Does God ever desert, even for the shortest period, any of his believing people? Does he ever 'hide his face,' or 'withdraw the light of his countenance,' from those who have been saved by grace, and are 'one spirit with the Lord?' At various times, indeed, and especially at the period of the captivity, he forsook his ancient people as their political protector, and hid his face from them as the Shechinah (Isa. 54:7, 8.); and he has also withdrawn, under the new dispensation, from communities who professed to be his worshippers, and from places where the light of his favour had long shone. But as the God of the everlasting and well-ordered covenant, as the Father and portion of the redeemed, as the guardian and provider of Christ's spiritual body, as God who has justified and who will also glorify, who has begun a good work and will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus, he emphatically says to every believer, 'I will never, never leave thee; I will not, no, I will not forsake thee,'—Heb. 13:5. The translation which I have given of this passage, is not only warranted but required by the emphatic repetition of negatives in the original: Ου μη σε ανω, ουδ' ου μη σε εγκαταλιπω. Though he chastises his people for their sins, and contends with them for their backslidings; yet he deals with them as with sons, and calls upon them to recognise the very sufferings which they endure as evidences

of his gracious presence and his love,—Heb. 12:6–10. Rev. 3:19. However numerous their transgressions, or however severe his displeasure, he never ceases to bless them with his grace. 'If,' says he, 'they forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,'—Ps. 89:30–33. Never, in connexion with the new covenant, was divine desertion endured, except by the Lord Jesus. He, indeed, when he bore our sins and suffered in our stead, had occasion to exclaim, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' But he so fully underwent it,—so amply achieved the purposes of its infliction,—so satisfactorily paid the penalty which it involved, that it will never he repeated, and can never be endured by any of his redeemed. If they walk in darkness, it is not because the light of God's face ceases to shine upon them, but because they shut their eyes from beholding it. He is 'near to them that call upon him,' and 'walks and dwells in his people.' Not only are his presence with them and his favour abiding, but their very 'life is hid with Christ in God.'—ED.]

[NOTE D. Paul's wishing himself 'accursed from Christ.'—Paul wrote under divine inspiration. How, then, could his words express 'a rash and inconsiderate flight of zeal for God?' Dr. Ridgeley does not seem quite to relish this view of his wish; yet he substitutes another which is scarcely less exceptionable. Paul said, 'Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.' How, then, could he 'be content to be deprived of the comfortable sensation of his love, or of many of those fruits and effects of it which the believer enjoys in the present life?' Could he have gone thus far, he was in the very frame of mind, and needed to take but another step, to be willing to undergo the miseries of

perdition. To want a sense of the divine love, is to want the chief element of spiritual life, and the grand motive to Christian obedience; and to be willing to endure that want, would argue an indifference as to both the permanency of the divine favour, and the acceleration of personal holiness, which is utterly inconsistent with the Christian character.

Paul's wish is sufficiently obvious, if we translate his words thus: 'I could wish that myself were anathema, after the manner of Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.' The word 'anathema,' among both the Jews and the Greeks, denoted a person who was devoted to destruction for the public safety, or one who was cut off from society and subjected to an ignominious death for the removal of a calamity. When a pestilence broke out, or any public distress occurred, one of the lowest or most execrable of the people was selected by authority, pronounced a vile thing, and doomed to a violent death. Among Greeks, Romans, and Jews, every such person, as well as every one who, like Achan, deserved to be sacrificed for the public good, was called anathema. Now Paul was willing to be esteemed such—he was willing to be treated as a malefactor, contemned as a despicable being, and led forth to ignominious execution—'after the manner of Christ.' As 'anathema,' he could not he counted vile, or put to death, forth from or away from any one, but by some person or after his example. A few codices of the Greek text read 'by Christ;' but are not of sufficient number and authority to affect the received reading. The phrase αναθεμα απο του Χριστου may fairly be translated 'anathema after the manner of Christ.' Both απο in Greek and 'from' in English, as well as the corresponding preposition in other languages, express as truly the relation of receiving impression, as that of receding or of being repelled. One object may he from another, in the sense of egression, a second in the sense of repulsion, a third in the sense of impression or imitation. To

say, 'I wish I could paint from Titian,' is as correct as to say, 'I wish I were separated from my companions.' In the latter phrase, 'from' has the sense of 'forth from' or 'away from;' and in the former, it means 'after the manner of.' Now a person who was 'anathema' might be in imitation or according to the example of another; but he could he 'forth from' or 'away from' only the community, who repelled him from their society, and on whose account he was devoted to ignominy and death. Paul 'wished to be anathema after the manner of Christ.' He was willing, in imitation of his blessed Lord, to be counted a vile thing, and, for the sake of his brethren's good, set apart to ignominious sufferings and destruction. 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,'—1 John 3:16. Christ, when professedly setting an example to his disciples, had said, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,' John 15:13.; and now the apostle, taking up the lesson which his Master taught, and breathing the spirit which he exemplified, says, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were anathema after the manner of Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' 'Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me; but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God,'—Acts 20:22–24.—ED.]

THE BEING OF GOD

QUESTION II. How doth it appear that there is a God?

ANSWER. The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare that there is a God; but his word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation.

Why proofs of the being of God should be studied

BEFORE we enter on the proof of this important doctrine, let it be premised, that we ought to be able to prove by arguments, or give a reason of our belief, that there is a God. For,

1. This doctrine is the foundation of all natural and revealed religion. It, therefore, must not be received merely by tradition, as though there were no other reason for our believing it than that others do so, or that we have been instructed in it from our childhood. To receive it in this manner is unbecoming the dignity and importance of the subject, and would display great stupidity; especially as we have so full and demonstrative evidence in the whole frame of nature,—in which there is nothing but what affords an argument to confirm our belief that there is a God.

2. There is a great deal of atheism in our hearts; by reason of which we are prone sometimes to call in question the being, perfections, and providence of God. The devil also frequently injects atheistical thoughts into our minds; which are a great affliction to us, and render it necessary that we should use all possible means for our being established in this great truth.

3. The abounding of atheism in the world, and the boldness of many in advocating it, renders it necessary that we should be able to defend the doctrine of the divine existence, that we may stop the mouths of blasphemers, and so plead the cause of God, and assert his being and perfections against those that deny them.

4. A firm belief in God's existence will greatly tend to establish our faith in those comfortable truths that arise from our interest in him; and will give us a more solid foundation for our hope, as excited by his promises, which receive all their force and virtue from those perfections which are implied in the idea of a God. It will also make us set a due value on his works, in which we see a manifestation of his eternal power and Godhead, and are in consequence led to admire him. 'Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold.'

Proofs of the being of God

We shall now consider those arguments, mentioned in this answer, by which the being of a God may be evinced; as,

1. The light of nature in man. By this we understand that reason which he is endowed with; whereby he is distinguished from, and rendered superior to, all other creatures in this lower world; and whereby he is able to observe the connection of things, and their dependence on one another, and to infer those consequences which may be deduced from thence. The reasoning powers of man, indeed, are very much sullied, depraved, and weakened, by our apostacy from God; but they are not wholly obliterated; for there are some remains of them, which are common to all nations,—whereby, without the help of special revelation, it may be known that there is a God. [See Note E, p. 20.] This respects either the principle of reasoning which we were born with, upon account of which infants

are called intelligent creatures, or the exercise of it in a discursive way, in adults, who alone are capable to discern the truth of God's existence; and this they do more or less, in proportion to their natural capacity, as they make advances in the knowledge of other things.

Now for the proof of the being of a God from the light of nature, let the following propositions be considered in their respective order: 1. There hath been, for many ages past, a succession of creatures in the world. 2. These creatures could not make themselves; for that which is nothing cannot act. If it make itself, it acts before it exists; it acts as a creator before it exists as a creature: and it must be, in the same respect, both a cause and an effect, or it must be, and not be, at the same time,—than which nothing can be more absurd. 3. These creatures could not make one another; for to create something out of nothing, or out of matter altogether unfit to be made into what is produced out of it, is to act above the natural powers of the creature, and contrary to the fixed laws of nature. Creation, therefore, is too great a work for a creature, who can do nothing but in a natural way; just as an artificer, though he can build a house with fit materials, cannot make these materials out of nothing, or build the house with materials unfit for his purpose, as water, fire, air, &c. All creatures act within their own sphere, that is, in a natural way; but creation is a supernatural work, and too great for a creature to perform; therefore, creatures cannot be supposed to have made one another. 4. If it were supposed possible for one creature to make another, then superiors must have made inferiors; and so man, or some other intelligent creature, must have made the world. But where is the creature that ever pretended to such power or wisdom as to be called the 'Creator of the ends of the earth?' 5. If any creature could make himself or other creatures of the same species, why did he not preserve himself? for he that can give being to himself, can certainly continue himself

in being;—or why did he not make himself more perfect? why did he make himself, and other creatures of the same species, in such a condition that they are always indigent, or stand in need of support from other creatures? Or further, supposing the creature made himself, and all other things, how comes it to pass that no one knows much of himself comparatively, or of other things? Does not he that makes things understand them? Man therefore could not make himself, or other creatures. It follows from hence, that there must be a God, who is the first cause of all things, necessarily existing, and not depending on the will of another, and by whose power all things exist. 'Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.' 'In him we live, and move, and have our being.'q [See Note F, p. 23.]

Thus much concerning the more general method of reasoning, whereby the light of nature evinces the being of a God. We proceed to consider more particularly,

II. How the being of God may be proved from his works. The cause is known by its effects; since, therefore, as was but now observed, creatures could not produce themselves, they must have been created by one who is not a creature. Now if there be no medium between God and the creature, or between infinite and finite, between a self-existent or underived and a derived being; and if all creatures exist, as has been shown, by the will and power of their Creator, and so are finite and dependent; then it follows, that there is one from whom they derived their being, and on whom they depend for all things,—and that is God. This is usually illustrated by a similitude: Suppose we were cast on an unknown island, and there saw houses built but no men to inhabit them, should we not conclude there had been some there that built them? Could the stones and timber put themselves into the form in which they are? Or could the beasts of the field, that are without understanding, build them? Or when we

see a curious piece of workmanship, as a watch or a clock, perform all its motions in a regular way, can we think that the wheels came together by chance? or should we not conclude that it was made by one of sufficient skill to frame them and put them together in order, and give motion to them? 'Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?'

This leads us to consider the wisdom of God as apparent in his works, and as demonstrating his being. This the Psalmist mentions with admiration: 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' When we see letters put together, which make words or sentences containing the greatest sense, and the ideas expressed by them joined together in the most beautiful order, should we not conclude that some man, equal to the work, had put them together? Even so the wisdom that shines forth in all the parts of the creation, proves that there is a God. This appears in the exact harmony and subserviency of one part of the creation to another. 'I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth: and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.'t One part of this frame of nature ministers to another. Thus the sun and other heavenly bodies, give light to the world,—which would be no better than a cave or dungeon without them; and afford life and influence to plants and trees; and maintain the life of all living creatures. The clouds send down rain that moistens the earth, and makes it fruitful; and this is not perpetual, so as to destroy it; nor is it poured forth by whole oceans together, but by small drops. 'He maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof.' The moist places of the earth, and the sea, supply the clouds with water, that they may have a sufficient store of rain. The air fans and refreshes the earth, and is necessary for the growth of all things, and for maintaining the life and health of the earth's inhabitants. This

subserviency of one thing to another is without their own design or contrivance,—for they are not endowed with understanding or will; neither doth it depend on the will of the creature. The sun doth not enlighten or give warmth to the world, or the clouds or air refresh the earth, at our pleasure; and therefore they are all subject to the order and direction of one who is the God of nature, who commands the sun, and it shineth, and the clouds to give rain at his pleasure. It is he who gave their regular motion to the heavenly bodies, and who, by his wisdom, fixed and continues the various seasons of the year, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, day and night, and every thing that tends to the beauty and harmony of nature. Hence these curious and never-enough-to-be-admired works, plainly declare that there is a God. This is described with unparalleled elegance of style: 'Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north. By the breath of God, frost is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud; he scattereth his bright cloud. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? how thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south-wind?'x

But that we may further evince the truth of the divine existence, we shall prove it by a series of arguments. And

I. The being of God appears from the constitution or condition of those creatures that are endowed with a lower kind of life than man.

1. No creature can produce a fly or even the smallest insect, but according to the fixed laws of nature; and that which we call life, or the principle of their respective motion and actions, none but a God can give. His being, therefore, is plainly proved, from all living

creatures below man, which are subservient, many of them, to one another, and all to man, and that not by our ordering, but by God's.

2. The natural instinct of living creatures by which every one acts according to its kind, and some of the smallest produce things that no human art can imitate, plainly proves the being of a God. Thus the bird, in building its nest; the spider, in framing its web; the bee, in providing store-houses for its honey; the ant, in making those provisions which it lays up in summer against winter; the silk-worm in providing clothing for man, and in being transformed into various shapes; and many others of the smaller sort of creatures, in their various wonderful ways of acting without the exercise of reason or design,—all prove the being of God,

3. The greater, fiercer, or more formidable sort of living creatures, as the lion, the tiger, and other beasts of prey, are so constituted, that they flee from man, whom they could easily devour, and avoid those cities and places which men inhabit, that so we may dwell safely. They are not chased into the woods by us; but these are allotted, as the places of their residence, by the God of nature.

4. Those living creatures that are most useful to man, and so subject to him, as the horse, the camel, and many others, know not their own strength or power, to resist or rebel against him. This is ordered by infinite wisdom. And there are many other instances of a like nature, all of which are very strong arguments to prove that there is a God, whose glory shines forth in all his works.

II. The being of God appears from the structure of human bodies, in regard to which we are said to be 'fearfully and wonderfully made;' and which, if it be abstractly considered, without regard to the fixed course and laws of nature, exceeds the power and skill of all creatures, and can be no other than the workmanship of a God, and

therefore is a demonstration of his being and perfections. No man ever pretended to give a specimen of his skill in constructing a human body. The finest statuaries or limners, who have given pictures or representations of human bodies, have not pretended to give life or motion to them; in this their skill is baffled. The wisest men in the world have confessed their ignorance as to how human bodies are formed,—how they are framed in their first rudiments, preserved and grow to perfection in the womb,—and how they are increased, nourished, and continued in their health, strength, and vigour, for many years. The structure of the human frame has made the inquiries of the most thoughtful men issue in admiration; and we may see plainly displayed in it the power and wisdom of God.

Here it may be observed, that there are several things very wonderful in the structure of human bodies, which farther evince this truth. As, 1. The organs of sense and speech. 2. The circulation of the blood, and the preservation of natural heat for many years together; of which there is no instance but in living creatures. Even fire will consume and waste itself by degrees, and all things into which heat has only been diffused will soon grow cold; but the natural heat of the body of man is preserved in it as long as life is continued. 3. The continual supply of animal spirits, and their subserviency to sense and motion. 4. The nerves; which, though small as threads, and all tending to convey strength and motion to the body, remain unbroken. 5. The situation of the parts in their most proper place. The internal parts, which would be ruined and destroyed if exposed to the same injuries as the external ones, are secured in proper enclosures, and in consequence preserved. 'Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.' 6. The disposal of the various parts of the body so as to be fitted for their respective uses; all being situated in those places which are best adapted to the performance of their proper functions. 7. The

diversity of features in human bodies; which is so great that we can see scarcely two persons in all respects alike. It is wonderful, and is clearly the result of divine wisdom; for even this is necessary for society, and for our performing the duties which we owe to one another. 8. The union of the body with the soul, which is of a very different nature. This union can never be sufficiently admired or accounted for; but gives us occasion to own a superior, infinitely wise being. This leads us to observe that,

III. The being of God appears from the nature of the soul of man. God is said to have 'formed the spirit of man within him.' And hereby his power and wisdom, and consequently his being, are declared. For,

1. The nature of a spiritual substance is much less known than that of bodies; and that which we cannot fully understand, we must admire. If the wisdom and power of God is visible in the structure of our bodies, it is much more so in the formation of our souls; and since we cannot fully describe what they are, and know little of them but by their effects, certainly we could not form them;—and therefore there is a God, who is 'the Father of spirits.'

2. The powers and capacities of the soul are various, and very extensive. The soul can frame ideas of things superior to its own nature, and can employ itself in contemplating and beholding the order, beauty, and connection of all those things in the world which are, as it were, a book, in which we may read the divine perfections, and improve them to the best purposes. It takes in the vast compass of things past, which it can reflect on and remember with satisfaction or regret; and it can look forward to things to come, which it can anticipate with pleasure or uneasiness. It can choose or embrace what is good, or flee from and reject what is evil and hurtful. It is

capable of moral government, of conducting itself according to the principles of reason, and according to rules enjoined it for the attaining of the highest end. It is capable of religion; and in consequence can argue that there is a God, and give him the glory that is due to his name, and be happy in the enjoyment of him. It is immortal, and therefore cannot be destroyed by any creature; for none but God has an absolute sovereignty over the spirits of men. 'No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death.'

IV. The being of God appears from the nature and office of conscience; which is that whereby the soul takes a view of itself, and its own actions, as good or evil, and considers itself as under a law to a superior being, from whom it expects rewards or punishments. This evidently proves that there is a God. For,

1. Conscience is often distressed or comforted by its reflection on those actions which no man on earth can know. Now when it fears punishment for those crimes which come not under the cognizance of human laws, its uneasiness and its dread of punishment, plainly discover that it is apprehensive of a divine being, who has been offended, whose wrath and resentment it fears. All the endeavours that men can use to bribe, blind, or stupify their consciences are unavailing. The sad apprehension of deserved punishment, from one whom they conceive to know all things, even the most secret crimes, makes persons uneasy, whether they will or not. Whithersoever they flee, or what amusement soever they betake themselves to, conscience will still follow them with its accusations and its dread of the divine wrath. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.' 'A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.'e 'Terrors take hold of him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night; the east wind carrieth him

away, and he departeth, and, as a storm, hurleth him out of his place; for God shall cast upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of his hand.' 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth.'g And this is universal. There are none who are not, some time or other, liable to fears arising from self-reflection, and the dictates of conscience. The most advanced circumstances in the world will not fortify against them or deliver from them. 'As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.' Even Pharaoh himself, the most hard-hearted sinner in the world, who would gladly have forced a belief upon himself that there is no God, and boldly said, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' even he could not ward off the conviction which his own conscience suggested, that there is a God. Hence he was forced to say, 'I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.'i And indeed all the pleasure that any can take in the world, who give themselves up to the most luxurious way of living, cannot prevent their trembling, when conscience suggests some things terrible to them for their sins. Thus respecting Belshazzar, when he had made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and when, in the midst of his jollity and drinking wine, he saw the finger of a man's hand upon the wall, it is said. 'The king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him; so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.' Thus there are dictates of conscience, which make men very uneasy, and which force wicked men to own that there is a God, whether they will or not. But,

2. Good men have frequently such serenity of mind and peace of conscience, as affords them farther conviction that there is a God. This indeed is a privilege enjoyed by those who have the light of scripture-revelation, and so might have been considered under a following head; yet in connection with the argument which has been just stated, it may properly be introduced here as a proof of the being

of a God. For, 1. This composure of mind abides under all the troubles and disappointments which good men meet with in the world. Those things which tend to disturb the peace of other men, do not so much affect them. 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' And as this peace abides under all the troubles of life; so it does not leave them, but is sometimes more abundant, when they draw nigh to death. 2. It is a regular and orderly peace, accompanied with grace; so that conscience is most quiet when the soul is most holy. This shows that there is a hand of God in working or speaking this peace; as designing thereby to encourage and own that grace which he has wrought in good men. Thus 'the God of hope' is said 'to fill us with all joy and peace in believing.'m 3. Though men labour ever so much after this peace, they can never attain it without a divine intimation, or God's speaking peace to their souls; and when he is pleased, for wise ends, to withdraw from them, they are destitute of it. God, therefore, is known by his works, or by those influences of his grace whereby he gives peace to the conscience.

V. The being of God appears from those vast and boundless desires which are implanted in the soul. These are such that it can take up its rest, and meet with full satisfaction, in nothing short of a being of infinite perfection. There must, therefore, be such a being; and he is God. This will further appear if we consider, that though the soul, at present, be entertained and meets with some satisfaction in creature-enjoyments, yet it still craves and desires more, of what kind soever they be; and the reason is, that they are not commensurate to its desires. 'The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing.' 'That which is wanting cannot be numbered.'o Now we cannot rationally suppose that such boundless desires should be implanted in the soul, while there is nothing sufficient to satisfy them; for then the most excellent creature in this lower world would

be, in some respects, more miserable than creatures of a lower order, which obtain their ultimate desire. The Psalmist, speaking of the brute creatures, says, 'They are filled with good;' that is, they have all that they crave. There must therefore be a being who is infinitely good, and who can satisfy, in their utmost extent, the boundless desires of the human soul; and that being is God, the fountain of all blessedness.

VI. The being of God appears from the consent of all nations. That which all mankind agree in, must be founded in the nature of man; and that which is founded in the nature of man, is evident from the light of nature. It is true, there are many who have, as the apostle says, thus 'known God, who have not worshipped and glorified him as God, but have been vain in their imaginations, and have changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.' But it does not follow, that the heathen, who were guilty of idolatry, had no notion of a God in general. The apostle's words seem to teach that there is something in the nature of men which suggests that they ought to worship some divine being, and that they did service to those who were by nature no Gods, because they could not, by the light of nature, sufficiently know the true Deity. This proves, however, that they were not wholly destitute of some ideas of a God; which, therefore, are common to all mankind. Accordingly, all ancient history sufficiently discovers that men, in all ages, have owned and worshipped something that they called a God, though they knew not the true God. The Heathens themselves, also, as may easily be understood from their own writings, reckoned atheism a detestable crime, because contrary to the light of nature; and some of them have asserted that there is no nation in the world so barbarous and void of reason, as to have no notion of a God. We may consider, likewise, that no changes in the world, or in the circumstances of men, no changes in the external

modes of worship, or in those things which have been received by tradition, have, in any instance, erased or altered the conviction, that there is a God. The being of a God, therefore, may be proved by the consent of all nations.

It is objected to this reasoning, that there have been some speculative atheists in the world. History, it is said, gives us an account of such persons, and informs us also, that there are some whole countries in Africa and America where there is no worship, and, as appears to us, no notion of a God. Now, though history does furnish us with instances of persons who have been deemed atheists, yet their number has been very inconsiderable; so that it will not follow, that the idea of a God is not, some way or other, impressed upon the heart of man. Might it not as well be said, that, because some children are born idiots, reason is not natural to man, or universal? Besides, they who bear the character of atheists in ancient history, and such as, by their conversation, appear to be atheists in our day, are rather practical atheists than speculative. We do not deny, that, in all ages, many have asserted, and have pretended to prove, that there is no God; but it is plain that they discover, at times, such fear and distress of conscience, as is sufficient to disprove what they pretend to defend by argument. As to the alleged fact that there are, in some parts of the world, people so stupid as not to own or worship a God, this is hard to be proved; nor have any, who have asserted it, had such knowledge of their condition as to be able to determine what their sentiments about this matter are. But suppose the fact were true, nothing could be argued from it but that such nations are barbarous and brutish,—that though they have the principle of reason, they do not act like reasonable creatures. It is sufficient for our purpose to assert, that all men who act like reasonable creatures, or who argue from those principles of reason which they are born with, may conclude that there is a God. It is further objected by

atheists that the notion of the being of a God, or indeed all religion, took its rise from human policy; that it was a device for restraining the world from those irregularities which were inconsistent with the well-being of civil government; and that it was readily received, and propagated by tradition, and so by an implicit faith transmitted from one generation to another among those who inquire not into the reason of what they believe, and was, at the same time, supported and enforced by the influence of fear. This, though much in the mouths of atheists, is a vile insinuation, without any shadow of reason, or show of proof; and indeed it may be easily disproved. For, 1. If the notion of a God, and religion consequent upon it, were a contrivance of human policy, it must have been either the invention of one man, or the result of the contrivance of many convened together to impose on the world. If it was the invention of one man, who was he? when and where did he live? what history gives any account of him? or when was the world without all knowledge of a deity, and some religion, that we may know, at least, in what age the contriver of it flourished? or could the contrivance of one man be so universally complied with, and yet none pretend to know who he was, or when he lived? And if it was the contrivance of a number of men, how could they possibly have acted together, without their proceedings being discovered? or how could the princes of the earth, who must have been at the head of the contrivance, have mutual intelligence, or be convened together? By whose authority did they meet? or what gave rise to their confederacy? It is morally impossible that such a piece of state policy should have been made use of to deceive the world, and universally prevailed, and yet none in any age ever discovered the imposture. Besides, the princes and great men of the world, who had a hand in it, would certainly have exempted themselves from any obligation to own a God, or any form of worship, whereby they acknowledge him their superior; for impostors generally design to beguile others, but to exempt

themselves from what they bind them to. If any of the princes or great men of the world, had invented the opinion that there is a God, and that he is to be worshipped, their pride would have led them to persuade the world that they were gods themselves, and ought to be worshipped. They would never have included themselves in the obligation to own a subjection to God, if the notion of a God had, for political ends, been invented by them. How, too, if belief in the being of a God was invented by human policy, came it to be universally received by the world? It is certain that it was not propagated by persecution; for though there has been persecution to enforce particular modes of worship, yet there never was any to enforce the belief of a God. If, then, this belief was not propagated by force, or spread through the world by fraud, what are those arts which are pretended to have been used to propagate it? It took its rise, say atheists, from human policy; but the politicians are not known, nor the arts found out, which they used to persuade the world that there is a God. How unreasonable is the objection, or rather cavil, against a deity, that it was the result of human policy! 2. The belief of a God was not propagated in the world merely by tradition, and so received by implicit faith. Notions that have been received with implicit faith by tradition, are not pretended to be proved by reason. But the belief of a God is founded on the highest reason, so that if no one in the world believed it besides myself, I am bound to believe it, or else must no longer lay claim to that reason which is natural to mankind, and should show myself rather a brute than a man. Schemes of religion, too, that were propagated merely by tradition, have, in no instance, been universally received. But the belief of a God has universally prevailed. Moreover, if this belief was spread by tradition, why was not the mode of worship settled, that so there might be but one religion in the world? The reason is, that the heathen received their respective modes of worship by tradition, which respects only particular nations, or a particular set of men; whereas the belief of a

God is rooted in the nature of man. Whatever, besides, has been received only by tradition, has not continued in the world in all the turns, changes, and overthrow of particular nations that received it. But the belief of a God has continued in the world throughout all ages and changes; and therefore is founded not in tradition, but in the light of nature. 3. The belief of a God could not take its rise merely from fear of punishment, which men expected would be inflicted by him; though that is a strong argument to establish us in it. Liability to punishment for crimes committed, supposes that there is a God, who is offended by sin, and from whom punishment is expected; and as the effect cannot give being to the cause, so fear could not be the first ground and reason of the belief of a God. Moreover, the principal idea which men have of God, and that which is most natural to us, is that of an infinitely amiable object,—a being of infinite goodness: 'God is love;' and we conceive of him as the spring of all we enjoy and hope for. But as for fear, that is only what arises in the breasts of wicked men, and is founded in the secondary ideas we have of him,—namely, as being offended, and as taking vengeance. Now they only who offend him are afraid of his vengeance; and the sentiments of the worst of men are not to be our rule in judging concerning the being of a God. If these believe that there is a God, only because they fear him, others believe him to be the fountain of all blessedness, and as such they love him. Therefore, the ideas that men have of the being of a God did not take their rise from fear.

VII. The being of God appears from the works of providence. Providence is that which governs the world, preserves it from returning to its original nothing, and supplies all creatures with those things that their respective natures or necessities require. Creatures could no more provide for themselves than they could make themselves; and he that provides all things for them is God. All

finite beings have their respective wants, whether they are aware of them or not; and he must be all-sufficient or divine who can fill or supply the necessities of all things. Thus the Psalmist speaks of God as supplying the necessities of 'beasts and creeping things;' who are said to 'wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season.' But more particularly,

1. The being of God appears from the extraordinary dispensations of providence when things happen contrary to the common course and fixed laws of nature, as when miracles have been wrought. These are undeniable proofs of the being of a God; for when they are performed, a check or stop is put to the course of nature, and its fixed order or laws are controlled or inverted,—and this none but he who is the God and Author of nature can do. To deny that miracles have been wrought, is little better than scepticism; since the reality of them hath been proved by the most unquestionable testimony, contained not only in scripture but in other writings, and is confessed even by those who deny the principal things designed to be confirmed by them. It is true, they were never wrought with an immediate design to prove that there is a God, since that is sufficiently demonstrated without them; but in as much as they have been wrought with other views, the being of a God, whose immediate power has been exerted in them, appears beyond all contradiction.

2. The being of God appears also from the common dispensations of providence, which we daily behold and experience. These we call common, because they contain nothing miraculous, or contrary to the laws of nature. They are nevertheless wonderful, and have in them the traces and footsteps of infinite wisdom and sovereignty, and therefore prove that there is a God. For it cannot otherwise be accounted for, that so many things which are altogether unlooked for, should befall us or others in the world. Thus one is cast down,

and a blast thrown on all his endeavours; and another is raised beyond his expectation. 'Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.' The wisest and best concerted schemes of men are often baffled, and brought to nought, by some unexpected occurrence of providence; and this also argues a divine control. Thus God says, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.'u And who is it that can turn the counsels of men into foolishness, but an infinitely wise God?

3. The being of God appears from his providing for the necessities of all living. There is a natural instinct, in all creatures, to take care of and provide for their young, before these are capable of providing for themselves. This is observable not only in mankind, as the prophet says, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child?' but also in the lower sort of creatures. Even those which are naturally most fierce and savage, provide for their young with extraordinary diligence; and they sometimes neglect and almost starve themselves to provide for them, and endanger their own lives to defend them. They bring forth their young at the most convenient season of the year,—when the springing grass begins to supply them with food,—when the fowls of the air may get a livelihood by picking up the seed that is sown, and not covered by the earth,—and when the trees begin to put forth their fruits to supply and feed them. A large class of them are provided, too, with the breast, the paps, the udder, replenished with milk; and there is a natural instinct in their young, to desire their appropriate nourishment. Many of the beasts of the field are furnished also with weapons for their defence; others have a natural swiftness to escape from danger; and the feeble have provided for them holes and caverns in the earth to secure them from pursuit. Now these

provisions cannot be the effect of mere chance, but are all evident proofs of the being of a God.

Providence is, in a peculiar manner, concerned for the supply of man, the noblest of all creatures in the world. 'He giveth food to all flesh.' 'Thou preservest man and beast.'z The earth is stored with variety of food. And though the poor, or greater part of mankind, cannot purchase those far-fetched or costly dainties which are the support of luxury, they may, by their industry, provide that food with which the earth is plentifully stored, and which maintains life and health as well as the luxuries of the rich, who fare deliciously every day; and if their families increase, and a greater number is to be provided for, they generally have a supply in proportion to their increasing number. Providence also has stored the earth with various medicines, and given skill to men to use them as a relief against the many sicknesses that we are exposed to. All these things, and innumerable other instances that might be given, argue the care and bounty, and consequently prove the being of God, whose 'tender mercies are over all his works.'

Providence provides likewise for the safety of man, against those things that threaten his ruin. Things which are the greatest blessings of nature, would be destructive, were there not a providence. The sun that enlightens and cherishes the world by its heat and influence, would be of no advantage were it situated at too great a distance, and would burn it up if it were too near. The sea would bring a deluge on the earth and swallow it up, if God had not, by his decree, fixed it within certain bounds, and made the shore an enclosure to it, and said, 'Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther.' The elements, though advantageous to us by their due temperature and mixture, would otherwise be destructive. The various hum ours and jarring principles in our bodies would tend to destroy us, were they not

tempered and disposed by the God of nature for the preservation of life and health. The wild beasts would destroy us, had not God put the fear and dread of man into them, or, at least, caused them not to desire to be where men live,—the forests and desert places, remote from cities, being allotted for them. Some creatures would be destructive to men, by the increase of their number, did they not devour one another; and insects would destroy the fruits of the earth, did not one season of the year help forward their destruction, as another tends to breed them. Men themselves, by reason of their contrary tempers and interests, and that malice and envy which is the consequence of our apostacy, would destroy one another, if there were not a providence that restrains them, and gives a check to that wickedness that is natural to them, and thus keeps the world in a greater measure of peace than it would otherwise possess. Hence, the Psalmist says, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'

It is objected by atheists, against the being of a God, that the wicked are observed to prosper in the world, and the righteous are oppressed. This objection the Psalmist was almost overcome by. 'My feet,' says he, 'were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.' In answer to this objection, let it be observed, 1. That the idea of infinite sovereignty is included in that of a God; so that the distribution of good and evil, if made at any time without regard to the deserts of men, argues the sovereignty of providence, and therefore proves that there is a God, who gives no account of his matters, but has an absolute right to do what he will with his own. 2. There is a display of infinite wisdom in these dispensations of providence. The good man is made better by affliction, and experiences inconsequence the kindness and care of providence; and the wicked man is forced to own, by his daily experience, that all the

outward blessings he enjoys in this world cannot make him easy or happy, or be a sufficient portion for him. 3. Outward prosperity does not prevent or remove inward remorse, or terror of conscience, which embitters the joys of the wicked. 'A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.'c 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.' And on the other hand, outward trouble in the godly is not inconsistent with spiritual joy and inward peace; which are more than a balance for all the distresses they labour under. It is said, 'The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.'e 'He shall be satisfied from himself.' 4. When we determine a person happy or miserable, we are not to judge of things according to their present appearance, but are to consider the end of circumstances, since every thing is well that ends well. Thus the Psalmist, who, as was before observed, was staggered at the prosperity of the wicked, had his faith established, by considering the different events of things. Concerning the wicked, he says, 'Thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.' This is a very beautiful expression, representing all their happiness as imaginary, a vain dream, and such as is worthy to be contemned. But as for the righteous, he represents them as under the special protection and guidance of God here, and as at last received to glory, there to enjoy him as their everlasting portion.

VIII. The being of a God appears from the foretelling of future events, which have come to pass according to the predictions. For,

1. No creature can, by his own wisdom or sagacity, foretell future contingent events with an infallible knowledge, or otherwise than by

mere conjecture. 'Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.' Our knowledge reaches no farther than to see effects, and judge of them in and by their causes. Thus we may easily foretell that necessary causes will produce those effects that are agreeable to their nature; but when the effects are not necessary but contingent, or purely arbitrary, we have nothing to judge by, and cannot come to the knowledge of things future, without an intimation of them given us by Him who orders and disposes of all things. Hence to foretell things to come in this sense, is an evident proof of the being of God.

2. That there have been predictions of contingent events, and that the things foretold have come to pass, is very obvious from scripture; and if it be highly reasonable to believe that which is so well-attested as scripture is, we are bound to conclude that there is a God. But since we are arguing, at present, with those who deny a God, and consequently all scripture-revelation, we will only suppose that they whom we contend with will allow that some predictions of contingent events have been made and fulfilled; and then it will follow, that these could have been made in no other way but by intimation from one who is omniscient,—and that is God. [See note G, p. 23.]

Having considered how the being of God is proved by the light of nature and by the works of God, we shall proceed to show how it appears from scripture; as it is observed in this answer, that 'the word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation.' The arguments hitherto laid down are directed more especially to those who are not convinced that there is a God, and consequently deny the divine origin of scripture. But this argument supposes a conviction of both. It must not, however, be supposed unnecessary; for as we are often exposed to temptations

which, though they may not lead us peremptorily to deny that there is a God, may tend to stagger our faith, we may desire some evidence of God's being and perfections additional to what the light of nature affords,—and this we have in the scriptures. In these the glory of God shines forth with the greatest lustre; and they furnish an account of works more glorious than those of nature,—works included in the way of salvation by a Mediator. The light of nature proves, indeed, that there is a God; but the word of God discovers him to us as a reconciled God and Father to all who believe, and is also accompanied in their experience with internal convictions of this truth which are produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and with evidences of it which consist in his peculiar gifts and graces. It is well observed, therefore, that only that knowledge of the being of God which is derived from the scriptures, is sufficient and effectual to salvation. The knowledge of God which may be attained by the light of nature is sufficient, indeed, in some measure, to restrain our corrupt passions; and it is conducive to the peace and welfare of civil society: it affords some conviction of sin, and, in some respects, leaves men without excuse, and renders their condemnation less aggravated than that of those who sin against the gospel light. Still it is insufficient to salvation; since it is a truth of universal extent, that there is salvation in no other than Christ, and that it 'is life eternal to know' not only the true God, but 'Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent,'k —and this can be known, not by the light of nature, but only by divine revelation.

This leads us to consider in what respect the knowledge of God, as it is contained in and derived from scripture, is sufficient to salvation. Here we do not assert the sufficiency of this knowledge exclusive of the aids of divine grace, so as to oppose the word to the Spirit. It is said, in this answer, that the word and Spirit of God alone can reveal him to men sufficiently to their salvation. The word is a sufficient

rule, so that we need no other to be a standard of our faith, and to direct us in the way to eternal life; but it is the Spirit that enables us to regard, understand, and apply this rule, and to walk according to it. These two are not to be separated. The Spirit doth not save any without the word; and the word is not effectual to salvation, unless made so by the Spirit.

That nothing short of scripture-revelation is sufficient to salvation, will appear, if we compare it with the natural knowledge we have of God. For, 1. Though the light of nature shows us that there is a God, it doth not fully display his perfections and character, as they are manifested in scripture; wherein God is beheld in the face of Christ. It doth not discover any thing of the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the divine essence, who are equally the object of faith; nor doth it give us any intimation of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, in whom we obtain forgiveness of sins. These truths are known only by scripture-revelation. And since the knowledge of them is necessary to salvation, we are bound to conclude that the scripture alone is sufficient to lead to it. 2. Though the light of nature suggests that God is to be worshipped, yet there is an instituted way of worshipping him, which depends wholly on divine revelation. And since the observance of this is necessary, it proves the necessity of scripture. 3. There is no salvation without communion with God: he that does not enjoy him here, shall not enjoy him hereafter. Now the enjoyment of God is attained by faith, which is founded on scripture. Thus the Apostle says, 'That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'

But it is one thing to say, that the knowledge of God, which is derived from scripture, is sufficient to salvation in an objective way,—that is, that it is a sufficient rule to lead us to salvation; and another thing to

say, that it is made effectual thereunto. We are now, therefore, to inquire when the doctrines contained in scripture are made effectual to salvation. And they are made so not by the skill or wisdom of men representing them in their truest light, nor by all the power of reasoning which we are capable of, without the aids of divine grace, but only by the Holy Spirit. And this he does, 1. By the internal illumination of the mind,—giving a 'spiritual discerning' of divine truth, which, as the apostle says, the 'natural man receiveth not.' And this is called, 'a shining into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.'n 2. By subduing the obstinate will of man, and so enabling it to yield a ready, cheerful, and universal obedience to the divine commands contained in scripture; and, in particular, inclining it to own Christ's authority as King of saints, and to say, as converted Paul did, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' 3. By exciting in us holy desires after God and Christ, and a very high esteem and value for divine truth; by removing all those prejudices which there are in our minds against the word; and by opening and enlarging our hearts to receive it, and to comply with all its commands. Thus the 'Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul.'p And David prays, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!'

[NOTE E. Natural Religion.—Dr. Ridgeley asserts, or simply takes for granted, that by reason or the light of nature, 'without the aid of special revelation, it may be known that there is a God.' He does not very distinctly say what he means by 'the light of nature,' but seems, in the next paragraph, to understand by it, both the active exercise of judgment in adults, and the undeveloped capacity of reason in infants. Does he intend, then, to say that there is constitutionally in the human mind, a religious light,—a light which discovers the

existence of the Deity? or that man is born with the idea of a God? It he does, all facts and common sense are in opposition to his theory. That man has a capacity of reason, or even a conscience or moral sense, no more proves that he is born with a theological idea, than that he has eyes and ears and all the mechanism and capacity of perception, proves that he is born with the idea of towns and landscapes, of noise and symphonies.

But does Dr. Ridgeley mean by 'the light of nature,' a power in man to infer religious truths from the appearances of design and wisdom in the universe? Then, what nation, or what individual, ever successfully used this power? what nation, or what individual, ever discovered, 'without the aid of special revelation,' that there is a God? Man unquestionably has capacity to see, in the physical phenomena around him, many evidences of 'the eternal power and Godhead' of Deity, when they are pointed out to him (Rom. 1:19, 20.); but has he, in any instance, detected them by his unaided reason? or has he even, by his own effort, conquered a strong natural disinclination either to look at them, or to receive the truth which they evince? Man, in his natural condition, is unwilling to know God. Even after the fact of the divine existence is communicated to him, he 'does not like to retain God in his knowledge.'—Rom. 1:28. The whole ancient heathen world 'walked in vanity of mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts,'—Eph. 4:17, 18. They were naturally or constitutionally characterized by alienation from God, by darkness, by ignorance, by blindness of heart; and though they received many intimations of the divine existence, and not a few details as to even his character, works, and will, 'they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and changed his glory into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed

beasts, and creeping things,'—Rom. 1:21–23. Now if man is constitutionally a hater of the idea of God,—if he is averse to inquire after it,—if, when it is communicated to him, he likes not to retain it, and transmutes and modifies it into the idea of a mere creature; on what principle of consistency, or by what law of probability, can he be supposed capable of making an original conception of God, or of effecting a discovery of his existence?

As regards both the being of God, and all other subjects embraced by what is usually styled 'natural religion,' there were pristine revelations made to the whole world. During the entire period from the fall of Adam till the death of Jacob, there were living among men some individuals who received oracles from heaven, and multitudes who had been instructed by either these men or their predecessors. Revelation was probably not less abundant among mankind at large previously to the call of Abraham, than in the Hebrew commonwealth subsequent to the death of Moses; or if not so full, or in so fixed a form, it was at least as frequently made, and as extensively communicated. The antediluvians sank into corruption, and the people of the patriarchal age into polytheism, not from any deficiency in supernatural instruction, but from that strong constitutional enmity against God which frequently seduced the Israelites themselves—seduced them even amid the prodigies of the revelation from Sinai—into debasing idolatry. Nothing—not even line upon line, and precept upon precept of supernatural instruction—could keep God's own peculiar people from sinking into practical atheism, without the aid of constant divine guardianship, of occasional miracles, and of frequent national chastisements. The universal idolatry of other nations is hence a proof that all had received revelation, and that all were averse to the lessons which it taught: it exhibits them as exactly in the position which the Israelites, after being well-instructed from heaven, would again and

again have permanently occupied, had they not been reclaimed by special divine interference. If then, amid the abounding light of revelation in the patriarchal age, and amid the special, miraculous light of revelation under the Mosaic economy, human reason displaced an uniform and inveterate tendency to plunge into polytheism, how, or in what imaginable age or circumstances, can it be supposed to have discovered either the existence of a supreme and only Deity, or any other doctrine of natural religion?

Whatever reason may be supposed able to accomplish in man's fallen state, it could doubtless most easily achieve in his state of innocence. Man, in paradise, was unenfeebled by depravity, un-warped by prejudice, and unbefooled by ignorance; he was distinct in his conceptions, perspicacious in his judgments, vigorous, searching, and accurate in his reasonings; yet, even in that condition, he appears to have received all his religious knowledge by revelation. Whatever ideas of God, of immortality, or of his own state and duties he possessed, were communicated to him by the Deity. Not only did he enjoy the light of one grand revelation, but he constantly walked in vocal and visible intercourse with God. What a commentary is his paradisaic history upon the absence of all 'natural religion,' and the deep necessity for a revelation, among his sinful degraded posterity!

All the ancient nations who were cotemporary with the Hebrew commonwealth, received whatever religious ideas they possessed through tradition from the ante-Mosaic revelations. "All the knowledge," says Shuckford, "which the ancients had on religious subjects, lay at first in a narrow compass; they were in possession of a few truths which they had received from their forefathers; they transmitted these to their children, only telling them that such and such things were so, but not giving them reasons for, or demonstrations of, the truth of them. Philosophy was not disputative

till it came into Greece; the ancient professors had no controversies about it; they received what was handed down to them, and out of the treasure of their traditions imparted to others; and the principles they went upon to teach or to learn by, were not to search into the nature of things, or to consider what they could find by philosophical examinations, but, 'Ask, and it shall be told you; search the records of antiquity, and you shall find what you inquire after,'—these were the maxims and directions of their studies." (Shuckford, vol. i. preface, pp. 47, 48.) Even when the heathen philosophers launched into speculation and inquiry, they steered in the light not only of tradition from patriarchal revelation, but of information received from the Jewish people, or in some instances, perhaps, immediately derived from the Jewish scriptures. Yet what theological discoveries did they achieve? what doctrines of natural religion did they clearly or consistently discern? They confounded the Deity with his works; they believed in the eternity of matter; they dreamed of an abstract necessity or sate to which God as well as man is subject; and, either in these or in other respects, they entertained notions utterly incompatible with a true idea of either God or moral obligation. Even with all their aids from tradition and the Jews, they failed, by the most vigorous and prolonged efforts of reason, to produce more than a hideous caricature of the most obvious of those doctrines which pass under the name of natural religion. Who, then; can doubt that, had they wanted the aids which were afforded them, they could not have made so much as one theological discovery?

In the proper sense of words, none know God but those who are taught by the Divine Spirit. Proofs of God's existence and representations of his character, drawn directly from revelation, or detected by the light of it in the works of creation, fail, when exhibited by mere reason, to carry distinct or true ideas to the human understanding. Unregenerated men, after all they can learn from

human teaching, or from a natural study of the scriptures and of expositions of theology, are αθιοι εν τω κοσμω, 'atheists in the world,'—Eph. 2:12. Their ideas of God, and of his government, though not so gross as those of polytheists, are as essentially imaginary, and as utterly unconnected with any true devotion, any real religion. Fallen man can know the Divine Being only in connexion with the plan of redemption. Adam, when he was created, required a paradisaic revelation, to teach him the religion of a state of innocence; and when he fell, he equally required, and he received, a revelation of the mediation of a Saviour, to teach him religion in his new condition. Whether, without the new revelation, he would or could have retained the knowledge of God which he possessed before he fell, needs not be inquired; for he obviously needed that knowledge to be so revived, enlarged, and modified, as to be adapted to his new circumstances, else the second revelation would not have been so immediately given. God, to be known at all by fallen man, must be known as just and yet merciful, an avenger of sin and yet long-suffering to the sinner; and he can be known thus only 'in the lace of Christ Jesus.' While whatever views men received of his being and character were afforded directly or indirectly by supernatural communication, all revelation, from the announcement to Adam of a Saviour till the close of the writings of John, proceeded on the scheme of redemption, and was made through the mediation of Christ. 'Natural religion,' therefore, as to even its elementary doctrines of the divine existence, is either a delusion of the fancy, or an unacknowledged transcript of the lessons of inspiration. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,'—John 1:18. 'No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him,'—Matt. 11:27.

All proofs, then, of the existence of God, derive their origin and force from revelation. Those which rest on abstract reasoning, are simply exhibitions of what the enlightened understanding has learned in the Bible; and those which rest on the appearances of design and skill in the universe, are God's own commentaries in his word of inspiration on the works of his hands. A doctrine—the doctrine of God's existence, that of his unity, that of his providence, or any other of an elementary character—is learned, directly or indirectly, from scripture; it is studied in the light in which scripture exhibits it; it is believed on the evidence which scripture displays in support of it; and only then is it announced as a doctrine of 'natural religion,' and worked up into a laboured theory or demonstration sustained or vindicable by reason. Scripture not only furnishes the substratum of all the theology claimed for 'the light of nature,' but suggests, and in some instances details, the arguments which reason adduces in its support. What, for example, is the beautiful interrogation of the Psalmist but the stamen of what has vegetated in the hot-house of reason into many a laboured proof of the divine perfections: 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?'—Ps. 94:9, 10. Or what is the sublime and prolonged answer which God made to Job out of the whirlwind, but a brilliant summary of all the thousand gorgeous proofs which have been furnished of the divine existence and government, wisdom, power, and beneficence, from the facts and phenomena of nearly all the physical sciences? See Job, chap. 38, 39. But for the hints given, and the illumination communicated, by these portions of scripture, and by multitudes of others of a similar description, man, in the nineteenth century, would have continued to make as blundering, irreligious, and heathenish an use of the lessons of cosmogony, zoology, astronomy, and providence, as in the ante-Mosaic age, or during the palmy days of the Greek philosophy. What

is called 'the book of nature' is, in all respects, a book lying open in darkness, till its pages are illuminated and its lessons brought into view, by the light of revelation.

Proofs, then, of all religious doctrines, be they what they may, ought to be stated and illustrated professedly on the authority of scripture. Whatever theorists or systematic theologians may think to the contrary, a plain statement from the divine word will go farther to arrest the attention and shake the prejudices of even an atheist, than the most elaborate 'demonstration,' on what are termed 'the principles of reason.' Man's pride, far more than the interest of truth, is concerned in working up a hint of scripture into a profound abstract argument. Revelation is felt by even an enlightened Christian mind—and felt increasingly in the very proportion of its enlightenment—to be as essential to the guidance and successful issue of any religious effort of reason, or any portion of theological argumentation, as the light and heat of the sun are to the cares and labours of agriculture. Hence, Dr. Ridgeley—though inconsistently with his sentiments respecting 'the light of nature'—correctly and very beautifully intersperses his leading proofs of the divine existence with illustrations and quotations from scripture. Without these, his arguments, in some instances, would be dim and indistinct even to Christians; while with them, and by means of them, they become intelligible to the most obtuse understandings, and fitted to confound the most obdurate prejudices.

Much is gained with infidels, and nothing lost, by discarding the notion of 'natural religion. The evidences for the genuineness, credibility, and inspiration of scripture, are both more easily led and more facile of comprehension, than those usually adduced for man's moral accountability, and kindred doctrines on the principles of mere reason; and they possess the high recommendation, that they

strike infidelity, and paganism, and Mahommedanism, and all the forms of practical atheism, at their roots. One of Dr. Ridgeley's proofs of the being of God, for example, is derived from the giving and fulfilment of prophecy (See afterwards the passage indicated by the note 'Proof of the being of God from prophecy'); it is in reality a direct and conclusive proof of the inspiration of scripture; and, as adduced for Dr. Ridgeley's purpose, it affordsan instance of what a waste of time and attention there is, in setting up natural religion as anterior to revelation. The grand, indeed the only religious office of reason, apart from the teaching of scripture, is simply to examine the evidences of our having a revelation; and when it has been convinced by these, it ought to conceive every doctrine in the light in which revelation represents it, and bow with submission to every lesson which revelation inculcates. Were reason always restricted to these limits—were it not set up by human pride as a discoverer and propounder of theological truths anterior to revelation, or abstractedly from its instructions—there would be less practical atheism in the world, less distortedness of vision in looking at the fundamental principles of religion, fewer misapprehensions, fallacious views, and caricatured representations of the character and government of Deity.

The preceding remarks all proceed on a strictly theological view of the question of Natural religion. After writing them, I thought that a very satisfactory corroboration of them might be furnished by exhibiting the question in a historical view. To do this, however, would require greatly more space than can be apportioned to a single note. I shall only state that the very learned critic and historian, Dr. Shuckford, after a long and elaborate induction of facts, arrives, simply in the light of history, at just the same conclusion which I have attempted to vindicate. The terms in which he sums up his argument are these:—"All history, both sacred and profane, offers us

various arguments to prove that God revealed to men in the first ages how he would be worshipped; but that, when men, instead of adhering to what had been revealed, came to lean to their own understandings, and to set up what they thought to be right, in the room of what God himself had directed, they lost and bewildered themselves in endless error. This, I am sensible, is a subject which should be examined to the bottom; and I am persuaded, if it were, the result of the inquiry would be this,—that he who thinks to prove that the world ever did in fact 'by wisdom know God.'—that any nation upon earth, or any set of men, ever did, from the principles of reason only, without any assistance from revelation, find out the true nature and the true worship of the Deity—must find out some history of the world entirely different from all the accounts which the present sacred or profane writers give us; or his opinion must appear to be a mere guess and conjecture of what is barely possible, but what all history assures us never really was done in the world."—Shuckford's Connexion of the Sacred arid Profane History of the World, vol. i. p. 323.—ED.]

[NOTE F. Proof of the Being of God from the absence of creative power in the creature.—This argument for the being of God from the light of nature, is really an argument from the want of creative power in the creature. Like many others which profess to elicit proof independently of the light of scripture, it is futile and inconclusive. It takes for granted that creation was "the making of something out of nothing, or out of matter altogether unfit to be made into what is produced out of it." But this is to prove a more obvious point from a more difficult one; it is to take for granted what is comparatively obscure, and argue from it what is comparatively clear. Most of the ancient philosophers freely admitted the existence of Deity, and, at the same time, contended for both the eternity and the fitness of material substances. Dr. Ridgeley's argument would have appeared

to them much more rational if it had inverted the order of the premises and the conclusion,—if, instead of assuming the creation of matter in order to prove the being of God, it had assumed the being of God in order to prove the creation of matter. The philosophers' doctrine, indeed, seems to enlightened reason abundantly absurd; but so does the doctrine of atheists; and both the one and the other have been contended for by natural reason, or what Dr. Ridgeley defines to be 'the light of nature." Not only the being of God, then, but the fact from which he attempts to prove it—the creation of matter out of nothing—are learned, and can be rightly proved, not by reason, but from the lessons of revelation.—ED.]

[NOTE G. Proof of the Being of God from prophecy.—This argument takes for granted the credibility of scripture, and is a direct and leading proof of its inspiration; and only through the medium of the authority of scripture, does it prove the existence of God. See remarks upon it in Note 'Natural Religion,' page 20.—ED.]

THE TITLES, OBJECT, AND COMPLETENESS OF SCRIPTURE

QUESTION III. What is the word of God?

ANSWER. The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.

IN speaking to this answer, we shall consider the several names by which the scripture is set forth, with the import thereof, and more particularly that by which it is most known,—namely, the Old and New Testament; and then speak of it as a rule of faith and obedience.

The several names given to scripture

The word of God is sometimes called his 'law,' 'statutes,' 'precepts,' 'commandments,' or 'ordinances;' to signify his authority and power to demand obedience of his creatures. This he does in his word,—showing us in what particular instances, and in what manner, we are to yield obedience. It is also called his 'judgments;' implying that he is the great Judge of the world, and that he will deal with men in a judicial way, according to their works, as agreeable or disagreeable to his law contained in his word. It is likewise called his 'righteousness;' because all that he commands in his word is holy and just, and his service is highly reasonable. It is also called his 'testimonies;' as containing the record or evidence which he has given of his own perfections,—whereby he has demonstrated them to the world. Thus we are said to 'behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.' It is also called his 'way;' as containing a declaration of the glorious works that he has done, both of nature and of grace,—a declaration of the various methods of his dealing with men, or of the way that they

should walk in, which leads to eternal life. Moreover, it is called, 'the oracles of God;'r to denote that many things contained in it could not have been known by us till he was pleased to reveal them. The apostle, accordingly, speaks of the great things contained in the gospel, as being hid in God,—'hid from ages and generations past, but now made manifest to the saints.' Again, it is sometimes called 'the gospel,'—especially those parts of it which announce the glad tidings of salvation by Christ, or the method which God ordained for taking away the guilt and subduing the power of sin. The apostle particularly calls it, 'The glorious gospel of the blessed God,'t and, 'the gospel of our salvation.'

In this answer, the word of God is called the Old and New Testament. That part of it which was written before our Saviour's incarnation, and which contains a relation of God's dealings with his church, from the beginning of the world to that time, or a prediction of what should be fulfilled in following ages, is called the Old Testament. The other part, which contains an account of God's dispensation of grace, from Christ's first to his second coming, is called the New. A testament is the declared or written will of a person; by which some things are bequeathed to those who are concerned or described in it. The scripture is God's written will or testament, as containing an account of what he has freely given in his covenant of grace to fallen man. Hence it contains an account of many valuable legacies given to the heirs of salvation,—the blessings of both worlds, all the privileges contained in those great and precious promises with which the scripture abounds. Thus it is said, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory;' and, 'The Lord will give grace and glory.'y It describes the testator, Christ; who gives eternal life to his people, and confirms all the promises which are made in him. These are said to be 'in him yea and amen, to the glory of God.' More especially, he ratified this testament by his death; as the same

apostle observes—which is a known maxim of the civil law—that 'where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator,'a upon which the force or validity of the testament depends. And the word of God gives us a large account how all the blessings which God bestows upon his people receive their validity from the death of Christ. It also discovers to us who are the heirs, or legatees, to whom these blessings are given; describing them as repenting, believing, returning sinners,—who may lay claim to the blessings of the covenant of grace. It, moreover, has several seals annexed to it, namely, the sacraments under the Old and New Testament; of which we have a particular account in scripture. [See Note H, end of section.] This leads us to consider,

How the scripture is divided or distinguished

As to the Old Testament, it is sometimes distinguished or divided into 'Moses and the prophets,' or 'Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.'c It may be considered also, as containing historical and prophetic writings, and writings that are more especially doctrinal or poetical. The prophets, too, may be considered as to the time when they wrote, some before and others after the captivity. They may be distinguished as to their subject-matter. Some contain a very clear and particular account of the person and kingdom of Christ,—as Isaiah, who is, for this reason, called, by some, the evangelical prophet; others contain reproofs, and denounce and lament approaching judgments,—as the prophet Jeremiah; others encourage the building of the temple, the setting up of the worship of God, and the reformation of the people upon their return from captivity,—as Zechariah and Haggai. As for the historical parts of scripture, these contain an account of God's dealings with his people, either before the captivity,—as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, &c.; or after it,—as Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Books of the New Testament may be thus divided:—Some of them are historical, namely, such as narrate the life and death of our Saviour, as the four gospels, or the ministry of the apostles, and the first planting and spreading of the gospel, as the Acts of the apostles. Others are more especially doctrinal, and are written in the form of epistles by Paul and some other apostles. One, the book of Revelation, is prophetical; wherein are foretold the shifting condition of the church, the persecutions it should meet with from its anti-christian enemies, its final victory over them, and its triumphs as reigning with Christ in his kingdom. This leads us to consider

When God first revealed his will to man in scripture, and how the revelation was gradually enlarged

There was no written word from the beginning of the world till the time of Moses, an interval of between two and three thousand years; and it was almost a thousand years longer before the canon of the Old Testament was completed by Malachi, the last prophet; and some hundred years after that, before the canon of the New Testament was given;—so that, as the apostle says, in the beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews, God revealed his will 'at sundry times,' as well as 'in divers manners,' and by divers inspired writers.

The church, however, before it had a written word, was not destitute of a rule of faith and obedience, or unacquainted with the way of salvation. To suppose this, would be greatly to detract from the glory of the divine government, and reflect on God's goodness. He supplied the want of a written word by revealing his will in other ways. And he showed his sovereignty, in making known his will in whatever way he pleased; and his wisdom and goodness, in giving his written word at a time when the necessities of men most required it. When there was no written word, the Son of God frequently

condescended to appear himself, and converse with man, and so reveal his mind and will to him. There was also the ministry of angels subservient to this end; for the word was often spoken by angels, sent to instruct men in the mind and will of God. The church had among them likewise, more or less, the spirit of prophecy, whereby many were instructed in the mind of God. And though the prophets were not commanded to commit to writing what they received by inspiration, yet they were authorized and qualified by it to instruct others in the way of salvation. Thus Enoch is said to have 'prophesied' in his days; and Noah is called 'a preacher of righteousness.'e During great part of this time, the lives of men were very long, namely, eight or nine hundred years; and the same persons could transmit the word of God by their own living testimony. Afterwards, in the latter part of the period when there was no written word, the world apostatized from God, and almost all flesh corrupted their way,—not for want of a sufficient rule of obedience, but through the perverseness and depravity of their natures; and they almost wholly sunk into idolatry, and were judicially excluded from God's special care. And Abraham's family being the only church that remained in the world, God continued to communicate to them the knowledge of his will in the same extraordinary way that he had done in former ages. But when man's life was shortened and reduced to the same standard as now it is, of threescore and ten years, and the church had become very numerous, and God had promised that he would increase them yet more; then they stood in need of a written word, to prevent the inconveniences that might have arisen from their continuing any longer without one, and God thought fit, as a great instance of favour to man, to command Moses to write his law, as a standing rule of faith and obedience to his church. This leads us to consider a very important question, namely,

Whether the church, under the Old Testament dispensation, understood the written word, or the spiritual meaning of the laws contained in it?

Some have thought that the state of the church before Christ came in the flesh, was so dark that, though they had, in whole or in part, the scriptures of the Old Testament, they did not know the way of salvation. The papists generally assert that they did not; and they therefore fancy, that all who lived before Christ's time were shut up in a prison, where they remained till he went from the cross to reveal himself to them, and, as their leader, conduct them in triumph to heaven. And some protestants think that the state of all who lived in those times was so dark that they knew but little of Christ and his gospel, though shadowed forth or typified by the ceremonial law; and they found their opinion on the passage where Moses is said to have 'put a vail over his face, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished, which vail is done away in Christ'; and on those scriptures that speak of the Jewish dispensation, as 'a night of darkness' compared with that of the gospel, which is represented as 'a perfect day,' or 'as the rising of the sun.'g As these persons extend the darkness of the Jewish dispensation farther than, as I humbly conceive, they ought to do; so they speak more of the wrath, bondage, and terror which attended it, than they have ground to do,—especially when they make the darkness universal. There are several reasons which may induce us to believe that the Old Testament church understood a great deal more of the gospel, shadowed forth in the ceremonial law, and had more communion with God, and less wrath, terror, or bondage, than these persons suppose.

1. Some of the Old Testament saints expressed a great degree of faith in Christ, and love to him, and expected him to come in our nature;

and many of the prophets, in their inspired writings, discover that they were not strangers to the way of redemption, and reconciliation to God by him, as 'the Lord our righteousness.' A multitude of scriptures might be cited from the Old Testament, which speak of Christ, and salvation by him. Thus Abraham is described as rejoicing to see his day;'i and the prophet Isaiah is so very particular and express in the account he gives of his person and offices, that I cannot see how any one can reasonably conclude him to have been wholly a stranger to the gospel himself. Can any one think this, who reads his fifty-third chapter; in which he treats of Christ's life, death, sufferings and offices, and of the way of salvation by him? It is objected to this, that the prophets who delivered evangelical truths, understood but little of them themselves, because of the darkness of the dispensation they were under: it is said, that the prophets, indeed, 'searched' into the meaning of their own predictions, but to no purpose; for 'it was revealed to them, that not unto themselves, but unto us they ministered,'l—that is, the account they gave of our Saviour was designed to be understood, not by them, but by us, in this present gospel-dispensation. The answer that may be given to this objection is, that the prophets inquired into the meaning of their own prophecies, because their own salvation was concerned in them. But we must not suppose that they inquired to no purpose, or were not able to understand them. And when it is farther said, that 'not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things that are now reported,' the meaning is, not that they did not understand those things, or had not much concern in them, but that the glory of the gospel state, which was foretold in their prophecies, was what we should behold with our eyes, and not they themselves. This objection, therefore, hath no force in it to overthrow the argument we are maintaining.

2. It is certain that the whole ceremonial law had a spiritual meaning annexed to it; for it is said that 'the law was a shadow of good things to come,' and that all those things 'happened to them for ensamples, [or types,] and they are written for our admonition.'n Now it is unreasonable to suppose that the spiritual meaning of the ceremonial law should not be known by those to whom principally the law was given, or that the gospel, wrapt up in it, should not be seen till the dispensation was abolished, the ceremonial law abrogated, and the nation cast off to whom it was given.

3. The knowledge of the gospel, or faith in Christ founded on it, which is necessary for our salvation, was no less necessary for the salvation of those who lived in former ages; for it was as much a truth then as it is now, that there is salvation in no other. Hence the church of old were as truly obliged to believe in him who was to come, as we are to believe in him as having already come. But it is inconsistent with the divine goodness to require knowledge, and not to give any expedient to attain it. And while the Old Testament church were obliged to believe in Christ, they really were not able to do so, if they did not understand the meaning of that law which was the only means of revealing him. Or if Christ was revealed in the ceremonial law, and they had no way to understand it, he was the same to them as though he had not been revealed. Either, therefore, we must suppose that the knowledge of Christ was attainable by them, and consequently that he was revealed to them, or else they must have been excluded from a possibility of salvation.

4. They had sufficient helps for understanding the spiritual meaning of the ceremonial law. Not only were some hints of explication given in the Old Testament scriptures, but there was also extraordinary revelation. The Jewish church was more or less favoured with this, almost throughout the dispensation; and by means of it, together

with the aid of the scriptures themselves, it is more than probable that they received the spiritual sense and meaning of those things which were contained in the Old Testament. Besides, there was one tribe, namely, that of Levi, almost entirely employed in studying and explaining the law of God. And it is said respecting them, 'They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law;' 'the priest's lips shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth;'p that is, the priests should, by all proper methods, understand the meaning of the law, that they might be able to teach the people when coming to be instructed by them. There were also among them, in some ages at least, several schools of the prophets. And some persons who belonged to these had extraordinary revelations; while they who had them not, made the scriptures their study, that they might be able to instruct others. From all this it appears, that the Jewish church had a great deal of knowledge of divine truth, and of the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament; though we will not deny that the gospel dispensation hath a clearer light, and excels in glory. We shall now proceed to show that

Scripture is a rule of faith and obedience

Though the Jewish dispensation is abolished, the Old Testament is not to be set aside as a rule of faith and obedience to us, nor are we to reckon it an useless part of scripture, or one which does not concern us. The greatest part of the doctrines contained in it are of perpetual obligation to the church, in all its dispensations or changes. As for the ceremonial law, which is abolished, and some forensic or political laws by which the Jews, in particular, were governed,—these, indeed, are not so far a rule of obedience to us, as that we should think ourselves obliged to observe them, as the Jews were of old. Yet even these are of use to us; for we see in them what was then the rule of faith and obedience to the church, and how far it agrees as to its

substance, or the things signified by it, with the present dispensation; we see also the wisdom, sovereignty, and grace of God to his church in former ages, and how what was then typified or prophesied is fulfilled to us. Thus it is said, that 'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.'

The scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the whole mind and will of God, and therefore are justly styled a perfect rule of faith and obedience. We do not mean, however, that they contain an account of every thing that God hath done or will do, in his works of providence and grace, from the beginning to the end of time, for this is altogether unnecessary. Hence it is said that, while Christ did many other signs than are written in the gospel, those things which are contained in it 'are written that we might believe;' and that 'there were many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written every one, the world would not contain the books that should be written.'s Neither do we understand that God has given us in the scriptures an account of all his secret counsels and purposes relating to the event of things, or the final state of particular persons, abstracted from those marks on which our hope of salvation is founded, or of their outward condition, or the good or bad success that shall attend their undertakings in the world, or of the time of their living upon earth. These, and many other matters of a like nature, are secrets which we are not to inquire into; God, for wise ends best known to himself, not having thought fit to reveal them in his word. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children.' When Peter was over curious in inquiring concerning the future state or condition of John, our Saviour gives him this tacit reproof, 'What is that to thee?'u Nor are we to suppose that the divine perfections, which are infinite, are fully and adequately revealed to man; since,

from the nature of the thing, it is impossible that they should. That which is in itself incomprehensible, cannot be so revealed that we should be able fully to comprehend it; though that which is possible, or at least necessary, to be known of God, is clearly revealed to us. Again, we do not suppose that every doctrine which is to be assented to as an article of faith, is revealed in express words in scripture; since many truths are to be deduced from it by just and necessary consequences, and thereby become a rule of faith. Nor are we to suppose that every part of scripture fully and clearly discovers all those things which are contained in the whole of it. There was increasing light given by degrees to the church, in succeeding ages, as it grew up from its infant state to a state of manhood. Hence there is a clearer and fuller revelation of the glorious mysteries of the gospel, under the New Testament dispensation, than there was before it. The apostle compares the state of the church under the ceremonial law, to that of 'an heir under age,' or of 'children' under the direction of 'tutors and governors,' whose instruction and advances in knowledge are proportioned to their age. Thus God revealed his word 'at sundry times,' as well as 'in divers manners.'y

The word of God, accompanied as it was with those helps which were before mentioned to an understanding of the sense of it, was always sufficient to lead men into the knowledge of divine truth; and the canon being completed, it is now so in an eminent degree. And it is agreeable to the divine perfections, that such a sufficient rule of faith and obedience should be given; for since salvation could not be attained, nor God glorified, without a discovery of suitable means, it is not consistent with his wisdom and goodness that we should be left in uncertainty, and at the same time rendered incapable of the highest privileges which attend instituted worship. Can we suppose that, when all other things necessary to salvation are adjusted, and many insuperable difficulties surmounted, and an invitation given to

come and partake of it, that God should lay such a bar in our way as an impossibility to attain it for want of a sufficient rule? And since none but God can give us such a rule, it is inconsistent with his sovereignty to leave it to men to prescribe what is acceptable in his sight. They may, indeed, give laws, and thereby oblige their subjects to obedience; but these must be such as are within their own sphere. Their power does not extend itself to religious matters, so that our faith and duty to God should depend upon their will; for this would be a bold presumption, and an extending of their authority beyond due bounds. Since, therefore, a rule of faith is necessary, we must conclude that God has given us such a one; and it must certainly be worthy of himself, and therefore perfect, and every way sufficient to answer its design.

That the scripture is a sufficient rule of faith farther appears from the happy consequences of our obedience to it,—from that peace, joy, and holiness, which believers are made partakers of, while steadfastly adhering to it. Thus it is said that, 'through comfort of the scriptures they have hope,' and that by the teaching of scripture 'the man of God is made wise to salvation, and perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'a The perfection of the law is demonstrated by the Psalmist, from its effects, that 'it converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes.'

We might further argue that the scripture is a perfect rule of faith, from the threatenings which are denounced against those who pretend to add to, or take from it. Tampering with scripture was strictly forbidden, even when but a part of it was committed to writing. Thus says God, 'Ye shall not add to the word which I command you; neither shall you diminish ought from it.' And the apostle denounces an anathema against any one who should pretend to 'preach any other gospel,' than that which he had received from

God.d And in the close of scripture, our Saviour testifies to every man, that 'if any should add to these things, God would add to him the plagues written in this book. And if any should take away from this book, God would take away his part out of the book of life.' [See Note I, page 36.] We now proceed to show what are

The properties of scripture as a rule of faith

1. A rule, when it is designed for general use, must have the sanction of public authority. Thus human laws, by which a nation is to be governed, which are a rule to determine the goodness or badness of men's actions, and their desert of rewards or punishments accordingly, must be established by public authority. Even so the scripture is a rule of faith, as it contains the divine laws, by which the actions of men are to be tried, together with the ground which some have to expect future blessedness, and others to fear punishment.

2. A rule by which we are to judge of the nature, truth, excellency, perfection, or imperfection of any thing, must be infallible, or else it is of no use. And as such, nothing must be added to, or taken from it; for then it would cease to be a perfect rule. Thus it must be a certain and impartial standard, by which things are to be tried. Such a rule as this is scripture, as was but now observed. And it is an impartial rule, to which, as a standard, all truth and goodness are to be reduced, and by which they are to be measured. 'To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'

3. All appeals are to be made to a rule, and controversies to be tried and determined by it. Thus the scripture, as it is a rule of faith, is a judge of controversies. Whatever differences in sentiment men have about religion, must all be submitted to it, and the warrantableness of them tried by it. A stop is to be put to growing errors by an appeal

to this rule, rather than to coercive power, or to the carnal weapons of violence and persecution. Moreover, the judgment we pass on ourselves, as being sincere or hypocrites, accepted or rejected of God, is to be formed by comparing our conduct with scripture, as the rule by which we are to try the goodness or badness of our state and of our actions.

4. A rule must have nothing of a different nature set up in competition with, or opposition to it; for that would be to render it useless, and unfit to be the standard of truth. Scripture is the only rule of faith. No human traditions are to be set up as standards of faith in competition with it; for that would be to suppose it not a perfect rule. This the papists do; and therefore may be charged, as the Pharisees were of old by our Saviour, with 'transgressing and making the commandment of none effect, by their tradition,' 'vainly worshipping God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'g What is such casting of contempt on the rule of faith which God hath given, but to reflect on his wisdom, and affront his authority and sovereignty?

Tradition not a rule of faith

Having considered scripture as a rule of faith and obedience, we farther observe that it is the only rule in opposition to the popish doctrine of human traditions, which are pretended to be of equal authority with the word of God. By means of this doctrine the law of God is made void at this day, as it was by the Jews in our Saviour's time; and the scripture supposed to be an imperfect rule, the defects of which are to be supplied by traditions.

1. The doctrine is attempted to be defended from the passage in which our Saviour is said to have done 'many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written;' from his own words,

in which he tells his disciples that he 'had many things to say unto them which they could not then bear;'i and from the words of the apostle Paul, in which he puts the church in mind of a saying of our Saviour, received by tradition, because not contained in any of the Evangelists,—'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

To this argument it may be replied, 1. That though there were many things done, and words spoken by our Saviour, which are not recorded in scripture, and which we must be content not to know, being satisfied with this, that nothing is omitted which is necessary to salvation; yet to pretend to recover or transmit them by tradition, is merely to assert, and not to prove, the doctrine at issue. 2. Those things which our Saviour had to say, which he did not before his death impart to his disciples because they were not able to bear them, respected, as is more than probable, what he designed to discover to them after his resurrection, during his forty days abode on earth, or by his Spirit, after his ascension into heaven; and were such as concerned the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, the abolition of the ceremonial law, the spirituality of his kingdom, and matters relating to the success of their ministry, the gathering and governing of those churches which should be planted by them. These, which the apostles were less able to bear while our Lord's personal ministry continued than afterwards, seem to be the things intended; and not those doctrines which the papists transmit by oral tradition,—such as the use of oil and spittle together with water, and the sign of the cross in baptism, the baptism of bells, the lighting up of candles in churches at noonday, purgatory, praying for the dead, and giving divine adoration to images or relics,—doctrines which are altogether unscriptural, and such as he would not have, at any time, communicated unto them. 3. Though these words of our Saviour, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' are not contained in one

distinct proposition, or in express words, in the gospels; yet he therein exhorts his people to 'give to him that asketh,' and speaks of the blessing that attends this duty, 'that they might be,' that is, approve themselves to be, 'the children of their Father,' and exhorts them to hospitality 'to the poor,' and adds a 'blessing' to it.m But even supposing the apostle refers to a saying frequently used by our Saviour, which might then be remembered by some who had conversed with him; this is no sufficient warrant for any one to advance doctrines, contrary to those our Saviour delivered, under a pretence of having received them by unwritten tradition. [See Note K, p. 36.]

2. The doctrine of the papists is further defended from the words of the apostle, in which he advises Timothy to 'keep that which was committed to his trust,' as if they had been traditions which he was to remember and communicate to others; and also from the advice he gives to the church at Thessalonica, to 'hold the traditions which they had been taught, either by word or by his epistle,'o—the former, say they, being unwritten traditions, the latter his inspired writings.

We reply, that what was committed to Timothy to keep, was either 'the form of sound words,' or the gospel, which he was to 'hold fast;' or the ministry which he had received of the Lord; or those gifts and graces which were communicated to him, to fit him for public service. [See Note L, p. 37.] And as for the traditions which he speaks of to the Thessalonians, his meaning is, that they should remember not only the doctrines they had received from him, which were contained in his inspired epistles, but those also which, being agreeable to scripture, he had imparted in the exercise of his public ministry,—the former to be depended upon as an infallible rule of faith, the latter to be retained and improved as agreeable to that rule, and no further. [See Note M, p. 37.]

3. The papists further add, that it was by means of tradition that God instructed his church for above two thousand years before the scripture was committed to writing.

To this it may be replied, that God communicated his mind and will during that interval, in an extraordinary manner, as has been before observed; and this cannot be said of any of those traditions which are pleaded for by them.

4. It is further argued, that 'the book of the law' was formerly lost in Josiah's time; for it is said that when it was found, and a part of it read to him, 'he rent his clothes,' and was astonished, as though he had never read it before. Yet he being a good man, was well-instructed in the doctrines of religion; and he must therefore have been instructed by tradition.

To this it may be answered, that though the book which was then found was doubtless an original manuscript of scripture, either of all the books of Moses or of Deuteronomy in particular; yet it is not to be supposed that he had never read the scriptures before. A person may be affected at one time in reading a portion of the word of God, which he has often read without impression. And doubtless, there were many copies of scripture transcribed, by which Josiah was made acquainted with the doctrines of religion, without learning them from uncertain traditions. [See Note N, p. 37.]

5. The papists further allege, that some books of the Old Testament are lost, and that their place must be supplied by traditions. The instances they give are of some books referred to in scripture, namely, 'the book of the wars of the Lord,' 'the book of Jasher,'t 'the book of the acts of Solomon,' and also his 'songs' and 'proverbs,' and the account he gives of 'trees, plants, beasts, fowls, creeping things, and fishes.'x There are also books said to be written by 'Samuel,

Nathan, and Gad,' the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer.z Likewise Jeremiah's lamentation for Josiah is said to be written in the book of the Lamentations; whereas there is no mention of Josiah in that book of scripture; and it is alleged that there was some other book called by the same name, which was written by Jeremiah, but is now lost.

As to the argument in general, that some books of scripture are lost, suppose we should take it for granted that they are so, must this loss be supplied by traditions, pretended to be divine, though without sufficient proof? I am not willing, however, to make this concession. Some protestant divines, indeed, have made it,—thinking it equally supposable that some books written by divine inspiration might be lost, as that many words spoken by the same inspiration have been so. Yet even these constantly maintain, that whatever inspired writings may have been lost, there is no doctrine necessary to the edification of the church, in what immediately relates to salvation, but is contained in those writings which are preserved by the care and goodness of providence, to this day. I adhere, however, to the more commonly received opinion, that no book, designed to be a part of the canon of scripture, is lost, though many uninspired writings have perished. And as to the books of Jasher, Nathan, &c., they might be books or parts of books of scripture, the inspired writers of which are not mentioned, and which, as is more than probable, were written by noted prophets who flourished in the church at the periods when they were respectively composed. Hence some persons suppose that the books of Nathan and Gad, or Iddo, are those of Kings or Chronicles, which are not lost. But since this is only a probable conjecture, we pass it over, and add, that it is not unreasonable to suppose that the books in question, as also those of Solomon which are not contained in scripture, were not written by divine inspiration. This is not only a safe but a sufficient answer to

the objection. As for Jeremiah's lamentation for Josiah, it is probable that the book of scripture, which goes under that name, was written on the occasion of Josiah's death; and though the prophet doth not mention in it the name of that good king, yet he laments the desolating judgments which were to follow soon after his death.

6. The papists pretend also that some part of the New Testament is lost; particularly the 'epistle from Laodicea,' mentioned in Coloss. 4:16,—one written to the Corinthians, 'not to company with fornicators,' and another mentioned in 2 Cor. 7:8. by which Paul made the Corinthians sorry.

As to the epistle from Laodicea, that was probably one of his inspired epistles, written by him when at Laodicea, and not directed, as is pretended, to the Laodiceans. As to the epistle which he is supposed to have written to the Corinthians 'not to company with fornicators,' it is not said to be an epistle which he had written to them before, but is plainly intimated to be the epistle which he was then writing to them, a part of which, and particularly the immediate context, related to the subject of keeping company with fornicators. And as to the letter which he wrote to them, 'which made them sorry,' it is not necessary to suppose that it was written by divine inspiration; for as every thing he delivered by word of mouth, was not by the extraordinary afflatus of the Holy Ghost, why may we not suppose that there were several epistles written by him to the churches, some to comfort, others to admonish, reprove, or make them sorry, besides those that he was inspired to write?

The completeness and purity of the canon of scripture

Having replied to the arguments brought to prove that some books of scripture are lost, we shall now prove, by direct evidence, that we have the canon complete and entire. Some think that the integrity of

the canon is sufficiently evident from what our Saviour says, 'Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle shall not pass from the law;' and 'it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail.'e If God will take care of every jot and tittle of scripture, will he not take care that no whole book, designed to be a part of the rule of faith, should be entirely lost? It is objected, indeed, that our Saviour intends principally the doctrines or precepts contained in the law; but if the subject-matter shall not be lost, surely the scripture that contains it shall be preserved entire. This will more evidently appear, if we consider that the books of the Old Testament were complete in our Saviour's time. It is said that 'beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.' The apostle also says, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;g and it is impossible that they should have been written for our learning if they are lost. Consider, likewise, the goodness of God, and the care of his providence, with respect to his church; if he gave them ground to conclude, that 'he would be with them always, even to the end of the world,' surely he would preserve from all the injuries of time, the rule he had given them to walk by, so that it should not be lost to the end of the world. Again, the Jews who were the keepers of the oracles of God, are not reproved by our Saviour, or the apostle Paul, for any unfaithfulness in not preserving them entire. And certainly our Saviour, when he reproves them for making void the law by their traditions, and threatens those that should add to or take from it, would have severely reproved them for so great breach of trust, if he had found them faulty, in not having faithfully preserved all the scriptures committed to them.

Some persons object against the scripture being a perfect rule of faith, that it is in several places corrupted. They say that the Old Testament was corrupted by the Jews, out of malice against our

Saviour and the Christian religion, in order that they might conceal or pervert some prophecies relating to the Messiah and the gospel-state. And as to the New Testament, they pretend that it was corrupted by some heretics, in defence of their perverse doctrines. We reply that,

1. As to the Old Testament, it is very improbable and unreasonable to suppose that it was corrupted by the Jews. Before our Saviour's time, no valuable end could be answered by their corrupting it; for then they expected the Messiah to come, according to what was foretold by the prophets, and understood their predictions in a true sense. And even after he had come, and Christianity was established in the world, however malice might prompt them, they would not dare to corrupt the scripture; for they had been trained up in the notion, that it was the vilest crime to add to, take from, or alter the word of God. One of their own writers says concerning them, that they would rather die an hundred deaths than suffer the law to be changed in any instance. Yea, they have such a veneration for the law, that if, by any accident, part of it should fall to the ground, they would proclaim a fast, fearing that for this, God would destroy the world, and reduce it to its original chaos. And can any one think, that, under any pretence whatever, they would designedly corrupt the Old Testament? Yea, they were so far from doing it, that they took care, to the greatest and even superstitious extent, to prevent its being corrupted through inadvertency; and, accordingly, they numbered not only the books and sections, but even the words and letters, that not a single letter might be added to, or taken from it. But even if they had had any inclination to corrupt the Old Testament out of malice against Christianity, they could not have succeeded after our Saviour's time; for the Old Testament was then translated into Greek, and was in the hands of almost all Christians; so that any attempt to corrupt it would soon have been detected. Had they

altered some copies of the Hebrew bible, they could not have altered all; and would only have exposed themselves to no purpose. Nor would it have been for their own advantage to pervert the scripture, for, by altering the texts which make for Christianity, they would have weakened their own cause; and, if their fraud had been detected, the reputation of scripture would have been so lost that they could not have advantageously made use of it to prove their own religion. Besides, no alleged instances are given of the Old Testament having been corrupted, except in two or three words which do not much affect the cause of Christianity; whereas, if the Jews had designed to pervert it, why did they not alter the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and many other scriptures, which so plainly speak of the person and offices of the Messiah?

2. As to the other part of the objection, that the New Testament hath been corrupted by heretics since our Saviour's time,—though the Arians and some others may have left out some words or verses which tend to overthrow their scheme, they were never able, even when the empire was most favourable to their cause, to alter all the copies; and whatever alterations they made have been detected and amended. As for the various readings that there are of the same text, these consist principally in literal alterations, which do not much affect the sense. It was next to impossible for so many copies of scripture to be transcribed, without some mistakes; since they who transcribed them were not under the infallible direction of the Spirit of God, as the first penmen were. Yet the providence of God hath not suffered them to make notorious mistakes; and whatever mistakes are found in one copy, may be corrected by another. The scripture therefore is not, on account of these various readings, to be treated as though it were not a perfect rule of faith.

[NOTE H. The Old and New Testament.—The Hebrew word ברית means a constitution, an economy, or a system of promise, established or confirmed by sacrifice. In the multitudinous passages in which it occurs, the Septuagint uniformly translates it by the word διαθηκη; though, had the usage of the Greek classical authors been followed, it would have been translated by the word συνθηκη. If the sense of these authors be allowed, διαθηκη means a testament; and, if that of the Septuagint be followed, it means the same as the word ברית. The inspired writers of the new economy, in every instance in which Hebraistie Greek and classical Greek differed, adopted the former. They addressed themselves, in the first instance, to Jews; they employed that Greek which had been naturalized in the expression of the Jewish theology; they wrote, as to idioms and phraseology, in the light of the Septuagint. Διαθηκη, therefore, possesses, throughout both the old and the new scriptures, the signification and force of the Hebrew ברית, and ought to have been everywhere in our version translated by the word 'covenant.' But of the very numerous passages in which it occurs, there are four—2 Cor. 3:16; Heb. 7:22; Heb. 9:15–20; and the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper—in which it is translated 'testament.' There is no warrant, however, either in the passages themselves, or in the analogy of faith to the idea of a testament, for departing from the usual meaning, and substituting this word. A testament, even with the ingenious glosses and constructions suggested by Dr. Ridgeley, expresses notions utterly incongruous with scriptural views either of the word of God or of the divine covenants.

As to the new covenant, or covenant of grace, in what just sense can it be called 'the declared or written will of Christ?' Like every other covenant—or system of promise confirmed by sacrifice—it has a dispenser by whom its promises are made, and a sacrificial victim by whose death its validity is established. But God is the dispenser:

Christ is the sacrificial victim. A covenant—consisting, as it does, not of bequests to be executed by another, but of promises to be fulfilled by himself—cannot be called a testament in reference even to the dispenser: how much less, then, in reference to the sacrifice? If, too, Christ was a testator, and if he died to give validity to his testament, he needed to remain in a state of death. That a living person should execute his own testament, or dispense the boons which he had himself bequeathed, is an idea repugnant to the very nature of a testamentary transaction. The analogy, it may be said, does not hold in all particulars; but does it hold in any? The blessings of the new covenant are not property apart from the Deity, and bequeathed to future possessors: they are acts of the divine love, performed by the divine agency on the persons and hearts of the saved. The economy of dispensing them is not a declaration of will on the part of one person, and the execution of that declaration on the part of another, but a manifestation of mercy from first to last on the part of one God. The blessings do not pass from Deity as their present possessor, to be enjoyed by believers as the heirs of his property, but are gifts of his favour bestowed on them as ransomed captives,—as 'the purchased possession' of the Saviour. The new covenant, view it as we may, whether in reference to God as dispensing it, to the sacrifice of Christ as establishing it, to the nature of its blessings, or to the character and position of its objects, is, in all respects, a system of sovereign promise rendered right and practicable by the work of atonement. But what idea of sovereign promise, what idea of substitution, of mediation, of redemption by sacrifice, will comport with the notion of 'a person's declared and written will?'

As to the old covenant, what is it?—'the covenant of works,' or the covenant at Sinai? If the former, neither the word covenant, nor the word testament, nor any word or phrase of meaning similar to either, is applied to it in scripture. The Adamic dispensation, as we may in a

future note have occasion to show, rested on no basis, and possessed no properties, of the nature of a covenant, and still less of the nature of testamentary bequest. All the parts of scripture, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle to the Galatians, chap. 4:24, and various passages in the prophets, which mention or contrast 'the old covenant' and 'the new,' distinctly identify the former with the transaction at Sinai. Now the Sinaitic covenant, or Mosaic law, so far from being a bequest of property to heirs, was a legislative enactment to subjects; it spoke the language, not of a testator, but of a king and lawgiver; it addressed men, not as legatees who should at a future period receive what was then enjoyed by another, but as persons who might rebel, and should become amenable to punishment; it was established or confirmed, not by the death of him who gave it, but by the institution of a multiform ritual of typical sacrifice; it was, on the one hand, given and dispensed by Jehovah, as King of Israel, and was, on the other, received and obeyed through the sacrificial slaughter of bulls and of goats. Both the old covenant, and the new likewise, were sovereign appointments, resting on God's authority as man's Creator and Judge, and solemnly enforced by penal sanctions. Men might not refuse the Sinaitic covenant, or disobey any of its injunctions, but at their peril; and still less may they despise or reject the covenant of grace, without incurring destruction. 'He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, whereby atonement was made, a common thing?' Heb. 10:28, 29. The clause rendered, in the authorized version, 'wherewith he was sanctified,' is εν ὠ ἠγιασθη. The verb ἁγιαζω retains throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews its ritual signification, and means 'to atone.' See 2:10; 9:13; 10:10, 14. In 10:10, as in the present passage, the verb is in the passive voice, ἠγιασμενοι εσμεν 'We have had expiation made for us through the

offering of the body of Jesus Christ.' The phrase εν ὠ ἡγιασθη therefore, ought to be translated 'whereby atonement was made for him,' or 'whereby he was atoned for.' With no propriety, then, even with the utmost stretching and accommodation of metaphor, can either the old or the new covenant be called a testament.

There is just one passage which appears to militate against our conclusion, and it is grievously distorted by mistranslation: 'And for this cause, he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also, of necessity, be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon, neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.' Heb. 9:15–18. This passage lies in the centre of a consecutive and closely compacted argument, extending from the commencement of the eighth chapter to the eighteenth verse of the tenth. Both in the early parts of the argument, and toward the close, 8:6, 8–10; 9:4; 10:16. the same word occurs which is here rendered 'testament.' διαθηκη; and, in these places, it is, as it ought to be uniformly translated 'covenant.' If it mean 'testament' in one part of the argument, it must mean so throughout. But what must be thought of the phrases, 'the mediator of a better testament,' 'the first testament had ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary,' 'the ark of the testament laid round about with gold?' Does a bequeathing of property require or admit the services of a mediator? or was such a transaction connected with the ceremonial of the Jewish sanctuary, or characteristic of the ark surmounted by the mercy-seat? From beginning to end of the argument. διαθηκη has clearly its ordinary meaning of 'covenant;' and, indeed, in several passages (8:8, 10; 10:16.), occurs in quotations from the Septuagint,

and, through that medium, is identified with the Hebrew word ברית. In the sense of a constitution confirmed by sacrifice, it forms the pivot on which the whole of the apostle's argument turns. It, and the word rendered 'testator,' are derived from the same root, and embody the same leading idea. Διαθεμενος is not a noun, but a participle, or a participial adjective; and, necessarily having an understood noun in regimen with it, denotes the covenanting, or covenant-conforming victim. The same noun which is understood with it ought clearly to have the place, in the phrase 'after men are dead,' which our translators give to the word 'men.' That phrase, επι νεκροις, is literally, 'upon, or over dead;' and, along with the understood noun, is 'over dead victims.' The entire passage, therefore, ought to be translated thus: 'And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where there is a covenant, there must of necessity be the death of the covenant-confirming victim; because a covenant is confirmed over dead victims, since it is not at all valid while the covenant-confirming victim liveth. Whereupon neither the first covenant was solemnized without blood.' That this is the true translation, or at least exhibits the true sense of the passage, is evident from what follows: 'For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet-wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined to you.' These words are so consecutive with what preceded them, that the 'calves' and the 'goats' are clearly the 'covenant-confirming, or dead victims' of the covenant. But were calves and goats 'testators?' I shall add the very apposite and luminous remarks of M-Kinght on the passage: "The things affirmed in the common translation concerning the new testament, namely, that it has a mediator, that

that mediator is the testator himself, that there were transgressions of a former testament, for the redemption of which the mediator of the new testament died, and that the first testament was made, by sprinkling the people in whose favour it was made with blood,—are all things quite foreign to a testament. For was it ever known in any nation that a testament needed a mediator? or that the testator was the mediator of his own testament? or that it was necessary the testator of a new testament should die to redeem the transgressions of a former testament? or that any testament was ever made by sprinkling the legatees with blood? These things, however, were usual in covenants. They had mediators who assisted at the making of them, and were sureties for the performance of them. They were commonly ratified by sacrifices, the blood of which was sprinkled on the parties; withal, if any former covenant was infringed by the parties, satisfaction was given at the making of a second covenant. By calling Christ 'the mediator of the new testament,' our thoughts are turned away entirely from the view which the scriptures give us of his death as a sacrifice for sin; whereas, if he is called 'the mediator of the new covenant,' which is the true translation of διαθηκης καινης μεσιτης, that appellation directly suggests to us that the new covenant was procured and ratified by his death as a sacrifice for sin."

As to applying the name 'old and new testaments' to the scriptures, the only text which appears to sanction it is, like that in Hebrews, disfigured by mistranslation of the word διαθηκη. When rightly translated, it reads thus: 'Who hath made us able ministers of the new covenant;' 'Until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old covenant,' 2 Cor. 3:6, 14. The first part of it seems to refer, not to the scriptures, but to the great doctrines of the new dispensation,—those which announce the ratification of the covenant of redemption; and the second part of it does not

necessarily refer to more of the Jewish scriptures, than those portions of them which exhibit the covenant made at Sinai. But though the name 'old and new covenants' were given, as it may not improperly be, to the entire scriptures of the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations, it would simply be an instance of the common metonymy which gives the name of a transaction to the document which records it. The Jewish scriptures are the old covenant, merely as exhibiting the covenant made at Sinai, and the apostolic scriptures are the new covenant, merely as exhibiting the covenant of grace.

The scriptures are in no sense testaments. To remove absurdity from the idea of their being so, Dr. Ridgeley is obliged to treat them, not as two testaments, but as one. He is also forced into the inconsistency of representing this at one time as the testament of Deity, and at another as the testament of the mediator. Scripture, according to its own account, is a 'law,'—a system of 'statutes,' 'ordinances,' 'oracles,'—'a record,' 'a testimony,' 'a word,' or discourse. As proceeding from God, it is the statute-book and oracle of the supreme lawgiver and guide; as proceeding from the mediator, it is the record of the 'faithful and true witness;' as jointly revealing the divine character and will, and describing the work of redemption, it is 'the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.' But a testimony, a statute-book, a supernatural communication; are ideas widely alien from that of a testament.

Dr. Ridgeley not only calls scripture a testament, but says that 'Christ ratified it by his death.' Scripture, however, did not need ratification. The offering of a divinely qualified sacrifice was necessary in order to the bestowal of the blessings of the everlasting covenant; but was not needed in order to the revelation of the divine will. All scripture, indeed, points to Christ, and receives its import from his mediatorial

work: but if, for this reason, it was ratified by his death, it must, on the same principle, have been ratified by all the events which it records, and particularly by the fulfilment of the prophecies which it contains. Scripture would not be true if Christ had not died; but neither would it be true if Cyrus, or Antiochus Epiphanes, or any other person described in its prophecies, had not acted as it foretold. Christ fulfilled scripture, but did not ratily it: he verified his testimony, and ratified the divine covenant.

Dr. Ridgeley speaks, likewise, of the seals annexed to scripture as a testament. But in what sense, or by what stretch of metaphor, ran 'the sacraments under the old and new testament' be said to seal the word of God?. The only sacrament called a 'seal' is circumcision; and it is declared to have been, not a seal of divine revelation, but 'a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had, yet being uncircumcised,' Rom. 4:11. We read of the Father having sealed the Son, John 6:27; of believers being sealed by the Holy Spirit. Eph.1:13; 4:30; of the servants of God being sealed on their foreheads. Rev. 7:2–4; of the converted Corinthians having been seals of Paul's apostleship, 1 Cor. 9:2; of transgression being sealed. Job 14:17; of the Lord's knowledge of his people being a seal that they are his, 2 Tim. 2:19; and of believers, by their practical exhibition of the truth of Christianity, setting to their seal that God is true, John 3:33;—but where have we even a hint that 'the sacraments' seal the divine word? If, in any due sense of the metaphor, scripture was ever sealed, its seals are the verification of its doctrines in the experience of converted sinners, the fulfilment of its prophecies, and the miracles which attended its first promulgation.

The name 'Old and New Testament' has been so long in general use as a designation of scripture, that it will probably remain while the English language endures. As conveniently distinguishing the

scriptures of the former dispensation from those of the present, it ought to give place to the significant designation, 'the old and new covenant;' though, if used simply for sake of distinction, and only, like the word 'Bible,' as a conventional title, it cannot do much harm. The sting of its impropriety consists in ascribing to the divine word the properties and accidents of a testamentary document, and, particularly, in indirectly identifying the same properties and accidents with the covenant of redemption. Whoever uses the word 'testament' to designate scripture, should take care that the ideas of testatorship, legateeship, and testamentary sealing and ratification, be not associated with the notion either of divine revelation, or of the covenant of grace.—ED.]

[NOTE I. The Sufficiency of Scripture.—Dr. Ridgeley rather misses the point of his last argument. The passage in Deuteronomy declares the completeness of the Mosaic law, as the ceremonial, judicial, and moral code of the Jewish dispensation; and the passage in Revelation declares the completeness of the canon, or of the entire scriptures, as a permanent rule of faith to man. Additional to the arguments adduced by Dr. R., the sufficiency of scripture may he proved from its being a work of God, and, like every other work of his, perfect in its kind,—from, its fitness to produce faith, hope, spiritual worship, saving knowledge, and all the other practical ends of a revelation,—from the multiplicity, variety, and minuteness of its illustrations of leading doctrines and duties,—from the adaptation of its lessons to all possible diversities of human character, experience, and condition,—and from such declarations as these: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,' 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. 'Bind up the testimony, seal the law, among my disciples. To the law and to the testimony, it they speak not

according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. 8:16, 20. 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they searched the scriptures daily., whether those things were so,' Acts 17:11. 'They have Moses and' the prophets, let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead,' Luke. 16:29, 31.—ED.]

[NOTE K. Unwritten sayings of Christ.—The only point sought to be proved here by the Romanists is, that there were sayings of Christ, remembered by his immediate disciples, which were not committed to writing; and this point is not denied, nor does it, in any respect, countenance the doctrine of tradition, or militate against the sufficiency of scripture. John expressly says, "There are many other things which Jesus did,' sayings, doubtless, which he spoke, as well as deeds which he performed, 'the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the would itself could not contain the books that should he written;' but he immediately adds, 'But these'—these which have been selected and recorded by inspiration—'are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have the through his name,' Jon. 21:25; 20:31. Only such sayings as are written, therefore, are our guide in believing, or form put of our rule of faith; and these are so sufficient, so perfect, for every purpose of religion, that the faith of them involves spiritual and eternal life. The unwritten sayings were, for the most part, such as had been spoken in a private capacity to individuals,—such, for example, us had been spoken previous to the commencement of his public ministry, or such as resembled the many inspired but merely oral messages, which the prophets delivered to kings; and the all were consentaneous with those which were written, and, however varied in language and illustration, contained at least no separate or additional point of faith. They, hence, were not meant for the world; ουδι αυτον οιμαι τον κοσμον

χωρησαι τα γραφομενα βιβλια, 'I think that the world could not receive,' owing to their not being adapted to it, 'the books which should be written.' Ον χωρειν has clearly the sense of not receiving in consequence of non-adaptation. 'His disciples say unto him, If the case of a man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying,' ου παντις χωρουσι τον λογον τουτον, 'but they to whom it is given; for there are some eunuchs,' &c., Matth. 19:10–12. 'The world could not receive the books,' strictly means, therefore, 'the books should not he fitted or adapted for the world;'—the sayings which they should record were either so personal to the individuals to whom they were spoken, or so limited in range, compared with sayings of the same import which are recorded, as to be unsuited to the general or varied capacity of the numerous classes of readers. If, too, they could not, on account of their number and bulkiness, be committed to writing, they could still less be gathered and handed down by tradition. As to the particular saying, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' though not found in the gospels, it is found in scripture; and it can be made a warrant for receiving other alleged sayings of Christ, only on the supposition that they too have been recorded by inspiration. The argument, view it as we may, disproves the doctrine of tradition, and affirms the sole authority of the written word.—ED.]

[NOTE L. The Form of Sound Words.—What the 'form of sound words' was is not stated by Dr. Ridgeley. It is made to mean 'tradition' by Romanists, and 'a formal creed,' by the advocates of fixed human standards of faith. Another passage which speaks of 'a form,'—a 'form of doctrine,' and which also the Romanists quote as a sanction to tradition, contains decided evidence as to what the form was: 'Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you,' Rom. 6:17. This passage, rightly translated, reads: 'Ye have obeyed from the heart that mould of doctrine into which ye

were cast, or delivered.' The word τυπος means such a mould or die as imparts shape and impression to melted metal; and, as occurring in the phrase εις ὀν παρεδοθητε τυπον διδαχης, it describes the gospel, or those truths which had been believed by the Christian converts, as a die into which their hearts had been cast, and which had imparted to them an impress of the image and superscription of God. The word ὑποτυπωσις, as appears from its derivation, and from its conventional use, is analogous. Timothy had received 'a moulding of sound words:' he had learned from scripture, and heard from the apostle Paul, doctrines which made distinct delineations on the mind, and stamped definite impressions on the heart: he had come in contact with the gospel, not as with a substance which conveyed only confused marks of contact, or no marks whatever, but as with one which impressed 'a moulding,' a legible representation, a well-delineated picture or plan of excellence on the character. How different is this 'moulding of sound words' from the idea either of a formal creed, or of authoritative oral tradition!

'That which was committed to Timothy's trust,' is simply the opposite of 'profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called.' Paul reminds him that he had 'professed a good profession before many witnesses;' he bids him 'fight the good fight of faith,' and charges him to 'keep this commandment without spot.' 1 Tim. 6:12, 14; and now, in opposition to profane and vain babblings, and the illusions of false philosophy, he enjoins him to hold fast what he had professed, and continue trust worthy in contending for the truth. —ED.]

[NOTE M. Paul's Traditions to the Thessalonians.—Dr. Ridgeley arbitrarily distinguishes, as to their authority, between Paul's written doctrines, and those of his public ministry. Paul himself does not distinguish between them, but enjoins obedience to both in the same

language, and applies to both the same epithet. The things which he had written; and the things which he had preached, were 'traditions;' they were matters 'delivered' to the Thessalonians for the guidance of their faith, but they were 'traditions' they were 'delivered,' simply as conveyed from the writer to the reader, or from the speaker to the hearer, not as received from some one anterior to Paul, or as committed to the Thessalonians for transmission to future ages, apart from the canon of revelation.

The apostles, in the first instance, all orally taught the same things which five of their number, and three evangelists, afterwards committed to writing. Paul, in the particular case before us, communicated his doctrines to the Thessalonians, first by his personal ministry, and next by epistle; and he 'taught' them equally by what he spoke and by what he wrote. Till the canon of scripture was completed, his discourses were of the same authority as the written word; and they contained just the same matter which became embodied in the apostolic scriptures. He had as yet written none of his epistles, except the first to the Thessalonians; he was now writing his second epistle, and addressing it to the same people; he uses the phrase 'our epistle,' literally, and with emphasis; and, aware how many doctrines and facts of the new dispensation remained yet to be penned, he enjoins attention equally to the portion of truth which he had taught in person, and to that which he had communicated by letter. As yet there was need for the oral teaching of the apostles. All those facts, and doctrines, and illustrations of the new economy, which were afterwards placed fixedly before the world in the epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, to the Corinthians, to the Hebrews, and, in other books of the apostolic scriptures, were taught as yet only by oral communication; and, being essential to the edification of believers and the extension of Christianity, they demanded for 'the word' of Paul, or of any of his inspired fellow-labourers, the same

deference which was claimed for his 'epistle,'—for the commencing, and as yet the only portion of his large contribution to the canon of the new dispensation. Such were the 'traditions' which had been delivered to the Thessalonians by 'word:' they were in perfect harmony with the 'traditions by epistle,' and, in all respects, identical with what is now exhibited in the completed scriptures.

A chief topic of the oral traditions contended for by the church of Rome is, according to Bellarmine, the character and coming of antichrist. Now this topic is discussed at considerable length in the very epistle in which Paul commands attention to his traditions; and it was afterwards fully developed, and held up to view in all its details, in the first epistle to Timothy, in the first epistle of John, and in the book of Revelation.—ED.]

[NOTE N. Arguments against Tradition.—Dr. Ridgeley contents himself with simply repelling the Romish arguments in favour of the authority of traditions. He might, however, have easily adduced many arguments on the other side. The Jewish traditions were condemned by Christ, Matt. 15:2–9; Mark 7:5–14.—All traditions which are not echoes of the written word are condemned by the apostles, Col. 2:8, 18–23; Gal. 1:14; Tit. 1:14; 1 Cor. 4:6—Necessary traditions, or oral apostolic instructions, were so ineffective previous to the completion of scripture, that, on such important topics as justification, the obligation of the ceremonial law, the right observance of the eucharist, and the proper use of supernatural gifts, they required to be promptly corrected, and displaced by written revelation, Gal. 3:1–6; 1 Cor. 7:11, 14; Eph. 4:14; Rom. 16:17; Phil. 1:27; 3:2.—Traditions, even with the help of a race of prophets, and of frequent revelation, were inefficient in the ante-Mosaic age; and, on the simplest topics of moral duty, as well as on matters of doctrine and worship, were necessarily supplanted by a written rule of faith—

Though the Jews, like the Romanists, pretended to both a written and an unwritten revelation, our Lord and his apostles, in all their reasonings with them, appealed only to the scriptures, John 5:39, 46, 47; Matt. 15:3, 9.—Traditions, as contended for by Romanists, nowhere exist,—are not contained in any depository,—and, in any emergency, or for any purpose of appeal, cannot be found.—Though the Church of Rome had possessed traditions, she cannot be trusted for preserving them; for she can give no traditionary expositions of theological or textual difficulties,—she has been unable, as is proved by the enormous discrepancies between the Vulgate of Sixtus V. and that of Clement VIII., to preserve even the text of her adopted translation of the scriptures,—she has rejected undoubted traditions of early times, such as the threefold application of water in baptism, and the giving of the eucharist to infants,—she has maintained the authority of forged documents, such as the Decretals, the Donation of Constantine, and pseudo-decrees of the first council of Nice,—she has widely departed from some universally-received and orthodox doctrines of the catholic church of the early centuries, as on the subjects of purgatory, indulgences, half-communion, and the canon of scripture,—and she has altered and varied her pretended traditions, according to her caprice, or in order to suit the shifting tastes of society, as in the changes in her Breviary, and in her doctrines respecting the mass-sacrifice, the number of the sacraments, and the Pope's temporal power.—ED.]

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

QUESTION IV. How doth it appear that the scriptures are the word of God?

ANSWER. The scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers to salvation: but the Spirit of God, bearing witness by and with the scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.

BEFORE we proceed to consider the arguments here brought to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, some things may be premised [See note O, p. 62] respecting

The nature, necessity, and possibility of revelation

1. When we speak of the scriptures as divine, we mean more than that they treat of God and divine things, or of his nature and works; for many human uninspired writings, in proportion to the wisdom of their authors, tend to set forth the divine perfections. And when we assert that every thing contained in the scriptures is infallibly true, we do not deny that there are many things which we receive from human testimony, of the truth of which it would be scepticism to entertain the least doubt. When we receive a truth from human testimony, however, we judge of it by the credibility of the evidence, and, in proportion to this, we fix the degree of certainty which belongs to it. But when we suppose a truth to be divine, we have the highest degree of certainty respecting it, simply because it is the word of him that cannot lie. Thus we consider the holy scriptures as of divine origin, or given by the inspiration of God; or as his revealed will, designed to bind the consciences of men. And we regard the

penmen, not as the inventors of them, but only as the instruments made use of to convey them to us. Hence the apostle Peter says, 'Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' and the apostle Paul says, 'I certify unto you, that the gospel, which was preached of me, is not after man; neither received I it of man; neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.'l The former asserts inspiration concerning scripture in general; and the latter asserts it concerning that part which was transmitted to us by him. Such is what we mean when we say the scripture is the word of God.

2. It is necessary for us to know and believe the scriptures to be the word of God. They are to be received by us as a rule of faith and obedience in whatever respects divine things; and if we do not believe them to be the word of God, we are destitute of a rule, and our religion must be a matter of the greatest uncertainty. And as faith and obedience are a branch of religious worship, they involve an entire subjection to God, a firm and unshaken assent to whatever he reveals as true, and a readiness to obey whatever he commands, as being influenced by his authority,—all of which are inconsistent with any hesitation or doubt as to the divine origin of scripture. Moreover, it is only in the scriptures that we have an account of the way in which sinners may have access to God, the terms of their finding acceptance in his sight, and all the promises of eternal blessedness on which their hope is founded; and if we are not certain that the scriptures are the word of God, our faith and hope are vain. It is in the scriptures that 'life and immortality are brought to light,' and by 'searching them, we think that we have eternal life.'n

3. Divine revelation is necessary; and it is not impossible, or contrary to reason or the divine perfections, for God to impart his mind and will to men in the way we call inspiration. These points must be

made apparent, else it is vain to attempt to give arguments to prove the scriptures to be the word of God. And,

That divine revelation is necessary, appears from this:—as religion is necessary, so there are some things contained in it which cannot be known by the light of nature, namely, all those divine laws and institutions which are the result of God's arbitrary will; and as these cannot be known by the light of nature, or in a way of reasoning derived from it, they must be known by special revelation. Positive laws, as opposed to those that are moral, rest on a different foundation from the latter; and the glory of God's sovereignty eminently appears in the one, as that of his holiness doth in the other. Now his sovereign pleasure relating to his positive laws could never have been known without divine revelation; and then all that revenue of glory, which is brought to him by them, would have been entirely lost, and there would have been no instituted worship in the world. The gospel, also, which is called 'the unsearchable riches of Christ,' must have been for ever a hidden thing; and the condition of those who bear the Christian name would have been no better than that of the heathen,—concerning whose devotion, the apostle Paul, though speaking of the wisest and best of them, says, they 'ignorantly worshipped an unknown God,'p and 'the world by wisdom knew not God.' And the reason is, that they were destitute of divine revelation.

It is not impossible or contrary to reason or the divine perfections, that God should reveal his mind and will to man. If it is possible for one creature to impart his mind and will to another, certainly God can do this; for there is no excellency or perfection in the creature but what is eminently in him. And if it be not unworthy of the divine majesty to be omnipresent, and to uphold all things by the word of his power, it is not unbecoming his perfections to manifest himself to intelligent creatures, who, as such, are fit to receive the discoveries of

his mind and will. His endowing them with faculties capable of receiving these manifestations, also argues, that he designed that they should be favoured with them. Whatever displays, therefore, there may be of infinite condescension in the work of revealing his character and will, yet it is not unbecoming his perfections to perform it. And as God cannot be at a loss for an expedient how to discover his mind and will to man, and is not confined to one certain way; so he may, if he pleases, make it known by inspiration. Nor is there any thing in the subject that should hinder him from impressing on the minds of men whatever ideas he designs to impart. That even a finite spirit can make impressions on the mind, will hardly be denied by any but those who, with the Sadducees, deny the nature and power of spirits. It follows that God can much more impress the souls of men, or immediately communicate his mind to them, in the way we call inspiration. To deny that there is such a thing as inspiration, is not only to deny the credibility of scripture-history, as well as its divine authority, but it is to deny that which the heathen, by the light of nature, have universally believed to be consonant to reason; for they often represent their gods as conversing with men, and appear, in many of their writings, not to have the least doubt whether there has been such a thing as inspiration.

Proofs that the scriptures are inspired

We are now to consider those arguments which are brought to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, or that they were given by divine inspiration. These are of the nature either of internal evidence, taken from the subject-matter of scripture, the majesty of the style, the purity of the doctrines, the harmony or consent of all the parts, and the scope or tendency of the whole to give all glory to God; or else of external, taken from the testimony which God himself

gave to inspiration, at first by miracles, whereby the mission of the prophets, and consequently what they were sent to deliver, was confirmed, and afterwards, in succeeding ages, by the use which he hath made of scripture in convincing and converting sinners, and building up believers to salvation. These are the arguments mentioned in this answer, and shall be distinctly considered. Some others also shall be added. One shall be taken from the character of the inspired writers, that they were holy men, and so would not impose on the world, or pretend themselves to have been inspired, if they were not,—that they were plain and honest men, void of all craft and subtilty, and so could not impose on the world,—and that even had they attempted any imposture, they had a great many subtle and malicious enemies, who would soon have detected it. Another argument shall be taken from the sublimity of the doctrine; in which respect it is too great, and has too much wisdom in it, to have been invented by men. Others shall be taken from the antiquity of scripture, together with its wonderful preservation, notwithstanding all the endeavours of its enemies to root it out of the world. We shall then consider how far the testimony of the church is to be regarded, not as though it contained the principal foundation of our faith, as the papists suppose, but as an evidence additional to those that have been before given. And finally, we shall speak something concerning the witness of the Spirit with the scripture in the heart of man, which inclines him to be persuaded by, and to rest in, the other arguments brought to support the truth of inspiration. And if all these be taken together, they will, we hope, beget a full conviction in the minds of men, that the scriptures are the word of God.

I. The majesty of the style in which scripture is written. This argument does not hold equally good with respect to all the parts of scripture; for there are, in many places, a great plainness of speech and familiarity of expression adapted to the meanest capacity, and

sometimes a bare relation of things, without that majesty of expression which we find in other places. Thus, in the historical books, we do not observe such a loftiness of style, as in Job, Psalms, Isaiah, and some others of the prophets;—although there are arguments of another nature to prove them to be of divine authority. We may, however, observe such expressions as set forth the sovereignty and greatness of God, interspersed with almost the whole scripture; as when he is represented speaking in a majestic way, tending not only to bespeak attention, but to strike those that hear or read with a reverential fear of his divine perfections. Thus when he gives a summons to the whole creation to give ear to his words, 'Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken;' or swears by himself, that 'unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear;'s or when it is said, 'Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool;' and elsewhere, 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him; his lightnings enlightened the world. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord; at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth;'u and when he is represented as casting contempt on all the great men of this world, and is said to 'cut off the spirit of princes, and to be terrible to the kings of the earth,' and to 'charge' even 'his angels with folly;'y or when the prophet speaks of him, as He who had 'measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance;' before whom 'the nations of the earth are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; yea, as nothing, less than nothing and vanity.' It would be almost endless to refer to the many places of scripture, in which God speaks in such a style as is inimitable by any creature. Of this we have

several instances in the book of Job, especially in those chapters where he is represented as answering Job out of the whirlwind,a and where expressions are used which, if not immediately from God, could proceed only from the most bold presumption in any creature, and which, therefore, argue the style to be divine, great, and magnificent. The argument taken from the majestic style of scripture, is not without its proper weight; and it may serve to prepare us for those other arguments, which, together with this, evince the divine origin of scripture.

II. The divine authority of scripture appears from the purity of its doctrines. The argument from this holds good, whether we consider the scripture absolutely, or compare it with other writings. It will appear, by its purity, not only to excel all other compositions, but to be truly divine, and to be deservedly styled the 'Holy Scripture.' The words of it are 'pure as silver tried in a furnace, purified seven times;'c and it speaks of 'right things in which there is nothing froward or perverse.' Every one that weighs the subject-matter of it may behold therein the displays of the glory of the holiness of God. Let us consider, then, that the word of God appears to be divine from its purity and holiness.

1. As considered absolutely, or in itself. It lays open the vile and detestable nature of sin, to render it abhorred by us. Thus the apostle says, 'I had not known sin,' that is, I had not so fully understood the abominable nature thereof as I do, 'but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet;' and hereupon he concludes, that 'the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.' It also presents to our view various instances of the divine vengeance, and shows us how the wrath of God is revealed against the unrighteousness of sinners, to make them afraid of rebelling against him. Thus it gives us an account how the

angels fell by rebellion from their first habitation, and are thrust down to hell, being 'reserved in chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day;'f and how man by disobedience lost his primitive integrity and glory, and exposed himself to the wrath and curse of God, and to all the miseries of this life consequent upon these; and how sin has destroyed flourishing nations and rendered them desolate,—how the Jews were first carried into Babylon for their idolatry and other abominations, and afterwards cast off and made the sad monument of the divine wrath, as at this day, for crucifying Christ, persecuting his followers, and opposing the gospel. It also gives an account of the distress and terror of conscience, which wilful and presumptuous sins have exposed particular persons to,—such as Cain, Judas, and others; and it describes these in a very pathetic manner, when it says of the wicked man who has his portion of the good things of this life, that when he comes to die, 'terrors take hold of him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night; the east-wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and hurleth him out of his place; for God shall cast upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of his hand.' Moreover, the scripture warns sinners of that eternal ruin which they expose themselves to in the other world: 'Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.'h All these things discover the purity and holiness of the word of God. Nor does scripture ever give the least indulgence or dispensation to sin, or, in any of its doctrines, lead to licentiousness. And it not only reproves sin in the life and outward conversation of men, but also discovers its secret recesses in the heart, where its chief seat is; and obviates and guards against its first motions, tending thereby to regulate the secret thoughts of men, and the principle of all their actions, which it requires to be pure and holy. All the blessings and benefits also, which it holds forth, or puts us in mind of, as the peculiar instances of divine favour and love to man, are urged and insisted on as

motives to holiness. Thus it is said, 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.' And when Moses had been putting the Israelites in mind of God's increasing them 'as the stars of heaven for multitude,'k he adds, 'therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge and statutes, his judgments and commandments alway.' And when the loving-kindness of God has been abused by men, scripture severely reproves them for their vile ingratitude; as when it says, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy father that bought thee? Hath not he made thee, and established thee?' All the examples which it proposes to our imitation are such as savour of, and lead to holiness. When it recommends the actions or conversation of men, it is more especially for the holiness which they discover; and when it describes the conduct of wicked men, together with the dreadful consequences of it, it is that we may avoid and be deterred from the sins which end in their ruin. Again, the rules laid down relating to civil affairs in the Old Testament dispensation, and the behaviour of one man towards another, have a vein of holiness running through them all. The government of the Jewish state, as described in the books of Moses and elsewhere, discovers it to be an holy commonwealth; and the Jews are often called an holy nation, as governed by those laws which God gave them. So the government of the church in the gospel dispensation, is a holy government; visible holiness is a term of church-communion, and apostacy and revolt from God excludes from it. Finally, all the promises contained in scripture are or will be certainly fulfilled, and the blessings it gives us ground to expect, conferred; and therefore it is a faithful word, and consequently pure and holy.

2. If we compare the scripture with other writings, which are of human composition, it plainly excels in holiness. The writings of heathen moralists, such as Seneca, Plato, and others, though they

contain a great many good directions for ordering the conduct of men, agreeably to the dictates of nature and right reason, yet, for the most part, allow of or plead for some sins which the scripture mentions with abhorrence, such as revenging injuries and self-murder. These and several other species of moral impurity, were not only practised by those who laid down the best rules to enforce moral virtue, but were either countenanced, or, at least, not sufficiently fenced against, by what is contained in their writings. And their strongest motives to virtue, or the government of the passions, or a generous contempt of the world, are taken principally from the tendency which a virtuous course of life has to free us from those things that tend to debase and afflict the mind, and fill it with uneasiness, when we consider ourselves as acting contrary to the dictates of nature, which we have as intelligent creatures. The scripture, on the other hand, leads us to the practice of Christian virtues from better motives, and considers us not barely as men, but as Christians, under the highest obligations to the blessed Jesus, and constrained to a virtuous life by his condescending love, expressed in all that he has done and suffered for our redemption and salvation. And it puts us upon desiring and hoping for communion with God, through him, in the performance of those evangelical duties which the light of nature knows nothing of; and so discovers a solid foundation for our hope of forgiveness of sin, through his blood, together with peace of conscience and joy resulting from it. It also directs us to look for that life and immortality which is brought to light through the gospel. And in all these respects, it far excels the writings of the best heathen moralists; and so contains in it the visible marks and characters of its divine original.—If, again, we compare the scriptures with writings among Christians which pretend not to inspiration, we shall find in these writings a great number of impure and false doctrines, derogatory to the glory of God. And if men who have the scripture in their hands propagate

unholy doctrines, they would do so much more were there no scripture to guide them. Thus the popish doctrines of free-will, the merit of good works, human satisfactions, penances, indulgences and dispensations for sin, are all impure doctrines, which are directly contrary to scripture. And as contraries illustrate each other, so the holiness and purity of scripture which maintains doctrines the opposite of these, will appear to those who impartially study it, and understand its sense.—If, further, we compare the scriptures with the imposture of Mahomet, in the book called the Alcoran, which the Turks make use of as a rule of faith, and reckon truly divine, we shall find that that book contains a system not only of fabulous but of corrupt and impure notions, accommodated to men's sensual inclinations. Thus it allows of polygamy, and many impurities in this world, and promises to its votaries a sensual paradise in the next, all which is contrary to scripture. Compositions merely human, therefore, whether they pretend to divine inspiration or not, discover themselves not to be the word of God by their unholiness; while the scripture manifests itself to be divine by the purity of its doctrine. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise, considering the corruption of man's nature, as well as the darkness and blindness of his mind; in consequence of which, any rule of faith which he might pretend to frame, will be like himself, impure and unholy. Hence that which has such marks of holiness as the scripture has, appears to be inspired by a holy God.

We shall now show the weight of this argument, or how far it may be insisted on to prove the divine authority of scripture. It is to be confessed, that a book's containing holy things, or rules for a holy life, does not of itself prove its divine origin; for then other books might be called the word of God besides the scripture. But this is so called, not only as containing some rules that promote holiness, but as being the fountain of all true religion. And its possessing this

character above any book of human composition, affords an argument of some weight to prove it to be of God. 1. Man, who is prone to sin, naturally blinded and prejudiced against divine truth and holiness, could never compose a book which is so consonant to the divine perfections, and contains such a display of God's glory, and is so adapted to make us holy. 2. If we suppose that man could invent a collection of doctrines, which tended to promote holiness, could he invent doctrines so glorious, and so much adapted to this end, as those of scripture are? If he could, he that does this must be either a good or a bad man: if the former, he would never pretend the scripture to be of divine authority, when it was his own composition; and if the latter, it is contrary to his character, as such, to endeavour to promote holiness,—for then Satan's kingdom must be divided against itself. But of this, we shall say more in its proper place, when we come to consider the character of the penmen of scripture, as a further proof of its divine authority. 3. It is plain that the world without scripture, could not attain holiness. The apostle says, 'the world by wisdom knew not God;' and certainly where there is no saving knowledge of God, there is no holiness. And the same apostle gives an account of the great abominations that were committed by the heathen: who, being destitute of scripture light, were 'filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity,' &c.n The fact, therefore, that the doctrines contained in the scriptures are not only pure and holy themselves, but tend to promote holiness in us, is not without its proper weight to prove the divine origin of scripture.

III. The scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God by the consent or harmony of all their parts. This argument will appear more strong and conclusive, if we compare them with other writings, in which there is but little harmony. Thus, if we consult the writings

of most uninspired men, we shall find that their sentiments are often inconsistent or contradictory; and that if, as historians, they pretend to report matters of fact, their evidence or report does not harmonize. This shows that they are fallible; while the exact and harmonious agreement of scripture proves it divine. That merely human compositions agree not among themselves, is very evident; and this is little to be wondered at, if we consider that men are naturally blind and unacquainted with the things of God. As their writings are often inconsistent with the standard of truth, by which they are to be tried, they will hardly be consistent with themselves, much less with one another. Nothing is more common than for men to betray their weakness, and cast a blemish on their compositions by contradicting themselves; especially if their writings are long, and on various subjects. They are also liable to contradict one another, when any scheme of doctrine is pretended to be laid down by different persons; for when they attempt to represent matters of fact, they often do it in a very different light. This may be especially observed in those accounts that are given of doctrines which are new, or not well known by the world; or in historical accounts, not only of general occurrences, but of particular circumstances attending them, —where, trusting to their memory and judgment, they often impose on themselves and others. The disagreement of human writings is particularly apparent when the authors were men of no great natural wisdom. If especially they lived in different ages, or in places remote from one another, and so could have no opportunity to consult one another or compare their writings together, we shall scarce ever find a perfect harmony or agreement in their writings. Now nothing preserves the books of scripture from such inconsistency and contradiction as are found in all other compositions, except that they were written by divine inspiration. This will appear, if we consider that the penmen were in themselves as liable to mistake as other men. Had they been left to themselves, they would have betrayed as

much weakness, confusion, and self-contradiction, as any other writers have done. They might even indeed have betrayed more, in as much as many of them had not the advantage of a liberal education, nor were conversant in human learning. But they were taken from mean employments, and made use of by God as penmen of scripture, that we might, in their want of human learning, see more of the divinity of the writings which they were employed to transmit to us. Besides, they lived in different ages and places, and so could not consult together what to impart; and yet we find, as we shall endeavour to prove, that they all agree together. The harmony of their writings, therefore, is an evident proof that they were inspired by the same Spirit, and consequently that these writings are the word of God.

We might here consider the historical parts of scripture, and the account which one inspired writer gives of matters of fact, as agreeing with what is related by another; and also the harmony of all the doctrines contained in them, as agreeing not only in the general scope and design of the writings, but in the way and manner in which they are particularly laid down or explained. But we shall illustrate the harmony of scripture, only by comparing what is foretold in one part with what is related in another as accomplished. There are various predictions relating to the providential dealings of God with his people, which had their accomplishment in an age or two after. Thus the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, foretold the captivity of the Jews, the number of years they should be detained in Babylon, and their deliverance by Cyrus, who is expressly mentioned by name. These prophecies, and the accomplishment of them, are so obvious, that there is no one who reads the Old Testament but will see a harmony between them; so that what in one place is represented as foretold, in another place is spoken of as accomplished in its proper time. And the revolt and apostacy of

Israel, their turning aside from God to idolatry, and their falling in consequence into desolation, were foretold by Moses,p and by Joshua; and every one that reads the book of Judges will see that the events occurred exactly as they were foretold.r And the prophecy of the great reformation which Josiah should make, and in particular, that he should 'burn the bones' of the idolatrous priests 'on the altar at Bethel,' was exactly accomplished above three hundred years after.t 2. There are also various predictions under the old testament relating to our Saviour and the new testament church, many of which have had their accomplishment, and others are daily accomplishing. It is said, 'To him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. And we shall find, that what is foretold concerning him in the Old Testament, is related as accomplished in the New. For example, that he should come in the flesh, was foretold in the Old Testament, and is mentioned as accomplished in the New.y That he should work miracles for the good of mankind, and to confirm his mission, was foretold, and accomplished.a That he should live in this world in a low and humbled state, was foretold; and the whole account of his life in the gospels bears witness that the predictions on this subject were fully accomplished. That he should be cut off, and die a violent death, by being lifted up upon the cross, was typified by the brazen serpent in the wilderness,c and foretold in several other scriptures; and this is largely insisted on, in the New Testament, as fulfilled. That after he had continued some time in a state of humiliation, he should be exalted, was foretold,e and fulfilled. That his glory should be proclaimed and published in the preaching of the gospel, was foretold,g and fulfilled, as appears from many scriptures. That he should be the spring and fountain of all blessedness to his people, was foretold,i and fulfilled. In these, and many other instances, we may observe such a beautiful consent of all the parts of scripture, as proves it to be the very word of God. [See note P. page 69.]

But since it will not be sufficient for supporting the divine authority of scripture, to assert that there is such a harmony as we have observed, unless we can prove that the scripture doth not contradict itself in any instances, we shall next consider the reproach cast upon it by those who would bring all divine revelation into contempt, by alleging that it contradicts itself in several instances, and contains various absurdities, which, were they proved, would enervate the argument we are maintaining. We shall consider some of the alleged contradictions as so many objections against the harmonious consent, and consequently the divine authority, of scripture; and shall add such answers as may be given to each.

There is alleged to be a very great inconsistency between our Saviour's genealogy, as related in the first of Matthew, and in the third of Luke; for one evangelist mentions different persons as his progenitors, from what the other does. For instance, in Matth. 1, he is said to be the son of Joseph, and Joseph the son of Jacob, and he the son of Matthan; but Luke says, that he was the son of Joseph, 'which was the son of Heli, which was the son of Matthat.' In like manner, we find the names of each genealogy differing from those of the other, till we come to David. It is alleged, therefore, that both genealogies cannot be true, in as much as the one contradicts the other. There is really, however, no contradiction between the two genealogies; for Matthew gives an account of Joseph's ancestors, and Luke of Mary's; and so, both together, prove that he was the son of David, by his reputed father's as well as by his mother's side. And if it be replied, that Luke, as well as Matthew, gives an account of Joseph's genealogy, and that therefore our answer is not sufficient, we may observe, that it is said, 'Jesus was, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,' &c. and that the meaning is, he was indeed the supposed son of Joseph, but was really descended from Heli, the father of the virgin Mary. Nothing is more common in

scripture than for grandsons to be called sons; and if we observe the meaning of the Greek words which we render, 'which was the son,' &c. they may be better rendered, 'who descended from Heli;' and then, supposing Heli to be his grandfather, there is not the least absurdity in the passage. There is, therefore, no appearance of contradiction between the two scriptures which contain the genealogy.

It is pretended that there is a contradiction between 2 Sam. 24:24. and 1 Chron. 21:25.; in the former of which passages it said, that David bought the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, to build an altar on, and the oxen for burnt-offerings, that the plague might be stayed, 'for fifty shekels of silver;' while in Chronicles, it is said that 'he gave him for the place six hundred shekels of gold.' Now the facts seem to be these:—David paid Araunah (who is otherwise called Oman) for his threshing-floor where he built an altar, and for the oxen which he bought for sacrifice, fifty shekels of silver, as is stated in Samuel. But, besides this threshing-floor, he bought the whole place, as is stated in Chronicles, that is, the whole tract of ground, or mountain, on which the threshing-floor stood, and on which he designed that the temple should be built. He therefore saith concerning it, 'This is the house of the Lord God,'—that is, this place, or tract of land, which I have bought round about the threshing-floor, is the place where the house of God shall stand; 'and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel,'—that is, this particular spot where the threshing-floor stands, is where the altar of burnt-offering shall be placed. Now, though he gave for the threshing-floor but fifty shekels of silver,—which probably was as much as it was worth; yet the whole place, containing ground enough for the temple, with all its courts, and the places leading to it, was worth a great deal more, or if there were any houses in the place, these were also purchased to be pulled down, to make room for the temple;—and for all this, he

gave six hundred shekels of gold; and we can hardly suppose it to have been worth less. There is, therefore, no real contradiction between these two passages.

It is pretended, that there is a contradiction between 2 Sam. 24:13. and 1 Chron. 21:12; in the former of which Gad, having been sent to David to reprove him for his numbering the people, came to him and said, 'Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land?' while, in Chronicles, he speaks of but 'three years of famine.' To reconcile this seeming contradiction, some think that, in some ancient copies, the words are not seven, but 'three years of famine,' in Samuel, as in Chronicles. The reason of this conjecture is, that the LXX., or Greek translation, has the words so; and they think that these translators would hardly have made so bold with scripture, as to put three for seven, and that they found the words as they state them in the copies which they made use of, when they compiled their translation. The best way, however, to account for the seeming contradiction, is this: In Chronicles, Gad bids David choose if he would have three years of famine from that time; but in Samuel he asks if seven years in all of famine should come unto him. There had been three years of famine already, 'for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites:' that famine ceased but the year before; and the ground being so chapped and hard for want of rain this year, which was the fourth, was little better than a year of famine. Now, saith Gad, 'wilt thou have this famine continued three years more, which, in all, makes up seven years?' If we take the two passages in this sense, there is no contradiction between them, though the one speaks of three years, and the other of seven.

Some pretend to find an inconsistency, or absurdity, little better than a contradiction, by comparing 1 Sam. 16:21, 22. with chap. 17:55. In the former it is said, 'David came to Saul, and stood before him, and

he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer, and he sent to Jesse,' with the intent that he might give him leave 'to stand before him, in as much as he had found favour in his sight.' Now, say they, "how can this be consistent with the other scripture; where Saul, seeing David going forth against Goliath the Philistine, asked Abner, 'Whose son is this youth?' and Abner replied, 'He could not tell,' and was ordered to 'inquire who he was,'—how could this ignorance exist, when David had been Saul's armour-bearer, stood before him, and found favour in his sight; and when Saul had sent to Jesse to desire that he might live with him?" I can see no appearance of absurdity, or defect of harmony, between these two scriptures. Supposing Saul's memory had failed him, and he had forgot that David had stood before him as a servant, shall the scripture, that gives an account of this, be reflected on, as containing an inconsistency? It is true, David had stood before Saul, as his armour-bearer; yet he had, for some time, been dismissed from his service, and lived at home where he kept his father's sheep. Probably, too, he had not lived long in Saul's family; and it might be no wonder if Saul had now forgot him. There is no master of a family but may forget what servants have formerly lived with him; and much more a king, who hardly knows the names of the greatest part of the servants that are about him. Besides, David at this time, appeared in the habit of a shepherd; and on that account Saul might well say, 'Whose son is the youth?' This sufficiently accounts for the difficulty, and vindicates this scripture from the charge of inconsistency. Some, however, account for it by supposing that Saul knew David, as having been his armour-bearer, but did not know his father, and therefore asks, 'Whose son is this?' or who is he that hath so bold and daring a son, as this youth appears to be? If these things be considered, there appears not the least absurdity in this scripture.

Another contradiction which some charge the scripture with, relates to the Israelites, when, pursuant to the advice of Balaam, they committed idolatry, and went a-whoring after the daughters of Moab, and God consumed them for it by the plague. In reference to this the book of Numbers says, 'Those that died in the plague were twenty-four thousand;' but the apostle Paul, referring to the same thing, says, 'Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.'p The answer that may be given to this objection, is that the apostle Paul when he says, 'three and twenty thousand died,' or fell, 'in one day,' speaks of those who died by the immediate hand of God, through the pestilential distemper that was sent among them; but took no account of a considerable number more who, for the same sin, died by the hand of public justice. In the passage in Numbers, we read of the 'heads of the people being hanged up before the Lord, and the judges being ordered to slay every man his men that were joined unto Baal-peor,' These died by the sword of justice; and it is no great impropriety to say, that they died in a mediate way, by the plague or sword of God. The sword is one of his plagues, as well as pestilential diseases, and is frequently so styled in scripture. Now, we cannot suppose that fewer died of this latter plague, if that be the import of the word, than a thousand; so that Moses gives the number of all that died, whether by God's immediate hand, or by the sword of the magistrate, pursuant to his command. But if it be reckoned too great a strain upon the sense of the word plague, to give this solution, let it be farther observed, that in the ninth verse, where Moses gives the sum total of those that died, it is not said that they were such as died of the plague, but in the plague;—that is, those who died in or soon after the time that the plague raged among them, whose death was occasioned by this sin, were four and twenty thousand. These two places of scripture, therefore, are so far from contradicting that they rather illustrate each other.

Another pretended contradiction is between Gal. 1:8. and 2 Cor. 11:4. In the one passage, the apostle says, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;' and in the other he says, 'If he that cometh, preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.' In the former he speaks against those who preach another gospel; in the latter he says they may be borne with,—which seems to be a contradiction. For reconciling the passages, let us consider, that, in the former of them, the apostle pronounces those who preached another gospel accursed, and that therefore they, doubtless, were not to be borne with. And it must be inquired what he means when he says, in the other scripture, that such may be well borne with. Now this scripture will, without the least strain or force upon the words, admit of one of these two senses: 1. It may be considered as containing a sarcasm, by which the apostle reproves the Corinthians for being too much inclined to adhere to false teachers. 'If,' says he, 'these bring you tidings of a better Jesus, a better spirit, a better gospel, then bear with them; but this they cannot do,—therefore reject them.' Or 2. Instead of 'Ye might well bear with him,' the words may be rendered, 'Ye might well bear with me,' as is observed in the marginal reference. The word 'him,' being in an Italic character, is not in the original; and 'me' may as well be supplied as 'him.' The meaning would then be this: "Ye bear with false preachers, are very favourable to them, and seem a little cold to us the apostles; so that I am afraid lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. You can bear with these false teachers; and will ye not bear with me.' 'Would to God you could bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed bear with me.' " It is a sign that religion is at a low ebb, when professors, who are too prone to turn aside to another gospel, are with some difficulty persuaded to bear with those that

preach the pure gospel of Christ. Take the word's in Corinthians in either of the senses suggested, and they exactly harmonize with the text in Galatians, and do not, as the objectors pretend, contradict it.

Another charge of contradiction brought against scripture is founded on that saying of our Saviour, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.' This, it is alleged, is contrary to Christ's general character, as a 'Prince of peace;'t—to the advice he gives his disciples, 'not to use the sword,' because such as use it 'shall perish by it;'—and to what he saith elsewhere, 'My kingdom is not of this world,'x and therefore not to be propagated by might or power, by force or civil policy, or by those other carnal methods by which the kingdoms of this world are advanced and promoted. For reconciling this seeming contradiction, let it be considered that Christ did not come to put a sword into his followers' hands, or to put them upon making war with the powers among whom they dwell, for the propagating of the Christian religion: his gospel was to be advanced by spiritual methods. In this sense, the design of his coming was not to send a sword, but to bring spiritual peace to his people. But when he saith, 'I came to send a sword,' he implies that his coming, his kingdom, and gospel, should occasion persecution and war, by reason of the corruption of men. This the gospel may do, and yet not put men upon disturbing their neighbours, or making war with them; and it is not contrary to Christ's general character of coining to be the author of spiritual peace to his people.

Another pretended contradiction, is between 1 Kings 8:9. and Heb. 9:4. In the former it is said, 'There was nothing in the ark but the two tables, which Moses put there;' in the latter, that there 'was the golden pot, that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.' This seeming contradiction may easily be

reconciled. We suppose it true that there was nothing in the ark but the two tables, as is stated in the former of these scriptures; and to explain the latter agreeably to it, two senses of it may be given. It is not necessary to suppose, that the apostle means, in the ark was the golden pot, &c. but in the holiest of all, which he mentions in the foregoing verse. And the meaning is, as in the holiest of all there were the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, so in the latter were the golden pot and Aaron's rod. But there may be an objection to this sense, from its being said, in the words immediately following, that 'over it were the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat;' where 'it' refers to the ark, and not to the tabernacle or holiest of all. And it may be argued, that if the cherubim were over the ark, then the other things must be supposed to be in it. This objection is not without its force; unless we suppose that the words translated 'over it' may be rendered 'in the higher parts of it,' and the whole clause to be, 'In the higher parts of it,' the holiest of all, 'were the cherubim of glory above the mercy-seat.' The meaning then will be, that, within the second vail, were not only the ark, the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod, &c. but also the cherubim of glory, which were above them all. But since the grammatical construction seems rather to favour the objection, there is another sense given of the words, which sufficiently reconciles the seeming contradiction, namely:—When it is said, that 'therein,' or 'in it,' that is, in the ark, 'was the golden pot that had manna and Aaron's rod that budded,' the meaning is, they were 'near it,' or 'beside it,' or some way or other fastened or adjoining to it, in some enclosure in the outside of the ark; while nothing was in it but the two tables. There is therefore no real contradiction between these two scriptures.

Many more instances of pretended contradictions might be stated and satisfactorily refuted; but, instead of noticing them, we choose rather to lay down some general rules for reconciling seeming

contradictions in scripture, which may be applied by us in any cases where difficulties occur. And,

1. A seeming contradiction sometimes arises from the inadvertency of some who have transcribed the copies of scripture, in putting one word for another;—though this is not often the case; for great care has been taken in transcribing the manuscripts of scripture, even greater, perhaps, than in transcribing any manuscripts whatever. The mistakes in transcribing are few, and occur only where there is such a likeness between two words that one might easily be mistaken for the other. And this ought not to prejudice any against the scripture; for it only argues, that though the inspired penmen were infallible, the scribes that took copies of scripture for common use were not so. When there is any mistake, it may generally be rectified by some other copy, that has the word as it really should be. So in some editions of our printed bibles, we find mistakes as to some words, which may be rectified by others which are more correct. And if so, why may not mistakes be supposed to be in some written copies of the scriptures, from which printed copies are taken, and which were used before printing, which is but a late invention, was known in the world?

2. When the same action in scripture seems to be ascribed to different persons, or the same thing said to be done in different places, there is no contradiction; for the same person, or place, is sometimes called by various names. Thus Moses' father-in-law, who met him in the wilderness, and advised him in settling the government of the people, is called, in one place, Jethro, and in another, Hobab;b and the mountain from which God gave the law to Israel is sometimes called Sinai, and at other times Horeb.d

3. Chronological difficulties, or such seeming contradictions as arise from a difference of computation as to the time in which any thing is said to have been done, may be reconciled by referring to different epochs or dates of computation. It is said, for example, that the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years; but when God foretells this sojourning, he says, 'Thy seed shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.'f Now the four hundred and thirty years take their beginning of computation from Abraham's being called to leave his country, and sojourn in the land of promise, as in a strange land. But the four hundred years take their beginning of computation from his having the promised seed, or from the birth of Isaac,—which happened twenty-five years after his leaving his country. From that time till the children of Israel's going out of Egypt was four hundred and five years, and the five years above four hundred are left out, as being an inconsiderable number. In the same way, our common method of computing time, when a large even number is mentioned, leaves out a small one of four or five years, more or less, as in the instance here mentioned; especially when time is expressed by centuries, as it is here; for it is said, in verse 16, 'In the fourth generation,' that is, after the fourth century of years, 'they shall come hither again.'

4. When, by comparing the years of the reign of any of the kings of Judah or of Israel, as mentioned in the books of Kings and of Chronicles, we find that he is said, in one of these books, to have reigned three or four years longer than according to the account given in the other, the seeming contradiction may be reconciled, by considering him as having begun to reign before his father's death, as Solomon did before David died, or as having been nominated his father's successor, and owned as such by the people, which was sometimes done to prevent disputes that might afterwards arise.

Sometimes, too, when a king was engaged in foreign wars, which obliged him to be absent from his people, and the event of which was uncertain, he appointed his son to reign in his absence; from which time the latter had the title of a king, though his father was living. Or when a king was superannuated, or unfit to reign, as Uzziah was when smote with leprosy,—or when he was weary of the fatigue and burden of government,—he would settle his son, as his viceroy, in his life-time; on which account the son is sometimes said to reign with his father. Thus many account for the difficulty respecting Jehoiachin, who, in 2 Chron. 36:9, is said to have been 'eight years old when he began to reign,' while in 2 Kings 24:8. he is said to have been 'eighteen years old when he began to reign.' The meaning is, that when he was eight years old he was nominated as his father's successor; but when he was eighteen years old he began to reign alone, his father being then dead.

5. Scriptures that seem to contradict one another may not, as to their general design, treat of the same but of different subjects. Thus the seeming contradiction between the apostles Paul and James, is to be accounted for. The former says, 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ;' but the latter says, 'By works a man is justified, and not by faith only.'o The apostle Paul speaks of a sinner's justification, or freedom from the condemning sentence of the law in the sight of God. This justification gives him a right to eternal life; and he looks for it out of himself, and, by faith, depends alone on Christ's righteousness for obtaining it. In this sense, works do not justify. But when the apostle James asserts, that 'a man is justified by works, and not by faith only,' he means that our profession of faith and sincerity in it are justified, that is evidenced, not by our having just notions of things, or an historical faith, such as the devils themselves have, but by those works of holiness which are the fruits of faith. This is the only

justification he treats of, and he therefore does not in the least contradict the apostle Paul, who treats of another kind of justification, in which works are excluded. [See note Q, page 69.]

6. When two scriptures seem to contradict each other, they may sometimes be reconciled by considering the same thing absolutely in one place, and comparatively in the other. Thus, in many scriptures, we are commanded to extend that love to every one in their several relations, which is due; and yet our Saviour says, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple.' This is to be understood comparatively; that is, our love to the creature ought to bear no proportion to that which is due to God.

7. Scriptures that seem to contradict one another, often speak of different persons, or persons of different characters. Thus the commands, 'Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful;' and 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,'r respect persons in a private capacity; and do not contradict scriptures which are applied to magistrates in the execution of public justice, and which say to them, 'Thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.' [See note R, page 69.]

8. Two contrary assertions may be both true in different respects. Our Saviour says in one place, 'The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always;' and in another, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'u These statements are both true; the one having reference to Christ's bodily presence as man, in which respect he is not now with us; the other, to his spiritual and powerful influences, whereby he is always present with his people as God.

9. We must take notice of different times or dispensations. Laws or ordinances, which were to be received and observed as a rule of faith

and duty at one time, may not be so at another. Thus circumcision is recommended as a duty and a privilege to the Jews before Christ's time, in which respect the apostle reckons it among the advantages which they formerly had above all other nations; but when the gospel dispensation was erected, and the Jewish economy abolished, it was so far from being an advantage, that the observance of it was deemed no less than a subversion of the gospel. Hence the apostle says, 'If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.'y The same apostle also gives a very diminutive character of these institutes of the ceremonial law, and calls them 'weak and beggarly elements,' such as had a tendency to bring the converted Jews again into bondage; and he blames them for observing the Jewish festivals, such as, 'days, months, times, and years,'—that is, the new moons, feasts of weeks, or of years, such as the seventh year, or the Jubilees; and he tells them, on this occasion, 'I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain.' Thus, then, what was a duty and a privilege in one age of the church, and enjoined with the greatest strictness and the inflicting of the severest punishments on those that neglected it, is forbidden as a sin in another age. There is, therefore, not the least shadow of contradiction between those scriptures which enjoin and those which forbid it. Thus, when our Saviour first sent his twelve disciples to preach the gospel, he commanded them, 'not to go in the way of the Gentiles;'a that is, not to do so as long as he was upon earth, or till they had finished their ministry among the Jews, to whom the word was first to be preached; but he afterwards, when it was to be spread throughout the world, gave them a commission to 'preach the gospel to all nations.' And this accordingly they did; apprehending there was no contradiction between the former prohibition and the present command.

IV. The divine authority of scripture may be further proved from the scope and design of the whole, which is to give all glory to God. It

may be observed concerning the scripture, that the advancing of the divine perfections, and the debasing of the creature, is the great end designed by God in giving it; and we find that whatever doctrine is laid down therein, this end is pursued. Now scripture doctrines are designed to advance the glory of God, either directly or by consequence. As to the former of these methods, the scripture abounds with instances in which God is adored, or set forth as the object of adoration, that is, as having all divine perfections, and as doing every thing becoming himself as a God of glory. Thus he is described as 'the Lord most high and terrible; a great King over all the earth;' as 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders;'d as 'the true God, the living God, and an everlasting King;' as 'the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and 'mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;'f and it is also said, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.' Not only does scripture, as in these passages, occasionally ascribe adorable perfections to God; but every part of it displays his glory in so illustrious a manner, as gives ground to conclude, that the great design of it is to raise in us becoming apprehensions of him, to put us upon adoring and worshipping him as God. It may also, by a just consequence, be said to give all glory to him, when it represents the emptiness and even nothingness of all creatures as compared with him, and thereby recommends him as all in all,—when it speaks of the best of creatures as vailing their faces before him, as acknowledging themselves unworthy to behold his glory, and as deriving all their happiness from him,—when it speaks of man as a sinful guilty creature, expecting all from him, and depending upon him for needful grace,—and when it speaks of God as the author and finisher of faith, in whom alone there is hope of obtaining mercy and forgiveness, grace here, and glory hereafter.

Making such representations as these, and laying them down as the sum of all religion, it must certainly be regarded as designing to give all glory to God.

Now, let us consider the force of this argument, or how the general scope and design of scripture, to give all glory to God, proves its divine authority. Had it been the invention and contrivance of men, or had the writers falsely pretended that they had received it by inspiration from God, the great design of it would have been to advance themselves, and they would certainly have laid down in it such a scheme of religion, as is agreeable to the corrupt appetites and inclinations of men, or as would tend to indulge and dispense with sin, and not such an one as sets forth the holiness of God, and his infinite displeasure against it. And as for salvation, the penmen of scripture, had they not been inspired, would certainly have represented it as very easy to be attained, and not as a work of such difficulty as it really is. They would also have propagated such a religion as supposes the creature not dependent on, or beholden to God for this salvation; and then the scripture would have detracted from his glory. Its general design, however, is to give him the glory due to his name; and this is a convincing evidence of its divine origin. [See note S, page 70.]

From the general design of scripture being to give all glory to God, we may infer that whenever we read the word of God, we ought to have this great design in view. Hence, we should not consider it as merely an historical narrative of things done; but should observe how the glory of the divine perfections is set forth, in order that we may be induced to ascribe greatness to God, and admire him for all the discoveries which he makes of his character. The scripture's general design should also be a rule to us in the whole of our conversation. Whatever we receive or expect from God, or whatever

duty we engage in, let us give all glory to him, and thus act as those who not only take the scripture for our rule, but its general scope and design for our example. And whatsoever doctrines are pretended to be deduced from, or to contain the sense of scripture, which, notwithstanding, tend to depreciate the divine perfections, are to be rejected as contrary to its general scope and design.

V. Another argument for the divine authority of scripture may be taken from the character of the penmen. And here let them be supposed to be either good men or bad. If good men, they could not give themselves a liberty to impose upon the world, and pretend that they received that from God which they did not; and if they were bad men, they neither could nor would have laid down such doctrines as centre in God, lead the soul to him, and tend to promote self-denial, and to advance his glory in all things. To imagine that wilful impostors fabricated the scriptures, is to suppose, which we can never do, that the worst of men may have the best ends. Our Saviour speaking of false prophets, who were to be known by their fruits, says, 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' that is, wicked men will have bad designs, or are like the corrupt tree, which bringeth forth evil fruit. But on the other hand, if persons deliver that which carries in it internal evidence of divine truth, and have such a noble design in view as securing the honour of God, and promoting his interest in the world, they must certainly be approved of by him, and concluded to be good men; and if so, they would not impose a fallacy on the world, or say that the scripture was given by divine inspiration, when it was not.

If the scriptures are not the word of God, the penmen have miserably deceived, not a small number of credulous people, but the whole Christian world; among whom we must allow that many were judicious, and such as would not easily suffer themselves to be

imposed on. Moreover, many to whom the gospel was preached, were exasperated enemies to them that preached it, and particularly to the inspired penmen of scripture, and greatly prejudiced against their doctrine; and therefore would use all possible endeavours to detect the imposture, if there had been any. It was therefore morally impossible for the penmen to deceive the world by making them believe that the scriptures were the word of God, if there had not been such strong evidence of their being so, as they could not withstand or gainsay.

But that we may enter a little further into the character of the penmen of scripture, let it be observed, that they could not be charged by their enemies with immoral practices, or notorious crimes, which might weaken the credit of the truths they delivered. They were, indeed, compassed about with like infirmities with other men; for it is not to be supposed, that, because they were inspired, they were perfectly free from sin. Yet their enemies themselves could find no great blemishes in their character, which might raise just prejudice against their writings, or which might render them unfit to be employed in the great work of transmitting the mind of God to the world. They appear, on the contrary, to be men of great integrity, not declining to discover and aggravate their own faults, as well as the sins of others. Thus Moses, though a man of great meekness, as to his general character, discovers his own failing, in repining and being uneasy, because of the untoward and turbulent spirit of the people over whom he was appointed a governor; and he thus represents himself as complaining to God: 'Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? I am not able to bear this people alone, because

it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see mine own wretchedness.' This was certainly a very great blemish in the character of this excellent man; but he does not attempt to conceal it. Neither does he omit to mention his backwardness to comply with the call of God, to deliver his brethren out of their bondage in Egypt; but tells us what poor trifling excuses he made,—as when he says, 'O my Lord, I am not eloquent.'l And when God answers him, by promising to supply this defect, he obstinately persists in declining the service, and says, 'O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send,' that is, by any one but myself. So that, though he expressed such courage and resolution forty years before in defending the oppressed Israelites, and supposed that his brethren would have understood that God, by his hand, would deliver them, but they understood it not; yet when God really called him to deliver them, he obstinately refused to obey. And, indeed, whatever excuses he might make, the main thing that lay at the bottom was fear; and therefore, as a further inducement to it, God tells him that 'the men were dead that sought his life.' All this he narrates concerning himself. And elsewhere he tells us,n that he did not sanctify the name of God in the eyes of the people, but spake unadvisedly with his lips; and that, for this, God would not let him go into the land of Canaan, though he earnestly desired it. The prophet Jeremiah also tells us respecting himself that he was ready to faint; and, in a murmuring way, he curses the day of his birth, and seems almost determined 'not to make mention of God, nor speak any more in his name,' because he had been put in the stocks by Pashur, and was derided and mocked by others,—who were, in fact, below his notice. And David discovered his own sin, though it was a very scandalous one, in the matter of Uriah;p and prays, 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness,'—words which are a confession of his being guilty of murder. The apostles also discover their infirmities. Thus Paul

discovers his furious temper, in persecuting the church before his conversion, and ranks himself among the chief of sinners. And how willing is Matthew to let the world know, that, before his conversion, he was a publican. He characterizes himself as such,r and says, that when Christ called him, he 'sat at the receipt of custom;'—though the publicans were reckoned among the vilest of men for extortion and other crimes, and were universally hated by the Jews. Moreover, as the penmen of scripture expose their own crimes, so they do those of their nearest and dearest friends and relatives, which carnal policy would have inclined them to conceal. Thus Moses relates that Aaron his brother made the golden calf, and so was the encourager and promoter of the people's idolatry; that it was he who 'bade them break off the golden earrings, which he received at their hand, whereof he made a molten calf, and then built an altar before it.'t The Jewish historian, Josephus, is so politic as, for the honour of his own nation, to conceal this affair; and when he tells us that Moses went up into the mount to receive the law, he says nothing of the scandalous crime which the people were at the same time guilty of at the foot of the mountain. Moreover, as the sacred penmen do not conceal their sins, so they sometimes declare the meanness of their extraction; which shows that they did not design to have honour from men. Thus Amos tells us that he 'was among the herdmen of Tekoa;'x and that he was not bred up in the schools of the prophets, —for this is his meaning when he styles himself, 'no prophet, neither a prophet's son.' And the evangelists occasionally tell the world that they were sea-faring men, when Christ called them to be his disciples, and so were not bred up in the schools of learning among the Jews.

The penmen of scripture were very far from being crafty or designing men; neither did they appear to be men that were able to manage such an imposture as a fabrication of the scriptures, or to frame a

new scheme of religion, and make the world believe that it was from God. None that read the scriptures can find on the part of the penmen any appearance of design to advance themselves or families. Moses, indeed, had the burden of government; but he did not affect the pomp and splendour of a king; neither did he make any provision for his family, so as to advance them to great honours in the world, which it was in his power to have done. The laws he gave rendered those of his own tribe, namely that of Levi, incapable of, and not designed for, kingly government; and the highest honour of the priesthood, which was fixed in that tribe, was conferred on his brother's children, not on his own. The prophets were very few of them great men in the world, or advanced to great places in government. The esteem and reputation they had among the people at any time, was only for their integrity, and the honour conferred on them by God. The apostles also were plain men, who drove on no design to gain riches and honours from those to whom they preached the gospel. On the other hand, they expected nothing but poverty, reproach, imprisonment, and, at last, to die a violent death. How then can it be supposed that they were subtle designing men, who had some worldly advantage in view? It is plain that they had no design but to do what God commanded, and to communicate what they had received from him; and that they shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, whatever it cost them. The apostle Paul was so far from endeavouring to enrich himself by preaching the gospel, that he tells the church, 'I seek not yours, but you.' He foresaw that afflictions would attend his ministry, and stood constantly prepared to meet them. 'I have learned,' says he, 'in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound, to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer want.'a He was not only content to bear afflictions, but when called to it, he professes himself to 'take pleasure in reproach, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.'

Hitherto we have proved, that the penmen of scripture were men of such a character, that they would not designedly impose on mankind. But some will say, 'Might they not be imposed on themselves, and think they were divinely inspired when they were not?' The Deists think them to have been mere fanatics, and esteem their writings no farther than as they contain the law of nature, or those doctrines that are self-evident, or might have been invented by the reason of man; and as such they receive them, without any regard to divine inspiration. Now if the sacred penmen were deceived or imposed on themselves, when they thought they received the scripture by divine inspiration, either they took what was the result of a heated fancy, of a strong imagination, or of raised affections, for inspiration, as some of our modern enthusiasts have done, who have prefaced their warnings, as they call them, with, 'Thus saith the Lord,' &c., when the Lord did not speak by them; or they were imposed on by a diabolic inspiration,—of which, in other cases, the world has had various instances, when Satan is said to have 'transformed himself into an angel of light,' or has been suffered to deceive his followers, not only by putting forth 'signs and lying wonders,' but by impressing their minds with 'strong delusions,' whereby they have 'believed a lie,'d as supposing themselves to be inspired, and, to give countenance thereto, has produced such violent agitations, tremblings, or distortions in their bodies, as have seemed preternatural, not much unlike those with which the heathen oracles were delivered of old, which were called by some a 'divine fury.' We shall show, however, that both parts of this supposition are without any shadow of reason. And as to the first part of it, we assert that the penmen of scripture did not mistake their own fancies for divine revelation. To suppose that they did so, is not only to conclude that all revealed religion is a delusion, but that the church in all ages, and amongst them the wisest and best of men, have been enthusiasts, and that all their hope, founded on this revelation, has been no better than a vain

dream. But it is one thing to assert, and another thing to prove; and because they who take this liberty to reproach the scriptures, pretend not to support their charge by argument, it might seem less necessary to make a reply. Yet that our faith may be established, we shall briefly consider their objection. Now this charge is either brought against all that ever spake or wrote by divine inspiration, or only against some of them. If only some of them have been deluded, we might demand particular instances of any of the inspired writers, who are liable to this charge, together with the reasons of their being so. If it be said that some of them were men of less wisdom, or had fewer advantages to improve their natural abilities, than others; we reply that God can make use of what instruments he pleases, and endow them with wisdom in an extraordinary way to qualify them for the service he calls them to, whereby the glory of his sovereignty more appears. If he pleases to choose 'the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, that no flesh should glory in his presence,' shall he for this be called to an account by vain man? And it is certain that some who have had the gift of inspiration, have, in consequence of it, been endowed with such wisdom as has tended to confound their most malicious enemies. But we will suppose that they who bring the charge of delusion against the inspired writers, do not single out any among them, but accuse them all of enthusiasm. If this charge be grounded on the vain pretensions of some to inspiration in this age, in which we have no ground to expect this divine gift, will it follow, that divine revelation, supported by incontestable evidence, was a delusion? Or if it be said that some of old, whom we conclude to have been inspired, were called enthusiasts, as Elisha the prophet was by Jehu and his fellow-soldiers,f nothing can be inferred from this, but that there were in all ages some Deists, who have treated things sacred with reproach and ridicule. But if anything that has the least appearance of an argument be brought to support the charge of delusion, it will be this, that it is impossible for a person at any time

certainly to know himself to be inspired. If this could be proved, it would be something to the purpose. And as we are obliged to assert the contrary, it will be demanded how it might be known that a person was under inspiration, or what are the certain marks by which we may conclude that the inspired writers were not mistaken in this matter.

I confess, it is somewhat difficult to determine this question, especially since inspiration has so long ceased in the world; but we shall endeavour to answer it, by laying down the following propositions. 1. If some powerful and impressive influences of the Spirit of God on the souls of men, in the more common and ordinary methods of divine providence and grace, have been not only experienced, but their truth and reality discerned by those who have been favoured with them, so that, without pretending to inspiration, they had sufficient reason to conclude that they were divine; certainly when God was pleased to converse with men in the way which we call inspiration, it was not impossible for those who enjoyed the converse to conclude that they were inspired. 2. There were some particular instances, in which it seemed absolutely necessary, that they who received intimations from God in a supernatural way, should have infallible evidence that they were not mistaken; as when, pursuant to a divine command, some great duty was to be performed by them in which it would be a dangerous thing for them to be deceived. Such was the case of Abraham's offering up his son. Such also was Jacob's going with his family into Egypt; which was a forsaking of the promised land, an exposing of them to the loss of their religion, through the influence or example of those with whom they went to sojourn. And as it might be uncertain whether they should ever return or not, he needed a divine warrant, inquired of God as to what was his duty, and doubtless had some way to be infallibly assured of the divine will concerning it. Moreover, our

Saviour's disciples leaving their families, and going into the most remote parts of the world to propagate the gospel, which they believed themselves to have received in a supernatural way, evinces the necessity of their knowing themselves to be under a divine inspiration. And if they had been deceived, would they not have been reproved by Him whose intimations they are supposed to have followed in the simplicity of their hearts? 3. There are various ways that might have been, and probably were, taken to convince the sacred penmen, beyond all manner of doubt, that God spake to them by inspiration. Sometimes extraordinary impressions were made on the soul of the prophet arising from the immediate access of God to it. Of this we have frequent instances in scripture; as in the vision of Daniel which occasioned his 'comeliness to be turned into corruption, and his having no strength;' and in the vision which John saw of our Saviour, the effect of which was his falling at his feet as dead.i Many other instances of the like impressions might be referred to, which were the result of the access of God to the soul, and which occasioned such a change in nature as could not but be discerned after the person had a little recovered himself. But if it be said that such impressions might be produced by an infernal spirit, I answer that, supposing this possible, it must be proved that God would suffer it,—especially in an instance in which his own cause was so much concerned. Besides, it is not improbable that the soul of the prophet was sometimes brought into such a frame as resembled the heavenly state, as much as is possible for any one to attain to in this world. The experience of this made Jacob say, 'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' Again, it is not improbable that God might work miracles of various kinds, to confirm the prophet's belief as to his being inspired; though they are not particularly recorded in all the instances in which we read of inspiration. If it be objected, that it is not probable that miracles were always wrought to give this conviction, I would not be too

peremptory in asserting the contrary, and would deem it sufficient to say that they were sometimes wrought. But doubtless there were some other concurring circumstances, which put conviction of inspiration out of all dispute; for not to suppose this, is to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God, as well as to depreciate one of the greatest honours which he has been pleased to confer upon men. Thus we have considered the unreasonableness of the charge brought against the inspired penmen of scripture, that they were imposed on by mistaking enthusiastic fancies for divine revelation. [See Note T, p. 71.]

We shall now show that they were not imposed upon by the devil, or did not mistake impressions made by him on their minds, for divine revelation. Divine inspiration was not occasional, or conferred in some particular instances, with a design to amuse men, or to confirm some doctrines which were altogether new, impure, and subversive of the divine glory in some ages of the world when men were universally degenerate, and had cast off God and religion; but it was continued in the church for many ages, when those for whose benefit it was given evidently appeared to be the peculiar objects of the divine regard. Now, God would never in such circumstances of time and things, have suffered the devil to delude the world, and that to such a degree as be the author of that rule of faith which he himself designed to make use of to propagate his interest, so that his people should be beholden to their grand enemy for those doctrines which were transmitted by inspiration. Satan, besides, would have acted against his own interest, had he inspired men to propagate a religion which has a direct tendency to overthrow his own kingdom; for in that case, as our Saviour observes, 'His kingdom would be divided against itself.' As it is contrary to the wisdom and holiness of God to have suffered the imposition, so Satan would never have done it out of choice, and he has too much subtilty to have done it through

mistake. The inspired writers, therefore, could not be imposed on by any infernal spirit. And we may add, that no delusion could have been practised by a good angel; for if such an one had pretended in the matter of inspiration, to have imitated, or, as it were, usurped the throne of God, he would not have deserved the character of a good angel. It follows, therefore, that the sacred penmen could not have been inspired by any but God himself.

Having considered that the penmen of scripture have faithfully transmitted to us what they received by divine inspiration, we must now take notice of an allegation meant not only to depreciate but to overthrow the divine authority of their writings, that they were inspired as to only the substance or general idea of what they committed to writing, and were left to express this in their own words. Hence, it is alleged, there arose some contradictions occasioned by the treachery of their memories, or the unfitness of their style to express what had been communicated to them. This allegation is founded on the difference of style observed in the various books of scripture; some of which are written in an elegant and lofty style, others clouded with mystical and dark expressions,—some more plain, others laid down in an argumentative way. These different modes of writing are supposed agreeable to the character of the several inspired writers; so that, though the matter of scripture contains something divine, the words and phrases can hardly be reckoned to do so. As for some books of scripture, especially those that are historical, it is alleged that these might be written without inspiration, and that some of them were taken from histories which were previously in being, or from occurrences which were observed in the days in which the writers lived, and which were generally known and believed at the time when they took place. [See Note U, page 72.] And as for those books of scripture, which are more especially doctrinal, it is supposed that there are many mistakes in

them, but that these respect only doctrines of less importance, the providence of God having preserved the writer from any gross or notorious blunders, subversive of natural religion; so that, while the scripture may be deemed sufficient to answer its general design of propagating religion in the world, we are not obliged to conclude that it is altogether free from those imperfections which must attend such a kind of inspiration.

If this account of scripture be true, it would hardly deserve to be called the word of God; and we must vindicate it from the aspersions which the account implies.

As to the different styles observed in the various books, it does not follow from them, that the penmen were left to deliver what they received, in their own words. For certainly it was no difficult matter for the Spirit of God to furnish the writers with words as well as matter, and to inspire them to write in a style agreeable to what they used in other cases. If a person should send a message by a child, it is easy to put such words into his mouth as are agreeable to his common way of speaking, without leaving the matter to him to be expressed in his own words. On the same principle, the inspired writers might be furnished by the Holy Ghost with words adapted to that style which they commonly used, without being left to themselves to clothe general ideas with their own words.

As to what is said concerning the historical parts of scripture, that it is not necessary for them to have been transmitted to us by divine inspiration, it may be replied, that these, as well as other parts, 'were written for our learning.' What is excellent in the character of persons, is designed for our imitation,—their blemishes and defects, to humble us under a sense of the universal corruption of human nature,—and the evil consequences of their wicked conduct, to

awaken our fears, and warn us against exposing ourselves to such judgments as were inflicted as the punishment of sin. And the account we have of the providential dealings of God with his church, in the various ages of it, is as truly of use as the doctrinal parts of scripture, to put us upon admiring and adoring the divine perfections. It is necessary, therefore, that we have the greatest certainty that the inspired writers have given us a true narration of things, and consequently that the words, as well as the matter, are truly divine.—Some opponents of this doctrine, in order that they may a little palliate these sentiments, allow, as we have seen, that the inspired writers, though left to the weakness of their memory, and the impropriety of their style, were notwithstanding, preserved, by the interposition of divine providence, from committing mistakes in matters of the highest importance. We reply, however, that it will be very difficult for them to assign what doctrines are of greater, and what of less importance, in all the instances in which they occur; or when providence has interposed to prevent the writers from running into mistakes, and when it has not. We should still, therefore, be in uncertainty as to what doctrines are delivered to us as they were received by inspiration, and what are misrepresented by the penmen of scripture; and we should be ready to conclude that, in every section or paragraph, some things may be true, and others false,—some doctrines divine, and others human; and we should, at the same time, have no certain rule to distinguish the one from the other, and accordingly could not be sure that any part of scripture is the word of God. Such a revelation as the allegation supposes, would thus be of no real service to the church; and our faith would be founded in the wisdom, or rather weakness, of men, and our religion, depending on it, could not be truly divine. [See note V, page 74.]

VI. Another argument, to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, may be taken from their antiquity and wonderful preservation for so

many ages. Many other writings, of much later date, have been lost; and nothing more is known of them, than that they once existed. Books were peculiarly liable to be lost, when there were none other than written copies of them, and these procured with much expense and difficulty, and consequently their number small. But the scripture has been preserved, not only against all ordinary accidents, but in spite of all the malice of its avowed enemies, as prompted hereunto by Satan, whose kingdom is overthrown by it. Had it been in his power, he would certainly have utterly abolished and destroyed it. Yet it has been preserved unto this day, and the preservation of it discovers the wonderful hand of providence. Would God have so remarkably taken care of a book, that pretends to advance itself by bearing the character of a divinely inspired writing, if it did not really possess this character?—This leads us to the next argument; which contains evidence more convincing than any other; or which, at least, if added to the arguments already given, will, I hope, make it more abundantly appear that the scriptures are the word of God. The argument is this:

VII. The divine authority of scripture is attested by God himself. And if, in other cases, 'we receive the witness of men,' surely, as the apostle observes, 'the witness of God is greater.' Now the testimony of God to the authority of scripture is twofold; First, extraordinary; Secondly, ordinary. The extraordinary testimony of God is that of miracles. The ordinary is taken from the use which he makes of scripture in convincing and converting sinners, and building believers up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation.

As to the extraordinary testimony of God, he has attested the truth of scripture by miracles. A miracle is an extraordinary divine work, whereby something is produced contrary to the common course and laws of nature. Thus the magicians of Egypt confessed, that one of

the miracles which Moses wrought was, the finger of God.' There are many undeniable instances of miracles recorded in scripture, both in the Old and in the New Testament; and these being above the power of a creature, and works peculiar to God, they contain a divine testimony to the truth which is confirmed by them. Now when we say that the divine authority of scripture was confirmed by miracles, we mean, that God has wrought miracles to testify his approbation of most of the prophets and apostles who were the inspired writers of it, whereby their mission was declared to be divine. And we cannot think that God, who knows the hearts and secret designs of men, would employ or send any to perform so great and important a work, if he knew them to be disposed to deceive and impose on the world, or that they would, in any instance, call that his word which they did not receive from him. The reason why men sometimes employ unfaithful servants about their work, is that they do not know them, —they never do it out of choice; and we cannot suppose that God, who perfectly knows the hearts of men, would do so. His having not only employed the penmen of scripture as his servants, but confirmed their mission, and testified his approbation of them, by miracles, is, therefore, a ground of conviction to us that they would not have alleged the scriptures to be the word of God if they were not so. And that miracles have been wrought for this end, I think, needs no proof. Not only are we assured of this by the report of those prophets whose mission is supposed to have been confirmed by the miracles; but the fact was universally known and received in the church, in those times in which they were wrought; and it is not pretended to be denied by the most inveterate enemies. That Moses, several of the prophets, our Saviour, and his apostles, wrought miracles, can hardly be reckoned a matter in controversy, for it is a kind of scepticism to deny it. [See Note W, page 76.] It is certain, also, that in working their miracles they appealed to God for the confirmation of their mission. Elijah, for example, explicitly did this,

when he prayed, 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant; and that I have done all these things at thy word;' and we read, that God answered him accordingly, 'by the fire from heaven consuming the burnt sacrifice,' &c.q Such appeals to God, and answers from him, have attained their end, by giving conviction to those for whose instruction the miracles were wrought. When God, through the instrumentality of Elijah, raised the dead child to life, the woman of Zarephath confessed that by this she 'knew that he was a man of God, and that the word of the Lord, in his mouth, was truth.' And it is not denied by the Jews, the most irreconcilable enemies to Christianity, that what is related in the New Testament, concerning the miracles of our Saviour and his apostles, was true in fact. The only thing they deny is, that miracles were a divine testimony, or that they were wrought by the hand of God. And the common reproach which is cast on these miracles is, that they were wrought by magic; just as the Jews of old objected to our Saviour, that 'he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.'s But his reply to them was unanswerable,—that this objection would argue 'Satan divided against himself,'—intimating, that Satan would never, to overthrow the Christian religion, use means which he could not but know was more conducive than any other to the establishment of it.

It may be objected, that though miracles were wrought to confirm the mission of several of the prophets, yet none were wrought to confirm the divine authority of the scriptures. It is sufficient, however, if we can prove that God has given his testimony, that he made choice of those prophets to declare his mind and will to the world, that he has accordingly deemed them fit to be credited, and that they were not men liable to any suspicion of carrying on a design to deceive the world; for if God not only calls them holy men, as he does the inspired writers in general, when he says, 'Holy men of God

spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' but also wrought miracles to prove that they were his servants and messengers, he gives as convincing a testimony as if every part of scripture had been confirmed by a miracle. Besides, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the church which flourished when the various parts of scripture were written, had some extraordinary proofs of their divine authority; since, in many ages miracles were very common. At the same time, too, that the penmen of scripture had the gift of inspiration, others had, what the apostle calls, 'a discerning of spirits,'u and were enabled to know whether the prophet who pretended to inspiration, was really inspired. This, to me, seems very probably the sense of the apostle, when he says, 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;' for in the context he discourses of prophets speaking by divine revelation, and of others judging of them. [See Note X, page 77.] Now if there was this extraordinary gift of discerning of spirits in the ages in which particular books of scripture were written, the persons who enjoyed it had, from the Holy Spirit himself, a convincing testimony to the inspiration of the prophets and apostles; and by this means the divine authority of scripture was infallibly known to them, and, at the same time, imparted to others for their farther confirmation in this great truth.

It may further be objected, that as we are not now to expect miracles for confirming our faith as to the divine origin of scripture, we cannot be said to have a divine testimony. But the confirming of divine revelation by a constant repetition of miracles is not necessary. God did not design to make the dispensation of miracles too common, or to continue the evidence it affords, when there was no necessity for it. When the Scribes and Pharisees came to our Saviour, desiring to 'see a sign' from him, he would not comply with their unreasonable demand. The apostle Paul takes notice that the Jews generally in his time 'required a sign;'z but, instead of

complying with their request, he refers them to the success of the gospel, which is 'the power of God to salvation,' as the only testimony which was then needful. And our Saviour, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, intimates that the truth of divine revelation has been so well attested, that 'they who believe not Moses and the prophets, would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' Now, since we have such convincing evidence, it is an unreasonable degree of obstinacy to refuse to believe the divine authority of scripture, merely because miracles are not now wrought. To demand farther proof, is no other than a tempting of God, or a disowning that what he has done is sufficient for our conviction; and before we say that for want of the evidence of continued miracles our faith is not founded on a divine testimony, we must be able to prove that it is not founded on such a testimony formerly given. The contrary of this, however, is undeniably evident; for the reality of miracles is confirmed by the confession of the church in all ages. We have, therefore, as much ground to believe the divine authority of scripture, as though miracles were wrought every day for its confirmation. This leads us to inquire,

VIII. How far the testimony of the church is to be regarded as evidence that the scriptures are the word of God. The church has in all ages given its suffrage to the divine origin of scripture, how much soever it has perverted the sense of it. That this argument may be set in a true light, let us consider what the papists say to this matter, when they appeal to the church, to establish the divine authority of scripture; and wherein we differ from them; and how far the testimony of the church is to be regarded as a means for our farther conviction. We are far from asserting, with the papists, that the church's testimony alone is to be regarded, without the internal evidence of scripture; as though it were the principal, if not the only foundation on which our faith is built. If, indeed, they could prove

the infallibility of the church, we should more readily conclude the infallibility of its testimony; but all their attempts to prove this are vain and trifling. Moreover, we do not by the word church understand altogether the same thing which they do; for they make it mean a council, convened by him whom they pretend to be the visible head, to decree and establish matters of faith; and so, according to them, a majority of votes of a body of men, every one of whom is liable to error, must determine, and give a divine sanction to, our faith. Nor do we think that those whom they call the fathers of the church, are to be any farther regarded than as they prove what they assert; since there is scarcely any error or absurdity which some one or more of them have not given in to. We also distinguish between the church's testimony, that the scripture was given by divine inspiration, and the sense they give of many of its doctrines. As to the latter, the church has given us ground enough to conclude that its judgment is not much to be depended upon. We find, however, that, in all ages, it has given sufficient testimony to this truth, that the scriptures are the word of God, and that God has proved them to be so by the miracles which he wrought. If God, then, has had a church in the world, or a remnant whom he has preserved faithful, and if their faith, and all their religion, and hope of salvation, have been founded on the truth that the scriptures are the word of God, we cannot altogether refuse to believe that the scriptures are of divine authority. But there is yet another argument which we lay more stress on, namely, the use which God has made of scripture. We remark, therefore, as is farther observed in this answer, that,

IX. The scriptures are proved to be the word of God, by their power to convince and convert sinners, and to comfort and build up believers to salvation. The work of conviction and conversion is, and has been at all times, experienced by those who have had any right or

claim to salvation. Not only have various instances of this occurred in all ages; but the very being of the church, which supposes and depends on it, is an undeniable proof of its reality. And as this work is truly divine, so the scriptures have been the principal, if not the only direct means by which it has been brought about. We have never had any other rule, or standard of faith or revealed religion; nor has the work of grace been ever begun, or carried on, in the souls of any, without it. Hence it evidently appears, that God makes use of scripture to propagate and advance his interest in the world, and that he has given his church ground to expect his presence with it, in all his ordinances. They are obliged, on all occasions, to pay a due regard to scripture; and, in so doing, they have found that God has, by means of it, manifested himself to them, and made them partakers of spiritual privileges, which have been the beginning of their salvation. But it cannot be supposed that God would make this use of his word, and thereby put such an honour upon it, had it been an imposture, or borne the specious but false pretence of being stamped with his authority; for that would be to give countenance to a lie, which is contrary to the holiness of his nature.

Thus we have considered the several arguments, whereby scripture appears to be the word of God. But since multitudes are not convinced by them, we have, in the close of this answer, an account of the means whereby Christians come to a full persuasion as to this matter,—and that is the testimony of the Spirit in the heart of man. By this we do not understand that extraordinary impression which some of old have been favoured with, who are said to have been 'moved by the Holy Ghost,' or to have had an extraordinary 'unction from the Holy One,' whereby they were led into the knowledge of divine truths in a way of supernatural illumination. This we pretend not to; for extraordinary gifts have ceased. It does not follow, however, that the Spirit does not now influence the minds of

believers in an ordinary way, whereby they are instructed and confirmed in all necessary truths, and particularly in this, that the scriptures are the word of God. No privilege referring to salvation was ever taken away, without some other, subservient to the same end, having been substituted in its room;—unless indeed a notorious forfeiture has been made of it, and the church, by apostacy, has excluded itself from an interest in the divine regard. And as this cannot be said of the gospel-church, in all the ages since extraordinary gifts have ceased, we must conclude, that, in the absence of former methods for vindicating the divine authority of scripture, believers have, instead of them, an inward conviction wrought by the Spirit of God, agreeable to his present method of acting; otherwise the present dispensation is, in a very material circumstance, much inferior to that in which God discovered his mind and will to man in an extraordinary way.

But that we may explain what we mean by the inward testimony of the Spirit in the hearts of men, whereby they are fully persuaded that the scriptures are the word of God, let it be considered, 1. That it is something more than simply a power or faculty of reasoning, to prove the scriptures to be divine; for that is common to all men, while this is a special privilege given only to believers. Moreover, there may be a power of reasoning, and yet a mistaken exercise of it; so that this is not sufficient fully to persuade us that the scriptures are the word of God, and is something inferior to what is intended in this answer. 2. The inward testimony of the Spirit in the hearts of men is something short of inspiration. Hence, though the scripture was known to be the word of God by the Spirit of inspiration, so long as that continued in the church; yet that privilege having now ceased, the internal testimony of the Spirit contains a lower degree of illumination, which has nothing miraculous attending it. 3. It is not an enthusiastic impulse, or strong impression upon our minds,

whereby we conclude a thing to be true, because we think it is so. This we by no means allow of; since our own fancies are not the standard of truth how strong soever our ideas of things may be. Therefore, 4. This inward testimony of the Spirit contains in it a satisfying and establishing persuasion, that the scriptures are the word of God,—a persuasion supported by other evidences and convincing arguments, and particularly by that which is taken from the use which God makes of the scripture, in beginning and carrying on the work of grace in the souls of believers; and this firm persuasion we find sometimes so deeply rooted in their hearts, that they would sooner die ten thousand deaths than part with scripture, or entertain the least slight thought of it, as though it were not divine. And certainly there is a special hand of God in this persuasion, which we can call no other than the inward testimony of the Spirit to the divine authority of scripture, [See Note Y, p. 77.]

[NOTE O. The Genuineness and Credibility of Scripture.—Dr. Ridgeley, before discussing the inspiration of scripture, "premises some things respecting the nature, necessity, and possibility of revelation;" and when stating his third remark on them, says, "These points must be made apparent, else it is vain to attempt to give arguments to prove the scriptures to be the word of God." But it is scarcely less vain to make this attempt without first proving the genuineness and credibility of the books of scripture. Some of the most important arguments for the inspiration of the books, assume that the genuineness and credibility of them are admitted, or suppose previous proof to have been offered quite sufficient to convince the judgment of any man who is not determined to reject all evidence. I shall, therefore, give, in as compressed a form as possible, an outline of proofs for the genuineness and credibility of the books of the New Testament. As to the books of the Old Testament, they will stand accredited by many of the arguments, just as if these were

adduced to support them; and, especially, they are so abundantly vouched for both by direct statements and by multitudinous quotations in the books of the New, that separate evidence of their genuineness and credibility, after offering it on behalf of the New Testament, is altogether superfluous.

The Genuineness of the Books of the New Testament

A book is genuine which was written by the author to whom it is ascribed. Some of the books of the New Testament profess, in general terms, to have been written by immediate disciples of Christ, and are proved to be genuine, simply if proved to be apostolical; others profess to have been written respectively by Paul, John, Peter, James, and Jude, and, in order to be proved genuine, must be severally traced to the individuals whose names they bear. Evidences of genuineness, as they affect the former class, may be not only satisfactory, but redundant; or they may be such as not alone prove the books to be apostolical, but discover and authenticate their respective authors. Such proofs as I shall advance, apply, for the most, to all the books of the New Testament, and contain subsidiary evidence, either expressed or implied, which bears on the books in detail, or on such of them as may be individually mentioned. I shall give them in the fewest words possible, and must rely on the reflection of my readers for eliciting their force, and giving them a practical application.

I. No reason can be urged against the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, which does not operate with vastly greater force against any of the ancient writings which are universally received as genuine. Listen to the reasonings of an infidel against an epistle of Paul or one of the four gospels, and apply them to Homer's Iliad, Virgil's Eneid, Herodotus' History, and similar works; and you will

find that they throw doubts on all these received books of antiquity, long before they raise a difficulty respecting a book of the New Testament. Tested by infidel argument, Paul may be the undoubted author of the epistles ascribed to him, after Homer, Virgil, and Herodotus are made to be suspected as fabricated or merely supposititious names. Yet the works ascribed to these authors are universally received as genuine. Why, then, should the genuineness of Paul's epistles be called in question?

II. If the books of the New Testament had not been apostolic, they would have been ascribed to the most eminent persons of the age in which they profess to have been written. Other existing documents than they profess to be apostolic, but are easily proved to be spurious; and they are ascribed to Nicodemus, to the whole college of the apostles, and even to our blessed Lord. The object of the fabricators was to stamp them with importance. But what fabricator would have ascribed professingly apostolic books to such men as Mark, Luke, or Jude, who, as compared to other immediate disciples of Christ, were always obscure or secondary persons? Or what fabricator would have passed by Andrew, Thomas, Bartholomew, Philip, Simon, James the son of Zebedee, and all the seventy disciples, assigning only meagre writings to even Peter, John, Matthew, James the Less, and Jude, while he ascribed no fewer than thirteen books to 'the young man Saul,' who was 'as one born out of due time?' What fabricator, in particular, would have forborne to ascribe some leading writings to the Lord Jesus?

III. The style of the New Testament is peculiarly such as the writers to whom the several books are ascribed might be supposed to employ.

1. It is not classical. That, indeed, of the books ascribed to Paul and Luke approaches to be so; but that of the other books is eminently what a polished or native Greek would have pronounced anomalous and inelegant. Now, Paul and Luke were learned men, the former 'brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,' and the latter 'a physician;' while the other reputed authors were all professedly illiterate.

2. It abounds in Hebrew and Syriac idioms. A Grecian would have written pure Greek; a Syrian would have written mere translated Syriac; a religious Jew, unacquainted with Christianity, would have written wholly in the idiom of Hebrew;—but only men situated exactly as the apostles, could have woven, upon a general texture of Greek, such a peculiar fringing of Hebrew and Syriac, as is found in the New Testament.

3. It wants the marks of every age but the apostolic. The nearest kindred writings to those of the New Testament, viewed simply as to subject and style, are the books of Maccabees, and the works of the earliest Christian fathers. But though the former immediately preceded the apostolic age, and the latter immediately succeeded it, both are characterized by a style essentially different from that of the New Testament. A cognate style to that of spurious existing books, which profess to be apostolic, may be found in various early writers; but no style can be found cognate to that which is ascribed to Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, and their fellow-writers.

IV. The characteristics or peculiar statements of the books, minutely agree with the position and character of the reputed authors.

1. They contain many intimate allusions to Jewish customs and ceremonies. Now the authors were Jews, who had witnessed the customs of the Jewish nation from infancy, and had often acted a part in both their civil and their religious ceremonies.

2. They display intimate acquaintance, not alone with the practice of the Roman government in Judea, but with the local feelings and opinions which it excited. Just such a political condition as they impliedly describe, is proved by Josephus and other neutral authors to have existed at the precise epoch when the books profess to have been written. Now the authors lived in Judea, under the Roman government, daily witnessing the conduct of governors and the governed.

3. Some of the books minutely allude to the manners, feelings, rural occupations, or industrious habits of the common people. Now the reputed writers of these books were poor men, belonging to the humblest class of society, who had personally mingled in every scene of humble life.

4. Others of the books, e. g. the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles of Paul, contain remarks of striking but remote coincidence with the ascertained condition, in politics, science, history, or topography, of the provinces of the Roman empire. Now the reputed writers of these books personally traversed the districts to which their remarks apply, and held intimate intercourse with the native population.

V. Some early enemies of Christianity, such as Celsus, Porphyry, and the Emperor Julian, attacked the books of the New Testament in form, and laboured to destroy their credit, yet they never called in question their genuineness. Julian wrote in the fourth century, Porphyry in the third, and Celsus in the reign of Adrian, or about the middle of the second; and they all, especially Celsus and Porphyry, enjoyed the amplest opportunity of assailing the books by every possible argument of coincidence or testimony; yet they felt constrained to admit their genuineness, and were obliged to rest contented with cavilling at their inspiration.

VI. The names and transactions of the reputed authors are recorded by writers of the first and second centuries. 'Paul' is spoken of by Clement of the first century, and Ignatius of the second; 'Paul and the rest of the apostles,' by Polycarp of the second century; 'Peter and John,' by Ignatius of the second century; 'Peter,' by Clement of the first century, and Papias of the second; and 'John and others who had seen the Lord,' by Irenæus of the second century. Now Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, and Irenæus, are all admitted to be genuine writers, and, along with about twenty others, most of whom also make personal references to the apostles, are the only extant Christian authors previous to the third century, by whom the penmen of the New Testament could have been noticed. They all lived so near the period when the books of the New Testament profess to have been written, that had any imposture existed, they could not have failed to detect it, and must have traced it to the very age in which several of the apostles survived. But they mention the penmen of the New Testament with confidence, and speak of them as having occupied exactly the position in which their reputed authorship of the books represents them to have been placed.

VII. Most of the books of the New Testament are mentioned singly or collectively as existing documents by the early Christian writers. 'Matthew' is mentioned by Papias; 'Mark' by Papias; 'The Four Gospels' by Cyprian; 'John, Matthew, Luke, and Mark,' by Tertullian; 'the gospels' by Justin Martyr; 'the Scriptures of the divine Gospels,' by Eusebius; 'the Historical Books,' by Justin Martyr; 'the gospels and apostles,' by Ignatius; 'the Acts,' by Origen and Cyprian; 'First Corinthians,' by Clement; 'Ephesians' by Ignatius; 'St. Paul's epistles,' by Tertullian; and 'the Scriptures of the Lord,' by Theophilus. Now Clement wrote in the first century, Ignatius, Papias, Tertullian, Theophilus, and Justin Martyr in the second, Cyprian and Origen in the third, and Eusebius early in the fourth; and all these writers treat

the books which they respectively mention, as of received and of undoubted genuineness.

VIII. The books of the New Testament were read and expounded as apostolic documents, or as the writings of the penmen to whom they are severally ascribed, in the public assemblies of the early Christians. This fact is attested by Eusebius, by Cyprian, and even by Tertullian, and by Justin Martyr. The third and fourth of these authors wrote in the second century; and all the four knew and referred to the public practice of the Christian churches, from the time of the apostles. The whole body of Christians from before the days of Justin Martyr are, in consequence, proved to have received the books of the New Testament as genuine. Or, more strictly, these books, as reputed apostolic writings, are traced up the broad stream of the whole Christian community, till the very days in which their professed authors lived. Could they have been fabricated and falsely imputed, under the very eyes of the men to whom they are ascribed?

IX. Several of the books are quoted, as existing documents and as apostolic writings, by some of the earliest Christian writers. The Gospel according to Matthew is quoted by Barnabas, Clement, and Hermas, the only extant Christian authors of the first century, and by Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and Theophilus, four of the very few extant authors of the second. The Gospel according to Mark is quoted by Justin Martyr and Athenagoras, both of the second century. The Gospel according to Luke is quoted by Clement, Hermas, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and Athenagoras. The Gospel according to John is quoted by Hermas, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Theophilus. The book of Acts is quoted by Hermas and Polycarp. The Epistle to the Romans is quoted by Clement. But all these are instances of quotation in only the few and scanty extant genuine writings of one hundred years succeeding the completion of the

books of the New Testament. Let instances be taken from the copious and more numerous writings of the period which followed, and the list of quotations will be unmanageably long.

X. Some of the books are minutely described, as to their received authorship and contents, by early writers. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are described by Clement and Eusebius; and Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts, by Irenæus of Lyons.

XI. Formal catalogues of the books, ascribing them to their respective authors, are given by early writers. Catalogues of precise and conclusive character are given in particular by Origen, Athanasnis. Cyril, and Jerome. This fact is decisive, not alone as to the genuineness of the books, but as to the canonicity of the New Testament. The catalogues are not lists of what the individual writers esteemed apostolic documents, but lists of what had been received as such by the Christian churches, from the earliest period to the time at which they severally wrote; and they constitute an evidence of genuineness which applies to all the books, and is stampt with the concurrent assent or accumulated testimony of the whole primitive Christian community.

XII. The books of the New Testament were collated, commented on, and translated in the early centuries of the Christian era.

1. Harmonies of the books were written by Ammonius, and by Julius Africanus, both of the third century.

2. Commentaries on the books were written in 170 by Tatian, in 190 by Pantænus, and in the fourth century by no fewer than fourteen authors.

3. Versions of the books were made, in the first century, into the Syriac language; in the second, into the Latin and the Sahidic; in the fourth, into the Ethiopic; and in the fifth, into the Coptic.

Now, the Harmonies, the Commentaries, and the Versions, had each the force both of a catalogue, and of a minute description of contents; and they all prove the genuineness of the books as resting on concurrent primitive testimony, and on the universal consent of the ages immediately succeeding the apostolic.

XIII. Many very ancient manuscripts of the books have been found in countries mutually distant and unconnected. The existence of ancient manuscripts is, in most cases, the sole, or almost, the sole evidence for the genuineness of any received writings of antiquity. But the ancient manuscripts, in the case of all other works, are few. collusive, and of recent date, compared to those in the case of the books of the New Testament. The ancient manuscripts, in the latter case, are so independent of one another as to the circumstances in which they were written, that they belong to at least three great classes, all as separate from one another as distance of country, improbability of intercourse, and difference of vernacular tongue, among the respective classes of transcribers, could possibly have rendered them. The manuscripts are also very old: of those still in preservation, one bears marks of the third century, two of the fourth, several of the fifth or sixth, and many of the centuries before the twelfth. These are all in the Greek language, and are independent of manuscripts, some of them equally ancient, of the earliest versions. Now, each manuscript—treating it as any man, even an infidel, treats an ancient manuscript of a Greek or Latin classical author—is in itself a complete proof of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament. How strong, then, is the evidence from a number of manuscripts, great, far beyond any parallel, uncollusive,

unconnected, extremely ancient, and all concurring to ascribe the books to their several reputed authors!

Objections to the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, either such as may be conceived, or such as infidels have actually advanced, are, for the most part, such as some of the preceding arguments directly and thoroughly answer. All which these arguments do not completely dispose of, may be comprehended in two.

First: The concurrent testimonies of Christian writers, as to the genuineness of the books, might have been designed.

But where is there reasonable ground of suspicion that they were so? The objection is founded on a gratuitous conjecture, and cannot he supported by even the shadow of evidence. No instance of apparent collusion has been adduced as to even any two testimonies. How then can we imagine collusion as to the whole?

Again: many of the testimonies are indirect, parenthetical, or incidental. None of them wear the appearance of having been written as testimonies, or with the view either of being quoted as authority, or of authenticating the apostolic writings. They consist simply of passing allusions, and never constitute the main aim of their authors. But had they been designed, they would have been direct, pointed, and formal, and would, at the same time, have been much more minute and numerous than we find them.

Further: the testimonies, as to the language, periods, and countries, in which they were written, were separate from one another, remote, unconnected, and independent. Some were written in Latin, and others in Greek, the former at the extreme west, and the Latter at the extreme east of the civilized world, at a time when few persons who

knew either language were acquainted with the other. Some were written in Syria, some in Cappadocia, some in Asia Miner, some in Greece, some in Egypt, some in Carthage, some in Italy, and some in Gaul, some in the first century, some in the second, in the third, in the fourth, when the means of intercourse between even neighbouring provinces were more seldom and imperfect, than those which exist now between the most distant regions of the globe. Collusion, in such circumstances, was morally and even physically impossible.

II. Why are not other extant documents than those of the New Testament, which profess to be apostolic, admitted to be genuine?

First: they contain only matter which is directly borrowed from the received books, with a few trifling and uncorroborated additions. In other words, their claim to apostolicity rests wholly on their having clumsily pirated such portions of the received books, as could most easily be subjected to change of phraseology.

Again: no documents professing to be apostolic, except those in the received canon, are quoted or mentioned by any writers of the first, second, or third century, or possess any of those evidences of genuineness which have been detailed in support of the received books.

The Credibility of the Books of the New Testament

A book is credible, the statements of which are worthy to be believed. Credibility is opposed to spuriousness of matter, as genuineness is opposed to spuriousness of authorship. The books of the New Testament having been authentically traced to their reputed authors, are next proved to contain only such statements as are true. Their credibility refers, in the first instance, to facts, and then, by

implication, to doctrines. What they state as sentiments or moral principles are all based on what they state as having been events. On the truth of their narratives turns the credibility of their entire contents. My proofs, therefore, shall refer to the books of the New Testament, chiefly, as historical documents.

I. The books do no more than assign adequate causes for effects which are known, on numerous testimonies, to have been produced, and describe effects naturally arising from causes which all parties admit to have existed.

1. They only assign adequate causes for known effects. No person doubts that, from the middle of the reign of Tiberius, Christianity, which had just sprung into being, spread in the face of unexampled persecutions, and amidst the most adverse circumstances, simply by the power of persuasion, and with irrepressible and amazing rapidity, throughout the civilized world. What causes but those assigned in the narratives of the New Testament, can account for an occurrence so utterly out of the ordinary course of human experience? Many other admitted events might be named, adequate causes for which are assigned only in the books of the New Testament.

2. The books only describe the natural effects of known causes. Let any man examine the admitted history of the Jews, let him study in particular the causes which had remotely and recently operated to form their character, and mould their condition; and he will find in the New Testament copious accounts of their opinions, prejudices, usages, and temporal state,—exactly such effects as the combination of remote and recent influences to which they had been subjected, must naturally have produced. The death of Christ, the conversion of many Jews to Christianity, the steadfast endurance by Christians of

severe persecution, as well as many other great causes of moulding opinion, revolutionizing society, or otherwise strongly influencing events, are admitted, on heathen or neutral testimony, to have existed; and they necessarily led exactly to such results as are regularly detailed in the statements of the New Testament.

II. The books were written in circumstances which rendered imposture or fabrication impracticable.

1. The occurrences which they record were public, well-known, and capable of being tested by the evidence of adverse witnesses. The leading events had been the most public and remarkable of the age in which they occurred, and had drawn the general attention of the population among whom the books were published. Even the lesser events were all matter of notoriety before the books were written. Almost every occurrence stated in the New Testament had been a subject of investigation and curiosity among the people to whose perusal it was submitted. A fabricator would have laid the scene of his events either in a secluded district, or in regions and times far remote.

2. The people among whom the books were published had the strongest jealousy of their object, and the most violent hostility to their doctrines. The Jews would sift every recorded fact to the bottom. No effort would they leave untried to detect falsification, exaggeration, or even circumstantial discrepancy. A fabricator either would not have dared to publish under their surveillance, or, had he dared, would instantly have been detected and disgraced.

3. The writers of the books, though united in one bond of faith, were scattered and mutually remote. Matthew wrote in Judea, Mark at Rome, Luke in Greece, and John at Ephesus; and the first, second, and third of these, whose writings embrace the same topics, and are

those of the books which most nearly resemble one another, wrote about the same period, Matthew and Mark having written in the year 64, and Luke in the year 64 or 63. Collusion among writers so remote from one another, and having no possibility of mutual communication before they severally published, was physically impossible. Paul, again, between whose epistles and the book of Acts there are many coincidences, wrote at Corinth, at Ephesus, in Macedonia, and chiefly at Rome, from the year 52 till the year 63; while Luke, the author of the book of Acts, wrote in Greece about the year 63.

III. The writers of the books were competent narrators of the facts which they recorded.

1. They were either, as in the majority of instances, personal witnesses of the facts, or, as in the case of Mark, who acted in a measure as the amanuensis of Peter, they received their information immediately from witnesses. Who were so competent to narrate the life and sayings of Christ as Matthew, Peter, John, and the other apostles who lived with him throughout the period of his ministry, and who, either personally or through Mark and Luke—themselves no mean witnesses—compiled the four gospels? Who so competent to narrate the voyages and numerous journeys of Paul, as Luke, who, for the most part, was his fellow-traveller? Or who so competent to describe the condition of the Ephesian, Galatian, Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Roman churches as Paul, who either planted them, or witnessed their infant condition, and in every case superintended their progress? Or who so competent to describe the seven churches of Asia, and the sect of Nicolaitanes or Gnostics, as John, who long lived amongst them, and watched their departure from apostolic Christianity?

2. The writers furnish no appearance of credulity. On the contrary, they stand unequalled, un-approached, and perhaps unimitated, in the remarkable property of narrating stupendous or uncommon events in a style so dispassionate as to prove the utter absence of any play of imagination.

3. They were not more subject than other men to mistakes, nor were exposed to imposition. Nothing can be objected against their capacity, which may not forcibly be objected against the capacity of almost all original historians; nor can any charge be laid against them of mistake or misconception, which will not impugn the credibility of the most accredited documents in existence.

4. Their integrity, though rigidly tried, was found to be unimpeachable. No proof is on record of their having wanted veracity, or fair moral character. The chief or only crimes ever alleged against them were their opinions,—those opinions which they openly and boldly promulged as doctrines of salvation, in their published writings.

IV. The writers of the books display extraordinary candour.

Matthew narrates his original inglorious condition of a publican; Peter, through Mark, describes in the darkest colouring the events of his temporary apostacy; Paul speaks of his having been 'a blasphemer and a persecutor,' and of strivings of unholy desire in his recent character; and all the writers expatiate on circumstances of their religion which exposed their persons to the certain derision and contempt of the world. A fabricator would have concealed what was ignominious, and invented whatever fiction might have dazzled or aggrandized.

V. The historical statements of the books possess, in keeping with their avowed objects, all the characteristics of true narrative.

1. They are complete. If they profess to narrate an event, they exhibit it in its cause, in its effects, in its design, and in all its details; or if they profess to discover the historical basis of a doctrine, they exhibit the whole fact on which the doctrine is founded, and fully explain in what respects the two are connected. No statement is cut short, so as to leave the reader in suspense, or to make an appeal to his imagination. Every narrative is so complete that the events described must have been before the writer's mind far more fully and distinctly, than if they had been either fiction, or mixtures of fact and fabrication.

2. The statements are minute. Spurious or exaggerated narratives are always general and indefinite; but the narratives of the New Testament are in the highest degree circumstantial, noticing the most minute particulars, and detailing the smallest matters with the same air of precision as the greatest.

3. The statements are consistent. Though they include the most various elements, grouping together all sorts of characters, and amassing the most heterogeneous materials, the picture which they exhibit is in beautiful, accurate, perfect keeping. Other writings which are received as credible, often contain most glaring discrepancies, and even palpable contradictions; but the writings of the New Testament are consistent to a degree which frees them, not alone from the charge of fabrication, but from the suspicion of mistake.

4. They are simple and unimpassioned. Either invention or exaggeration is the work of the fancy, and cannot go on without emotion; and it also invariably leads to rhetorical flourish, or at least

to a violation of simplicity. But the books of the New Testament, though detailing the most wonderful occurrences, are as unadorned and dispassionate as the humblest and most unpretending narrative.

VI. Though the writers, especially the four evangelists, wrote independently of one another, in countries mutually remote, and nearly at the same period, they minutely agree as to all the essential circumstances of what they record, while they fall into such apparent discrepancies as arise from computing time in different methods, from using words in different acceptations, or from narrating the same events in subordination to different designs.

Matthew and Mark say, 'that after six days' Jesus went to the mount of transfiguration; but Luke says, 'that after eight days,' he went. Now, the former evangelists excluded, while the latter included, the day from which they dated, and the day on which the transfiguration occurred. Luke says, that the men who journeyed with Saul to Damascus 'heard the voice' of him who spake from heaven; but Paul himself says, that they 'heard not the voice.' Now Luke by 'the voice' means the sound or prefatory thunder which stupified the men, while Paul means by it the articulate utterance which was addressed solely to himself. Matthew and Mark speak of 'an angel' as having attended the resurrection of Christ; but John speaks of 'two.' Now John simply narrated the event of the resurrection as it occurred, while Mark and Matthew diverge into a description of angelic manifestation, telling how 'an angel shone,' yet omitting to state that 'two angels' were present. Only such apparent discrepancies as these occur in the books of the New Testament,—discrepancies which disappear before an examination of the respective designs of the writers, and which strongly prove the absence of all collusion, and at the same time serve as a powerful reflector to the minute agreement which pervades the narratives.

VII. Among the books in general, and especially between the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul, there exist numerous yet remote coincidences.

These coincidences are extremely striking. They are perfectly exact; yet often are so remote as to be discoverable only by a process of two or three consecutive inductions. They could not have been designed, for they lie too deep beneath the surface, to be available to any except men of painful research; yet they are greatly more numerous and perfect, than it they had been the result of patient and dexterous study. Those between the book of Acts, and the epistles of Paul, form the subject of Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ.'

VIII. The statements of the books coincide with known or independently authenticated circumstances to which they refer.

1. They coincide with admitted facts, authenticated by profane historians. Instances of this occur in Matt. 2:22; Luke 2:1; and 3:1; Acts 12:1; 11:28; 12:19–23; 13:6; and 24:24.

2. They coincide with political, secular, or heathen practices, which are known to have been contemporaneous. Instances of this occur in John 19:19, 20; Acts 4:1; and 17:22.

3. They coincide with existing customs, attested by Jewish writers who were hostile to Christianity. Instances of this occur in Mark 8:3, 4.; Acts 16:13; and 21:23, 24.

IX. Some leading statements of the books, including those which form the basis of the most important doctrines, are repeated by cotemporary Jewish and heathen writers.

The events respecting John the Baptist, and the circumstances of the death and resurrection of Christ, are mentioned by Josephus. The persecution of the first Christians, and especially the apostles' being 'made a spectacle to the world,' and treated as 'fools,' are mentioned by Tacitus The opinions of the Jewish sects, and the customs and morals of the Jewish nation, are detailed by Josephus, and several Roman writers. The manners, moral practices, and superstitious observances of the heathens, are described by many authors. The notices of Jewish and Roman princes and governors, concur with the general testimony of contemporaneous history. Some of these instances, such as those respecting the moral condition of the Jews and the heathens, include a great diversity of particulars, almost all of which, as well as the general facts, are confirmed by independent testimony.

X. The books narrate events and promulgate opinions which formed the natural origin of numerous remarkable usages of the primitive Christians, which are mentioned as novelties by profane authors of the first century.

The authors who describe the usages, uniformly date them at a period subsequent to that at which the books were written. They also ascribe the usages to the new religion of Christianity. Now, whatever was remarkable, peculiar, or novel in what the authors describe, is exactly accounted for by the statements of the New Testament. Either these statements propagated the usages throughout the empire, or they were a transcript of actual circumstances in which the usages originated.

XI. Many persons who witnessed the facts recorded in the books, or who received information respecting them from personal witnesses, and enjoyed the most abundant opportunities of testing their

credibility, voluntarily underwent sufferings and death, to attest that the facts were true.

These persons were what are called confessors and martyrs. But they did not suffer for their opinions: they suffered for their belief of facts. They were all either personal or secondary, and most competent witnesses to the facts on which Christianity was based; and they were tortured and destroyed, that either they might be compelled to deny what they had attested, or might no longer work havoc upon the reigning superstition by the effects of their testimony. Both the fact and the nature of their sufferings are mentioned in the first century by Clement and Hermas, and by the heathen writers Tacitus and Martial, and early in the second century by Polycarp and the heathen writer Suetonius.

XII. The books of the New Testament are sometimes associated by early writers with those of the Old, as though the two sets of documents were equally received, or stood upon an equal footing of authority.

Clement of the first century speaks of 'the Law, the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Gospel.' Hegesippus, Ignatius, and lrenæus of the second century, speak respectively of 'the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord,' 'the Prophets, but especially the Gospels,' and 'the apostolic writings, the Law and the Prophets.' Origen of the third century is more formal, and speaks, as a modern would do, of 'the Old and New Testament,' and 'the Ancient and New Scriptures.' Now the books of the Old Testament were universally received by the Jews as not only credible but inspired; and those of the books which are historical, were received even by the heathens as narratives at least equally credible with those of any ancient historians. The associating of these books and those of the New Testament by early Christian writers,

would therefore seem to prove that the latter were generally esteemed credible,—that they were esteemed so by a people who denied their inspiration, and rejected their doctrines, and at the same time possessed ample opportunity to investigate, and, had it been practicable, to impugn their facts. Or if the associating of the books of the Old and those of the New Testament, does not prove that the latter were actually esteemed credible by the whole hostile or neutral community, it at least proves that they were so esteemed by all classes of persons to whom the early Christian authors addressed their writings.

XIII. The books were appealed to in all the controversies respecting Christianity, which occurred during the first and second centuries, and were treated on all sides as conclusive authority respecting facts.

Though some persons professing to be Christian denied that particular books were inspired, they nevertheless admitted that they were credible; and though heathen and Jewish opponents rejected them on account of their doctrines, they paid them remarkable deference as historical documents. All modern infidels freely admit, and even quote for their own purposes, whatever historical statements of the Bible can be detached from the peculiar doctrines of revelation; and they in consequence constructively assent to the credibility of at least those books from which they quote. But this conduct is a mere inconsistency. That of the early controvertists, on the other hand, was a regular, formal, professed appeal to the books of the New Testament, as documents of historical authority.

XIV. Those statements of the books which form the basis both of their doctrines and of all their minor or subordinate facts, were admitted to be true, and even adopted and repeated, by the public opponents of Christianity.

The death and exalted character of Christ were so generally admitted at Rome, that the emperor Tiberius, in whose reign he was crucified, proposed his being enrolled among the Roman gods. The spread of the gospel over Judea and throughout the regions mentioned in Paul's epistles and the book of Acts, was recognised in the public edicts of the empire, and made the avowed basis of the imperial persecutions to which the Christians were subjected. Even the change in condition, in moral habits, in social sentiments and in religious usages, which the books describe as having been produced respectively in Jews and Heathens who believed the gospel, is admitted as to almost all its details, and is in some instances even minutely described, by such persons as Tacitus, Celsus, and Porphyry.

XV. The doctrines of the books and the credit of their narratives, were rapidly diffused and publicly professed, amongst the population who had the highest facilities for ascertaining the truth or falsehood of the facts on which they were based.

Christianity rose to gigantic strength almost the instant after it began to exist. As is declared by Jewish and heathen historians, it spread throughout most parts of the Roman empire, during the generation which lived at the commencement of the apostolic ministry. What is chiefly remarkable is, that it spread first and most rapidly in Judea. Yet the books of the New Testament state the miracles and discourses of Christ to have been so numerous, and to have been performed and spoken before such multitudes and in so many parts of the country, that there could have lived no persons in Judea, at the period when it extensively received Christianity, who either had not seen the miracles and heard the discourses, or at least did not enjoy opportunity to make inquiries respecting them of personal witnesses, both friendly and hostile. The people of the first century, especially

they of the generation cotemporaneous with the death of Christ, and more particularly such as resided in Judea, or resorted from other countries to the great festivals at Jerusalem, possessed a thousand facilities for investigating the facts of the New Testament; yet they were the very people among whom the credit of the facts, and a belief in all the doctrines consequent upon them, were most rapidly and signally disseminated.

XVI. The writers of the books frequently appeal, for confirmation of their statements, to those who were in circumstances to know or to ascertain their truth; and they often found their admonitions and reasonings upon what were admitted as incontrovertible facts.

The historical statements throughout the epistles are almost all the mere echo of general previous belief. They are assumed as undisputed by the parties to whom the epistles are addressed, and, in the character of undoubted transcripts of acknowledged facts, are directly employed as grounds for admonition, or as the premises of an argument for supporting a conclusion. They are, at the same time, proved on abundant testimony to have been first published among the parties to whom they severally appeal. It hence follows that their credibility was established the instant they were written. Even the historical books, though themselves making no other appeal than the silent but powerful one of their having been first published among the people whom they describe as having been witnesses of most of the facts which they record, contain many discourses, such as that of Peter on the day of Pentecost, that of Paul at Athens, and those of our Lord against the Scribes and Pharisees, which base all their doctrines and admonitions on series of important facts, and appeal for the truth of their premises to the public undisguised acknowledgment of the parties addressed.

XVII. All the Christian writers of the first and second centuries assume, throughout their reasonings, the credibility of the books of the New Testament; or, in other words, they uniformly treat the historical statements of these books as uncontroverted, or as universally admitted to be true.

This is a fact of singular strength; and unless we shall esteem all the early Christian writers to have been egregious fools, and believe that they maintained their influence and propagated their opinions by means of the most contemptible foolery of argument, it proves to demonstration that the credibility of the books of the New Testament was questioned, in the early ages, by neither heretics, Jews, heathens, nor philosophers. The early Christian authors wrote with the express design of propagating Christianity. Many addressed their writings in the first instance and even exclusively to the enemies of the gospel. Some grappled in the tug and wrestle of controversy with those who would now be called the infidel opponents of their faith. Most reviewed the current arguments, objections, or erroneous principles of heretics, Jews, heathens, and philosophers, labouring to convince these classes of persons of their errors, and to convert them to the truth. All the early Christian writers, in fact, exerted their efforts more or less directly with the avowed design, and almost for the sole purpose, of defending Christianity against the objections of its enemies. Wherefore, then, did they never defend the credibility of the books of the New Testament? Why, in particular, did they dare or venture, in all circumstances, to assume that credibility as uncontroverted? The only possible reason must be that there was not in existence, or at least never was publicly avowed, one noticeable objection on the subject.

Modern objections to the credibility of the books of the New Testament, additional to such as some of the preceding proofs

directly answer, may be comprehended in two.

I. The books of the New Testament were never received by unconverted Jews as they are by Christians, and in particular, they were rejected by such Jews as did not embrace Christianity, and yet had opportunities of testing the historical statements which the books contain.

This objection confounds credibility with inspiration. The Jews certainly never received the books of the New Testament as a revelation or as divine scriptures; yet they have always admitted them to be authentic and credible historical documents. The early Jews, who are the only parties in the case of any weight, never denied the facts which the books record. They denied, indeed, the doctrines which were built upon them; but they often quoted the facts for the purpose of pervertedly supporting their own opinions. They admitted, for example, that Christ was crucified, hut denied, on the perverted authority of his own discourses, that he was the Son of God; or they acknowledged that he had worked the numerous miracles ascribed to him, but contended, from his alleged blasphemy, in having called himself the Son of God, that he had worked them through diabolic agency.

II. If the books were credible, it is unaccountable that cotemporary historians should have so slightly noticed the remarkable events which they narrate.

This objection can be met by many answers, but may be overthrown by one or two of the more obvious.

1. That contemporary historians noticed at all the events narrated, is sufficient evidence of credibility. How could they have noticed them it they had not occurred? Or is a notice of no value unless when it is

of a length and copiousness to suit the demands of our fancy or our caprice?

2. Most of the writings of the first century are lost; and those which remain are, for the most part, mutilated. Had all the writings been preserved, they might have been found to contain many corroborations of the New Testament narratives. Such as might have contained corroborations, are exactly the writings which were most likely to have been lost. For,

3. The writings which survive owe their preservation to the circumstance, that the topics of which they treat were those most interesting to the imperial Romans, or to heathen philosophers. Now, the discussion of these topics admitted no direct reference to Christianity, and much less a detailed account of the facts of its origin. Whoever adverts to the character of the writings, to the design of their authors, and to the circumstances of their publication, will only wonder that they adverted even slightly to the subjects of the New Testament history.—ED.]

[NOTE P. The Harmony of the Scriptures, a Proof of their Inspiration.—Dr. Ridgeley's argument from the Harmony of Scripture, so far as it is valid, is simply the argument from prophecy, —that scripture contains predictions of events, which are related in credible history, and are universally admitted to have happened as they were foretold. Most of his argument, as illustrated by him, simply exhibits agreements between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the narratives of the New. It ought, however, to have included a view of some of that class of minute, latent, and striking coincidences in description and historical allusion, which Dr. Paley, in his Horæ Paulinæ. discovers between the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul: it ought, in particular, to have exhibited the

remarkable agreement which exists among respectively all the doctrines and all the ethical principles of scripture. A general statement of the argument, as applying to the several books of the New Testament, may be made thus:—The writers wrote in different countries, in different circumstances, with different specific designs, without means of collusion, without opportunity for mutual revision; they addressed themselves to readers of the most various characters; they framed their statements to suit the most discrepant exigencies, and confront the most conflicting prejudices or errors; they touched fact and doctrine incidentally, directly, argumentatively, or in whatever manner was adapted to their respective designs; they dealt with facts which astuteness and cunning had done their utmost to mystify, and with doctrines which were new, profound, numerous, and associated together by many abstract relations; and yet they are all consistent with one another, minutely harmonious, uniformly and perfectly agreed.—ED.]

[NOTE Q. Paul's Justification by Faith only, and James' Justification by Works.—The justification of which James speaks, is a justification very often mentioned in scripture, and perfectly familiar to all persons who speak the English language: it is the evincing of a person to be what he professes to be, or the vindicating of him from a charge of deception or of sin. Wisdom, and Christ, and God, as well as Christians, are represented as subjects of this justification. 'Wisdom is justified of her children,'—Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:35. 'God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,'—1 Tim. 3:16. 'Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written. That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings,'—Rom. 3:4. James, to illustrate his doctrine, adduces two examples,—that of a professedly benevolent man, who is vindicated by feeding the hungry and clothing the naked; and that of Abraham, who professed to be an obedient observer of the divine will, and was vindicated by offering his son

Isaac on the altar. What he understands by the justification of a Christian, therefore, is simply the vindication of his Christian profession or character. Now, Paul everywhere teaches as distinctly as he, that this is effected, not by faith only, but chiefly by works. James, in the same way, teaches as truly as Paul that justification from guilt, or acceptance with God, has connexion, not with works but only with faith. The leading text which Paul quotes in support of it, is quoted for the same purpose by James: 'And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness,'—James 2:23, comp. with Rom. 4:2, 3. How does James say this scripture was fulfilled? and what does he imply to be its meaning? It was fulfilled when Abraham had offered Isaac his son upon the altar,'—ver. 23. It was fulfilled by an event which did not happen till eighteen years after it was spoken, or after Abraham's faith had been imputed to him for righteousness; and it necessarily had reference to justification with God—justification by faith,—a justification altogether different in character from vindication by works. It James can be supposed to treat of justification from guilt when he speaks of Abraham offering up Isaac, then, by adducing the saving that his faith was imputed to him for righteousness, he represents the patriarch as having been justified eighteen years before he was justified. He treats, however, of a totally different matter, and, as we have seen, writes in perfect harmony with Paul.

Dr. Ridgeley's explanation as to James speaking of a justification of faith, is hence not quite correct. Faith, in strict propriety of words, cannot even be vindicated from a charge, and still less justified from guilt. A person, an active and intelligent being, is the subject either of justification or of vindication. Dr. R.'s incidental sentiment about 'an historical faith, such as the devils themselves have,' is still more

objectionable; and may furnish occasion for a stricture or two, when he comes to discuss the nature and properties of believing.—ED.]

[NOTE R. Vindictive Justice.—Dr. Ridgeley's sentiments on this paragraph, clearly imply that there is one rule of rectitude for 'persons in a private capacity,' and another for 'magistrates in the execution of public justice.' No practical principle can be more mischievous or unsound. If any action be sinful to a Christian as a private member of society, will it cease to be so, and become just and obligatory, when he is elected to fill a civil office? Is there, 'in the execution of public justice,' or in the rights and prerogatives of magistrates, an authority to annul or reverse a law of God,—to dispense with the obligations of private conscience,—to perform as necessary to the public welfare, actions which are in consistent with private personal religion? If so, either moral rectitude is a nose of wax which may be twisted to the right or left agreeably to a man's position in society, or no Christian, without renouncing allegiance to Christ, and violating his laws, can art in a magisterial capacity! Mere political economists, who make no pretensions to a sure for wisdom than that of reason, teach a better doctrine than this, and have no difficulty in saying to the magistrate, as truly as to the private member of society, 'Be merciful as your Father also is merciful;' 'judge not, that ye be not judged.' They maintain that 'public justice' ought to be conducted, not for retaliating injuries, but for preventing crime and reclaiming offenders; they can see a model for magistrates as truly in the moral government of Deity, as for private Christians in the perfections of the divine character; and, while inculcating magisterial vigilance and fidelity on the one hand, and official mercy and forbearance on the other, they have no difficulty in recognising a perfect oneness in a public and in a private standard of rectitude.

Dr. Ridgeley forgets that the precept respecting 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' was part of the judicial law, or of that peculiar polity which belonged to the theocratic government of the Jews. An advertence to this fact affords a key to the true reconciliation of the two classes of texts to which he refers. The judicial law, as truly as the ceremonial, was peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation, and became defunct at the advent of Christ. Our Lord, at the commencement of his public ministry, quoted the very precept of it in question, for the purpose of teaching that it was abolished: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but 1 say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also,'—Matt. 5:38–40. The judicial law existed in union with the ceremonial; the one exhibited the severity of justice, and the other the method of mercy; the former inculcated the severity and inevitableness of the deserts of transgression, and the latter the necessity and availableness of propitiation by sacrifice. Both received their due fulfilment in the obedience and sufferings of our great Surety; and they were a rule respectively of moral conduct and of acceptable approach to God, only as typifying the properties of his atonement. The principle of 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,'—the principle of vindictive justice, or of retaliating and avenging injuries—has, hence, no place in the rule of rectitude between man and man. 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay.' Man, be he serf or magistrate, peasant or prince, may not, without sin, avenge himself: he may not 'return evil for evil;' he may not demand 'an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth.' Public justice, as well as private, is restricted to restoring property, and to protecting and respecting it. Punishment must not be vindictive, but corrective—it must not avenge or retaliate a wrong, but merely chastise with a view to personal amendment and the public safety.

What, then, is to be said respecting 'life for life,'—the punishment of death for the crime of murder? It is, in my humble judgment, fearfully wrong; and I shall find occasion to state my reasons, when we shall advance to Dr R.'s exposition of the sixth commandment.—ED.]

[NOTE S. Proof of the Inspiration of Scripture from the Zeal which it displays for the Divine glory.—Dr. Ridgeley does not see the argument from the zeal of scripture for the divine glory in its full light, and tails to advert to its most striking phasis. The argument may be given in few sentences, and, for the sake of greater brevity, shall be stated with reference only to the New Testament.

Man, in the present state of being, is never, in the ordinary course of things, and especially when opportunity is afforded him of recounting actions which excite the wonder or attract the applause of his fellows, so effectually humbled as not to he influenced by feelings of self-gloriation. The inspired writers were, in this respect, men of the same passions as others, and, according to information furnished by themselves, felt strongly the promptings of vanity to boast of even those spiritual honours which belonged to them as ambassadors of Christ. Paul required to have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, lest he might be exalted overmuch through the abundance of the revelations he received. Peter exposed himself to public severe censure from a fellow-labourer, on account of weakly seeking the favour of a numerous class of men by trimming to their prejudices. The whole body of the apostles, in fact, engaged at one time in unseemly strife for pre-eminence, contending among themselves as to who should be greatest in the kingdom of their Master. Such are the accounts, furnished by their own pen, of their having shared in the vanity and self-gloriation common to mankind.

Now, liable as the penmen of the New Testament were to exalt themselves and desire personal fame—possessed constitutionally of just the same vain ambition as Julius Cæsar, or any other historian of his own exploits—they, nevertheless, display not one tinge of either self-adulation or homage to one another from beginning to end of their writings. In all histories but those of the Bible, praiseworthiness and wonder are wreathed around the blow of man. Xenophon, Livy, Josephus, Clarendon, and all other ordinary historians talk only of the virtues, prowess, or achievements of human heroes. Julius Cæsar, Marco Paolo, or any other ordinary narrator of his own exploits or travels, lets no leading agent, no object of applause, no wonder-worker or discoverer figure in his pages except himself. Had the penmen of the New Testament written under merely human influences, they themselves and their coadjutors would have stood forth in every narrative as the chief or only claimants of admiration and homage. All their writings, however, proclaim abasement to man, and undivided glory to God. "Whatever beneficence they record, is traced to Deity as its source; whatever wonders of love or of power they narrate, are ascribed to him as their cause; whatever claims to praiseworthiness or honour or homage they advance, are made in his name and connected solely with his glory. Men, including the sacred writers themselves, are spoken of only that they may stand rebuked and humbled, or that they may appear as mere instruments under the one, supreme, sovereign agency of God. One apostle figures as the subject of guilty cowardice, base apostacy, and deeply humiliating repentance; another in the mid-career of wonder-working efforts and of splendid successes, describes himself as less than the least of all saints;' and all make mention of their excellencies as unmerited gifts of divine bounty, and of their miracles and other achievements as the direct results of divine agency. Their writings, from beginning to end, unfeignedly and fervently echo the sentiment of David: 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give

glory.' What a contrast do they, in this respect, exhibit to all other productions of authorship! In scripture, God is all in all: in other writings, man—poor, drivelling, sinful man—is always a prominent, and generally the sole, claimant of praise and admiration. What but inspiration could have so perfectly controlled the ordinary feelings of the sacred penmen, and imbued them with so transcendently a devotional spirit?—ED.]

[NOTE T. Consciousness of Inspiration.—Dr. Ridgeley's speculations as to the manner in which the sacred writers knew themselves to be inspired, are conjectural and unnecessary. No man now knows from experience what the phenomena of inspiration are; nor can any one gather distinct information respecting them from the divine word. The fact, that the sacred writers knew themselves to be inspired, and not the manner in which they knew this, is what we ought to investigate and discern: and it will be clearly understood, and convincingly exhibited, just in the proportion in which it is viewed as a matter simply of testimony or at best of analogy. We can acquire no knowledge or assurance of it by attempting to ascertain how it was; we shall form but conjectural ideas of it, by comparing it, as Dr. Ridgeley does, with the fact of a consciousness of spiritual illumination on the part of believers in Christ; we can truly understand it, or perceive the evidence on which it rests, only when we regard it as an essential part of the process of inspiration, and compare it with consciousness of all sorts of knowledge. Every proof that a book is a revelation from God, is necessarily a proof that the writers of it knew themselves to be inspired. Whatever proves that a writing was penned by inspiration, proves at the same time that it was not penned under the influence of fanaticism and delusion. The fact that the sacred penmen had a consciousness of being inspired, stands thus on just the same basis—as broad, as tangible, as

convincing—as the general truth that the scriptures are a revelation from God.

There is, in the consciousness of inspiration, nothing contrary to the ordinary laws of human experience, nothing unanalogous to consciousness of other sorts of knowledge, but everything accordant and harmonious with both. Let it even be supposed that in all instances, instead of merely a few, the sacred writers did not, at the time when they wrote, understand the matters which were suggested to them, they had no more difficulty in perceiving that certain communications had been made to their mind, and no less calm and distinct a conviction that these did not originate in delusion, than the general human mind has in receiving from a parent or tutor the lessons of childhood. Man's mind is so constituted as to receive and retain for years what is utterly devoid of meaning to it, and what by mere reflection it afterwards comes to understand; and it receives and retains such matter, not only without injury to its powers, without contravention of its spontaneous operations, and without detriment to consciousness or hazard of illusion, but in the ordinary course of the training and development of its energies, and in the full exercise of its most wakeful and calm perceptions. Every educated man received lessons in his childhood which long lay like newly masticated food upon his mind, and did not yield intellectual nourishment, or become incorporated with what he knew or understood, till after tedious processes of digestion and secretion; yet he, all the while, possessed distinct consciousness that the lessons had been communicated by a tutor, that they lay lodged in his mind as acquired materials of thought, and that they were neither illusions of his own fancy, nor suggestions from some strange or unremembered source. Now if man, through the defective medium of spoken language, can so communicate ideas to the mind, that, though not understood, they will be retained, and afterwards turned

to practical account, God, who is infinitely stronger and more skilful than he, can assuredly do it through the surer medium of moral operation; if man can, in the ordinary course of his educational culture, receive, by the means of sound or of disturbance of the atmosphere, the elements of future thought, he could much more, without suspension or modification of his ordinary reason, receive, by the higher means of a moral impression on his intellect, the elements of full acquaintance with the will of his Creator; and if he, daily, in all circumstances, and in millions of instances, acquires, without confusion or damage to his consciousness, his rote-work lessons from the articulations of a tutor's voice, he could much more, with clear, calm perception of the divine source whence the communications came, receive inspired suggestions from the supreme agency and unerring wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Again, consciousness of inspiration is perfectly accordant with the nature of all knowledge. Every man knows what is presented to his mind, and believes what appears to him to be true; and he knows it just in the light in which it is presented to him, and believes it with more or less firmness according to the strength or nature of the evidence by which it is supported. He knows, for example, that extreme best gives pain to the body, and believes it on the evidence of sensation; he knows that one reminiscence draws forth another by the attraction of resemblance, and believes it on the evidence of consciousness; he knows that a whole is greater than a part, and believes it on the evidence of intuition; he knows that a ripe orange is yellow, and round, and juicy, and believes it on the evidence of perception; he knows that the inhabitants of New Zealand are cannibals, and believes it on the evidence of written or of oral testimony. But why does he know any of these matters? Just because they are presented to his mind. In what light does he know them? Just in that which belongs respectively to the several media through

which they are conveyed. And why does he believe them? Just because all matters presented to the intellect carry with them their appropriate evidence, and necessarily make an impression proportioned to its weight. Now, why should he not know a matter presented to his mind by the divine agency? Why should he not know it in the light of supernatural suggestion? Why should he not believe it on the evidence of divine testimony? Knowledge by divine suggestion is knowledge on exactly the same principle, and according to exactly the same laws, as knowledge by any other medium: it is simply the presenting of objects to the mind,—the presenting of them in a manner and with an evidence suited to their peculiar nature; and it, in no respect, differs more from knowledge of any other genus, than knowledge by intuition differs from that by perception, or knowledge by consciousness differs from that by human testimony. Hence, a man under divine inspiration, and knowing that he is so, is, on philosophical principles, no greater a phenomenon, than a man reading history or studying mathematics; and he may, on the evidence of divine suggestion, as surely commit the revelation he has received to writing, as, on the evidence of demonstration and of human testimony, the mathematician and the historian may deliver prelections on the properties of angles and the revolutions of empires.—ED.]

[NOTE U. Modes and Degrees of Inspiration.—In this paragraph, and in a subsequent one, Dr. Ridgeley hints at the popular doctrine respecting degrees of inspiration. In some parts of this section, he makes remote allusion also to the modes in which the sacred writers were inspired. On both topics, however, he is confused and obscure. On the former, in particular, he confounds the semi-infidel theory of Socinians with the theory of the opponents of mere plenary verbal inspiration. That some light may be thrown on his allusions, I shall make a remark or two on the subject of modes and degrees.

Many writers distribute inspiration into classes corresponding to the external phenomena with which it was given. When it came through the medium of sounds, they call it audible revelation; when it came through the medium of visions, they call it symbolic revelation; and when it came as a direct influence upon the mind, they call it silent suggestion. They, in consequence, discover as many kinds of revelation as there were varieties of phenomena,—revelation by audible communication, revelation by symbolic representations, revelation by dreams, revelation by Urim and Thummim, and revelation by immediate afflatus on the understanding. These varieties they are pleased to designate varieties in the modes of inspiration. Every person, however, may, on a moment's reflection, perceive that they are varieties merely in the external or physical phenomena. The mode of inspiration, or the manner in which the Divine Spirit operated supernaturally on the minds of the sacred writers, seems to have been, in all cases, the same. Neither sound, nor symbolic representation, nor anything else, addressed to the senses, constituted inspiration. The supernatural influence of the Divine Spirit on the mind, whether direct or mediate, whether with or without external phenomena, was that alone which either made revelations, or produced a consciousness that they were from God. How this influence operated, we neither know, nor ought to inquire. If it is true respecting the regenerating, how emphatically true is it respecting the inspiring influences of the Holy Ghost: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born,' every one that is inspired, of the Spirit,'—John 3:8. But though we know not what the modus is, we may easily see that it is unique and uniform. Difference of medium, or difference of external phenomena, cannot affect a manner of operation which is divine, and which, as such, is always, when directed to any given end, one and immutable. To talk of modes of creation, modes of divine volition,

modes of God's faithfulness, would seem to me nearly, if not quite as correct, as to talk of modes of inspiration. Phenomena, and circumstances, and objects, differ from one another as widely in various cases of God's creating, and of his willing, and of his fulfilling promises, as in the instances of his inspiring the sacred writers. But are we entitled, in consequence, to speak of modes and kinds of his power, his will, and his faithfulness? The miraculous power of Christ, in particular, was marked by varieties in its display which peculiarly resemble the supposed varieties of inspiration. He exerted it, at one time, 'while he spake with a loud voice;' at another, while he made use of clay and spittle; at another, while a woman touched the hem of his garment; at another, while he travelled at a distance of several miles from the object on which it was displayed. But who will say that it was of different modes of operation,—that, as display ed silently, as displayed by the accompaniment of touch, and as display ed by the accompaniment of sound, it was of different kinds? No one will say so; nor, therefore, will any one who admits the cases to be parallel, talk of modes and kinds of inspiration.

The doctrine of degrees is nearly allied to that of modes, and seems always to accompany it. The writers who maintain it, however, appear to be as enveloped in mist, and as shrouded from one another's view, as the ancient theorists in metaphysics: they agree only that there are degrees, but promulge all sorts of contradictious as to the points in which these consist, or the limits by which they are defined. To a superficial student, indeed, they may seem to be so far agreed as all to distribute the degrees into what they term "suggestion," "elevation," and "superintendence;" but they greatly conflict with one another even in this; for they use the same word in totally different senses, and, under cover of the same phraseology, promulge the most discrepant sentiments as to the amount or energy of inspiring influence. Their variations from one another appear to

me to arise from the erroneous and illusive character of their fundamental principle. Degrees of inspiration, or differences of quantity in the inspiring agency of the Divine Spirit, seems to my very humble judgment, a notion utterly discountenanced by scripture, and quite repugnant to enlightened and sanctified reason. The scripture's own accounts of its inspiration all contemplate the writings as a whole, and, speaking of them in cumulo, exhibit, them, in their origin and nature, as in one uniform sense the word of God. 'The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,'—2 Pet. 1:21. 'And he said unto them, All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures,'—Luke 24:44, 45. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,'—2 Tim. 3:16. These texts appear profoundly uncognizant of the doctrine of degrees: they treat expressly of the subject of inspiration, they exhibit the scriptures as of divine origin, they claim for them just the authority and the influence which arise from their being wholly the word of God; and yet they afford no hint, and no room or scope for insinuation, that they, in any respect, differ from one another, or are of different classes, as to the amount of divine agency which gave them origin. Whoever reads these texts, and others on the same subject, and does not afterwards lose sight of them amid the mazes of "systematic theology," will probably regard it as almost an axiom in Constantly, that the books and parts of scripture are all, in the same sense, and in the same plenitude of supernatural origin, the word of God.

There is, indeed, one distinction, on this subject, which the Bible sanctions,—that, in some parts of scripture, the inspired writers did

not, while in other parts they did, understand the meaning of what they wrote, 1 Pet. 1:10, 11. But this distinction has reference only to the topics of inspiration, and not to its degree or amount. Theological writers usually assume that a loftier or more powerful agency was needed for communicating matters which were not understood, than for suggesting such as were easily comprehended, or for properly arranging and exhibiting those which were previously known. The mere fact that some parts of scripture were not understood by the inspired penmen, is hence the basis on which the whole theory of degrees in inspiration is built. But why should it be thought that matters not understood were the word of God by a higher agency, or in a sublimer sense, than matters which were comprehended, or had been observed? Information, it is to be remembered, is not inspiration. Man knew, or might have known, by ordinary observation, many things recorded and taught in the Bible; but, in that case, he knew, or might have known them, only as matters of information; and he can know them as part of God's word, only when they are so arranged by infinite wisdom, and so combined and modified by infinite knowledge, and so imbued with the various sublime properties of divine authorship, as to possess a kind and an amount of moral influence which no skill or perspicacity of man can impart. Now, who will say that there was a smaller amount of divine agency in taking matters of human observation and elevating them to the standard and investing them with the power of divine communications, than in suggesting matters which were utterly unknown? The philosopher who discourses to the mob about insects, and grasses, and pebbles, which are familiar to their observation, and are despised for their insignificance, and who successfully exhibits them as objects of the highest interest and wonder, achieves quite as noble a task, and exerts as strong an influence on their minds, as he who discourses to them about the nebulæ and the milky way, and leads them in bewilderment among the mazes of

astronomy. Advocates for degrees in inspiration usually represent the writers of the historical parts of scripture, as having simply been preserved from error. But will they make no allowance for the wise selection of materials,—for the skilful collocation of parts,—for the just intermixture of narrative and moral lesson,—for the exact exhibition of the most attractive or influential phases,—for omniscient adaptation to all capacities and varieties of readers, and to all conditions and ages of the world,—for the secret but powerful subordination of the statement of facts to the development of doctrines,—and for harmony, uniqueness, and mutual subserviency, in relationship to each and all of the other parts of scripture? These, and kindred properties—and not merely correctness of narrative or accuracy of description—are what constitute the historical books the word of God. Now, who will say that the imparting of these properties was less difficult, less superhuman, less eminently divine, than the simple suggesting or communicating of matters not understood? A sacred historian was, in himself, or previous to his inspiration, encumbered with the same weaknesses as other men: he viewed some matters through a false medium; attached to some disproportionate importance; he abstracted some from the principles on which they were really based, and rested them on principles with which they had only remote connexion; he viewed events more in the materiel than in the morale,—more as detached and final occurrences, than as direct expositors of moral truth; he looked at human actors rather as treading the ordinary arena of life, than as performing their part in the fulfilment of the most stupendous councils of eternity; in a word, he had the thoughts and feelings, the predilections and prejudices, of a mere narrator. How, then, could he, in writing history, become a penman of the word of God? By being merely preserved from error? By enjoying only a low degree of supernatural influence? Surely not. Had he previously known nothing of what he was to write, his mind, as to feeling and prejudice

and misconception, would have been free from mischievous and antagonistic influences, and would simply have had to receive communications made to it, as a child receives lessons about unknown things from a tutor. But encumbered, biassed, and wilful as his mind was, he required to be placed under active pressure, and subjected to a controlling energy. While he wrote, the laws of ordinary human experience were suspended and contravened: his feelings were subdued, his prejudices counteracted, his predilections turned aside, and all his motives and machinery of mere historiography broken up or counterworked. His mind, in short, was supremely ruled by supernatural agency. The amount of divine energy requisite to make him an inspired penman, might, on principles of human calculation, be imagined to have been considerably greater than that which was needed or enjoyed by a passive recipient of communications not understood. If, therefore, degrees of inspiration are at all to be conceived of, the inspired historian may, on several grounds, and in important respects, be supposed to have had a higher degree than even the inspired prophet. The two, however, are not to be compared. Both enjoyed the fulness of divine influence,—the plenitude of inspiring energy. Equally in the writer of prophecies, in the writer of didactics, and in the writer of narrative, the Holy Spirit exerted his supernatural power,—his power to exhibit lessons to man which could never have been constructed by the efforts of human reason. All classes of the sacred penmen were inspired to the same degree, and in the same way,—to a degree truly and exclusively divine and in a way consistent with the uniformity of divine operation. What theological writers call degrees of inspiration, are thus merely varieties and differences in the topics discussed. To one inspired penman was given the recording of visions; to another, the reporting of audible communications; to another, the exhibition of argumentative doctrine; to another, the statement of dehortation and precept; to

another, the divinely instructive collocation of historical occurrences; and in each, as truly as in the others, the Holy Spirit's agency was supreme, the same in energy and in mode of operation. What Paul says respecting the varieties of miraculous gifts, applies in principle to the varieties of inspiration: 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administration, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, (ενεργηματων, miraculous influences,) but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will,'—1 Cor. 12:7–11. "All these gifts," says Dr. Clarke, paraphrasing the last of these verses, "are miraculously bestowed; they cannot be acquired by human art or industry, the different languages excepted; but they were given in such a way, and in such circumstances, as sufficiently proved that they also were miraculous gifts."—ED.]

[NOTE V. Verbal Inspiration.—Dr. Ridgeley chiefly proves the possibility and desirableness of plenary verbal inspiration, but does not give direct arguments for the fact. I shall briefly state three which he might have adduced.

1. As the mind thinks only in words', inspiration must either have presented ideas clothed in appropriate language, or have merely incited or strengthened the mind to invent or discover them. To have done the latter, would have been only to invigorate, not to reveal: it would have been to enable man to discover or invent religious truths

for himself, not to communicate or present them to his understanding. But all believers in inspiration agree that it dealt, not with the mind, but with ideas. Why, then, do any of them deny that it dealt with words? Apart from words, either symbolic or arbitrary, there are no ideas. A man has a confused consciousness that some given idea was at one period present to his mind; he endeavours to recal it, but cannot succeed; he throws away the words employed in his fruitless effort, and adopts others; he now begins to perceive the idea, but perceives it obscurely; he next modifies and alters the words, till at length they bring the idea before him in all its plenitude and clearness. A process like this may be every hour detected by any man who attends to his own consciousness; and it distinctly shows that, constituted as the human mind is, ideas and words, as matters of thought, are inseparable. An infant, or a dumb person, is not an exception; for he thinks in symbols, and, in consequence, possesses ideas of only such objects as are cognizable by sense. Whoever receives a new idea, expresses it to his own mind in terms succinct, diffuse, clear, obscure, or otherwise, corresponding to its own properties; and, if it be faulty, he progressively rectifies it, as he removes the ambiguities, redundancies, or improprieties of its appropriate phraseology. To say, then, that inspiration dealt not at all, or but partially, with words, is tantamount to saying that it dealt not at all, or but partially, with ideas. Even in matters, such as facts and savings, which were previously known to the writers by personal observation, inspiration must either have dealt chiefly with words, or it must have amounted to no more than a moral influence on the heart. Mere correctness in stating facts, and especially the exhibition of their influential phases, and the perception of their morale, of their connexion with doctrines, and of their harmony with the general scheme of revelation, consisted chiefly, if not solely, in propriety of language, or in strict accuracy of graphic delineation. The communicating of ideas independently of words would, in fact,

have been a suspension of the laws of human thought,—a contravening of the methods by which the human understanding works; and it would have served the purpose—of doing what? of imparting the highest certainty to the truth of what the penmen wrote? no, but of impairing that certainty, if not even utterly destroying it. For,

2. Such uneducated men as most of the sacred writers were, and, indeed, any men whatever, could not so overcome the multitudinous errancies of language, as to express any ideas with infallible certainty, unless they had been divinely directed to the adoption of suitable words. Persons who have attended much to literary composition, and have been habituated for years to sift their style and make improvements in their diction, would all laugh at the absurdity of an expectation that, within the period of their life, they should ever become able to write a tractate with such accuracy as would preclude their afterwards detecting in it ambiguities, improprieties, or other blemishes in phraseology affecting the clearness or the truth of their sentiments. The entire force of a paragraph, or of a continuous piece of reasoning, frequently depends upon great niceness in the selection of a single expression. One slightly inaccurate vocable may vitiate a historical statement. Yet, in all countries and in all circumstances, mistakes and improprieties, in the just use of words, occur among the illiterate by the thousand. An uneducated man utters hardly one sentence upon an abstract subject or upon any topic beyond the range of every-day observation, without employing some word in an improper sense. Even very moderate, or comparative correctness of diction, can be attained only after prolonged and studious practice. Nor, as it exists among the greatest masters of it, does it ever become such as to preclude frequent misapprehension, controversy, and doubt. Thousands of debates continually arise from defects of precision and clearness in

the diction of authors. By that hypothesis, then, short of 'a gift of tongues,' a gift of rhetoric, a gift from on high of exactly understanding and accurately selecting the most suitable words,—a gift tantamount, in all respects, to verbal inspiration, can the herdsman of Tekoa, and the fishermen of Galilee, be supposed to have delineated, in perfectly correct phraseology, the sentiments which they wrote?

3. The scriptures declare themselves to contain, not only the truths, but the words of God. Such portions of them as were given to the inspired writers by audible communication, must be either garbled reports of what God said, or transcripts of his precise words. All the moral, ceremonial, and judicial law,—all the heavenly communications to Job,—all the messages to kings and nations by the prophets,—these, at least, and some kindred portions of the sacred volume, were originally given in words, and must have been committed to writing exactly as they were received. Now, not only for the words of them, but for the words of the histories in which they are interspersed, and of the songs and didactics with which they are accompanied, the inspired writers claim entire reverence and subjection as to 'the words of God.' 'Hear, therefore, O Israel, these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.'—Deut. 6:4, 6, 7. 'Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may he as found is between your eyes,'—Deut. 11:18. And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, be and Hoshea the son of Nun. And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: and he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law,'—Deut. 32:44–46. 'Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears

to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us,'—Psal. 78:1–3. Who can read such texts as these,—texts which refer to the entire pentateuch, or to others of the sacred books, historical, didactic, and legislative, without identifying inspiration with the words as truly as with the sentiments of scripture? In how solemn an aspect, especially, do the words appear in such a passage as this: I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book,'—Rev. 22:18, 19. Scripture, when claiming to be an authoritative revelation, thus makes special mention of its words; and, when claiming to be inspired, or describing the influence which rested on its penmen, it, on the same principle, makes mention, not of a process of thinking, but of a process of speaking. 'God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,'—Heb. 1:1, 2. 'When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you,'—Matt. 10:19, 20. 'No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,'—2 Pet. 1:20, 21. Now, though it were doubted—while it cannot be denied, much less disproved—that man always thinks in words; it will, on all hands, be readily admitted that, at least, he always speaks in words. To speak and not use words, is just as impossible as to see and not possess light. Yet the texts I have just quoted—referring to all the inspired communications made

through the prophets under the Jewish dispensation, to the entire 'prophecy which was of old time,' to all the 'more sure word of prophecy,' and to all the suggestions and supernatural communications of the Divine Spirit to the minds of the apostles—distinctly say, 'God spake to the fathers,' 'the Spirit of your Father speaketh in you,' 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Who does not feel as if sedulous care were used in such statements, not only to state, but to inculcate and protect the doctrine of verbal inspiration? Or who, with these statements before him, can coolly conceive of an abstract infusion of unexpressed ideas to the mind, and make no advertence to the simultaneous adjustment of them to an appropriate utterance on the lips? 'The speaking of God by the prophets,' the 'speaking of the Spirit in' the apostles, it is freely admitted, was not vocal, but mental; but still it was 'speaking.' It was not the infusion of the mere materials of thought; it was the suggestion, the communication, or the utterance of expressed ideas; it was a process which, in its very nature, was conducted in the use of words.

The three arguments which I have stated apply equally to all parts of scripture, and confront the theory which denies the plenary verbal inspiration of only some of the sacred books, as well as that which denies the plenary verbal inspiration of the whole. The notion entertained by some eminent theologians that the writers of the historical books were left in a great measure to choose their own phraseology, while the writers of visions and prophecies enjoyed full verbal inspiration, arises altogether from the doctrine which we examined in a former note as to there having been degrees of inspiring influence. Let that doctrine of degrees stand exploded, and it follows that if verbal inspiration pervades any one part of scripture, it pervades the whole. Just such reasons as were assigned for the truth or necessity of entirely superhuman influence in writing the

historical as in writing the prophetical books, might be adduced also to show the truth or necessity of an uniform verbal inspiration.

Persons who contend that the sacred writers chose their own phraseology, usually appeal to their respective, characteristic varieties of diction. Is it, then, gravely alleged—can it even be seriously insinuated—that the Holy Spirit, when inspiring words, must have framed and uniformly followed a diction peculiar to himself? Or is it assumed that he must have adopted the existing and approved diction of some classic author as his model? All languages, all styles, all systems of phraseology were surely alike known, alike manageable, alike facile to God. To his unerring and omnipotent agency, Hebrew, Chaldaie, and Greek were equally practicable media for an infallible communication of his will. Why, then, should not diversities of Hebrew, or diversities of Greek,—especially such trivial diversities as are usually designated by the word 'style?' His influence on the writers was strictly of a moral nature; it did not alter the physical complexion, or modify the characteristic varieties of their intellectual powers: why, then, should it have taught them a new rhetoric, or made alterations on their idioms and vocabulary? If their characteristic habits of excogitation were a practicable medium of the inspiration of ideas,—their characteristic habits of phraseology must have been as truly a practical medium of the inspiration of words. Let the sacred writers varieties of style be employed to prove that they chose their own phraseology, and their varieties of mental character—the ratiocinativeness of Paul, the fire and energy of Peter, the blandness and gentleness of John—may, from the same principle, be employed to prove that they chose their own ideas. There seems to me, in fact, no consistent medium between the theory which views scripture as a merely authentic record, and the theory which views it as in the fullest sense inspired.

Persons who contend that the sacred writers chose their own phraseology, appeal, further, to the quotations made in the books of the New Testament from those of the Old,—many of which, while they retain the sentiment, considerably alter the expression. But quotation in one book of scripture from what is written in another, is not, in any proper sense of the phrase, quotation by one author from another, but strictly an author's quotation from himself. Now, may not any human author repeat a sentiment in totally different words, or quote from a previous work of his own in altered phraseology, without either modifying his ideas, or affording any just occasion for suspicion that he does not, both in the passage as quoted from, and in the passage as quoted, use strictly his own words? If he say in all respects the same thing which he said before, he rather commands admiration, than provokes distrust, by the variation of his diction. And shall the inspiring Spirit, who dictated the sacred scriptures, be restricted to a rule of writing which does not apply to ordinary composition,—which is altogether imaginary or capricious,—and which ascribes to him less power of preserving identity of idea than what is possessed by a human author? The inspired penmen, besides, were controlled in their phraseology, or directed to the adoption of words, only so far as to secure infallibility in the truth of what they wrote; they were not propelled away from phrases or modes of expression which were usual to them, on account of their being idiomatic, or unclassical, or otherwise peculiar; and as the apostles and evangelists were accustomed to think of Old Testament scripture in the words of the Septuagint version, they made their quotations, so far as comported with perfect accuracy of idea, in the language best known to themselves and their immediate readers. They could not quote the ipsissima verba of any passage, unless they had quoted in Hebrew. They in reality translated, rather than quoted; and, while employing such Greek phrases and modes of expression as were known to them, they were guided, as the

amanuenses of the Holy Spirit, to select and modify with a view simply to the infallibly correct statement of the sentiments translated. If, then, any author may either give a free translation of any passage in his own writings, or quote from himself in altered phraseology, and yet maintain both integrity of idea and originality of expression, the objection against verbal inspiration, based on variations of Old Testament texts as they occur in the New, amounts merely to the capricious prescribing to the Holy Spirit of a rule of composition which is unknown and inapplicable in the literature of any language.

Persons who contend that the sacred writers chose their own phraseology, object, finally, that the doctrine of verbal inspiration is subversive of the authority of translations. Do they mean, then, to say, that translations—that all translations, or any—are of the same authority as the original scriptures? If so, the Jeromes of the early centuries and the Careys and De Lacys, the Protestant missionaries and the Romish universities of modern times, must have enjoyed just as much divine aid in rendering inspired truths into words, as the sacred historians, the apostles of our Lord, or even the writers of prophecies and visions. What a revolting hypothesis! Does it exalt the mistakes of Jerome or the blunders of De Lacy to the standard of the unerring phraseology of Paul and Isaiah? No; but it robs the diction of all the inspired penmen of its infallible accuracy, and sinks it to a level with the crudities of Arius Montanus and the distortions of the Douay translators. Or, when the opponents of verbal inspiration speak of the authority of translations, do they mean merely an authority proportioned to the amount of agreement between the translations and the original? If so, the authority is firm and high, just in the degree in which the diction of the original is certain. Represent a phrase as humanly selected, and you leave a translator in doubt whether he ought rigidly to follow it; but

represent it as selected by infinite knowledge and wisdom, and you make him secure that he will bring through the idea which it expresses all the more certainly that he adheres closely to its vocables. Variations of translation, and the subtilties and uncertainties of phraseology which they elicit, are a strong practical argument—not against the verbal inspiration of the original, but for the absolute necessity of it, as a final and infallible appeal from the misconceptions or errors of translators.

I shall conclude by offering a rapid summary of the views of inspiration advocated in these Notes.—Inspiration so fully and divinely controlled the minds of the sacred penmen, as to make them the mere amanuenses of Deity; and yet it exerted no modifying influence on the physical phenomena of their reminiscences, or on their acquired or peculiar habits of phraseology. An inspired writer, in some instances, did not know the moral import of the visions or figures of speech which he committed to writing; and, in other instances, he understood, appreciated, and attested the matters suggested to him as simple reminiscences of what he had personally seen and heard. He also clothed both sentiments and facts in exactly such expressions or words as were supernaturally suggested to his mind; and yet, as appears from the diversity of style among the various writers, as well as from the purely moral nature of inspiration, he was prompted to use only such vocables as were familiar to him, and to arrange them in the order of his accustomed idioms and habitual phrases. Inspiration did not supersede, repress, or modify any of the intellectual peculiarities of a writer; but was concerned solely with the perfect moral and verbal accuracy, the infallible correctness, the divine integrity of what he wrote.—ED.]

[NOTE W. The Evidence of Miracles.—Hume had not flourished when Dr. Ridgeley wrote. Could our author have foreseen what

dogmas that infidel promulged on the subject of miracles, with what metaphysical subtilty be laboured to render them specious, and how extensive a hearing they have obtained in society, he would probably have treated a denial of miracles more gravely than he does. What answer is it to the cavils of a disciple of Hume to say that the reality of miracles "can hardly be reckoned a matter in controversy, for it is a kind of scepticism to deny it?" Yet such an answer, if due emphasis be put on the word "scepticism," is probably the only one which so wild a theory as that of Hume deserved. Scepticism, especially as exhibited in him, is the most inconsistent and grotesque grouping of vagaries that ever figured before the human fancy. It puts on every-day garments, and follows the current fashions of the world, in every matter of domestic life, of commerce, of arts, of politics, of science; but when matter of religion comes to view, it then, and only then, puts on a harlequin dress, and professes to be deaf, dumb, blind, and invisible, knowing nothing, and incapable of being known.

Whoever wishes to see Hume's sophisms anatomized, may consult the works of Dr. Campbell and Dr. Beattie. We can afford only to hint at his attempts to upset the evidence of miracles. His objection, that no human testimony is sufficient to prove a miracle, rests on principles which are contrary to common sense, and which no man, not even Mr. Hume himself, ever ventured to apply to secular subjects. He misstates the nature of human testimony; he misapprehends, or misrepresents, the laws, or established constitution of nature; he sets principles at war with principles in his argument; and only, after having done all this does he arrive at the conclusion which gives countenance to his objection. As to his allegation that, though the authenticity of miracles might be quite satisfactory to cotemporaries, it is not so to after ages, but progressively diminishes with the lapse of time, till it becomes extinct,—who does not see that, it this were true, all authentic history

has long ago become fabulous, and that the credible history of to-day will become fiction to future ages? The allegation supposes the evidence of testimony, like an inscription or a sculptured emblem on a soft stone, to waste away by the attrition of time, and, however legible at first, to become annihilated by age. But who that reflects for a moment on the nature of human testimony, on the considerations which give it force, and on the phenomena of its just and universal influence in producing conviction, does not perceive that, as to the qualities or the validity of its evidence, it has no connexion whatever with time, and that, as attesting any fact, it is invariably of the same force as when first given, so long as it is transmitted amid a fair accompanying view of the circumstances which originally produced it credit? All the abundant and luminous testimony which is on record as to the reality of the miracles of our Lord and his apostles, remains, therefore, of the same force in the nineteenth century, as in the days of Tiberius Cæsar—ED.]

[NOTE X. The Spirits of the Prophets subject to the Prophets.—Dr. Ridgeley seems to me to mistake the sense of this passage. Paul does, indeed, as he remarks, speak, in the context, of prophets uttering revelation and of others judging; but he mentions these topics, especially the latter, only in subordination to the grand object of his argument. What he treats of throughout six preceding, and five following verses, is the practicability, desirableness, and necessity of observing decorous order in the exercise of supernatural gifts. He enjoins those who possessed the gift of unknown tongues, to speak by course, and to allow time for others to interpret what they said; he next enjoins those who possessed the gift of prophecy to speak by turns, and each to hold his peace when anything was revealed to another who sat by; and now, in order to show the propriety of what he enjoined, he says, 'Ye may all prophecy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted; and the spirits of the prophets are

subject to the prophets; for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.' To prophecy one by one, or in orderly rotation, was essential to the edification and comfort of hearers; it was harmonious with the character of him by whom the prophets were inspired; and it was in keeping with the moral and perfectly controllable nature of the gifts enjoyed. The last of these ideas, as appears to me, is what the words express: 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.' The spirits of the prophets, as such—the spirits which constituted them prophets—the spirits, not of the men personally, but of the men as announcers of revelation—in other words, 'the spiritual gifts of the prophets were subject to the prophets;' they were not incontrollable or impetuous; they did not suddenly seize the understanding, and overpoweringly propel it; but they were calm and ratiocinative and orderly, tranquil in their influence, decorous in their display, and, in all respects, stamped with the impress of their author's character, as the God, not 'of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.'

Dr. Ridgeley's mistaking the meaning of the text, however, does not impair the argument which he adduces his view of it to support. Other texts teach, though this does not, that one of the supernatural gifts of the apostolic age was the gift of 'discerning spirits;' and they contain internal evidence that this gift consisted in a power of discriminating between true and spurious pretensions to the enjoyment of supernatural influence. The 'discerning of spirits,' or of spiritual gifts, it is true, had immediate reference to the gifts of tongues, of interpretation of tongues, of prophesying, of miracles, and to others of a kindred character; but it may, at the same time, be supposed or even proved to have included within its range the gift—if I may call it so—of inspiration,—the amanuensis-ship of the written oracles of God.—ED.]

[NOTE Y. Inward Testimony of the Spirit to the authority of Scripture.—Had Dr. Ridgeley treated of an inward testifier, instead of an inward testimony, he would have adhered to his text. The words of the Catechism on which he comments, are: 'But the Spirit of God, bearing witness by and with the scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.' These words, on the whole, contain sound doctrine; but they speak not of a testimony to the truth of scripture, not of an evidence that the Bible, is the word of God, but of the agency of the Holy Spirit in enlightening the understanding, and producing conviction in the heart. They speak indeed of the Sprit 'bearing witness;' but they do not mean that he bears some testimony additional to what is contained in the scriptures,—some testimony which exists apart from the other evidences of revelation, and may be viewed as 'inward in the heart.' What they mean by 'bearing witness,' is simply disclosing the evidences to the understanding, so as to produce 'persuasion' or conviction. They are faulty only in using an ambiguous phrase, or one which does not justly express the idea which they intend to convey.

The 'inward testimony' of which Dr. Ridgeley treats, is less sanctioned by scripture than even by the words of the Catechism. He clearly views it and treats it as a distinct and separate evidence that the Bible is the word of God. He is sufficiently inconsistent or confused, indeed, to call it 'a satisfying and establishing persuasion that the scriptures are the word of God;' but he immediately adds, that it is 'a persuasion supported by other evidences and convincing arguments.' His 'inward testimony' is one evidence, while miracles, prophecies, harmony of doctrines, power of moral influences, are other evidences of the truth of revelation. Now there is no such testimony, no such evidence,—no evidence or testimony inward in the believer, or apart from such as exist, without him, and are

presented exteriorly to his understanding. What Dr. Ridgeley represents as an 'inward testimony,' is, in reality, the result of all the testimonies to the truth of scripture,—the effect upon the mind of all the evidences of revelation,—the persuasion or conviction that the Bible is the word of God, produced by the Holy Spirit's exhibition of the evidences to the understanding, and impressing of them on the heart.

There are just three texts of scripture (1 John 5:10; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6.) which speak of anything resembling 'an inward testimony;' and they all treat of a topic widely different from the evidences of inspiration. The chief of these is in the First Epistle of John; and, when rightly understood, it explains the others. Our English version greatly mars it, in consequence of translating the correlatives μαρτυρεω and μαρτυρια corresponding to 'testify' and 'testimony,' by three radically different words. Let due uniformity be observed, and the passage stands self-explained: 'There are three that hear testimony on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God, which he hath testified concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the testimony in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the testimony which God gave concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.' The last of these verses is a key to the whole. The testimony of which the entire passage treats, is this, that God has given us, in his Son, everlasting life. It is a testimony, not that the Bible is of divine origin, but that, in terms which it announces, God has given man salvation: it is not a testimony in the heart with reference to the Bible, but a testimony in the Bible with reference to the heart. It is inscribed on the pages of revelation; it forms the substance of all the lessons and discoveries or

scripture; and, when understood and believed, it is transcribed in the experience, and exhibited in the renovation, and life, and hope, and joy of the soul. 'He that believeth, hath the testimony in himself.' He is an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. His faith, his peace with God, his new nature, his rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, are a living inscription that 'God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.'

THE TOPICS OF SCRIPTURE

QUESTION V. What do the scriptures principally teach?

ANSWER. The scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

THE scriptures having, in the foregoing answer, been shown to be the word of God, there is in this a general account of the contents of them. There are many great doctrines contained in them, all which may be reduced to two heads; namely, what we are to believe, and what we are to do. All religion is contained in these two things; and we may apply the words of the apostle to this case, 'Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum.' Accordingly, as this Catechism is deduced from scripture, it contains two parts,—namely, what we are to believe, and in what instances we are to yield obedience to the law of God. That the scriptures principally teach these two things, appears from the apostle's advice to Timothy, 'Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love.'c

From the scripture's principally teaching us matters of faith and practice, we infer, that 'faith without works is dead;' or that he is not a true Christian who yields an assent to divine revelation, without a practical subjection to God in all ways of holy obedience. The apostle accordingly gives a challenge, to this effect, to those who separate faith from works: 'Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.' On the other hand, works without faith are unacceptable. A blind obedience, or ignorant performance, of some of the external parts of religion, without the knowledge of divine truth, is no better than what the apostle calls 'bodily exercise,

which profiteth little.'e We ought, therefore, if we would approve ourselves sincere Christians, to examine ourselves whether our faith be founded on, or truly deduced from scripture; and whether it be a practical faith, or, as the apostle says, such as 'worketh by love,'— whether we grow in knowledge, as well as in zeal and diligence, in performing the duties of religion.

QUESTION VI. What do the scriptures make known of God?

ANSWER. The scriptures make known what God is, the persons in the Godhead, the decrees and the execution of his decrees.

It is an amazing instance of condescension, and an inexpressible favour which God bestows on man, that he should not only manifest himself to him, as he does to all mankind, by the light of nature, which discovers that he is; but that he should, in so glorious a way, as he does in his word, declare what he is. This is a distinguishing privilege. The Psalmist observes that it is such, when speaking of God's 'showing his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel;' and he mentions it, as an instance of discriminating grace, that 'he has not dealt so with any other nation.' This raised the admiration of one of Christ's disciples, when he said, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?h And it is still more wonderful, that he should discover to man what he does, or rather what he has decreed or purposed to do, and so should impart his secrets to him.' How familiarly does God herein deal with man! Thus he says concerning the holy patriarch of old, 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? It is one thing, however, to know the secret purposes of God, and another, thing to know the various properties of them. The former, however known of old by extraordinary intimation, are now known to us only by the execution of them: the latter may be known by a careful study of the scriptures.

Now, as the scriptures make known, First, what God is,—Secondly, the Persons in the Godhead.—Thirdly, his Decrees,—and, Fourthly, the Execution thereof; we are directed hereby in the method to be observed in treating of the great doctrines of our religion. Accordingly, the first part of this Catechism, which treats of doctrinal subjects, contains an enlargement on these four general heads,—the first of which we now proceed to consider.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

QUESTION VII. What is God?

ANSWER. God is a Spirit, in and of himself, infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection, all sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, every where present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

General view of the Divine Attributes

BEFORE we proceed to consider the divine perfections, as stated in this answer, let it be premised, that it is impossible for any one to give a perfect description of God; since he is incomprehensible. No words can fully express, or set forth, his perfections. When the wisest men on earth speak of him, they soon betray their own weakness, or discover, as Elihu says, that they 'cannot order their speech by reason of darkness,' or that 'they are but of yesterday, and know,' comparatively, 'nothing.'l When we speak of the infinite perfections of the divine nature, we are but like children, talking of matters

above them, which their tender age can take in but little of. 'This knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain to it.' 'How little a portion is heard of him?'n

But though God cannot be perfectly described, yet there is something of him which we may know, and ought to make the matter of our study and diligent inquiries. When his glory is set forth in scripture, we are not to look upon the expressions made use of, as words without any ideas affixed to them,—for it is one thing to have adequate ideas of an infinitely perfect being, and another thing to have no ideas at all of him; neither are our ideas of God, though imperfect, to be for this reason reckoned altogether false,—for it is one thing to think of him in an unbecoming way, not agreeable to his perfections, or to attribute the weakness and imperfection to him which do not belong to his nature, and another thing to think of him, with the highest and best conceptions we are able to entertain of his infinite perfections, while, at the same time, we have a due sense of our own weakness and the shallowness of our capacities. When we thus order our thoughts concerning the great God, though we are far from comprehending his infinite perfections, yet our conceptions are not to be concluded erroneous, when directed by his word.

Let us consider then, how we may conceive aright of the divine perfections, that we may not think or speak of God that which is not right, though at best we know but little of his glory. And, 1. We must first take an estimate of finite perfections, which we have some ideas of, though not perfect ones in all respects,—such as power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, &c.; then we must conceive that these are eminently, though not formally, in God. Whatever perfection is in the creature, the same is in God, and infinitely more; or it is in God, but not in such a finite, limited, or imperfect way, as it is in the creature. 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye,

shall not he see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?' 2. When the same words are used to denote a perfection in God, and in the creature, such as wisdom, power, &c., we must not suppose that they import the same thing in their different application. When they are applied to the creature, they denote properties, which, though we call them perfections, are, at best, but finite, and have many imperfections attending them,—all which we must separate or abstract in our thoughts, when the same words are used to set forth any divine perfection. Thus knowledge is a perfection of the human nature; and the word knowledge is used to denote a divine perfection; yet we must consider that 'the Lord seeth not as man seeth.'p The same may be said of all his other perfections. He worketh not as man worketh. Whatever perfections are ascribed to the creature, are to be considered as agreeable to the subject in which they exist; and when the words denoting them are used to set forth any of the divine perfections, they are to be understood in a way becoming a God of infinite perfection.

This has given occasion to divines to distinguish the perfections of God, into those that are communicable, and those that are incommunicable. The communicable perfections of God are those some faint resemblance of which we find in intelligent creatures; though at the same time, there is an infinite disproportion. When, for example, we speak of God as holy, wise, just, powerful, or faithful, we find something like these perfections in the creature; though we are not to suppose them, in all respects, the same as they are in God. In him, they are in his own, that is, an infinite way. In us, they are in our own, that is, a finite and limited way. The incommunicable perfections of God are those of which there is not the least shadow or similitude in creatures. They rather represent him as contrasted by them. Thus when we speak of him as infinite, incomprehensible, unchangeable, without beginning, independent, &c., we ascribe to

him perfections which exhibit the vast distance that there is between God and the creature, or how infinitely he exceeds all other beings, and is the opposite of every thing that argues imperfection in them. [See note Z, end of section.]

From the general account we have given of the divine perfections, we may infer, 1. That there is nothing common between God and the creature; that is, there is nothing which belongs to the divine nature which can be attributed to the creature, and nothing proper to the creature is to be applied to God. There are, however, some rays of the divine glory, which may be beheld as shining forth or displayed in the creature, especially in the intelligent part of the creation, angels and men; who are for that reason, represented as made after the divine image. 2. Let us never think or speak of the perfections of God, but with the highest reverence, lest we take his name in vain, or debase him in our thoughts. 'Shall not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you?' And whenever we compare God with the creatures, namely, angels and men, that bear somewhat of his image, let us abstract in our thoughts all their imperfections, whether natural or moral, from him, and consider the infinite disproportion that there is between him and them. We now come to consider the perfections of the divine nature, in the order in which they are laid down in this answer.

The Spirituality of God

God is a Spirit, that is, an immaterial substance, without body, or bodily parts. This he is said to be in John 4:24. But if it be inquired what we mean by a spirit, let it be premised, that we cannot fully understand what our own spirits or souls are, and that we know less of the nature of angels, a higher kind of spirits, and least of all the spirituality of the divine nature. In considering the nature and

properties of spirits, however, our ideas begin at what is finite, and thence we are led to conceive of God as infinitely more perfect then any finite spirit.

Here we shall consider the word spirit, as applied more especially to angels, and the souls of men. A spirit is the most perfect and excellent being. The soul is more excellent than the body, or indeed than any thing that is purely material; and angels are the most perfect and glorious part of the creation, as they are spiritual beings, in some things excelling the souls of men. A spirit is in its own nature immortal: it has nothing in its frame and constitution that tends to corruption. In material things, which consist of various parts, that may be dissolved or separated, and may assume an altered form, there is what we call corruptibility. This, however, belongs not to spirits, which are liable to no change in their nature, except by the immediate hand of God, who can, if he pleases, reduce them again to nothing. A spirit is capable of understanding and willing, and of performing corresponding actions, which no other being can do. Thus, though the sun is a glorious and useful being, yet, because it is material, it is not capable of thought or any moral action, such as angels and the souls of men can perform.

Now these conceptions of the nature and properties of finite spirits, lead us to conceive of God as a Spirit. As spirits excel all other creatures, we must conclude that God is the most excellent and perfect of all beings, and also that he is 'incorruptible, immortal, and invisible,' as he is said to be in scripture. It follows that he has an understanding and will, and hence we may conceive of him as the creator and governor of all things. This he could not be, if he were not an intelligent and sovereign being, and particularly a Spirit. Again, the difference between other spiritual substances and God, is, that all their excellency is only comparative, or consists in their being

superior in their nature and properties to all material beings; while God, as a Spirit, is infinitely more excellent, not only than all material beings, but than all created spirits. Their perfections are derived from him, and therefore he is called, 'the Father of spirits,'s and 'the God of the spirits of all flesh;' but his perfections are underived. Other spirits are, as we have observed, in their own nature, immortal, yet God can reduce them to nothing; but God is independently immortal, and therefore it is said of him, that 'he only hath immortality.'u Finite spirits, indeed, have understanding and will, but these powers are contained within certain limits; whereas God is an infinite Spirit, and therefore it can be said of none but him, that 'his understanding is infinite.'

From God's being a Spirit, we may infer, 1. That he is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits. As the God and Father of spirits, he can communicate himself to them, and apply to them those things which tend to make them happy. 2. He is to be worshipped in a spiritual manner, that is, with our whole souls, and in a way becoming the spirituality of his nature. We are, therefore, to frame no similitude or resemblance of him in our thoughts, as though he were a corporeal or material being; neither are we to make any pictures of him. This God forbids Israel to do;z and he tells them, that they had not the least pretence for doing it, in as much as they 'saw no similitude of him, when he spake to them in Horeb;' he tells them also that to make an image of him would be to 'corrupt themselves.'

The Self-existence of God

God is said to be 'in, and of, himself,' not as though he gave being to, or was the cause of himself; for that implies a contradiction. Divines, therefore, generally say, that God is 'in and of himself,' not positively,

but negatively; that is, his being and perfections are underived, they are not communicated to him, as all finite perfections are by him communicated to the creature. He is self-existent, or independent; and this is one of the highest glories of his nature, by which he is distinguished from creatures, who all live, move, and have their being, in and from him.

This attribute of independence belongs to all his perfections. Thus his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, &c. are all independent.

1. He is independent as to his knowledge or wisdom. He doth not receive ideas from any object out of himself. All intelligent creatures do this, and, in that respect, are said to depend on the object; so that if there were not any such object, they could not have the knowledge or idea of it in their minds. The object known must exist, before we can apprehend what it is. But this must not be said respecting God's knowledge; for the things which he knows cannot be supposed of as antecedent to his knowing them. The independency of his knowledge is elegantly described in scripture: 'Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, has taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?'

2. He is independent in power. As he does not receive strength from any one, so he doth not act dependently on the will of the creature. 'Who hath enjoined him his way?' Again, as he did not receive the power of acting from any one, so none can hinder, turn aside, or control his power, or put a stop to his methods of acting.

3. He is independent as to his holiness, hating sin necessarily, and not merely depending on some reasons out of himself, which induce

him to hate it; for it is essential to the divine nature to be infinitely opposite to all sin, and therefore to be independently holy.

4. He is independent as to his bounty and goodness, and so he communicates blessings not by constraint, but according to his sovereign will. Thus he gave being to the world, and all things therein, which was the first instance, and a very great one, of bounty and goodness, not by constraint, but by his free will: 'For his pleasure they are and were created.' In like manner, in whatever instances he extends mercy to miserable creatures, he acts independently in displaying it. Nothing out of himself moves him or lays a constraint upon him; but he shows mercy because it is his pleasure so to do.

To evince the truth of this doctrine, that God is independent as to his being, and all his perfections, let it be considered, 1. That all things depend on his power, which brought them into, and preserves them in being. They exist by his will, as their creator and preserver, and consequently are not necessary but dependent beings. Now if all things depend on God, it is the greatest absurdity to say that God depends on any thing; for this would be to suppose the cause and the effect to be mutually dependent on, and derived from each other,—which implies a contradiction. 2. If God be infinitely above the highest creatures, he cannot depend on any of them, for dependence argues inferiority. Now that God is above all things is certain. This is represented in a very beautiful manner by the prophet, when he says, 'Behold the nations are as the drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity.' He cannot, then, be said to be inferior to them, and, by consequence, to depend on them. 3. If God depends on any creature, he does not exist necessarily,—and if so, he might not have been; for the same will, by which he is supposed to exist, might have determined that he should

not have existed. And, according to the same method of reasoning, he might cease to be; for the same will that gave being to him might take it away at pleasure,—a thought which is altogether inconsistent with the idea of a God.

From God's being independent, or 'in and of himself,' we infer that the creature cannot lay any obligation on him, or do any thing that may tend to make him more happy than he is in himself. The apostle gives a challenge to this effect: 'Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?' And Eliphaz says to Job, 'Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?'e Again, if independency be a divine perfection, let it not, in any instance, or by any consequence, be attributed to the creature. Let us conclude, that all our springs are in him, and that all we enjoy and hope for is from him, who is the author and finisher of our faith, and the fountain of all our blessedness.

The Infinitude of God

God is infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection. To be infinite, is to be without all bounds or limits, either actual or possible. Now that God is so, is evident from his being independent and uncreated, and because his will fixes the bounds of all the excellencies, perfections, and powers of the creature. If he doth not exist by the will of another, he is infinite in being, and consequently in all perfection. Hence, it is said, 'His understanding is infinite.' His infinitude appears also in his omniscience. His will likewise determines what shall come to pass, with an infinite sovereignty, which cannot be controlled or rendered ineffectual. His power, moreover, is infinite; and therefore all things are equally possible

and easy to it, nor can it be resisted by any contrary force or power. And he is infinite in blessedness, as being, from all eternity, self-sufficient, or not standing in need of any thing to make him more happy than he was in himself. The Psalmist is supposed, by many, to speak in the person of Christ, when he says, 'My goodness extendeth not to thee;'g that is, "How much soever thy relative glory may be illustrated by what I have engaged to perform in the covenant of redemption, yet this can make no addition to thine essential glory." And if so, certainly nothing can be done by us which may in the least contribute to it.

The All-sufficiency of God

God is all-sufficient; or he hath enough in himself to satisfy the most enlarged desires of his creatures, and to make them completely blessed. As his self-sufficiency is that whereby he has enough in himself to constitute him completely blessed, as a God of infinite perfection; so his all-sufficiency is that whereby he is able to communicate as much blessedness to his creatures, as he is pleased to make them capable of receiving. In consequence of his all-sufficiency, he is able not only to 'supply all their wants, but to do exceedingly above all that they ask or think.' This he can do in an immediate way. Or if he thinks fit to make use of creatures as instruments to fulfil his pleasure, and communicate what he designs to impart to us, he is never at a loss; for as they are the work of his hands, so he has a right to use them at his will,—and on this account they are all said to be 'his servants.'i

This doctrine of God's all-sufficiency should be improved by us to induce us to seek happiness in him alone. Creatures are no more than the stream, while he is the fountain. We may, in a mediate way,

receive some small drops from them; but he is the ocean of all blessedness.

Let us take heed that we do not depreciate, or, in effect, deny this perfection. This we may be said to do in various instances. 1. We do it when we are discontented with our present condition, and desire more than God has allotted to us. This seems to have been the sin of the fallen angels, who left their first habitation through pride, seeking more than God designed they should have; and it was the sin by which our first parents fell. desiring a greater degree of knowledge than what they thought themselves possessed of, and fancying that by eating the forbidden fruit they should be 'as gods, knowing good and evil.' 2. We practically deny the all-sufficiency of God, when we seek blessings, of what kind soever they are, in an indirect way; as though God had not been able to bestow them upon us in his own way, or in the use of lawful means. This Rebekah and Jacob did, when they contrived a lie to obtain the blessing of Isaac;l for they acted as if there had not been an all-sufficiency in providence to bring what they desired, without their having recourse to methods which were sinful. 3. When we use unlawful means to escape imminent dangers. This David did when he feigned himself mad,—supposing, without ground, that he should have been slain by Achish king of Gath, and that there was no way to escape but by the artifice he adopted. Abraham and Isaac also were guilty of this,n when they denied their wives, as an expedient to save their lives,—as though God had not been able to save them in a better and more honourable way. 4. When we distrust his providence, though we have had large experience of its appearing for us in various instances. This David did, when he said in his heart, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;' and the Israelites, when they said, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?p though he had provided for them in an extraordinary way ever since they had been there. Yea, Moses

himself was faulty in the same way, when he said, 'Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me;' and Asa, when he tempted Benhadad to break his league with Baasha, who made war against him,—as though God had not been able to deliver him without this indirect practice, and as though he had not in an eminent manner appeared for him, in giving him a signal victory over Zerah the Ethiopian, when he came against him with an army of a million of men;r and likewise Joshua, when Israel had suffered a small defeat, occasioned by Achan's sin, and fled before the men of Ai, though there were but thirty-six of them slain; for on that occasion he was ready to wish that God had not brought them over Jordan, and anticipated nothing but ruin and destruction from the Amorites, forgetting God's former deliverances, and distrusting his faithfulness and his care of his people, and, as it were, calling in question his all-sufficiency, as though he were not able to accomplish the promises he had made to them. 5. When we doubt of the truth, or the certain accomplishment, of his promises; and so are ready to say, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Doth his truth fail for ever?' This we are apt to do, when there are great difficulties in the way of the accomplishment of them. Thus Sarah, when it was told her that she should have a child in her old age, laughed through unbelief;t and God intimates, that her conduct was an affront to his all-sufficiency, for he says, 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Gideon, in the same way, though he was told that God was with him, and though he had an express command to go in his might, with a promise that he should deliver Israel from the Midianites, yet says, 'O Lord, wherewith shall I save them? for my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.'x He was told again by God, 'I will be with thee, and smite the Midianites;' yet, afterwards, he desires that he would give him a sign in the wet and dry fleece. What was this but questioning his all-sufficiency? 6. When under pretence of

our unfitness for them, we decline great services, though called to them by God. Thus when the prophet Jeremiah was called to deliver the Lord's message to the rebellions house of Israel, he desired to be excused, and said, 'Behold I cannot speak, for I am a child;' whereas the main discouragement was the difficulty of the work, and the hazards he would probably run. But God encourages him to it, by putting him in mind of his all-sufficiency, when he tells him, that 'he would be with him, and deliver him.'z

The all-sufficiency of God affords matter of support and encouragement to believers, under the greatest straits and difficulties they are exposed to in this world. We have many instances in scripture of believers having had recourse to it in such circumstances. Thus, when David was in the greatest strait that ever he met with—when upon the Amalekites spoiling Ziklag, and carrying away the women captives, the people talked of stoning him, and all things seemed to make against him, 'he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.' Mordecai, in the same way, was confident that 'the enlargement and deliverance' of the Jews should be accomplished by some other means, if not by Esther's intercession for them, when she was afraid to go in to the king;b and, considering the present posture of their affairs, he could never have this confidence without a due regard to God's all-sufficiency. Moreover, it was this divine perfection which encouraged Abraham to obey the difficult command to offer up his son; as the apostle observes, he did this as knowing 'that God was able to raise him from the dead.' And when believers are under the greatest distress from the assaults of their spiritual enemies, they have a warrant from God, as the apostle had, to encourage themselves that they shall come off victorious, because 'his grace is sufficient for them.'d

The Eternity of God

God is eternal. He was without beginning, and shall be without end. His duration is unchangeable, or without succession, the same from everlasting to everlasting. Hence the Psalmist says, 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.'

1. God is from everlasting. This appears, from his being a necessary, self-existtent Being, or from his existing in and of himself; for whatever is not produced is from eternity. That he did not derive his being from any one, is evident from his having given being to all things, which is implied in their being creatures. Nothing gave being to him; and consequently he was from eternity.

Again, if he is an infinitely perfect being, as has been observed before, then his duration is infinitely perfect; and consequently it is boundless, that is to say, eternal. It is an imperfection, in all created beings, that they began to exist; and hence they are said, in a comparative sense, to be but of yesterday. We must, therefore, when we conceive of God, separate this imperfection from him, and so conclude that he was from all eternity.

Farther, if he created all things in the beginning, then he was before the beginning of time, that is, from eternity. It is said, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' Time is a successive duration, taking its rise from a certain point, or moment, which we call the beginning. Now that duration, which was before this, must be from eternity; unless we suppose that there was time before time began, or that there was a successive duration before successive duration began,—which is a contradiction. Hence, if God, as their Creator, fixed a beginning to all things, and particularly to time, which is the measure of the duration of all created beings, then it is evident that he was before time, and consequently from eternity.

That God is from everlasting appears also from scripture; as when it is said, 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;' and when we read of his 'eternal power and Godhead;'h and elsewhere, 'Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord my God? 'Thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting.'k His attributes and perfections also are said to have been from everlasting: 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.'

That God is from everlasting, may be proved, further, from many scripture-consequences. Thus, there was an election of persons to holiness and happiness, 'before the foundation of the world.' Christ, in particular, 'was fore-ordained' to be our mediator 'before the foundation of the world;' and was 'set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.'p It follows, that there was a sovereign fore-ordaining will; and therefore God, whose will it was, existed before the foundation of the world, that is, from everlasting. Moreover, there were grants of grace given in Christ, or put into his hand, from all eternity. Thus we read of 'eternal life, which God promised before the world began;' and of our being 'saved, according to his purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.'r From this it follows, that there was an eternal giver, and consequently that God was from everlasting.

2. God shall be to everlasting. Accordingly it is said, 'The Lord shall endure for ever;' 'he liveth for ever and ever;'t 'his years shall have no end;' and 'the Lord shall reign for ever;'x therefore he must endure to everlasting. Again, it is said, 'the Lord keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, to a thousand generations;' and 'he will ever be mindful of his covenant,'z that is, will fulfil what he has promised therein. Now, if his truth shall not fail for ever, then he who will accomplish what he has spoken, must endure to everlasting.

But that he shall endure for ever may be farther evinced from the perfections of his nature. His necessary existence not only argues, as has been before observed, that he could not begin to be, but equally proves that he cannot cease to be, or that he shall be to everlasting.—Again, He is void of all composition, and therefore must be to everlasting. None but compounded beings, namely, such as have parts, are subject to dissolution; which arises from the contrariety of the parts, and their tendency to destroy one another,—a contrariety and tendency which occasion their dissolution. But God having no parts, as he is the most simple uncompounded being, there can be nothing in him that tends to dissolution; so that he can never have an end from any necessity of nature. [See note 2 A, page 124.]—Further, He must be to eternity, because there is no one superior to him, at whose will he exists, who can deprive him of his being and glory.—Lastly, He cannot will his own destruction, or non-existence; for to do so would be contrary to the universal nature of things. No being can desire to be less perfect than it is; much less can any one will or desire his own annihilation. No one, especially, who is possessed of blessedness, can will the loss of it, for to do so is incongruous with the nature of it as a desirable good. God, therefore, cannot will the loss of his own blessedness; and since his blessedness is inseparably connected with his being, he cannot cease to be, from an act of his own will. Now, if he cannot cease to be, from any necessity of nature, or from the will of another, or from an act of his own will, he must be to eternity.

The eternity of God, as to both the past and the future, may still further be proved from his other perfections; since one of the divine perfections infers the other.—First, it may be proved from his immutability. He is unchangeable in his being; he is, in consequence, unchangeable also in all his perfections; and therefore, he must be always the same from everlasting to everlasting, and not proceed

from a state of non-existence to that of being, which he would have done, had he not been from everlasting, nor decline from a state of being to that of non-existence, which he would be supposed to do, were he not to everlasting. Either of these is the greatest change that can be supposed, and therefore inconsistent with the divine immutability.—Again, He is the first cause, and the ultimate end of all things. He must, therefore, be from eternity, and remain the fountain of all blessedness to eternity.—Further, He could not be almighty, or infinite in power, if he were not eternal. That being which did not always exist, once could not act, that is, when it did not exist; and he that may cease to be, may, for the same reason, be disabled from acting. Both of these consequences are inconsistent with almighty power.—Lastly, If he were not eternal, he could not, by way of eminence, be called, as he is, 'the living God,' or said 'to have life in himself;'b for both these expressions imply his necessary existence, and that argues his eternity.

3. God's eternal duration is without succession, as well as without beginning and end. That it is so, appears from his being unchangeable. All successive duration infers change. Thus, the duration of creatures, which is successive, is not the same one moment as it will be the next; every moment adds something to it. But this cannot be said of God's duration. Besides, successive duration implies a being what we were not in all respects before, and a ceasing to be what we were; and so it is a kind of continual passing from not being to being,—which is inconsistent with God's perfections, and, in particular, with his unchangeable duration. The Psalmist, speaking of God's eternal duration, describes it by its immutability: 'Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end;' and the apostle, speaking concerning it, says, 'He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'d Moreover, successive duration is applicable to time. The duration of all creatures is measured, and

therefore cannot be termed infinite. It is measured by its successive parts: thus a day, a year, an age, a million of ages, are measured by the number of moments of which they consist. But God's duration is unmeasured, that is, infinite; it is, therefore, without succession, or without those parts of which time consists.

4. Eternity is an attribute peculiar to God; and hence we call it an incommunicable perfection. There are, indeed, other things that shall endure to everlasting,—as angels, and the souls of men,—also those heavenly bodies that shall remain after the creature is delivered from the bondage of corruption, to which it is now subject, —and likewise the heavenly places, designed for the seat of the blessed; but the everlasting duration of these things infinitely differs from the eternity of God. As all finite things began to be, and their duration is successive, so their everlasting existence depends entirely on the power and will of God, and therefore cannot be called necessary or independent, as his eternal existence is.

It may, perhaps, seem inconsistent with the account that has been given of his eternity, that the various parts of time, as days, years, &c. and the various changes of time, as past, present, and to come, are sometimes attributed to God. Such expressions, it is true, are often used in scripture. Thus he is called, 'the Ancient of days;' and his eternity is expressed, by 'his years having no end;'f and it is said, 'He was, is, and is to come.' But, for the understanding of such expressions, we must consider that in using them God is pleased to speak according to our weak capacity, who cannot comprehend the manner of his infinite duration. We cannot conceive of any duration but that which is successive; therefore God speaks to us, as he does in many other instances, in condescension to our capacities. But yet we may observe, that though he thus condescends to speak concerning himself, there is often something added which

distinguishes his duration from that of creatures; as when it is said, 'Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out.'h Hence, though we read of the years of his duration, yet they are such as are unsearchable, or incomprehensible, infinitely differing from years as applied to created beings. Thus it is said, 'A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past.' 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'k And, by the same method of reasoning, it may be said one moment is with the Lord as a thousand millions of ages, or a thousand millions of ages as one moment. Such is his duration; and therefore it is not properly successive, like that of creatures. Again, when any thing past, present, or to come, is attributed to God, it signifies either that he is so as to his works, which are finite, and measured by successive duration; or that he whose duration is not measured by succession, notwithstanding, exists unchangeably, through all the various ages of time. As he is omnipresent with all the parts of matter, yet has no parts himself; so he exists in all the successive ages of time, but without that succession which is peculiar to time and creatures.

Several things may be inferred, of a practical nature, from the eternity of God. Since his duration is eternal, that is, without succession, so that there is no such thing as past or to come with him,—since ten thousand millions of ages are but like a moment to him,—it follows that those sins which we committed long ago, and which perhaps are forgotten by us, are present to his view. He knows what we have done against him ever since we had a being in this world, as much as though we were at present committing them.—Again, if God was from eternity, how contemptible is all created glory when compared with his! Look but a few ages backward, and it was nothing. This consideration should humble the pride of the creature, who is but of yesterday, and whose duration is nothing, and less than

nothing, when compared with God's.—Further, the eternity of God, as being to everlasting, affords matter of terror to his enemies, and of comfort to his people, and, as such, should be improved for the preventing of sin. It affords matter of terror to his enemies. For he ever lives to see his threatenings executed, and to pour forth the vials of his fury on them. Accordingly, the prophet speaking of God as 'the everlasting King,' says, that 'at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.' The eternity of God argues the eternity of the punishment of sin; since this great Judge, who is a consuming fire to impenitent sinners, will live for ever to see his threatenings executed upon them; and as he is eternal in his being, he must be so in his power, holiness, justice, and all his other perfections, which are terrible to his enemies. Hence the Psalmist says, 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath;'m and the apostle says, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' But the doctrine of God's eternity affords, on the other hand, matter of comfort to believers. It is a refuge to them from the fluctuating and uncertain enjoyments which are connected with the creature; and it is an encouragement under the loss of friends and relations, and under all the other losses and disappointments which they meet with, as to their outward state in this world. These are, at best, but short-lived comforts; but God is 'the eternal portion' and happiness of his people.o And from his eternity, they may certainly conclude, that the happiness of the heavenly state will be eternal; for it consists in the enjoyment of him, who is so,—a thought which is very delightful to all who are enabled by faith to cherish it.

The Immutability of God

God is immutable. 'With him is no variableness neither shadow of turning.' His immutability is sometimes set forth in a metaphorical

way; in which respect he is compared to a 'rock.'q As this remains immoveable, when the whole ocean that surrounds it is continually in a fluctuating state; so, though all creatures are subject to change, God alone is unchangeable in his being, and in all his perfections.

I. We shall consider how immutability is a perfection, and how it is a perfection peculiar to God.

It must be allowed that immutability cannot be said to be an excellency or perfection, unless it be applied to, or spoken of, what is good. An immutable state of sin or of misery, as found in fallen angels or wicked men, is far from being an excellency. But unchangeable holiness and happiness, as found in holy angels, or saints in heaven, is a perfection conferred upon them. And when we speak of God's immutability, we suppose him infinitely blessed,—which is included in the notion of a God; and so we farther say, that he is unchangeable in all those perfections in which it consists.

Immutability belongs, in the most proper sense, to God alone; so that 'as he only' is said 'to have immortality,' that is, such as is underived and independent,—he alone is unchangeable. Other things are rendered immutable by an act of his will and power; but immutability is an essential perfection of the divine nature. Creatures are dependently immutable; God is independently so.

The most perfect creatures, such as angels and glorified saints, are capable of new additions to their blessedness. New objects may be presented as occasions of praise, which tend perpetually to increase their happiness. The angels know more than they did before Christ's incarnation; for they are said to know 'by the church,' that is, by the dealings of God with his church, 'the manifold wisdom of God,' and to 'desire to look into' the account the gospel gives of the 'sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;'t and they shall have

farther additions to their blessedness, when all the elect are joined to their assembly in the great day. Hence the happiness of the best creatures is communicated in various degrees. God's perfections and blessedness, on the contrary, can have no additions made to them. He, therefore, is immutable in a sense in which no creature is.

II. We shall now prove that God is immutable in his being, and in all his perfections.

1. He is immutable in his being. Immutability in this belongs to him as God, and consequently to him alone. All other beings once were not; there has been in them, if I may so express it, a change from a state of non-existence to that of being; and the same power that brought them into being, could reduce them again to nothing. To be dependent, is to be subject to change at the will of another, and belongs to all finite things. Hence it is said, 'As a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed;' while God, being opposed to them as independent, is said to be 'the same.'

God did not change from a state of non-existence to being; in as much as he was from everlasting, and therefore necessarily existent. He consequently cannot change from a state of being to that of non-existence, or cease to be. And because his perfections, in the same sense as his being is, are essential to him, and underived, there can be no change in them.

Again, he cannot change from a state of greater to a state of less perfection, or be subject to the least diminution of his divine perfections. To suppose this possible, is to suppose that he may cease to be infinitely perfect,—that is, that he may cease to be God. Nor can he change from a state of less perfection to a state of greater; for that is to suppose him not to be infinitely perfect before this change, or that there are degrees of infinite perfection. Nor can he pass from

that state in which he is, to another of equal perfection; for, as such a change implies an equal proportion of loss and gain, so it would argue a plurality of infinite beings; or as he who was God before this change, was distinct from what he arrives to after it, the change would be contrary to the unity of the divine essence.

Moreover, if there were any change in God, it must arise either from himself, or from some other. But it cannot be from himself; for he exists necessarily, and not as the result of his own will, and therefore cannot will any alteration or change in himself. To suppose that he could, is contrary also to the nature of infinite blessedness, which cannot desire the least diminution, as it cannot apprehend any necessity for it. And then he cannot be changed by any other; for he that changes any other, must be greater than him whom he changes. Nor can he be subject to the will of another, who is superior to him; for there is none equal, much less superior, to God. There is, therefore, no being that can add to, or take from, his perfections.

2. God is immutable in his knowledge. 'He seeth not as man seeth.' His knowledge is independent of the objects known; so that whatever changes there are in them, there is none in him. Things known are considered, either as past, present, or to come, and are not known by us in the same way; for concerning things past, it must be said, that we once knew them, and concerning things to come, that we shall know them hereafter. But God, with one view, comprehends all things past and future, as though they were present.

If God's knowledge were not unchangeable, he might be said to have different thoughts or apprehensions of things, at one time, from what he has at another; and this would argue a defect of wisdom. A change of sentiments implies ignorance, or weakness of understanding; for to make advances in knowledge, supposes a degree of ignorance, and

to decline therein, is to be reduced to a state of ignorance. Now it is certain, that both these are inconsistent with the infinite perfection of the divine mind, and cannot be attributed to him who is called, 'The only wise God.'

Moreover, a possibility of God's knowledge being changed, would infer a change of his will; since having changed his sentiments, he must be supposed to alter his resolutions and purposes. But his will is unchangeable; and, therefore, his understanding or knowledge is so. This leads us to prove,

3. That God is unchangeable in his will. It is said of him, 'He is in one mind, and who can turn him?' This is agreeable to his infinite perfection. He does not purpose to do a thing at one time, and determine not to do it at another. The revelation of his will, it is true, may be changed; and that may be rendered a duty at one time, which was not at another. Thus the ordinances of the ceremonial law were in force from Moses' time to Christ's; but after that they were abolished, and ceased to be ordinances. There may thus be a change in the things willed, or in the external revelation of God's will, and in our duty founded thereon, when there is, at the same time, no change in his purpose; for he determines all changes in the external dispensation of his providence and grace, without the least shadow of change in his own will.

This may farther appear, if we consider that if the will of God were not unchangeable, he could not be the object of trust. For how could we depend on his promises, were it possible for him to change his purpose? Neither would his threatenings be so much regarded, if there were any ground to expect, from the mutability of his nature, that he would not execute them. All religion would in consequence be banished out of the world.

Again, Any changeableness in the will of God, would render the condition of the best men, in some respects, very uncomfortable. They might be one day the object of his love, and the next of his hatred; and those blessings which accompany salvation might be bestowed at one time, and taken away at another. But such things are directly contrary to scripture; which asserts, that 'the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.'

Farther, None of those things which occasion a change in the purposes of men, can have any place in God; and there is, therefore, nothing in him that, in the least degree, can lead him to change his will, or determination, with respect to events. Men change their purposes, from a natural fickleness and inconstancy,—there being mutability in their very nature; but God, being unchangeable in his nature, must be so in his purpose or will. Men often change their purposes, in making but not fulfilling their promises; or, as we say, in being worse than their word, from the viciousness and depravity of their nature; but God is infinitely holy, and therefore, in this respect, cannot change. Men change their purposes, for want of power to bring about what they designed,—a want of power, which has hindered many well-concerted projects from taking effect in some, and many threatenings from being executed in others; but God's will cannot be frustrated for want of power to do what he designed, in as much as he is almighty. Men often change their purposes for want of foresight—something unexpected occurs, which argues a defect of wisdom, and renders it expedient for them to alter their purpose; but with God, who is infinitely wise, nothing unforeseen can intervene to induce him to change his purpose. Men, in fine, are sometimes obliged to change their purposes by the influence, threatenings, or other methods, used by some superior; but there is none equal, much less superior, to God, and consequently none who can lay any obligation on him to change his purpose.

The Incomprehensibility of God

God is incomprehensible. This implies that his perfections cannot be fully known by any creature. Thus it is said, 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?'

When we consider God as incomprehensible, we not only mean that man, in this imperfect state, cannot fully comprehend his glory,—for we can comprehend but very little, comparatively, of finite things, and much less of that which is infinite; but we mean, that the best of creatures, in the most perfect state, cannot fully conceive of or describe his glory. The reason is, that they are finite, while his perfections are infinite; and there is no proportion between an infinite God and a finite mind. As easily might the water of the ocean be contained in the hollow of the hand, or the dust of the earth weighed in a balance, as the best of creatures could have a perfect and adequate idea of the divine perfections.

On this subject we generally distinguish between apprehending and comprehending. The former denotes our having some imperfect or inadequate ideas of what surpasses our understanding; the latter, our knowing every thing that is contained in it, or our having an adequate idea of it. Now we apprehend something of the divine perfections, in proportion to the limits of our capacities, and our present state; but we are not, and never shall be, able to comprehend the divine glory,—God being incomprehensible to every one but himself.—Again, we farther distinguish between our having a full conviction that God hath those infinite perfections, which no creature can comprehend, and our being able fully to describe them. Thus we firmly believe that God exists throughout all the changes of time, and yet that his duration is not measured thereby; or that he fills all places, and yet is not co-extended with matter. We

apprehend, as having undeniable demonstration of it, that he does so; though we cannot comprehend how he does it.

The Omnipresence of God

God is omnipresent. This is elegantly set forth by the Psalmist, 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' The omnipresence of God doth not consist merely, as some suppose, in his knowing what is done in heaven and earth. This is only a metaphorical sense of omnipresence; as when Elisha tells Gehazi, 'Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?'c or as the apostle says to the church at Corinth, that 'though he was absent in body, yet he was present with them in spirit;' or as we say, that our souls are with our friends in distant places, as often as we think of them. Nor doth this perfection consist in God's being omnipresent by his authority, as a king is said, by a figurative way of speaking, to be present in all parts of his dominions, where persons are deputed to act under him, or by his authority. We must take omnipresence in a proper sense; and understand by it that God fills all places with his presence,e and is not confined to or excluded from any place. He is thus omnipresent, not by parts, as the world or the universe is said to be omnipresent; for such an omnipresence is agreeable only to things corporeal, and compounded of parts, and is by no means attributable to deity. [See note 2 B, page 124.]

This is a doctrine which it is impossible for us to comprehend; yet we are bound to believe it, because the contrary to it is inconsistent with infinite perfection. It is sometimes called his essential presence, to

distinguish it from his influential presence. By the latter, he is said to be where he acts in the methods of his providence; and it is either common or special. By his common influential presence, he upholds and governs all things; and by his special he exerts his power in a way of grace. As his omnipresence, or immensity, is necessary, and not the result of his will, so his influential presence is arbitrary, and an instance of infinite condescension. In respect to it he is said to be, or not to be, in particular places,—to come to, or depart from, his people; sometimes, to dwell in heaven, as he displays his glory there agreeably to the heavenly state; at other times, to dwell with his church on earth, when he communicates to them those blessings which they stand in need of.

The Omnipotence of God

God is almighty. If he is infinite in all his other perfections, he must be so in power. Thus, if he be omniscient, he knows what is possible or expedient to be done; and if he be an infinite sovereign, he wills whatever shall come to pass. Now his knowledge would be insignificant, and his will inefficacious, were he not infinite in power, or almighty. Again, his omnipotence might be argued from his justice, either in rewarding or in punishing; for if he were not infinite in power, he could do neither of these, at least so far as to render him the object of that desire, or fear, which is agreeable to the nature of these perfections. Neither without omnipotence, could infinite faithfulness accomplish all the promises which he hath made, so as to excite that trust and dependence, which is a part of religious worship; nor could he say, without limitation, as he does, 'I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.'g

But since power is visible in and demonstrated by its effects, and infinite power by those effects which cannot be produced by a creature, we may observe the almighty power of God in all his works, both of nature and of grace. His 'eternal power is understood,' as the apostle says, 'by the things that are made,'—not that there was an eternal production of things, but that the exerting of creative power in time proves it to be infinite and truly divine; for no creature can produce the smallest particle of matter out of nothing, much less furnish the various species of creatures with those endowments in which they excel one another, and set forth their Creator's glory. And the glory of his power is no less visible in the works of providence, whereby he upholds all things, disposes of them according to his pleasure, and brings about events which only he who has an almighty arm can effect. These things might have been enlarged on, as evident proofs of this divine perfection. But since the works of creation and providence will be particularly considered in their proper place,i we shall proceed to consider the power of God, as appearing in his works of grace.

1. The power of God appears in some things subservient to our redemption; as in the formation of the human nature of Christ, which is ascribed to 'the power of the highest,'—and in preserving it from being crushed, overcome, and trampled on, by the united powers of hell and earth. 'The arm of God,' it is said, 'strengthened him,' so that 'the enemy should not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him.'l It was the power of God that bore him up under all the terrible views he had of sufferings and death,—sufferings which had many ingredients in them that rendered them, beyond expression, formidable, and would have sunk a mere creature, unassisted by divine power, into destruction. It was by the divine power, which he calls 'the finger of God,' that he cast out devils, and wrought many other miracles, to confirm his mission.

Accordingly, when he 'rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child,' it is said, 'they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.'n It was by the divine power also which, as thus displayed, is called 'the exceeding greatness of the power of God,'—that 'he was raised from the dead;' and accordingly he was 'declared to be the Son of God, with power,' by this extraordinary event.p Moreover, the power of God will be glorified, in the highest degree, in his second coming, when, as he says, he will appear 'in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.'

2. The power of God eminently appears in the propagation of the gospel. That a doctrine so contrary to the corrupt inclinations of mankind, and which had so little to recommend it but what was divine, should be spread throughout the greatest part of the known world, by a small number of men, who, in order to this end, were spirited to act above themselves, and furnished with extraordinary qualifications, such as the gift of tongues and a power to work miracles, is a convincing proof that the power by which all this was done is infinite. It was by this power that they were inspired with wisdom, by which they not only silenced and confounded their malicious enemies, but persuaded others to believe what they were sent to impart to them. It was by this that they were inflamed with zeal, in proportion to the greatness of the occasion, and fortified with courage to despise the threats, and patiently to bear the persecuting rage, of those who pursued them unto bonds and death. It was by this that they were enabled to finish their course with joy, and seal the doctrines they delivered with their blood. And the power of God was the more remarkably displayed, that they were not men of the greatest natural sagacity or resolution; and they always confessed, that whatever there was extraordinary in the course of their ministry, was from the hand of God.

3. The power of God appears in the success of the gospel; the report of which would never have been believed, had not 'the arm of the Lord been revealed.' An eminent instance of this occurs in the greatness of the multitude which were converted to Christianity in one age. The profession which these made was contrary to their secular interests, and exposed them to the same persecution, though in a less degree, which the apostles themselves met with; yet they willingly parted with their worldly substance, when the necessity of affairs required it, and were content to have all things common, that the work might proceed with more success. It was the power of God that touched their hearts; and its internal influence contributed more to the work of grace, than all the rhetoric of man could have done. It was this that carried them through all the opposition of cruel mockings, bonds, and imprisonment, and, at the same time, compensated all their losses and sufferings, by those extraordinary joys and supports which they had, both in life and death. Moreover, the daily success of the gospel, in all the instances of converting grace, is an evident effect and proof of the divine power. This will farther appear when, under a following head, we consider effectual calling, as the work of God's almighty power and grace.p

It will be objected, that there are some things which God cannot do; and that, therefore, he is not almighty. It is true, there are some things that God cannot do; but the reason is, either that to do them would be contrary to his divine perfections, or that they are not the objects of power. It is not an imperfection in him that he cannot do them, but rather a branch of his glory.—First, there are some things which he cannot do, not because he has not power to do them, had he pleased, but only because he has willed or determined not to do them. If we should say that he cannot make more worlds, we do not mean that he wants infinite power, but we merely suppose that he has determined not to make them. He cannot save the reprobate, or

fallen angels, not because he wants power, but because he has willed not to save them. In this, the power of God is distinguished from that of the creature. We never say that a person cannot do a thing, merely because ho will not, but because he wants power, if he would. But this is by no means to be said, in any instance of God. We must distinguish therefore between his absolute and his ordinate power. By the former he could do many things, which by the latter he will not; and consequently to say he cannot do those things which he has determined not to do, does not in the least impugn the attribute of almighty power. [See Note 2 C, page 124.]—Again, God cannot do that which is contrary to the nature of things, when there is, in the things themselves, an impossibility that they should be done. Thus he cannot make a creature to be independent; for independence is contrary to the idea of a creature. Nor can he make a creature equal to himself; for then it would not be a creature. It is also impossible that he should make a creature to be, and not to be, at the same time, or render that not done, which is done; for that is contrary to the nature and truth of things. We may add, that he cannot make a creature the object of religious worship, or, by his power, advance him to such a dignity as shall warrant any one's ascribing divine perfections to him.—Farther, He cannot deny himself. 'It is impossible for God to lie;' and it is equally impossible for him to act contrary to any of his perfections. For this reason, he cannot do any thing which argues weakness,—for instance, he cannot repent, or change his mind, or eternal purpose. Nor can he do any thing which would argue him not to be a holy God.—Now that God can do none of these things, is no defect in him, but rather a glory; since they are not the objects of power, but would argue weakness and imperfection in him, should he do them.

We shall now consider what practical improvement we ought to make of this divine attribute.

The almighty power of God affords great support and relief to believers, when they are assaulted, and afraid of being overcome, by their spiritual enemies. Hence when they 'wrestle,' as the apostle says, 'not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places;' and when they consider what numbers have been overcome and ruined by them, and are discouraged very much, under a sense of their own weakness, or of their inability to maintain their ground against them; let them consider that God is able to bruise Satan under their feet, and to make them more than conquerors, and to cause all grace to abound in them, and to work in them that which is pleasing in his sight.

The consideration of God's almighty power, also gives us the greatest ground to conclude, that whatever difficulties seem to lie in the way of the accomplishment of his promises, relating to our future blessedness, shall be removed or surmounted. Things, which seem impossible, if we look no farther than second causes, or the little appearance there is, at present, of their being brought about, are not only of possible but of very easy accomplishment by the power of God. With respect to those who are sinking into despair, under a sense of the guilt or power of sin, and who are ready to conclude that their burden is too great to be removed by any finite power, let them consider that to God all things are possible. He can, by his powerful word, raise the most dejected spirits, and turn the shadow of death into a bright morning of peace and joy. Moreover, if we consider the declining state of religion in the world, the apostacy of some professors, the degeneracy of others, and what reason the best of them have to say, that it is not with them as in times past; or if we consider what little hope there is, from the present view of things, that the work of God will be revived in his church; yea, if the state of it were, in all appearance, as hopeless as it was when God, in a vision,

represented it to the prophet Ezekiel, showing him the valley full of dry bones, and asking him, 'Can these bones live?' or if the question be put, Can the despised, declining, sinking, and dying interest of Christ be revived? or how can those prophecies which relate to the church's future happiness and glory ever have their accomplishment in this world, when all things seem to make against it? every difficulty will be removed, and our hope encouraged, when we contemplate the power of God, to which nothing is difficult, much less insuperable.

A consideration of the power of God will remove likewise all the difficulties that lie in our way, with respect to the resurrection of the dead. This is a doctrine which seems contrary to the course of nature; and, if we look no farther than the power of the creature, we shall be inclined to say, How can this be? But when we consider the almighty power of God, all objections which can be brought against it will be sufficiently removed. Accordingly, when our Saviour proves this doctrine, he exposes the absurd notions which some entertained respecting it, by saying, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.'

Let us have a due regard to this attribute, and take encouragement from it, when we are engaging in holy duties, and are sensible of our inability to perform them in a right manner. When we have too much reason to complain of an unbecoming frame of spirit, of the hardness and impenitency of our hearts, the obstinacy and perverseness of our wills, the earthliness and carnality of our affections, and when all the endeavours we can use to bring ourselves into a better frame have not their desired success; let us encourage ourselves with this consideration, that God can make us 'willing in the day of his power,' and 'do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.'y

But let us take heed that we do not abuse, or practically deny, or cast contempt on, this divine perfection, by presuming that we can obtain spiritual blessings, without dependence on God for them, or by expecting divine influences, while we continue in the neglect of his instituted means of grace. God, it is true, can work without means; but he has not given us ground to expect that he will do so. When, therefore, we seek help from him, it must be in his own way. Again, let us take heed that we do not abuse this divine perfection, by a distrust of God, or by dependence on an arm of flesh. Let us not, on the one hand, limit the Holy One of Israel, by saying, Can God do this or that for me, with respect either to spiritual or to temporal concerns? nor, on the other hand, rest in any thing short of him, as though omnipotence were not an attribute peculiar to himself. As he is able to do great things for us that we looked not for; so he is much displeased when we expect blessings from any one short of himself. 'Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man, that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth?'

The Omniscience of God

God knows all things. It has been before considered, that his being a Spirit implies his having an understanding, as a Spirit is an intelligent being. His being an infinite Spirit, therefore, must argue that 'his understanding is infinite.'—His omniscience farther appears from his having given being to all things at first, and from his continually upholding them. He must necessarily know his own workmanship, the effects of his power. This is especially evident, if we consider the creation of all things, as a work of infinite wisdom, which is plainly discernible therein, as well as of almighty power. He must know all things; for wisdom supposes knowledge. Moreover, his being the proprietor of all things, results from his having created

them; and certainly he must know his own.—His omniscience appears, again, from his governing all things, or from his so ordering them in subserviency to valuable ends, that all shall redound to his glory. Both the ends and the means must be known by him. The governing of intelligent creatures, in particular, supposes knowledge. As the Judge of all, he must be able to discern the cause, else he cannot determine it,—and perfectly to know the rules of justice, else he cannot exercise it in the government of the world.—Moreover, God's knowing all things, appears from his knowing himself; for he that knows the greatest object, must know things of a lesser nature. Besides, if he knows himself, he knows what he can do, will do, or has done; which is as much as to say that he knows all things. And that God knows himself, must be granted; for if it be the privilege of an intelligent creature to know himself, though his knowledge be but imperfect, surely God must know himself. And because his knowledge cannot have any defect—for that would be inconsistent with infinite perfection—he must have a perfect, that is to say, an infinite knowledge of himself, and consequently of all other things.

The knowledge of God, as having the creature for its object, is distinguished, in scripture, into his comprehending all things, or seeing them or having a perfect intuition of them, and his approving of things; or it is either intuitive or approbative. The former of these is what we principally understand by the attribute of omniscience. This is referred to when it is said, 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;' and 'Thou knowest my down-sitting and up-rising, and art acquainted with all my ways; for there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether;'c and 'The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.' As for the approbative knowledge of God, it is less properly called knowledge; because it is seated rather in the will than in the understanding. Of this we read in

several scriptures. Thus God tells Moses, 'I know thee by name,'e—a saying which is explained by the following words, 'And thou hast found grace in my sight.' So when our Saviour says, concerning his enemies, 'I will profess unto you, I never knew you,' he speaks of a knowledge, not of intuition, but of approbation. In the former sense, he knows all things,—bad as well as good,—that which he hates and will punish, as well as what he delights in; in the latter, he knows only that which is good, or is agreeable to his will.

God is said to know what he can do, and what he has done, or will do. He knows what he can do, even many things that he will not do; for as his power is unlimited, so that he can do infinitely more than he will, so he knows more than he will do. This is very obvious. We ourselves, as free agents, can do more than we will; and, as intelligent, we know in many instances what things we can do, though we will never do them. Much more must this be said of the great God; who 'calleth things that be not as though they were.' Accordingly, when David inquires of God, 'Will Saul come down? and will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand?' God answers him, 'He will come down, and the men of Keilah will deliver thee up;'h which implies, that God knew what they would have done, had not his providence prevented it. Thus things known by him are said to be possible, by reason of his power; while the future existence of them depends on his will. [See Note 2 D, page 125.]—Again, God knows whatever he has done, does, or will do, namely, things past, present, or to come. That he knows all things present, has been proved, from the dependence of things on his providence, and from his knowledge being inseparably connected with his power. That he knows all things past, is no less evident; for they were once present, and consequently known by him; and to suppose that he does not know them, is to charge him with forgetfulness, or to suppose that his knowledge at present is less perfect than it was,—which is

inconsistent with infinite perfection. Moreover, if God did not know all things past, he could not be the Judge of the world; and particularly, he could neither reward nor punish,—both which acts respect only things that are past. Such things, therefore, are perfectly known by him. When Job considered his present afflictions as the punishment of past sins, he said, 'My transgression is sealed up in a bag; thou sewest up mine iniquity,'—a metaphorical way of speaking, which implied that God remembered it. So when God threatens to punish his adversaries for their iniquity, he speaks of it as remembered by him, 'laid up in store' with him, and 'sealed up among his treasures;'k and when, on the other hand, he designed to reward or encourage the religious duties performed by his people, who feared his name, it is said, 'a book of remembrance was written before him, for them.'

But what we shall principally consider, is God's knowing all things future, namely, not only such as are the effects of necessary causes, where the effect is known in or by the cause, but such as are contingent with respect to us. This is the most difficult of all knowledge, and possesses properties which argue it to be truly divine. By future contingencies, we understand things which are accidental, or which, as we commonly say, happen by chance, without any forethought or design of men. Now that many things happen so with respect to us, and therefore cannot be certainly foreknown by us, is very obvious. But even these are foreknown by God. For things that happen without our design, or forethought, and therefore are not certainly foreknown by us, are the objects of his providence, and therefore known to him from the beginning. Thus the fall of a sparrow to the ground is a casual thing; yet our Saviour says, that this is not without his providence. Hence, that which is casual or accidental to us, is not so to him; so that though we cannot have a certain or determinate foreknowledge of it, it does not follow

that he has not. He has, accordingly, foretold many such future events; as appears by the following instances. Ahab's death by an arrow, shot at random, may be reckoned a contingent event; yet this was foretold before he went into the battle,n and accomplished accordingly. That Israel should be afflicted and oppressed in Egypt, and afterwards should be delivered, was foretold four hundred years before it came to pass. And when Moses was sent to deliver them out of the Egyptian bondage, God tells them beforehand, how obstinate Pharaoh would be, and with how much difficulty he would be brought to let them go.p Joseph's advancement in Egypt was a contingent and very unlikely event; yet it was made known several years before, by his prophetic dream. That also which tended more immediately to it, was his afterwards foretelling what happened to the chief butler and baker, and the seven years of plenty and famine in Egypt, signified by Pharaoh's dream, all which were contingent events, and were foretold by divine inspiration, and therefore foreknown by God. Again, Hazael's coming to the crown of Syria, and the cruelty that he would exercise, were foretold to him, when he thought he could never be such a monster of a man as he afterwards appeared to be.r Also, Judas' betraying our Lord, was foretold to him; though at the time he seemed as little disposed to commit so vile a crime as any of the disciples.

Having thus considered God's knowledge, with respect to the object, either as past, or as future, we shall now observe some properties of it; whereby it appears to be superior to all finite knowledge, and truly divine.—1. It is perfect, intimate, and distinct, and not superficial, or confused, or general, as ours often is. It is said concerning him, that 'he bringeth out his hosts by number, and calleth them all by names;' and this denotes his exquisite knowledge of all things, as well as his propriety in them, and his using them at his pleasure. And since all creatures 'live and move,' or act, 'in him,'u or by his powerful

influence, it follows that his knowledge is as distinct and particular as the actions themselves. Even the most indifferent actions, which are hardly taken notice of by ourselves, such as 'our down-sitting and up-rising,' and all transient thoughts, which are no sooner formed in our minds than forgotten by us, are known by him 'afar off,' at the greatest distance of time, when they are irrecoverably lost with respect to us. That God knows all things thus distinctly, is evident, not only from their dependence upon him, but also from their accordance with his divine purpose. Accordingly, when he had brought his work of creation to perfection, 'he saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good; 'that is, it was agreeable to his eternal design, or, if we may so express it, to the idea, or platform, laid in his own mind. And this he pronounced concerning every individual thing,—which is as much the object of his omniscience as the effect of his power. Now what can be more expressive of the perfection and distinctness of his knowledge than this? The apostle might well say, therefore, that 'there is not any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'y—2. He knows every thing, even future contingencies, with a certain and infallible knowledge, without the least hesitation, or possibility of mistake. And as opinion or conjecture is opposed to certainty, it is not in the least attributable to him. In this, his knowledge differs from that of the best of creatures; who can only guess at some things that may happen, according to the probable fore-views they have of them.—3. He knows all things directly and not in a discursive way, agreeable to our common method of reasoning, by inferring one thing from another, or by comparing things together, and observing their connexion, dependence, and various powers and manner of acting, and thereby discerning what will follow. Such a knowledge as this is acquired, and presupposes a degree of ignorance. Conclusions can hardly be said to be known, till the premises whence they are

deduced be duly weighed. But to do this is inconsistent with the perfect knowledge of God, who sees all things in himself, things possible in his own power, and things future in his will, without inferring, abstracting, or deducing conclusions from premises.—4. He knows all things at once, not successively as we do. For if successive duration is an imperfection—as was before observed, when we considered the eternity of God—his knowing all things after this manner, is equally so. Indeed, his knowing things successively would argue an increase of the divine knowledge, or a making advances in wisdom by experience, and by daily observation of things, which, though experienced by all intelligent creatures, can by no means be supposed of him whose 'understanding is infinite.'

We shall now consider what improvement we ought to make of God's omniscience, in relation to our conduct in this world.

1. Let us take heed that we do not practically deny this attribute, Let us not act as though we thought that we could hide ourselves from the all-seeing eye of God. Let us not say, to use the words of Eliphaz, 'How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.' How vain a supposition is this! for 'there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.'b Hypocrisy is, as it were, an attempt to hide ourselves from God,—an acting as though we thought that we could deceive or impose on him, and is called, in scripture, 'a lying to him,' or 'a compassing him about with lies and deceit.'d This all are chargeable with who rest in a form of godliness, as though God saw only the outward actions, but not the heart. Let us likewise not be more afraid of man than of God, or venture, without considering his all-seeing eye, to commit the vilest abominations, which we would be afraid and ashamed to do were we under the eye of man. 'It is a

shame,' saith the apostle, 'even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.' And God, speaking to the prophet Ezekiel, says, concerning an apostatizing people of old, 'Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.'f

2. The consideration of God's omniscience should be improved, to humble us under a sense of sin, but especially of secret sins, which are all known to him. Thus it is said, 'Thou hast set our iniquities before thee; our secret sins in the light of thy countenance;' and, 'His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.'h There are many things which we know concerning ourselves, that no creature is privy to, which occasion self-conviction, and might fill us with shame and confusion of face. But our own knowledge of them falls infinitely short of God's omniscience; 'for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' This should make sinners tremble at the thoughts of a future judgment; for if sins be not pardoned, he is able to bring them to remembrance, and, as he threatens he will do, 'set them in order before their eyes.'k

3. The due consideration of God's omniscience' will, on the other hand, tend very much to the comfort of believers. He seeth their secret wants, the breathings of their souls after him; and, as our Saviour saith, 'Their Father which seeth in secret shall reward them openly.' With what pleasure may they appeal to God as the searcher of hearts, concerning their sincerity, when it is called in question by men! And when they are afraid of contracting guilt and defilement, by secret faults, which they earnestly desired, with the Psalmist, to be 'cleansed from,'m it is some relief to them to consider that God knows them, and therefore is able to give them repentance for them; so that they may pray with David, 'Search me, O God, and know my

heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' To all, likewise, who are affected with a view of the church's troubles, and of the deep-laid designs of its enemies against it, it is a consoling thought that God knows these, and therefore can easily defeat them, and turn them into foolishness.

4. The due consideration of God's omniscience will be of great use to all Christians, to promote a right frame of spirit in holy duties. It will make them careful how they behave themselves, as being in his sight; and tend to fill them with a holy reverence, as those that are under his immediate inspection, that they may approve themselves to him, in whose presence they are.

The Wisdom of God

God is most wise, or is infinite in wisdom; or, as the apostle expresses it, 'he is the only wise God.' This perfection, considered as absolute, underived, and truly divine, belongs only to him. Even the angels, the most excellent order of created beings, are said to be destitute of it, or to be 'charged with folly.' For our understanding what this divine perfection is, let us consider that wisdom contains in it more than knowledge; for there may be a great degree of knowledge where there is but little wisdom, though there can be no wisdom without knowledge. Knowledge is, as it were, the eye of the soul, whereby it apprehends, or sees, things in a true light, and so is opposed to ignorance, or not knowing things; but wisdom is that whereby the soul is directed in the skilful management of things, or in ordering them for the best, and it is opposed, not so much to ignorance, or error of judgment, as to folly or error in conduct. It consists more especially in designing the best and most valuable end in what we are about to do,—in using the most proper means to effect

it,—in observing the season most fit and the circumstances most expedient and conducive for accomplishing it,—and in foreseeing and guarding against every occurrence that may frustrate our design, or give us an occasion to blame ourselves for doing what we have done, or to repent of it, or to wish we had taken other measures. Now,

1. The wisdom of God appears in the reference or tendency of all things to his own glory. This is the highest and most excellent end that can be proposed; as he is the highest and best of beings, and his glory, to which all things are referred, is infinitely excellent. Here let us consider, that God is, by reason of his infinite perfection, naturally and necessarily the object of adoration,—that he cannot be adored, unless his glory be set forth and demonstrated, or made visible,—that there must be an intelligent creature to behold his glory, and adore his perfections, which are thus demonstrated and displayed,—and that every thing which he does is fitted and designed to lead this creature into the knowledge of his glory. Now that every thing is thus fitted and designed, is an eminent instance of divine wisdom, and is a fact so obvious that we need not travel far to know it. Wherever we look, we may behold how excellent God's name is in all the earth. And because some are so stupid that they cannot, or will not, in a way of reasoning, infer his divine perfections from things that are without us, he has instamped the knowledge of them on the souls and consciences of men; so that, at times, they are obliged, whether they will or not, to acknowledge them. There is something which 'may be known of God,' which is said to be 'manifest in, and shown to' all; so that 'the Gentiles, who have not the law,' that is, the written word of God, 'do by nature the things,' that is, some things 'contained therein,' and so are 'a law unto themselves,' and 'show the work of the law written in their hearts.' [See Note 2 E, p. 125.] God has led us farther into the knowledge of his divine perfections by his word;

which he is said to have 'magnified above all his name.' And having thus adapted his works and word to set forth his glory, he discovers himself to be infinite in wisdom.

2. The wisdom of God appears in his doing whatever he does in the fittest season, and in circumstances all of which tend to set forth his own honour, and argue his foresight to be infinitely perfect; so that he can see no reason to wish that anything had been otherwise ordered, or to repent that it was done. 'For all his ways are judgment.' 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;' and 'he hath made every thing beautiful in his time.'t But since wisdom is known by its effects, we shall, for farther illustrating the wisdom of God, observe some of the traces or footsteps of it in his works. We remark, therefore,

3. That the wisdom of God appears in the work of creation. As it requires infinite power to produce something out of nothing; so the wisdom of God appears in that excellent order, beauty, and harmony, which we observe in all the parts of the creation,—in the subserviency of one thing to another,—and in the tendency of all to promote the moral government of God in the world, and the good of man. In this manner was this lower world fitted up for man, that it might be a convenient habitation for him, and a glorious object, in which he might contemplate, and thereby be led to advance, the divine perfections, which shine forth therein as in a glass. We have therefore the highest reason to say, 'Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all.' 'He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.'x But as this argument hath been insisted on, with great ingenuity and strength of reason by others, we shall say no more upon it, but proceed to observe,

4. That the wisdom of God appears in the works of providence. It produces unexpected events for the good of mankind, and brings them about by means that seem to have no tendency to this end, but rather the contrary. This will appear in the following instances. Jacob's flying from his father's house, was wisely ordered, as a means not only of his escaping the fury of his brother, of the trial of his faith, and of humbling him for the sinful method he took to obtain the blessing; but also of building up his family, and of increasing his substance in the world, under a very unjust father-in-law and master, as Laban was. Joseph's being sold into Egypt, was ordered, as a means of his preserving not only that land, but his father's house, from perishing by famine. His imprisonment also was the occasion of his advancement. And both events led the way to the accomplishment of what God had foretold relating to his people's dwelling in Egypt, and their wonderful deliverance from the bondage they were to endure therein. The wisdom of God was seen, likewise, in the manner of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt,—in his first laying them under the greatest discouragements, by suffering the Egyptians to increase their tasks and burdens,—in his hardening Pharaoh's heart, that he might try his people's faith, and make their deliverance appear more remarkable,—in then plaguing the Egyptians, that he might punish their pride, injustice, and cruelty,—and finally, in giving them up to such an infatuation, as effectually secured their final overthrow, and his people's safety. His wisdom was seen further, in his leading Israel forty years in the wilderness, before he brought them into the promised land, that he might give them statutes and ordinances, and that they might experience various instances of his presence among them, by judgments and mercies, and so be prepared for all the privileges he designed for them, as his peculiar people, in the land of Canaan. We have, moreover, a very wonderful instance of the wisdom of Providence recorded in the book of Esther. When Haman, the enemy of the Jews, had obtained a

decree for their destruction, and purposed, as a first step, to sacrifice Mordecai to his pride and revenge, providence turned upon himself whatever he intended against him. There was, in all the circumstances that led to this, something very remarkable, which brought about the church's deliverance and advancement, when to an eye of reason this seemed almost impossible.

5. The wisdom of God appears yet more eminently in the work of our redemption. This work is what 'the angels desire to look into,' and cannot behold without the greatest admiration; for herein God's 'manifold wisdom' is displayed. It solves the difficulty involved in a former dispensation of providence, respecting God's suffering sin to enter into the world; which he could have prevented, and probably would have done, had he not designed to overrule the event, for bringing about the work of our redemption by Christ,—so that what we lost in our first head should be recovered, with great advantage, in our second, the Lord from heaven. But though this matter was determined, in the eternal covenant, between the Father and the Son, and the necessity of man seemed to require that Christ should become incarnate, as soon as man fell; yet it was deferred till many ages after. And in this delay the wisdom of God eminently appeared. By means of it, he tried the faith and patience of his church, and put them upon waiting for, and depending on, him who was to come. So that though they had not received the promised blessing of his coming, yet 'they saw it afar off,' and 'were persuaded of it, and embraced it,' and, with Abraham, 'rejoiced to see his day,' though at a great distance.a They thus glorified the faithfulness of God, and depended on his word, that the work of redemption should be brought about, as certainly as though it had been actually accomplished. Our Saviour, in the mean time, took occasion to display his own glory, as the Lord and Governor of his church, to whom he often appeared in a human form, assumed for that purpose

as a prelude of his incarnation. They had hence the greatest reason to expect his coming in our nature. Moreover, the time of Christ's coming in the flesh was such as appeared most seasonable. The state of the church was very low, religion was almost lost among them, and the darkness they were under was exceeding great; so that it seemed very necessary that the Messiah should come. When iniquity almost universally prevailed among them, then 'the deliverer came out of Sion, and turned away ungodliness from Jacob; and when the darkness of the night was greatest, it was the most proper time for 'the Sun of righteousness to arise, with healing in his wings.'b

6. The wisdom of God farther appears, in the various methods he has taken in the government of his church, before and since the coming of Christ. Till Moses' time, as has been before observed, God left his church without a written word, that he might take occasion, in the exercise of infinite condescension, to converse with them more immediately, and to show them that, though they had no such method of knowing his revealed will as we have, yet he could communicate his mind to them another way. And when the necessity of affairs required it, his wisdom was seen, in taking this method of oral revelation, to propagate religion in the world.—Again, when he designed to govern his church by those rules which he hath laid down in scripture, he revealed the great doctrines contained therein, in a gradual way. The dispensation of his providence towards them, like the light of the morning, was increasing to a perfect day. He first instructed them by various types and shadows, leading them into the knowledge of the gospel, which was afterwards to be more clearly revealed. He taught them, as they were able to bear instruction, like children growing in knowledge, till they arrive to a perfect manhood. He first gave them manifold predictions as a ground to expect the blessings which he would bestow in after-ages; and he afterwards glorified his faithfulness in their accomplishment.—He sometimes,

also, governed them in a more immediate way, and confirmed their faith, as was then necessary, by miracles, and raised up prophets, as occasion served, whom he furnished, in an extraordinary way, for the service to which he called them, to lead his church into the knowledge of those truths on which their faith was built.—To this we may add, that he gave them various other helps for their faith, by those common and ordinary means of grace, which they were favoured with, and which the gospel church now enjoys, and has ground to conclude will be continued until Christ's second coming.—Here we might take occasion to consider how the wisdom of God appears, in furnishing his church with a gospel ministry,—in adapting the management of it to the necessities of his people,—in employing those persons about it who are duly qualified for it,—in assisting them in the discharge of its duties, and in giving success to their humble endeavours; and all this in such a way, that the praise shall redound to himself, who builds his house, and bears the glory. But on this topic we may have occasion to insist, in a following part of this work,d

7. The wisdom of God appears, in the method he takes to preserve, propagate, and build up his church in the world. As his kingdom is not of this world, but is of a spiritual nature, he hath ordered that it shall not be promoted by those methods of violence, or of carnal policy, by which the secular interests of men are often advanced. He has no where appointed that wars should be proclaimed to propagate the faith, or that persons should be forced to embrace it against their will, or be enlisted under Christ's banner by bribery, or by a prospect of worldly advantage. Hence, all the success, worthy of the name, which the gospel has had, has been such as is agreeable to the spirituality of Christ's kingdom. His house is to be built, 'not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit.'—Again, that the church should flourish under persecution,—that those methods which its

enemies take to ruin it, should be overruled to its greater advantage, —that, in consequence, shame and disappointment should attend every weapon which is formed against Sion,—and that the church should appear more eminently to be the care of God, when it meets with the most injurious treatment from men,—are plain proofs of the glory of divine wisdom. On the other hand, that its flourishing state as to outward things, should not be always attended with such marks or evidences of the divine favour as those which more immediately respect salvation, is equally an illustration of the divine wisdom; as God hereby incites his people to set the highest value on those things which are most excellent, and not to reckon themselves most happy in the enjoyment of the good things of this life, when they are destitute of his special presence with them.—Moreover, the preserving of the rising generation, especially the seed of believers, from the vile abominations which are in the world, and the calling of many of them by his grace, that there may be a constant reserve of them to be added to his church, and to preserve his interest in the world, as others, who have served their generation, are called out of it, are further proofs of the wisdom of God, as well as of his other perfections.

From what has been said concerning the wisdom of God, we may infer that none can be said to meditate aright on the works of God, such as creation, providence, or redemption, who do not behold and admire his manifold wisdom displayed in them, as well as his other perfections. As we conclude that man to be a very unskilful observer of a curious picture or statue, who takes notice only of its dimensions in general, or of the matter of which it is composed, without considering the symmetry and proportion of its parts, and those other excellencies of it by which the artist has signalized his skill; so it is below a Christian to be able to say only, that there are works of God done in the world, or to have a general idea of its being governed

by providence, without having his thoughts suitably affected with the harmonious subserviency of things, and the design of all to set forth the glory of Him who is a God of infinite wisdom.

If we cannot understand the meaning of some particular dispensations of providence, so as to admire the wisdom of God in them, let us compare all the parts of providence together; and one will illustrate and add a beauty to another,—as our Saviour says to Peter, 'What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' Let us, in particular, compare the various dark dispensations, which the church of God is under at one time, with the glory that shall be put upon it at another.

From the displays of the wisdom of God in all his works, let us learn humility, under a sense of our own folly. The psalmist, when he had been meditating on the glory of some other parts of God's creation, which he calls, 'The work of his fingers,' that is, creatures in which his wisdom is displayed in a very eminent degree, takes occasion to express his low thoughts of mankind in general, and says, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' But, besides this, we may take occasion to have a humble sense of our own folly, that is, of our defect of wisdom; for it is but a little of God that is known by us, and the wonderful effects of divine wisdom are known but in part by us, who dwell in houses of clay.

Let us subject our understandings to God, and have a high veneration for his word, in which his wisdom is displayed, and which he has ordained as the means whereby we may be made wise unto salvation. And whatever incomprehensible mysteries we find contained in it, let us not reject or despise them, because we cannot comprehend them.

Finally, since God is infinite in wisdom, let us seek wisdom of him. 'If any of you lack wisdom,' says the apostle, 'let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.'

The Holiness of God

God is most holy, or infinite in holiness, which is essential to him. He is often styled, 'The Holy One of Israel;' and this attribute is thrice repeated by the seraphim, who, with the utmost reverence and adoration, 'cry one unto another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.'k And he is said to be holy, exclusively of all others; as this is a divine perfection, and as he is infinitely and independently holy. 'O Lord, thou only art holy;' and the reason of this is assigned, namely, that he is the only God. Holiness is his very nature and essence. 'There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none besides him.'m

In considering this divine perfection, we shall inquire, first, what we are to understand by it. Holiness is that whereby God is infinitely opposite to every thing that tends to reflect dishonour or reproach on his divine perfections. He is holy, especially, as he is infinitely opposite, in his nature, will, and works, to all moral impurity. As his power is opposed to all natural weakness, and his wisdom to the least defect of understanding; so his holiness is opposed to all moral blemishes, or imperfections, which we call sin. Holiness, therefore, is not so much one perfection as the harmony of all his perfections, as they are opposed to sin. Hence it is called, 'The beauty of the Lord.' And when the psalmist prays, that the church may be made an holy people, and dealt with as such, he says, 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.'o God's holiness is that which, if we may so express it, adds a lustre to all his other perfections; so that if he were not glorious in holiness, whatever else might be said of him, would

tend rather to his dishonour than his glory, and the beauty of his perfections would be so sullied that they could not be called divine. As holiness is the brightest part of the image of God in man, without which nothing could be mentioned concerning him but what turns to his reproach, his wisdom would deserve no better a name than that of subtilty, his power would be injurious and destructive, and his zeal furious madness. Thus, if we separate holiness from the divine nature, all other excellences would be inglorious, because impure.

We shall next consider the holiness of God, as glorified or demonstrated in various instances.

1. The holiness of God appears in his works. This perfection was as eminently displayed in the work of creation, especially that of angels and men, as his power, wisdom, and goodness. He made them with a perfect rectitude of nature, with a power to retain it, and without the least spot or propensity to sin. There was no natural necessity laid on them to commit sin, which might infer God to be the author of it.—Furthermore, as a moral expedient to prevent it, as well as to assert his own sovereignty, he gave them a law, which was holy, as well as just and good, and warned them of those dreadful consequences which would ensue on its violation,—showing them that it would render them unholy, deprive them of his image, and consequently separate them from him, and render them the objects of his abhorrence.—We may add, that his end in making all other things was, that his intelligent creatures might actively glorify him, and be induced to holiness.

2. The holiness of God appears in the government of the world and of the church, in all the dispensations of his providence, either in a way of judgment or of mercy. He shows his displeasure against nothing but sin,—which is the only thing that renders creatures the objects of

punishment; and all the blessings he bestows are a motive to holiness. As to his people, whom he hath the greatest regard for, they are described, as 'called to be saints;' and it is said of the church of Israel, that it was 'holiness unto the Lord.'q All his ordinances also are holy, and are to be engaged in with such a frame of spirit as is agreeable to holiness. Accordingly he says, 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me;' and 'holiness becometh his house for ever.'s We are hence to estimate the success of the divine ordinances by their sanctifying effects,—when, through the divine blessing accompanying them, they tend to promote internal holiness in those who are engaged in them, so that they become distinguished from the rest of the world, and 'sanctified through his truth.'

It may be objected by some, that God's suffering sin to enter into the world, which he might have prevented, was a reflection on his holiness. It must be allowed, indeed, that God might have prevented the entrance of sin into the world, by his immediate interposition, and so have kept man upright, as well as made him so. Yet let it be considered, that he was not obliged to do this; and therefore might, without any reflection on his holiness, leave an innocent creature to the conduct of his own free will, so that this creature might be tempted, but not forced, to sin,—especially as he designed to overrule the event to the setting forth of the glory of all his perfections, and, in an eminent degree, of that of his holiness. This point, however, will be more particularly considered when we come to discuss some other questions.

From what has been said, concerning the holiness of God, let us take occasion to behold and admire the beauty and glory of it, in all the divine dispensations. He can neither do, nor enjoin, any thing but what sets forth his infinite purity. And as he cannot be the author of sin, we must take heed that we do not advance any doctrines from

which this consequence may be inferred. The holiness of God ought to be the standard by which they are to be tried,—as we shall take occasion to observe in several instances; and we ought to think ourselves as much concerned to advance the glory of this perfection, as that of any other. Yet it is one thing for persons to oppose what appears to be a truth, by alleging this popular objection, that it is contrary to the holiness of God; and another thing to support the charge. This will be particularly considered, when the objection, as brought against the doctrine of predestination, and several other doctrines, is answered in its proper place.

It is an excellency, beauty, and glory, in the Christian religion, which should make us more in love with it, that it leads to holiness, which was the image of God in man. All other religions have indulged, led to, or dispensed with many impurities; as for example, those of the Mahommedans and the Pagans. And the different religions professed by persons called Christians, are to be regarded as more or less valuable, and to be embraced or rejected, as they tend more or less to promote holiness. Here I cannot but observe, that it is a singular excellency of the Protestant religion above the Popish, that all its doctrines and precepts have a tendency to holiness, while the other admits of, dispenses with, and gives countenance to manifold impurities. This will appear, if we consider some of the doctrines held by Papists, which lead to licentiousness. Of this class, is their doctrine that some sins are, in their own nature, so small as not to deserve eternal punishment,—that satisfaction is to be made for them, by undergoing some penances enjoined them by the priest,—and that on this condition, he gives absolution to the offenders, and discharges them from any farther concern about their sins. This doctrine is certainly subversive of holiness, as well as contrary to scripture, which says, 'The wages of sin is death.' The word of God knows no distinction between mortal and venial sins, especially in

the sense which the Papists entertain. Again, the doctrine of indulgences and dispensations to sin, given forth at a certain rate, is contrary to holiness. This doctrine, as displayed in practice, was a matter of great scandal to those who, among other reasons, took occasion from it, to separate from the church of Rome in the beginning of the Reformation; and, by their protesting against it, and expressing a just indignation against the vile practices to which it led, they gave glory to the holiness of God. The Papists, it is true, allege, in defence of the practice of indulgences, that it is maintained in compassion to those whose natural temper leads them, with impetuous violence, to those sins which are dispensed with; and that it is, in some respects, necessary, in as much as the temptations of some, arising from their condition in the world, are greater than others are liable to. But no such excuses will exempt a person from the guilt of sin,—much less warrant the practice of those who, by their indulgences, encourage them to commit it. Another doctrine maintained by the Papists is, that the law of God, as conformed to human laws, respects only outward actions or overt acts, as they are generally called, and not the heart, or the principle whence they proceed; and that, therefore, concupiscence, or the corruption of nature, which is the impure fountain whence all sins proceed, comes not under the cognizance of the divine law, nor exposes us to any degree of punishment. They entertain this view of concupiscence, either because they suppose it unavoidable, or because every sin is an act, and not a habit,—the offspring or effect of 'lust;' and to obtain countenance to their sentiment, they pervert the words of the apostle, 'And lust, when it has conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' Now, how much soever actual sins may be supposed to be scandalous and pernicious to the world in proportion as they are visible, the spring of defiled actions is, in reality, more corrupt and abominable, than the actions themselves. If the fruit be corrupt, the tree which brings it forth must

be much more so. And though this is not so discernible by others, yet it is abhorred and punished by a jealous God, who searches the heart and the reins. This doctrine of the papists, therefore, is contrary to his holiness.—Another doctrine which reflects on the divine holiness, is that of the merit of good works, and our justification by them. This doctrine makes way for boasting, and is inconsistent with that humility which is the main ingredient in holiness. It also casts the highest reflection on Christ's satisfaction, which is the greatest expedient for setting forth the holiness of God; and argues it not to have been absolutely necessary, and substitutes our imperfect works in its room.—We may instance, further, the doctrine of purgatory, and of prayers for the dead. This the papists are as tenacious of, as Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen were of the image of Diana at Ephesus. The destruction of it would endanger their craft;z and any disregard of it would bring no small detriment to them. But what renders it most abominable, is, that it extenuates the demerit of sin, and supposes it possible for the living to do that for the dead by their prayers which the latter neglected to do whilst they were alive. Persons, from this presumptuous supposition, do not see an absolute necessity of holiness to salvation. These, and many other doctrines which might have been mentioned, cast the highest reflection on the holiness of God, and not only evince the justice and necessity of the Reformation, but oblige us to maintain the contrary doctrines. If by way of reprisal, it be objected that there are many doctrines which we maintain, that lead to licentiousness, I hope we shall be able to exculpate ourselves; but this subject we reserve for its proper place, that we may avoid the repetition of things which we shall be obliged to insist on elsewhere.

As a further practical improvement of what we have taught respecting the holiness of God, let us not practically deny, or cast contempt on, this divine perfection. This we may be said to do, when

we live without God in the world, as though we were under no obligation to holiness. The purity of the divine nature is proposed in scripture, not only as a motive, but so far as conformity to it is possible, as an exemplar of holiness. We are exhorted to be holy, not only because God is holy, but 'as he is holy,' or so far as the image of God in man consists in holiness. They who 'live without God in the world, being alienated from his life,' that is, his holiness, 'and giving themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,' regard not the holiness of his nature or law. These sin presumptuously, and, accordingly, are said to 'reproach the Lord,'b as though he were a God that had pleasure in wickedness; or if they conclude him to be infinitely offended with it, they regard not the consequence of being the objects of his displeasure and fiery indignation.—Again, men reflect on the holiness of God, when they complain of religion, as though this were too strict and severe a thing, a yoke that sits very uneasy upon them; and when they resolve to keep at the greatest distance from it, unless they may have some abatements made, or indulgence given, to live in the commission of some beloved lusts. These cannot bear a faithful reprover. Thus Ahab 'hated Micaiah, because he did not prophesy good concerning him, but evil.' Thus also the people in Isaiah's days, did not like to hear of the holiness of God; and desired that the prophets would 'cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them.'—We may add, that they also do, in effect, deny or despise God's holiness, who entertain an enmity or prejudice against holiness in persons whose conversation is not only blameless, but exemplary. Such make use of the word 'saint,' as a term of reproach; as though holiness were not only a worthless thing, but a blemish or disparagement to the nature of man,—a stain on his character,—a thing to be avoided by all who have any regard to their reputation; or, at least, as though religion were mere hypocrisy, particularly when it shines brightest in the conversation of those who esteem it their greatest ornament. What is

this, but to spurn at the holiness of God, by endeavouring to bring that into contempt which is his image and delight?

The Justice of God

God is most just. This attribute differs but little from that of holiness. The two are sometimes distinguished thus: as holiness is the contrariety or opposition of his nature to sin, justice is an external and visible display of that opposition. In particular, when God is said to be just, he is considered as the Governor of the world. Hence, when he appears in the glory of his justice, he bears the character of a Judge; accordingly, it is said concerning him, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' and he is said, 'without respect of persons to judge according to every man's work.'e The justice of God is sometimes taken for his faithfulness, which is a doing justice to his word. This view of it, however, will be more particularly considered, when we speak of him as abundant in truth. According to the most common and known sense of the word, it is taken either for his disposing, or for his distributive justice. The former is that whereby his holiness shines forth in all the dispensations of his providence; all his ways being equitable, of what kind soever they are. The latter, or his distributive justice, consists either in rewarding or punishing, and so is styled either remunerative or vindictive, [See note 2 F, page 126.] In these two respects, we shall more particularly consider this attribute.

As to the remunerative justice of God, he may be said to give rewards to his creatures, without our supposing the persons who are the subjects of them to have done anything by which they have merited them. We often find, in scripture, that the heavenly glory is set forth as a reward; and it is called, 'a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day,'g that is, when he

appears, in the glory of his justice, to judge the world in righteousness. Scripture says also that it is 'a righteous thing with God to recompense to his people who are troubled, rest, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.' As to the meaning of such expressions, I humbly conceive that they import the necessary and inseparable connection that subsists between grace wrought in us, and glory conferred upon us. Glory is called, indeed, a reward, or a crown of righteousness, to encourage us to duty; but it is so called, without supposing that what we do is in any degree meritorious. If we ourselves are less than the least of all God's mercies, then the best actions performed by us must be so; for the action cannot have more honour ascribed to it than the agent. Or if, as our Saviour says, when 'we have done all, we must say we are unprofitable servants,'i and that sincerely, and not in a way of compliment, as some Popish writers, consistently with their doctrine of the merit of good works, understand it: we must conclude that glory is a reward not of debt, but of grace. The phrase, remunerative justice, therefore, is taken in an accommodated sense. The reward is not a blessing purchased by us, but for us. Christ is the purchaser, we are the receivers. It is strictly and properly the reward of his merit; but, in its application, it is the gift of his grace.

Next, there is the vindictive justice of God. By this he punishes sin, as an injury offered to his divine perfections, an affront to his sovereignty, a reflection on his holiness, and a violation of his law. For these he demands satisfaction, and inflicts punishment, proportioned to the nature of the crime; and this he continues to do, till satisfaction be given. This is called his 'visiting iniquity,' or 'visiting for it;'l it is also called, his 'setting his face against' a person, and 'cutting him off from amongst his people.' When he does this, his wrath is compared to flames of fire,—it is called, 'the fire of his

jealousy;'n and they who are the objects of it are said to 'fall into the hands of the living God,' who is 'a consuming fire.'

But that we may farther consider how God glorifies his justice, and thereby shows his infinite hatred of sin, we may observe that an eminent display of it was made in his inflicting that punishment which was due to our sins, on the person of Christ our Surety. It was, indeed, the highest act of condescending grace that Christ was willing to be charged with the iniquity of his people, or to have it laid upon him; but it was the greatest display of vindictive justice, that he was accordingly punished for it. He is said to have been 'made sin for us, who knew no sin;' and God gave a commission to 'the sword' of his justice, to 'awake' and exert itself in an uncommon manner, against him, 'the man his fellow.'r In this instance, satisfaction was not only demanded, but fully given; and in that respect it differed from all the other displays of vindictive justice. On this subject, however, more will be said under some following answers.

Again, the vindictive justice of God is displayed in punishing sin in the persons of finally impenitent sinners in hell. There a demand of satisfaction is perpetually made, but can never be given. For this reason the punishment inflicted is eternal; and it is accordingly called, 'everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.' This subject also we shall have occasion to insist on more largely, under a following answer.u

In the two instances we have specified, punishment is taken in a strict and proper sense. There is, however, another sense, in which, though many evils called punishments are inflicted for sins committed, the word is taken in a less proper sense. In this sense, believers, who are justified on account of the satisfaction which Christ has given for their sins, are said to be punished for them. Thus

it is said, 'Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve;' and 'If his children forsake my law, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him.'y And the prophet, though speaking of some for whom God would execute judgment, and to whom he would be favourable in the end, so that they should behold his righteousness, yet represents them as 'bearing the indignation of the Lord, because they had sinned against him.' As these evils are exceedingly afflictive, being often attended with a sad apprehension and fear of the wrath of God, and as sin is the cause of them, they are called punishments. Yet they differ from punishment in its most proper sense; for though justice inflicts evils on believers for sin, it doth not in doing so demand satisfaction: in as much as they are considered as justified, that is supposed to have been given; and, to speak with reverence, it is not agreeable to the nature of justice to demand satisfaction twice. Nevertheless, it is one thing for God really to demand it, and another thing for believers to apprehend or conclude that such a demand is made. This they may often do, as questioning whether they are believers, or in a justified state. God's design, however, in these afflictive dispensations, whatever he determines shall be the consequence of them, is to humble his people greatly, and to show them the demerit of sin. Moreover, the persons who are the subjects of these punishments, are considered not as enemies, but as children, and therefore as the objects of his love, at the same time that his hand is heavy upon them. For this reason some have called them castigatory punishments, agreeably to what the apostle saith, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;' and 'He dealeth with them as with sons.'a

From what has been said, concerning the justice of God in rewarding or punishing, we may learn that, since the heavenly blessedness is

called a reward, to denote its connection with grace and duty, no person may presumptuously expect the one without the other. The crown is not to be put upon the head of any one, but him that runs the Christian race; and it is a certain truth, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' On the other hand, as this is a reward of grace, founded on Christ's purchase, let us take heed that we do not ascribe that to our performances which is founded wholly on Christ's merit. Let every thing, in the idea of a reward, that may be reckoned a spur to diligence, be apprehended and improved by us, to quicken and excite us to duty; but whatever there is in it of praise and glory, let it be ascribed to Christ. When we consider the heavenly blessedness in this view, let us say, as the angels and the blessed company who are joined with them are represented as saying, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' It is the price that he paid which gives it the character of a reward; and therefore the glory of it is to be ascribed to him.

From what has been said concerning the vindictive justice of God in inflicting punishment on his enemies, let us learn the evil and heinous nature of sin, and take warning, that we may not expose ourselves to the same or like judgments. How deplorable is the condition of those who have contracted a debt which they can never pay,—who are said 'to drink of the wrath of the Almighty, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation!' This consideration should induce us to flee from the wrath to come, and to make a right improvement of the price of redemption, which was given by Christ, to deliver his people from wrath.

Believers, who are delivered from the vindictive justice of God, have the highest reason for thankfulness; and under all the afflictive evils which they endure, it is a very great encouragement to them, that the

most bitter ingredients are extracted. Their afflictions, it is true, are not in themselves 'joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby.' And let us not presume without ground, but give diligence to have good reason for concluding, that these are the dispensations of a reconciled Father, who 'corrects with judgment, not in anger, lest he should bring us to nothing.'f It will afford great matter of comfort, if we can say, that he is, at the same time, 'a just God and a Saviour,' and that, as one observes, though he punishes for sin, yet it is not with the punishment of sin.

The Benignity of God

God is most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness. These perfections are mentioned together in Exod. 34:7. We shall consider first his goodness, which, in some respects, includes the others; though in other passages, it is distinguished from them, as will be afterwards more particularly observed. This being one of his communicable perfections, Ave may conceive of it by comparing it with that goodness which is in the creature; for by separating all the imperfections of it as it exists in the creature we may arrive at some idea of it.

Persons are denominated good, as having all those perfections that belong to their nature. This is the most extensive sense of goodness. It is taken also in a moral sense, and so consists in the rectitude of their nature. In this sense, we call a holy man a good man. Lastly, it is affirmed of one who is beneficent, or communicatively good, and so is the same with benignity. Now, as seen in this light, the goodness of God includes in it either all his perfections, or his holiness in particular, or his being disposed to impart or communicate those blessings to his creatures which they stand in need of; and thus are

we to understand it, as distinguished from his other perfections. This goodness of God supposes that he has, in himself, an infinite and inexhaustible treasure of all blessedness, enough to fill all things, and to make his creatures completely happy. This he had from all eternity, before there was any object in which it might be displayed, or any act of power put forth to produce one. It is this the psalmist intends, when he says, 'Thou art good;' and when he adds, 'Thou doest good,' as the former implies his being good in himself the latter denotes his being so to his creatures.

Before we treat of this perfection in particular, we shall observe the difference that there is between goodness, mercy, grace, and patience, which, though they all are included in the divine benignity, and imply in them the communication of some favours which tend to the creature's advantage, as well as to the glory of God, may be distinguished with respect to their objects. Goodness considers its object as indigent and destitute of all things; and so communicates those blessings that it stands in need of. Mercy considers its object as miserable; and though an innocent creature may be the object of the divine bounty and goodness, it is only a fallen, miserable, and undone creature, that is an object of compassion. Grace is mercy displayed freely; and its object is considered as not only miserable but unworthy. At the same time, though the sinner's misery and his unworthiness of pity, may be distinguished, the two ideas cannot be separated; for that which renders him miserable, constitutes him at the same time guilty, misery being inseparably connected with guilt, and no creature being miserable but as a sinner. We are considered, therefore, as unworthy of mercy, and in consequence objects of divine grace,—which is mercy extended freely to those who have rendered themselves unworthy of it. Patience and long-suffering, is the suspending of deserved fury, or the continuing to bestow

undeserved favours,—a lengthening out of our tranquillity. These attributes are now to be considered in particular. And, first,

The Goodness of God

As God was infinite in power from all eternity, before there was any display or act of omnipotence; so he was eternally good, before there was any communication of his bounty, or any creature to which it might be imparted. The first display of this perfection was in giving being to all things; which were the objects of his bounty and goodness, as well as the effects of his power. And all the excellencies or advantages, which one creature hath above another, are as so many streams flowing from this fountain. 'He giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things.'

The Mercy of God

The mercy of God considers its object as miserable, and is illustrated by all those distressing circumstances which render sinners the objects of compassion. Are all by nature bond-slaves to sin and Satan? It is mercy that sets them free, 'delivers them, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.' Are we all by nature dead in sin, unable to do what is spiritually good, alienated from the life of God? Was our condition miserable, as being without God in the world, and without hope,—like the poor infant, mentioned by the prophet, 'cast out in the open field, to the loathing of our persons, whom no eye pitied?' It was mercy that 'said to us, Live.'l Accordingly, God is said to have 'remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.'

The mercy of God is either common or special. Common mercy gives all the outward conveniences of this life; which are bestowed without distinction. 'He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good,

and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' 'His tender mercies are over all his works.'o But his special mercy is that which he bestows on, or has reserved for, the heirs of salvation, and which he communicates to them in a covenant way, in and through a Mediator. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of God, as 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.'

The Grace of God

As God is said to be merciful, or to extend compassion to the miserable; so he doth this freely, and accordingly is said to be gracious. And as grace is free, so it is sovereign, and is bestowed in a discriminating way. That is given to one, which he denies to another; and only because it is his pleasure. Accordingly, one of Christ's disciples says, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' And our Saviour himself glorifies God for the display of his grace, in such a manner, when he says, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;' and he considers this as the result of his sovereign will, when he adds, 'even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' The discriminating grace of God appears in several instances.

1. It appears in his extending salvation to men, rather than to fallen angels. Our Saviour 'took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,' because he designed to save the one, and to reserve the other 'in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.' And among men, all of whom were equally unworthy of this invaluable blessing, only some are made partakers of it, and their number is comparatively very small. They are called 'a little flock;' and 'the gate' through which they enter 'is strait;' and 'the way

is narrow that leads to life, and few there be that find it.'t There are many who make a considerable figure in the world for riches, honours, great natural abilities, bestowed by common providence, who are destitute of special grace; while others, who are poor and despised in the world, are called and saved. The apostle observed it to be so in his day, when he said, 'Not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.'

2. The discriminating grace of God appears in several things relating to the internal means whereby he fits and disposes men for salvation. Thus the work of conversion is an eminent instance of discriminating grace; for herein he breaks through, and overcomes, that reluctance and opposition, which corrupt nature makes against it,—subdues the enmity and rebellion that were in the heart of man,—and works a powerful change in the will, whereby he subjects it to himself, contrary to its natural bias and inclination. That which renders this grace more illustrious, is, that many of those who are thus converted, were previously notorious sinners. Some were 'blasphemers, persecutors, and injurious.' The apostle says this concerning himself before his conversion, and concludes himself to have been 'the chief of sinners;' and he tells us, how he 'shut up many of the saints in prison,' and how, when they were put to death, 'he gave his voice against them, and punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and, being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even unto strange cities.' But you will say, "He was, in other respects, a moral man." He, therefore, gives an instance elsewhere of some who were far from being so, whom he puts in mind of having been 'fornicators, idolaters, adulterers,

effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners.' 'Such,' says he, 'were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.' Moreover, the change wrought in the soul is unasked for; and hence it may truly be said, 'God is found of them that sought him not.' The change is also undesired; for though unregenerate sinners desire to be delivered from misery, they are far from desiring to be delivered from sin, or to have repentance, faith, and holiness. If they pray for these blessings, their desires are conceived in such a manner, that the Spirit of God hardly calls them prayer. The Spirit of grace and of supplications, by which alone Ave are enabled to pray in a right manner, is what accompanies or flows from conversion. If, therefore, God bestows this blessing on persons so unworthy of it, and so averse to it, it must certainly be an instance of sovereign and discriminating grace.

3. The discriminating grace of God appears, farther, if we consider how much they who are the objects of it, differ from what they were, or if we compare their present with their former state. Once they were blind and ignorant of the ways of God, and going astray in crooked paths. The apostle speaks of this in the abstract: 'Ye were sometimes darkness;' and 'The god of this world had blinded the minds of some, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them;' but now they are made 'light in the Lord,' and brought into the way of truth and peace. Their hearts were once impenitent, unrelenting, and inclined to sin, without remorse or self-reflection. Nothing could make an impression on them; for they were 'past feeling, and gave themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.'b But now they are penitent, humble, relenting, and broken under a sense of sin, afraid of every thing that may be an occasion of it, willing to be reproved for it, and desirous to be set at a greater distance from it. Once they were destitute of hope,

or solid peace of conscience; but now they have hope and joy in believing, and are delivered from that bondage in which they were formerly enthralled. A happy turn is thus given to the frame of their spirits. And as to the external and relative change which is made in their state, there is no condemnation to them as justified persons. Hence, they who were formerly in the utmost distress, expecting nothing but hell and destruction, are enabled to lift up their heads with joy, experiencing the blessed fruits and effects of this grace in their souls.

The discriminating grace of God farther appears, in his bestowing saving blessings on his people, at seasons when they appear most suitable and adapted to their condition. He is a very present help in a time of trouble; and when their straits and difficulties are greatest, then is his time to send relief. When sinners sometimes have wearied themselves in the greatness of their way, while seeking rest and happiness in other things than the divine favour, and finding only disappointment, and when they are brought to the utmost extremity, then he appears in their behalf. So with respect to believers, when their comforts are at the lowest ebb, their hope almost degenerated into despair, their temptations most prevalent and afflicting, and they ready to sink under the weight that lies on their spirits,—when, as the psalmist says, their 'hearts are overwhelmed within them,' then 'he leads them to the rock that is higher than they.' When they are even 'desolate and afflicted, and the troubles of their hearts are enlarged, then he brings them out of their distresses.'d

Thus the grace of God eminently appears, in what he bestows on his people. But if we look forward, and consider what he has prepared for them, or the hope that is laid up in heaven, then we may behold the most amazing displays of grace, in which they who shall be the happy objects of it, will be a wonder to themselves, and will see more

of the glory of it than can now be expressed in words. Hence the psalmist says, in a way of admiration, 'O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!'

It may, perhaps, be objected, that the afflictions which God's people are exposed to in this life, are inconsistent with the glory of his grace and mercy. But afflictive providences, so far from being inconsistent with the glory of these perfections, tend peculiarly to illustrate them. Afflictions are needful as an expedient to humble us for sin, and to prevent it for the future; and however grievous they are, yet as they are overruled by God, as the apostle says, to 'yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby,' they are far from being inconsistent with the mercy and grace of God. This will farther appear, if we consider that the outward afflictions are often attended with inward supports and spiritual comforts. Accordingly, the apostle says concerning himself, 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ;'g and 'though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' Nothing but this could make him say, 'I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.'i

It is farther objected, that the doctrine of free grace leads men to licentiousness, and therefore that what we have said concerning it, is either not true and warrantable, or at least, should not be much insisted on, lest licentiousness should ensue. Now those sinners only abuse the grace of God who presumptuously take occasion from it to go on, as they apprehend, securely in sin,—alleging that God is merciful and gracious, and ready to forgive. The vile and disingenuous temper of such persons the apostle observed in some that lived in his days; and he expresses the greatest abhorrence of it:

'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.' But does it follow, that because the doctrine of grace is abused by some, as an occasion of licentiousness, through the corruption of their nature, it therefore leads to it? The greatest blessings may be the occasion of the greatest evils; but yet they do not lead to them. That which leads to licentiousness must present some motive or inducement which will warrant an ingenuous mind, acting according to the rules of equity and justice, to take occasion to sin; but this nothing can do, much less the grace of God. His great clemency, indeed, may sometimes give occasion to those who hate him, and have ingratitude and rebellion rooted in their natures, to take up arms against him; and an act of grace may be abused, so as to make the worst of criminals more bold in their wickedness, who presume that they may commit it with impunity. But this is not the natural tendency or genuine effect of grace; nor will it be thus abused by any, but those who are abandoned to every thing that is vile and ungrateful. As the law of God prohibits all sin, and his holiness is opposed to it; so his grace affords the strongest motive to holiness. It is therefore the neglect or contempt of this grace, and a corrupt disposition to act contrary to the design of it, which leads to licentiousness. Grace and duty are inseparably connected; so that where God bestows the one, he expects the other. Yea, duty, which is our act, is God's gift, as the power to perform it is from him. Thus, when he promises to give his people 'a new heart,' and to 'put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes,' he tells them, that they should 'remember their evil ways and doings, and loath themselves in their own sight for their iniquities.' This is not only a prediction respecting the event, but a promise of what he would incline them to do; and when he adds, that 'for this he would be inquired of by them,'l or that they should seek the blessings by fervent prayer, he secures to them by promise a disposition and grace to perform this great duty, which is inseparably connected with

expected blessings. God himself, therefore, will take care that, however others abuse his grace, it shall not lead those who are, in a distinguishing way, the objects of it, to licentiousness. We may add that it is a disparagement to this divine perfection to say, that because some take occasion from it to continue in sin, its glory is therefore to be, as it were, concealed, and not published to the world. As some of old did not care to hear of the holiness of God, and required the prophets, if they would render their doctrine acceptable to them, not to insist on that perfection, but to 'cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them;' so there are many who are as little desirous to hear of the free and discriminating grace of God, which contains the very sum and substance of the gospel, lest it should be abused. The glory of it, on the contrary, cannot be enough admired; and it ought, therefore, to be often recommended, as what leads to holiness, and lies at the very root of all religion.

That the grace of God may be so improved, let it be farther considered, that it is the greatest inducement to humility, as well as one of the greatest ornaments and evidences of a true Christian. This appears from the nature of the thing; for, as has been but now observed, grace supposes its object unworthy. It argues him a debtor to God for all that he enjoys or expects; and this consideration, if duly weighed, will make him appear vile and worthless in his own eyes, and excite in him a degree of thankfulness in proportion to the ground he has to claim an interest in it, and the extensiveness of its blessed fruits and effects.

The Patience of God

We proceed to speak of God as long-suffering, or, as he is styled by the apostle, 'the God of patience.' Sometimes this attribute is set forth in a metaphorical way, and called a 'restraining of his wrath,'o

and 'refraining himself,' and 'holding his peace,' or 'keeping silence.' While he exercises patience, he is represented, speaking after the manner of men, as one that is 'weary' with forbearing;q and he is said to be 'pressed,' under a provoking people, 'as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.' By all these expressions, the patience of God is set forth in a familiar style, according to our common way of speaking. But that we may briefly explain the nature of it, let us consider, in general, that it is a branch of his goodness and mercy, manifested in suspending the exercise of his vindictive justice, and in his not punishing in such a degree as sin deserves. But that we may consider this more particularly, we shall observe something concerning the objects of it, and the various instances in which it is displayed; how it is glorified; how the glory of it is consistent with that of vindictive justice; and lastly, how it is to be improved by us.

1. As to the objects of God's patience, since it consists in deferring deserved wrath, an innocent creature cannot be the object of it. Vindictive justice makes no demand upon him; nor has it any reserves of punishment laid up in store for him. Such a one, indeed, is the object of goodness, but not of forbearance; for punishment cannot be said to be deferred where it is not due. On the other hand, they cannot be said to be the objects of patience, in whom the vindictive justice of God is displayed to the utmost, when all the vials of his wrath are poured forth. Whether the devils are, in some sense, the objects of God's forbearance, as having ground to expect a greater degree of punishment after the final judgment, is disputed by some, who contend about the sense of the word 'forbearance.' They are said, indeed, to be 'reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day;' that is, though their state be hopeless, and their misery great beyond expression, yet there is a greater degree of punishment, which they bring upon themselves, by all the hostilities they commit against God in this world. This farther

appears, from what they are represented as having said to our Saviour, 'Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?'t a saying from which it is sufficiently evident that their misery shall be greater than now it is. Yet the less degree of punishment inflicted on them is never called, in scripture, an instance of God's patience or long-suffering towards them. We must conclude, therefore, that they are not, properly speaking, the objects of the glory of this attribute. Patience, then, is extended only to sinful men, while in this world. Accordingly it is called, in scripture, 'the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering,' and is said to 'lead' those who are the objects of it 'to repentance.' Hence there must, together with the exercise of this perfection, be a day or season of grace granted, which is called, in scripture, with a peculiar emphasis, the sinner's day, or 'the time of his visitation;' in which it ought to be his highest concern 'to know the things which belong unto his peace.'x And the gospel that is preached, in this season of God's forbearance, is called, 'the word of his patience;' so that there is something more in this attribute than merely a deferring of punishment. Accordingly, God is said, to 'wait that he may be gracious;'z and the effects and consequences of his waiting are various,—as may be said of all the means of grace. Sinners, who neglect to improve it, have in consequence of it not only a reprieve from deserved punishment, but also all those advantages of common grace which attend it. But with respect to believers, it may be said, in the words of the apostle, 'The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.' God spares them, therefore, not that he may take a more fit opportunity to punish them, but that he may wait the set time to favour them, and then extend to them salvation. In this respect more especially, the exercise of this perfection is founded in the death of Christ. And as the elect, who were purchased thereby, were, by the divine appointment, to live throughout all the ages of time, and to have the saving effects of his redemption applied to them, one after another, it was necessary that

the patience of God should be so long continued. This perfection, therefore, is glorified more immediately with respect to them, as the result of the plan of redemption; and, in subserviency to this, it is extended to all the world.

2. The patience of God has been displayed in various instances. It was owing to it that God did not destroy our first parents as soon as they fell. He might then, without the least impeachment of his justice, have banished them for ever from his presence, and left their whole posterity destitute of the means of grace, and have punished them all in proportion to the guilt contracted. That the world is continued to this day, is therefore a very great instance of God's long-suffering. Again, when mankind were universally degenerate, and 'all flesh had corrupted their way,' before the flood, and God determined to destroy them, yet he would not do this, till in the display of his patience he had given an intimation of this desolating judgment, an hundred and twenty years before it came. And Noah was, during this period, 'a preacher of righteousness;' while 'the long-suffering of God' is said to have 'waited' on them.c Further, the Gentiles, who not only worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, but committed vile abominations, contrary to the dictates of nature, and thereby filled up the measure of their iniquity, are said to be the objects of God's patience,—though in a lower sense than that in which believers are said to be so. Accordingly, the apostle observes, that 'in times past God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;' that is, God did not 'draw forth his sword out of its sheath,' by which metaphor, the prophet sets forth the patience of God; he did not stir up all his wrath, 'but gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their heart with fruit and gladness.' Moreover, the church of the Jews, before the coming of Christ, had long experience of the forbearance of God. It is said, that 'he suffered their manners forty years in the wilderness.'e And afterwards, when they often

revolted to idolatry, following the customs of the nations round about them, he did not utterly destroy them, but, in their distress, raised them up deliverers. And when their iniquity was grown to such a height, that none but a God of infinite patience could have borne with them, he spared them many years before he suffered them to be carried away captive into Babylon. And finally, when their rebellion against him had arrived at the highest pitch,—when they had crucified the Lord of glory, he spared them some time, till the gospel was first preached to them, and they had rejected it, and thereby 'judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life.' After this, the patience of God was extended to those also who endeavoured to pervert the gospel of Christ, namely, to false teachers and backsliding churches,—to whom he 'gave space to repent, but they repented not.'g We may add, that he has not yet poured forth the vials of his wrath on the antichristian powers; though he has threatened, that 'their plagues shall come in one day.'

3. We are next to consider the method which God takes in glorifying his patience. We have already observed that, with respect to believers, the patience of God is glorified in subserviency to their salvation. With respect to others, by whom it is abused, it discovers itself in giving them warning of his judgments before he sends them. 'He speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.' Indeed, all the prophets were sent to the church of the Jews, not only to instruct them, but to warn them of approaching judgments; and they were faithful in the delivery of their message. In what moving terms doth the prophet Jeremiah lament the miseries which were ready to befall them! And with what zeal doth he endeavour, in the whole course of his ministry, to bring them to repentance, that the storm might blow over, or, if not, that their ruin might not come upon them altogether unexpected!

When the divine warnings are not regarded, and wrath must be poured forth on an obstinate and impenitent people, it is inflicted by degrees. God sends lesser judgments before greater, or inflicts his plagues, as he did upon Egypt, one after another, not all at once. So, in his judgments upon Israel of old, as the prophet Joel observes,—first the palmer-worm, then the locust, after that the canker-worm, and then the caterpillar, devoured the fruits of the earth, one after another. The prophet Amos also observes, that first God sent a famine among them, which he calls 'cleanness of teeth in all their cities;' and afterwards 'some of them were overthrown, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.' Some think that the gradual approach of divine judgments is intended by what the prophet Hosea says, when 'the judgments of God' are compared to 'the light that goeth forth.'m This language implies more than is generally understood by it,—more than that the judgments of God should be rendered visible, as the light of the sun is; for the prophet seems to intimate, that the judgments of God should be progressive like the light of the morning, which increases until a perfect day. It is more than probable that the same thing is intimated by the same prophet, when he represents God as saying concerning Ephraim, that he would be to them 'as a moth;' which doth not consume the garment all at once, as fire does, but frets it by degrees, 'or like rottenness,' which is of a spreading nature. Thus the judgments of God are poured forth by degrees, that together with them there may be, comparatively at least, a display of divine patience.

Again, when God sends his judgments abroad into the world, he often moderates them. None are proportionate to the demerit of sin. Accordingly, it is said of him, that being full of compassion, he 'forgave the iniquity' of a very rebellious people; that is, he did not punish them as their iniquity deserved, and therefore he 'destroyed them not, and did not stir up all his wrath.' So the prophet Isaiah

says concerning Israel, 'Hath God smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.'p

Further, when God cannot, in honour, defer his judgments any longer, he pours them forth, as it were, with reluctance; as a judge, when he passeth sentence on a criminal, doth it with a kind of regret; not insulting his misery, but rather pitying it as unavoidable, because the course of justice must not be stopped. Thus the prophet says, 'God doth not afflict willingly,' that is, with delight or pleasure, 'nor grieve the children of men;' that is, he doth not punish them because he delights to see them miserable, but to secure the rights of his own justice in the government of the world. So when Israel had been guilty of vile ingratitude and rebellion against him, and he threatens to turn his hand upon them, and destroy them, he expresseth himself in such terms, speaking after the manner of men, as imply a kind of uneasiness: 'Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.'r And before he gave up Israel into the hands of the Assyrians, he seems, again speaking after the manner of men, to have a hesitation or debate in his own mind, whether he should do so or not: 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together.' And when our Saviour could not prevail upon Jerusalem to repent of their sins, and embrace his doctrine,—when he was obliged to pass sentence upon them, and to tell them that the things of their peace were hid from their eyes, and that their enemies should cast a trench about the city, and should lay it even with the ground, he could not speak of it without tears; and 'when he beheld the city, he wept over it.'t

4. The next thing to be considered, concerning the patience of God, is, how the glory of it is consistent with that of his vindictive justice; or how he may be said to defer the punishment of sin, and yet appear to be a sin-hating God. It is certain, that the glory of one divine perfection cannot interfere with that of another. As justice and mercy meet together in the work of redemption, so justice and patience do not oppose each other in any of the divine dispensations. Their demands, it is true, seem to be different: justice requires that the stroke should be immediately given, while patience insists on a delay. Without this, patience does not appear to be a divine perfection; and if it is so, and its glory is as necessary to be displayed as that of any of his other perfections, it must be glorified in this world, by delaying the present exercise of the highest degree of vindictive justice, or it cannot be glorified at all. Justice will be glorified throughout all the ages of eternity, in those who are its objects; but patience can then have no glory, since, as has been before observed, the greatest degree, either of happiness or of misery, is inconsistent with its exercise. This being, therefore, a perfection which redounds so much to the divine honour, we must not suppose that there is no expedient for its being glorified, or that the glory of vindictive justice is inconsistent with it.

Now the harmony of these two perfections must be a little considered. [See Note 2 G, page 126.] Justice, it is true, obliges God to punish sin; yet it does not oblige him to do it immediately: the time, as well as the way, is to be resolved into his sovereign will. In order to make this appear, let us consider, that the design of vindictive justice, in all the punishment it inflicts, is either to secure the glory of the holiness of God, or to assert his rights as the Governor of the world. If, then, the deferring of punishment doth not interfere with either of these, then the glory of God's patience is not inconsistent with that of his vindictive justice.

Now the glory of his holiness, as connected with the display of his patience, is sufficiently secured. Though he delays to punish sin in the highest degree, yet, at the same time, he appears to hate it, by the threatenings which he hath denounced against sinners, which shall certainly have their accomplishment. If he says that 'he is angry with the wicked every day,' and that 'his soul hateth them,' is there any reason to suppose the contrary? Or if he has threatened that 'he will rain upon them snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, which shall be the portion of their cup,' and that because, 'as the righteous Lord, he loveth righteousness,' is not this a sufficient security for the glory of his holiness, against any thing that might be alleged to detract from it? If threatened judgments be not sufficient, for the present, to evince the glory of this divine perfection, it will follow, on the other hand, that the promises he has made of blessings not yet bestowed, are to be as little regarded for the encouraging of our hope, and the securing of the glory of his other perfections; and then his holiness would be as much blemished in delaying to reward, as it can be supposed to be in delaying to punish. If, therefore, the truth of God, which will certainly accomplish his threatenings, be a present security for the glory of his holiness, it is not absolutely necessary that vindictive justice should be immediately exercised in the destruction of sinners, and so exclude the exercise of God's forbearance and long-suffering. Moreover, there are many terrible displays of God's vindictive justice in his present dealing with sinners. 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes,' as well as by those which he designs to pour forth, on his enemies. The wicked are now 'snared in the work of their own hands;' and in the end they shall be 'turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.'x If vindictive justice takes occasion to inflict many temporal and spiritual judgments upon sinners in this world, then the glory of God's holiness is illustrated at the same time that his patience is prolonged. This may be observed in God's dealing with his

murmuring and rebellious people in the wilderness; which gave him occasion to take notice of the abuse of his patience, and to say, 'How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?' Justice was now ready to strike the fatal blow. 'I will,' says God, 'smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them.' This gave Moses occasion to intercede for them, and to plead the glory of God's patience. 'The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy: Pardon,' said he, 'I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt, even until now;' by which he means, as I humbly conceive, 'Spare thy people, as thou hast often done, when, by reason of their provocations, thou mightest justly have destroyed them.' And God answers him in the following words, 'I have pardoned, according to thy word;' but he adds, 'As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord,' that is, with the report of the glory of his vindictive justice, which should be spread far and near; and then he threatens them that they, that is, those who murmured against him, should not see the land of Canaan. Vindictive justice, therefore, had its demands fulfilled in one respect, while patience was glorified in another. The psalmist referring to the occurrence, says, 'Thou answeredst them, O Lord,' namely, Moses' prayer for them; 'thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.'

Consider, again, the vindictive justice of God, as tending to secure his rights as the Governor of the world, and as being ready to take vengeance for sin, which attempts to control his sovereign authority, and disturb the order of his government. The stroke of justice may be suspended for a time, that it may make way for the exercise of patience, provided there be no just occasion given for men to trample on the sovereignty of God, despise his authority, or rebel against him, without fear. Now these consequences will not necessarily result

from his extending forbearance to sinners. We do not find that delaying to inflict punishment among men is any prejudice to their government; and why should we suppose that the divine government should suffer any injury by it? When a prince puts off the trial of a malefactor for a time, in order that the indictment may be more fully proved, and the equity of his proceedings may more evidently appear, the postponement is always reckoned a greater excellency in his administration, than if he should proceed too hastily. And we never find that such a course tends to embolden the criminal, as impunity would do; for he is punished, in part, by the loss of his liberty, and if he be convicted, he loses the privilege of an innocent subject, his life is forfeited, and he is in daily expectation of having it taken away. Now if such a method, or the allowing of a reprieve to some for a time, tends to secure the rights of a government, may not God stop the immediate proceedings of vindictive justice for a time, without the least infringement either on his holiness, or on his rectoral justice?

5. We come now to consider how the patience of God is to be improved by us. Since it is a divine perfection, and there is a revenue of glory due to God for the display of it, we ought to exercise those graces, which it engages us to. Some of the divine attributes tend to excite our fear; but this should draw forth our admiration and praise. We have special reason to adore and admire it, when we consider how justly he might destroy us. The best man on earth may say, with the psalmist, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' He need not watch for occasions, or diligently search out some of the inadvertencies of life, in order to find matter for our conviction and condemnation. The multitude and the heinous aggravation of our sins, proclaim our desert of punishment, and might provoke his vengeance, and immediately draw it down upon us. What farther enhances our guilt is, that we provoke him, though

laid under the highest obligations to serve and love him. How easily, too, might he bring ruin and destruction upon us! He does not forbear to punish us for want of power, as earthly kings often do; or because the exercise of justice might weaken his government, or occasion some rebellions which could not easily be put a stop to. David says concerning himself, that he was 'weak, though anointed king,' and that on occasion of Joab's having forfeited his life, when the necessity of affairs required the suspending of his punishment, 'the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him.'z No such thing can be said of God; he is represented as 'slow to anger, and great in power;' that is, he does not punish, though he easily could. It would be no greater difficulty for him immediately to destroy an ungodly world, than it is to crush a moth or a worm, or to break a leaf. Finite power can make no resistance against that which is infinite. What are briars and thorns before the consuming fire?

Let us take heed that we do not abuse the divine patience. It is a crime to abuse the mercy of God, even in the smallest instances of it; and much more is it so to slight and contemn the riches of his forbearance or mercy, as extended to so great a length as it has been to most of us. This crime is committed by those who infer from his forbearing to pour forth his fury on sinners, that he neglects the government of the world; or who take occasion from it to deny a providence; or who, because his threatenings are not executed at present, do, as it were, defy him to do his worst against them. This some are represented as doing, with an uncommon degree of presumption, and with a scoff; for they are termed 'scoffers, walking after their own lusts; saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation.' Again, God's patience is abused by those who take occasion from it to sin presumptuously; and who, because he not only delays to punish, but, at the same time,

expresses his willingness to receive returning sinners at what time soever they truly repent, become emboldened to persist in their rebellion, concluding that it is time enough to submit to him. This is not only to abuse, but, as it were, to wear out his patience: it is to provoke his indignation, like them of whom it is said, that 'because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.'c But you will say, "These are uncommon degrees of wickedness, which only the vilest part of mankind are chargeable with." We add, therefore, that a bare neglect to improve our present season and day of grace, or to embrace the great salvation offered in the gospel, is an abuse of God's patience. This will certainly affect the greatest number of those who are favoured with the gospel-dispensation. Indeed, who are they that improve it as they ought? All therefore are said, more or less, to abuse the patience of God,—a consideration which affords matter of great humiliation in his sight. Now, that we may be duly sensible of this sin, together with the consequences of it, let us consider that it argues the highest ingratitude,—especially, in a professing people. The apostle, when reproving the Jews for this sin, puts a very great emphasis on every word when he says, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering?' Let us consider, also, that the consequence of this sin is very destructive; in as much as the opportunity afforded us by the divine patience is the only one which we can ever enjoy for seeking after those things which relate to our eternal welfare. What stress does the apostle lay on the word 'now,' which is twice repeated, as well as on the word 'behold,' which notes that he had something remarkable to communicate, when he says, 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'e Another consideration, and a very awakening one, is, that the abuse of God's patience will expose finally impenitent sinners to a greater degree of his vengeance. When the forbearance of God had been extended to Israel for many years,

from his bringing them up out of the land of Egypt, and the exercise of it had been attended all that time with the means of grace, and many warnings of approaching judgments, he tells them, 'You only have I known, of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you,' that is, my wrath shall fall more heavily upon you, 'for all your iniquities.' And when God is represented, as coming to reckon with Babylon, the cup of his wrath, it is said, must be filled double. 'How much she hath glorified herself,' saith God, 'and lived deliciously, so much sorrow and torment give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.'g

Let us, on the other hand, improve God's patience, by duly considering the great end and design of it, and what encouragement it affords to universal holiness. It is a great relief to those who are at the very brink of despair; for if, apprehending themselves to be yet in a state of unregeneracy, they cannot say that it has hitherto led them to repentance, let them consider that a door of hope is still open, and that the golden sceptre is held forth, the invitation given to come to Christ. Let this consideration excite us to a diligent attendance on the means of grace; for though forbearance is not to be mistaken, as it is by many, for forgiveness, yet we are encouraged to wait and hope for it, in all God's holy institutions, according to the tenor of the gospel. And they who are not only spared but pardoned, to whom grace has not only been offered but savingly applied, may be encouraged to hope for farther displays of grace, as well as to improve, with the greatest diligence and thankfulness, what they have received.

Finally, Let us consider the great obligation we are laid under, by the patience of God, to a constant exercise of the grace of patience, in our behaviour towards God and man. We are laid under the highest engagements by it to submit to God's disposing will, and, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content, without murmuring, or

repining, when under afflictive providences. 'Shall we receive good at his hand, and shall we not receive evil?' Has he exercised so long forbearance towards us, not only before we were converted, when our life was a constant course of rebellion against him; but has he since, not only passed by, but forgiven, innumerable offences—and shall we think it strange when he testifies his displeasure against us in any instances? Shall we be froward and uneasy, because he does not immediately give us what we desire, or deliver us from those evils we groan under? Let us exercise patience, also, in our behaviour towards men. Shall we give way to, or express unbecoming resentment against those whom we converse with, for injuries done us, which are often rather imaginary than real? Or if they are very great, as well as undeserved, let not our passions exceed their due bounds; much more, let us not meditate revenge, but consider how many injuries the great God has passed over in us, and how long his patience has been extended towards us.

The Faithfulness of God

God is abundant in truth. That we may understand what is meant by this perfection, we may observe the difference between his being called a true God, and a God of truth; though they seem to import the same thing, and are not always distinguished in scripture. Thus he that receiveth Christ's testimony, is said to 'set to his seal that God is true,' that is, that he is a God of truth, in accomplishing what he has promised respecting the salvation of his people; and elsewhere it is said, 'Let God be true, but every man a liar,' that is, let God be esteemed a God of truth. Yet his being the true God, and his being the God of truth, are, for the most part, distinguished. Hence when he is called the true God, or the only true God, the phrase does not denote one distinct perfection of the divine nature, but the Godhead; and it includes all his divine perfections, and represents him in

contrast to all others who are called gods, but are not so by nature. This point, however, will be more particularly considered in the next Answer. When, on the other hand, we speak of him as the God of truth, we mean that he is true to his word,—a God that cannot lie,—whose faithfulness is unblemished, because, as a God of infinite holiness, whatever he has spoken, he will certainly bring to pass. This perfection respects either his threatenings, or his promises. As to the former, it is said that 'the judgments of God,' that is, the sentences he has passed against sinners, 'are according to truth;' and the display of his vindictive justice is called, 'his accomplishing his fury.'k This renders him the object of fear; and it is, as it were, a wall of fire round about his law, to secure its glory from the insults of his enemies. As to his faithfulness in his promises, he is said to be 'the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations.' This is that which encourages his people to hope and trust in him, and to expect that blessedness which none of his perfections would give them a sufficient ground to lay claim to, were it not promised, and the promises of it secured by his infinite faithfulness. Almighty power is able to give us happiness, and mercy and goodness can communicate every thing that may contribute to it; but it does not follow that they will do so, since God is under no natural obligation to glorify these perfections. But when he is pleased to give us a promise of happiness, and the accomplishment of this is made sure to us by his infinite faithfulness, the blessings we need become not only possible but certain, and strong consolation is afforded to the heirs of salvation. It is this that renders things future as certain as though they were present, and so lays a foundation for our rejoicing in hope of eternal life, whatever difficulties may seem to lie in the way.

Here we may take occasion to consider the blessings which are secured by the faithfulness of God. Some of these respect mankind in general, or are bestowed in the ordinary course of divine providence,—such as that the world should be preserved, and 'all flesh not perish out of it,' from the deluge till Christ's second coming, and that, during this time, the regular course of nature should not be altered; but 'that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, should not cease.' There are also promises made to the church in general,—such as that it should have a being in the world, notwithstanding all the shocks of persecution which it is exposed to, that the ordinances of divine worship should be continued, and that, 'in all places where he records his name, he will come to his people and bless them.'n He has promised also that his church shall be increased and built up,—that to Shiloh, the great Redeemer, should the 'gathering of the people be,'—that he would 'multiply them that they should not be few, and also glorify them that they should not be small,'—and that the glory should be of an increasing nature, especially that which it should arrive to in the latter ages of time, immediately before its exchanging this militant state for a triumphant one in heaven. Moreover, there are many great and precious promises made to particular believers. These every one of them have a right to lay claim to; and this they are often enabled to do by faith, which depends entirely on this perfection. These promises are such as respect the increase of grace,—that they shall 'go from strength to strength,' or that 'they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength,'p—that they shall be recovered after great backslidings, and be enabled to persevere in that grace which is begun in them, till it is crowned with complete victory,r—that they shall be made partakers of that inward peace and joy which accompanies or flows from the truth of grace,—and that all this shall be followed by perfect blessedness in heaven at last.t The scripture abounds with such promises, suited to every condition, and fitted to

afford relief to God's people under all the difficulties they meet with in the world; and the accomplishment of them is made sure to them by the divine faithfulness.

It is objected against this divine attribute, that God, in some instances, has not fulfilled his threatenings, which has tended to embolden some in a course of obstinacy and rebellion against him,—particularly that the first threatening was not executed as soon as man fell; for though God told our first parents, that 'in the very day they should eat of the forbidden fruit, they should surely die,' yet Adam lived after this nine hundred and thirty years. It is also objected, that though God threatened to destroy Nineveh, within forty days after Jonah was sent to publish this message to them,x they continued in a flourishing state many years after.—As to what respects the first threatening, that death should immediately ensue upon sin being committed, we shall have occasion to speak on it in its proper place. All that needs be replied to it at present is, that the threatening was, in some respect, executed the day, yea, the moment in which our first parents sinned. If we understand it in a legal sense, they were immediately brought into a state of condemnation; which, in a forensic sense, is often called death. They were immediately separated from God, the fountain of blessedness, and plunged into all those depths of misery which were the consequence of their fall. Or if we understand 'death' to mean, what certainly was one ingredient in it, either the separation of soul and body, or the greatest degree of punishment, consisting in everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, it is sufficient to say, that man's being liable to it was the principal thing intended in the threatening. Certainly God did not design to tie up his own hands, so as to render it impossible for him to remit the offence, or to recover the fallen creature out of this deplorable state. If you take 'death' for that which is natural, which was not inflicted

till nine hundred and thirty years after, we may say that his being on the very day that he sinned exposed to it, or brought under an unavoidable necessity of dying, might be called his dying from that time. The scripture will warrant our using the word in this sense; for the apostle, speaking to those who were, by sin, liable to death, says, 'The body is dead because of sin,' that is, it is exposed to death, as the consequence of sin, though it was not actually dead. And if we take death for a liability to eternal destruction, the threatening must be supposed to contain a tacit condition implying that man was to expect nothing but eternal death, unless some expedient were found out which the miserable creature then knew nothing of, to recover him from the state into which he was fallen.—As to what concerns the sparing of Nineveh, we have sufficient ground to conclude that there was a condition annexed to the threatening that it should be destroyed. The meaning therefore, is, that they should be destroyed in forty days, if they did not repent. This condition was designed to be made known to them; otherwise Jonah's preaching would have been to no purpose, and the warning given would have answered no valuable end. It is plain, too, that the Ninevites understood the matter in this sense; otherwise there would have been no room for repentance. God, therefore, connected the condition with the threatening. And as, on the one hand, he designed to give them repentance,—so that the event was not dubious and undetermined by him, as depending on their conduct, abstracted from his providence; so, on the other hand, there was no reflection cast on his truth,—because the provisionary expedient for their deliverance was as much known by them as the threatening itself.

It is objected that several promises have not had their accomplishment. Thus there are several promises of spiritual blessings which many believers do not experience the accomplishment of in this life,—a circumstance which has given

occasion to some to say with the psalmist, 'Doth his promise fail for evermore?' All the promises of God are not literally fulfilled in this world to every particular believer. The promise of increase of grace is not actually fulfilled, while God suffers his people to backslide from him, and while the work of grace is rather declining than sensibly advancing. Nor are the promises respecting the assurance and joy of faith fulfilled to one that is sinking into the depths of despair,—or those that respect the presence of God in ordinances, to such as are destitute of the influences of his grace in observing them,—or those of victory over temptation, to such as are not only assaulted but frequently overcome by Satan, when it is as much as they can do to stand their ground against him. There are also many other instances of a similiar nature. Notwithstanding all these, however, the faithfulness of God may be vindicated, if we consider, that there is no promise of which there are not some instances of accomplishment. This fact is a sufficient evidence to the world, that there are such blessings bestowed as God has promised. Those, again, who are denied these blessings, may possibly be mistaken when they conclude themselves to be believers; and then it is no wonder that they are destitute of them, for God has promised to give joy and peace only in a way of believing, or to give first the truth of grace, and then its comfortable fruits and effects. But we will suppose that they are not mistaken, but have experienced the grace of God in truth, and then their graces are so defective that they know but little of their own imperfections, if they do not take occasion from a consciousness of these to justify God for withholding his blessings from them, and to adore, rather than call in question, the equity of his proceeding. If remunerative justice be not laid under obligation to bestow these blessings by any-thing performed by us, then certainly the faithfulness of God is not to be impeached because he is pleased to deny them. Again, in denying these blessings, he often takes occasion to advance his own glory in some other way: he tries the faith and

patience of his people, corrects them for their miscarriages, humbles them by his dealings with them, and overrules all events for their good in the end,—which is an equivalent for those joys and comforts which are withheld. Indeed, God has never promised these blessings to any, but with this reserve, that if he thinks it necessary for his own glory and their good, to bring about their salvation some other way, he will do it; so that, when he does so, not the least occasion is given to detract from the glory of his faithfulness. All those promises, moreover, which have not had their accomplishment in kind, in this world, shall be accomplished in the next, with the greatest advantage. Believers will then have no reason to complain of even the least unfaithfulness in the divine administration. If rivers of pleasure at God's right hand for ever, will not compensate for the want of some comforts while we are in this world, or silence all objections against his present dealings with men, nothing can do it; or if the full accomplishment of all the promises hereafter will not secure the glory of God's faithfulness, it is a sign that men who deny it are disposed to contend with the Almighty. To such, therefore, we may justly apply God's own words to Job, 'He that reproveth God, let him answer it.' 'Wilt thou disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?'

We shall now consider how the faithfulness of God ought to be improved by us. The consideration of it may be a preservative against presumption, on the one hand, and despair, on the other. Let no one harden himself in his iniquity, or think that, because the threatenings are not yet fully accomplished, they never shall. It is one thing for God to delay to execute them, and another thing for him to resolve not to do it. Because 'our houses are safe from fear, and the rod of God is not upon them,' we may vainly conclude that 'the bitterness of death is past;' but let it be considered, that 'the wicked are reserved for the day of destruction,—that they shall be brought

forth to the day of wrath.' The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. His threatenings lay him under an obligation to punish finally impenitent sinners; because he is a God of truth. Let none therefore harden themselves against him, or expect impunity in a course of open rebellion against him. On the other hand, let not believers give way to despair of obtaining mercy, or conclude that, because God is withdrawn, and hides his face from them, he will never return, or that because his promises are not immediately fulfilled, they never shall. His faithfulness is their great security. 'He will ever be mindful of his covenant.'d

Again, Let us compare the providences of God with his word, and see how every thing tends to set forth his faithfulness. We are very stupid, if we take no notice of the great things which are done in the world; and we behold them to little purpose, if we do not observe how this divine perfection is glorified in them. The world continues to this day, because God has several things yet to do in it, in pursuance of his promises. The whole number of the elect are to be gathered, and brought in to Christ; their graces must be tried, and their faith built up in the same way as it has been in former ages. The church, in consequence, is preserved; and, according to his promise, 'the gates of hell have not prevailed against it.' As it was of old, so we observe now, that the various changes which are made in civil affairs are all rendered subservient to the church's welfare. 'The earth helps the woman,'f—not so much from its own design, as by the appointment of providence. And why does God order it so, but that his promises might be fulfilled? The continuance of his ordinances, and the efficacy and success of them in the experience of believers, as the consequence of his presence with them, which he has given them ground to expect 'unto the end of the world,' are blessings in which his faithfulness is eminently glorified.

Further, This divine perfection is a sure foundation for our faith. As his truth, with respect to what he has revealed, is an infallible ground for our faith of assent; so his faithfulness, in fulfilling his promises, affords the highest encouragement for our trust and dependence on him. Hence we are said to 'commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator;' and when we lay the whole stress of our salvation upon him, we have no reason to entertain any doubt about the issue. Moreover, are we exposed to evils in this world? We may conclude, that as 'he has delivered, and does deliver,' so we have reason to 'trust in him, that he will deliver us.'i And is there much to be done for us, to make us meet for heaven? We may be 'confident of this very thing, that he that has begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

Again, The faithfulness of God should be improved by us, as a remedy against that uneasiness and anxiety of mind which we often have about the future, especially when events seem to run counter to our expectation. When, for example, there is but a very melancholy prospect before us, as to what concerns the glory of God and the flourishing state of his church in the world, and we are ready to say with Joshua, 'Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?' or when we have many sad thoughts of heart about the rising generation, and are in doubt whether they will adhere to or abandon the interest of Christ; when we are ready to fear whether there will be a reserve of faithful men, who will stand up for his gospel, and fill the places of those who are called off the stage, after having served their generation by the will of God; when we are too much oppressed with cares about our outward condition in the world; when, like Christ's disciples, we are immoderately thoughtful 'what we shall eat, what we shall drink, or wherewith we shall be clothed,'m or how we shall be able to conflict with the difficulties that lie before us,—our great relief against all our solicitude is to be derived from the faithfulness

of God. Since godliness has the promise annexed to it, of 'the life that now is,' as well as of 'that which is to come,' this promise shall have its accomplishment, so far as shall most redound to God's glory, and our real advantage.

Finally, The consideration of the faithfulness of God should be improved, to humble us, and to fill us with shame and confusion of face, when we consider how treacherously we have dealt with him,—how unsteadfast we have been in his covenant,—how often we have broken our own promises and resolutions, that we would walk more closely with him,—how frequently we have backslidden from him, contrary to all the engagements which we have been laid under. Have we found any unfaithfulness in him? Has he, in the least instance, been worse than his word? As God says, when he reproves his people, 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?'

[NOTE Z. The Communicable and the Incommunicable Perfections of God.—The distinction between communicable and incommunicable perfections of Deity, ought not to be made. All the divine perfections are alike absolute, alike glorious, alike infinite, alike identical with divinity. They are not, as Dr. Ridgeley himself afterwards teaches, to be considered as apart from God, or as properties of the divine subsistence. God's perfections are God himself, and God himself is his perfections. To suppose some of them to be more and some of them less distinctive of Deity, or some to be communicable and some incommunicable, is to conceive of the divine subsistence abstractedly from itself, or to compare God with God. Mere 'resemblances' between the creature and the Creator do not lessen the distance between finitude and infinitude. Holiness, power, and faithfulness, as they exist in Deity, are as truly infinite, as

truly characteristic of divinity, as though no resemblances of them were found in men and angels; and, as divine perfections, are as strictly incommunicable, and as entirely remote from any properties of a creature, as immutability and independence. All resemblances between what is infinite and what is finite are distant, analogical, and remotely comparative. If holiness be called a communicable perfection, because man was created a sinless being, immutability may as justly be called so, because the physical movements and agencies of the universe were made uniform and unvarying. Durability and unchangeableness are as much illustrated by the stability of the earth and of the 'everlasting hills,' and the regularity of the seasons and of chemical agencies, as holiness and truth are by the character impressed on Adam in creation. What some writers have termed distinctively the natural and the moral perfections of God, are displayed respectively in his natural and his moral works, and have produced in these just those remote resemblances whence' we derive our ideas of their nature. Hence any distinction which is warrantable, has reference, not to the perfections themselves, but to the sphere in which they are displayed, and the effects which they produce. When we think of God as making worlds out of nothing, we speak of his power; when we think of him as the source of all created being, we speak of his self-existence; when we think of him as sustaining universal nature, we speak of his independence; when we think of him as entertaining uniform purposes, and as governing his creatures by uniform laws, we speak of his immutability; when we think of him as opposing sin, as creating minds imbued with love to his service, and as regenerating and sanctifying depraved intelligences, we speak of his holiness; when we think of him as making promises, and invariably fulfilling them, or as establishing principles, and invariably verifying them, we speak of his faithfulness; and when we think of his delaying to inflict punishment on transgressors, of his planning, revealing, and establishing the

covenant of redemption, and of his enlightening the understandings, subduing the hostility, renewing the wills, and captivating the affections of believers in Christ, we speak of his patience, his mercy, and his grace. In all of these cases, however—in each or any as truly as in others—there is simply a display of his perfections,—a display of Deity. In none, is there a communication of his perfections; in none, the imparting of such a peculiar or distinguishing resemblance of himself, as occasions or warrants an abstract conception of one of his attributes from another. Every thing divine is essentially, or in its very nature, incommunicable.

The distinction between communicable and incommunicable perfections of Deity, like many other distinction produced by the scholastic theology, has named the simplicity of scripture instruction, and afforded encouragement to caring speculation and to error. High Arianism, in particular, avails itself of it, to sanction and defend its insidious and destructive dogma respecting the semi-divinity of Christ. But let just views of the divine perfections be entertained, let them be seen as essentially incommunicable, and as just Deity himself, and all such speculations as those of Arianism will stand as stultified in the view of reason as they appear wicked in the eye of revelation.—ED]

[NOTE 2 A. Connexion between Uncompoundedness and Eternal Duration.—The argument for the future eternity of God from his being 'void of all composition,' is based on false premises, and ought not to be used. The dissolution of some beings, and the future eternal duration of others, does not, as Dr. Ridgeley assumes, depend on their being compounded or not compounded of parts. Angels and the souls of men are 'void of composition,' and yet are not necessarily eternal. The duration as truly as the origin and the sustenance, of their being, depends entirely on the divine will, and arises solely

from the divine purpose. The glorified bodies of saints, on the other hand, will be compounded of parts, and yet will not be subject to dissolution, but will exist for ever. Even man's natural body, as it was originally created, possessed perfect adaptation to perpetuity of existence; and not till doomed to corruptibility by the divine will in punishment of sin, did it contain any seed or germ of dissolution. Dr. Ridgeley's idea that 'dissolution arises from the contrariety of the parts' of compounded beings, and from 'the tendency of these to destroy one another,' is utterly incompatible with the doctrine of the divine sovereignty, with the penal nature of mortality and corruptibility in man, and with the redemptional and gracious character of the eternal existence of the souls and bodies of the saved. His adoption of the idea, and the use which he makes of it in raising an argument for the future eternity of God, are an illustration of how prone even so well toned and strong a mind as his is to ear, when it wanders from the supreme guidance of revelation, and attempts to prove an abstract or elementary doctrine from what he terms 'the light of nature.' So obvious a truth as God's future eternity is peculiarly liable to be obscured, and rarely receives elucidation, when attempted to be proved or illustrated by any but plain scriptural considerations.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 B. Omnipresence—Dr. Ridgeley, in this paragraph, distinguishes four kinds of omnipresence,—first, such as Paul had when he was at Corinth in spirit, while absent in body,—secondly, such as a king has, when he is in many places by his authority,—thirdly, such as matter has, when viewed as in all parts of the universe,—and lastly, such as is proper and peculiar to Deity. Now these are so essentially different each from the others, that they ought to be all designated by different names, and treated as entirely distinct things. The first is metaphorical ubiquity; the second is representation; the third is extension; and only the last is

omnipresence. Extension is a property of matter, and ought no more to he placed in the same category with a divine perfection, than cubicity, opacity, colour, or any other physical property. Representation—especially the representation of a king in the person of viceroys and inferior magistrates—implies the necessary absence and even the personal ignorance of the individual represented; and, so far from possessing affinity or resemblance, it exhibits contrariety or contrast, to the divine perfection. Ubiquity, indeed, may require to be distinguished from omniscience; but as a literal property, it does not exist. What is denoted by it is the capacity of being in many places at once; and it is simply an invention of the schoolmen, applied to the glorified humanity of Christ to obviate the physical difficulties, or the physical impossibility, implied in their doctrine of transubstantiation. Metaphorical ubiquity, or the capacity of being in many places 'in spirit' or in imagination, is, 'as a phrase,' only a remote accommodation of the scholastic invention; for even it does not imply the capacity of thinking of many places at once, but the capacity of thinking of many places, or of imaginarily visiting them, in rapid succession. Words and ideas are only obscured and confounded, when extension, representation, and metaphorical ubiquity, are placed in the same connexion, and classed under the same generic epithet as divine omnipresence.

Dr. Ridgeley, in the paragraph which follows, makes another distinction, which, though not so grotesque and mischievous as this, is at least unnecessary, and ought therefore to be avoided. He distinguishes between the essential and the influential presence of God; and again distributes the influential presence into common and special. Now the essential presence of God is just his omnipresence. Why, then, depart from that designation, and introduce another? Can any reason be assigned, except that an opportunity is sought to flourish a distinction,—to exhibit an antithesis,—to attract the ear

with the alliterative jingle 'essential presence,' 'influential presence?' Better phrases, because more scriptural, may be found, too, to denote what is meant by 'the common' and 'the special' presence of God. If by God's common presence is meant, as Dr. Ridgeley says, 'that by which he upholds and governs all things,' its proper name is either power or providence. 'Special presence,' though not seriously objectionable, would be advantageously substituted by 'gracious presence.' Either let it be retained, however, and let Dr. Ridgeley's other distinctions—or rather the scholastic distinctions which he adopts—be exploded; and there will remain only two phrases of kindred character,—'special presence,' and 'omnipresence;' while other terms will be used—'providence,' 'ubiquity,' 'representation,' and 'extension'—as distinct from one another, and from the word 'omnipresence,' as the ideas which they respectively express. How preferable is a terminology which possesses a distinct word for every distinct idea, to one which clusters under the same epithet the most various, or even contrary conceptions, and creates occasion for ostentatious and bewildering distinctions! On all subjects, indeed, such a terminology does not exist; but whenever, as on the subjects clustered under the head of omnipresence, it is sanctioned by scripture, and virtually presented in its simple phraseology, it ought to be followed and cherished as no mean expositor of revealed truths. —ED.]

[NOTE 2 C. The Absolute and the Ordinate Power of God.—The distinction between absolute and ordinate power is founded on a metaphysical view of the human mind. Man's will is determined by motives. He has the power of acting in one of two, or in any of several ways; and he acts in only one of them, according to the determination of his will. His power, viewed irrespectively of his will, is called absolute; and, viewed as determined or defined by it, is called ordinate. But can the same distinction be with propriety made

in reference to God? Man's motives, or those qualities in objects, considerations, or inducements, which determine his will, and define the exercise of his power, are all exterior to himself. His will is dependent and relative: it is swayed by objects and influences which come unbidden before him, and acts, not absolutely, as if he stood alone and independent, but in relation to the circumstances in which he is placed by supreme sovereign disposal. God's will, on the contrary, is strictly absolute: it is his mere good pleasure,'—the counsel of his own will:' it acts, as to motive, in self-existent and supreme independence. God, and his will, and his power, and his glory, are phrases expressive, not of distinct things, but of different modes of contemplating Deity. His power, view it as we may, is co-extensive with his will and his glory: it is power to do whatever he wills, or whatever comports with his holiness and wisdom. He wills whatever his power performs; and his power performs whatever his will determines. Contemplated either as resolving, or as acting, or as displaying any one perfection, he is supreme, infinite, independent, incomprehensible, the same in character, the same in subsistence, the same in essential manifestation. Caution, therefore, ought to be used not to raise a distinction which suggests any such idea, in our views of Deity, as that of 'ordinate power' in man,—of a limitation or defining of ability by volitions dependent on exterior motives. Whatever is proper or peculiar to the creature, must not, by any analogy, be made the basis of a distinction with reference to the Creator. The instance adduced by Dr. Ridgeley in illustration of his distinction—the divine economy with regard to the fallen angels—ought to be viewed in connexion, not with God's power, but with the character or glory of his moral administration.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 D. The Objects of God's Knowledge.—'As intelligent agents, we know, in many instances, what things we can do, though we will never do them.' Does Dr. Ridgeley, by this statement, mean that we

know what things we have resolved not to do,—that we know what things we have power but not inclination to do,—or that we know contingently effects of our power which may be prevented by our will? His words may be construed to bear any of the three meanings; and, whichever of the three they bear, they fail to sanction or illustrate his position in reference to the objects of God's knowledge. To know what things we have resolved not to do, is only negatively to know what things we have resolved to do: it is to know actual objects or events in the light of their opposites; for there is no knowledge, no idea of an absolute nonentity or negation. To know what things we have power but not inclination to do, is simply to know, in any given circumstances, that we are dependent creatures, influenced by motives, and that, in the exercise of freedom to adopt any of several modes of acting, we are restricted to one by the determination of our will. Again, to know contingently effects of our power which may be prevented by our will, or to know things as contingently existing, is simply either to conjecture what shall happen or exist, or to substitute fiction for reality, imagination for discernment. Now, in none of these three ways which have been named is there any affinity between man's 'knowing what things be can do, though he will never do them,' and God's 'knowing many things that he will not do.' Knowledge, on God's part, of what he has purposed not to do, is either knowledge of nonentities, or knowledge, negatively considered, of what he has proposed to do. But knowledge of nonentities is no knowledge whatever, and is not to be predicated of God. Again, knowledge of several modes of action, one of which must be adopted to the exclusion of the others, according to the determination of the will by motives, is predicable only of a dependent being, the circumstances of whose position are disposed and controlled by a superior power. As to knowing things contingently, in the sense either of conjecture or of imagination, so far from being predicable of God, it exhibits a direct contrast to the

infallible certainty of his knowledge. Dr. Ridgeley, in all he says respecting 'God's knowing many things that he will not do,' seems to forget the essential difference which exists between the will of God and the will of man. Possibility and contingency, in reference to what may or can be done, are ideas which affect only the imperfect, dependent, finite knowledge of the creature. What can exist, what shall exist, and what are objects of knowledge, are all the same thing with God. His power to do, his purpose to do, and his knowledge of what he will do, are strictly one thing viewed in different phases. His knowledge, his will, and his power, are matters of distinct conception only in accommodation to the capacities of the creature: they are not distinct in themselves, nor are they distinct from God. All are different from the corresponding attributes of the creature, not only in degree, but in essential nature. Man's power is derived and contingent; his will is dependent and relative; his knowledge is exoteric in its sources and evidential in its basis. To say that 'he knows many things which he can do, though he will never do them,' is consistent with the imperfection of his nature; but to say the same thing of God seems derogatory to his independence, and to the undividedness of his attributes.

Dr. Ridgeley's appeal in support of his sentiment to scripture, appears to be far from successful. God's 'calling things that be not as though they were,' is simply his creating something out of nothing,—his acting with the same power without materials as with them. His knowledge respecting Saul and the men of Keilah, was not knowledge of 'what they would have done, had not his providence prevented it,' but knowledge of the secret and vain purposes of their hearts: in other words, it was not knowledge of events as contingent, but absolute knowledge of actual and ineffective intentions.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 E. Man's natural knowledge of God.—To say that God has 'instamped the knowledge of his perfections on the souls and consciences of men,' savours strongly of the doctrine of innate ideas. Are men born with a knowledge of God's perfections? Have they it constitutionally 'in-stamped' on their minds? If so, they are born with a revelation,—they have constitutionally an acquaintance with the divine justice, the divine patience, the divine mercy, the divine grace, and, by consequence, the divine method of saving the guilty. An innate revelation, a constitutional 'instamping' of religious knowledge, must either be so defective as to be useless, or include all the clements of divine truth. But where is the evidence from consciousness, observation, or the testimony of scripture, that, even in one particular such a revelation or instamping is possessed? Do not universal experience, universal history, the condition even of man in paradise, the principles of all God's moral administration in our world, and the existence and progressive grant of a written revelation, expressly and forcibly contradict it?

The Gentiles 'who have not the law doing by nature the things contained in the law, and being a law unto themselves,' proves only that they had consciences; just as Red Indians' acquaintance with sounds and colours, though they are destitute of science, and their ability to reason, though destitute of formal logic and mathematics, prove that they have the faculties of perception and judgment. Man is born with a power of perception; and, as his mind expands, he finds himself possessed of organs and exterior facilities for acquiring ideas. He is born with a power of judging; and, as his mind expands, he enjoys constant occasion to detect relations among objects, and to form opinions. He is born with a power of distinguishing between right and wrong; and as his mind expands, he has access to continual lessons, practical and theoretic, for obtaining moral perceptions. Only his powers, however, are innate: the objects of them are

exoteric, and the materials with which they work are acquired. Just as he is not born with ideas of towns and landscapes, or with opinions of cookery and the chase; so is he not born with a knowledge of God and of duty. Yet as certainly as his faculty of perception is addressed by sounds and colours, and his faculty of judging by the collisions or juxtaposition or chemical influences of objects, so certainly is his faculty of moral discernment—his power of knowing right from wrong—his conscience—addressed immediately, preceptively, or traditionarily by revelation. Heathens, even in their darkest state, enjoy some remnants of teaching from heaven. All educationally acquire some perceptions of right and wrong,—some remote discernment of religious obligation and moral duty. All, in the absence of 'the law'—'the law of Moses,' a written revelation—'are a law unto themselves;' and though they are 'natural men,' though they are still in the state of 'nature' peculiar to the children of wrath, they do 'by nature the things,' some things, 'contained in the law.' Who does not see, however, that the state of 'nature' in which they are a law unto themselves, is the state not of their constitutional structure, not of their birth, not of their fœtus or suckling condition, but of their unregeneracy, their alienation from the life of God, their destitution of spirituality and of a written revelation?—ED.]

[NOTE 2 F. The disposing, the vindictive, and the remunerative Justice of God.—The scholastic distinctions, which Dr. Ridgeley adopts, between the disposing and the distributive, and again between the vindictive and the remunerative, justice of God, tend, not to illustrate, but to obscure a subject of great simplicity. The divine justice, view it as we may, is simply infinite rectitude, infallible equity, God doing what is right. To speak of his 'disposing justice,' and define it to be 'the shining forth of his holiness in all the dispensations of his providence,' is just to give a general and not very appropriate name to the mingled exercise of the divine wisdom, the

divine mercy, the divine grace, and what is called the divine vindictive and remunerative justice. Confusion of ideas is the sure and only result. The rectitude or equity of God's moral administration, is a notion which fully contains and clearly exhibits whatever is alluded to by distinctions as to his justice. His dispensations in chastising or punishing for sin, are simply his equity in reference to his law; his dispensations in allotting men's external condition in the world, are simply his equity in reference to his sovereign good pleasure; and his dispensations in bestowing the blessings of salvation and eternal glory on believers in Jesus, are simply his equity in reference to the substitutionary and redemptional sufferings of Christ. He is just in punishing sin, because he inflicts only what is deserved; he is just in allotting to men various conditions in life, because he bestows on all undeserved kindness, and withholds from none any merited favour; and he is just in delivering believers from the curse and raising them to blessedness, because Christ became a curse in their stead, and has united himself to them as a source of unending life and glory. In all of the dispensations, justice is simply equity, rectitude, doing what is right and holy.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 G. The Harmony of the Divine Perfections.—In the preceding paragraph, and in other passages, Dr. Ridgeley uses language respecting the distinguishableness of the divine perfections which is incautious. To say, as he does, that the glory of divine patience is as necessary to be displayed as that of any of the other divine perfections,' suggests to the mind a notion that the perfections are distinct not only from Deity but even from one another. Such a notion, it is true, is not intended to be conveyed; yet phraseology which suggests it ought, as carefully as possible, to be avoided. The very phrase, 'harmony of the divine perfections'—so approved, so common, so popular among theologians—ought either to be

discarded, or to be carefully defined. In a literal, or in a strictly analogical sense, it is utterly objectionable. What is meant by it is the perfect, the infallible consistency, of the divine actings or modes of manifestation. If, for illustrating this, the various actings or modes of manifestation are compared, we shall find it safe, instead of using a metaphor not sanctioned by scripture, to adopt the beautiful images of the inspired penman: 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.' (Ps. 89:14, 15.) 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other; truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven; yea, the Lord shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield her increase; righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps.' (Ps. 85:11–13.) The metaphors employed in these texts possess a significancy and an appropriateness which cannot be found in any of man's devising. They appear to allude to the visible and peculiar manifestations of Deity in connexion with the Old Covenant, and particularly to the Shechinah or cloud of the divine glory in the Holy of Holies. The 'throne' of the Shechinah was over the ark of the covenant, containing the tables of the law, the records of 'justice and judgment.' The oracles of the Urim and Thummim, and the tokens of acceptance of sacrifice and complacency in the people—or 'truth and mercy,'—went forth or forward from the Shechinah toward the priest or congregation who were waiting without. The ministration of sacrifice was upward, from the court of the tabernacle, the symbol of 'the earth,' to the Holiest of all, the symbol of heaven; and both the oracles of the Urim and Thummim and the manifested tokens of accepting sacrifice and blessing the people, were from the Holiest of all toward the outer sanctuary; and thus an emblem was afforded of

'truth springing out of the earth' in our Lord's ministrations on earth, and of righteousness looking down from heaven, in his appearing for his people in the heavenly places to give them repentance and remission of sins, and sending the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, and perform in them the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power. There is hence, in the metaphors in question, an instructive significancy which has no counterpart in such phraseology as that employed by Dr. Ridgeley.—ED.]

THE SUPREMACY AND UNITY OF GOD

QUESTION VIII. Are there more Gods than one?

ANSWER, There is but one only, the living and true God.

The Supremacy of God

IN this answer, God is described as the living and true God. Life is the greatest excellency belonging to the nature of any finite being. Some have concluded that the lowest degree of it renders a creature more excellent in itself, than the most glorious creatures that are without it. Intelligent creatures, in the same way, have a superior excellency to all others; because, that which gives life to them, or the principle by which, as such, they act, is most excellent. So the life of God is that whereby he infinitely excels all finite beings. When, therefore, he is called the living God, the phrase does not denote one single perfection of the divine nature, but is expressive of all his divine perfections. Accordingly, when God represents himself, in scripture, as giving his people the highest assurance of any thing which he designs to do, and as using the form of an oath, and swearing by his life, 'As I live,' or 'As truly as I live,' the language imports the same thing, as when he says, 'By myself have I sworn,'q Hence, when he is called the living God, his glory is set forth as a God of infinite perfection. This, however, has been considered under the last answer.

We may farther observe, that when God is styled the living God, the phrase denotes the display of all his perfections, in connection with life being a principle of action. Hereby he is distinguished from lifeless idols, who were reputed gods by their stupid and profane

worshippers. The apostle lays down the terms as antithetic, when he speaks to some, as having 'turned from idols,' or false gods, 'to serve the living and true God.' Here we might consider the origin and progress of idolatry. Men were inclined to 'worship the creature more than the Creator,'s or 'to do service to them who by nature are no gods.' Some seemed to have been destitute of common sense, as they were of true religion, when they not only worshipped God by idols of their own making, but prayed to them, and said, 'Deliver us, for ye are our gods.' This the prophet takes notice of;u and he exposes their unaccountable stupidity, observing to them that these gods were first growing among the trees of the forest, then cut down with their own hands, and fashioned into their designed form, and part of them cast into the fire, as destined for common uses. These were literally lifeless gods; and their senseless worshippers were but one remove from them: 'They that make them,' says the psalmist, 'are like unto them, and so is every one that trusteth in them.' But this subject we shall have occasion to insist on in a following part of this work,y and therefore shall pass it over at present, and consider,

The Unity of God

Scripture is very express in asserting the unity of the Godhead. It is said, 'The Lord our God is one Lord;' and 'I, even I, am he; and there is no God with me;'a and 'The Lord, he is God; there is none else besides him;' and elsewhere, 'Thou art God alone.'c This truth is not founded merely on a few places of scripture which expressly assert it, but may be deduced from every part of it. Yea, it is instamped on the very nature of man, and may be as plainly proved from the light of nature, as that there is a God. Every one of the divine perfections, which were particularly considered under the last answer, will supply us with arguments to confirm our faith in it. But that this may farther appear, let it be considered,

1. That the idea of a God implies, that he is the first cause of all things. In this respect he is opposed to the creature, and existed from all eternity. Now there can be no more than one being, who is without beginning, and who gave being to all other things. This appears from the very nature of the thing; for if there are more gods, then they must derive their being from him,—and then they are a part of his creation, and consequently not gods, for God and the creature are infinitely opposed to each other. There is but one independent being, who is in and of himself, and derives his perfections from no other; and therefore there can be but one God.

2. There is but one Being, who is the ultimate end of all things. This necessarily follows from his being their Creator. He that produced them out of nothing, must be supposed to have designed some valuable end by doing so; and this, ultimately considered, cannot be anything short of himself, for that is inconsistent with the wisdom and sovereignty included in the idea of a Creator. Accordingly, he is said to have 'made all things for himself.' Hence the glory which results from creation is unalienable, and cannot be ascribed to any but himself. To suppose therefore that there are other gods, is to ascribe a divine nature to them, divested of that glory which is essential to it. We may add, that if God is the ultimate end of all things, he is to be glorified as such; and all worship is to terminate in him: and we must proclaim him to be our chief good and only portion and happiness,—consequences which are plainly inconsistent with a plurality of gods. Besides, he that is the object of adoration must be worshipped, and loved with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.e Our affections must not be divided between him and any other. And since man is under a natural obligation to give supreme worship to him, it follows that there is no other god that has a right to it, and that he is the only true God.

3. Infinitude of perfection being implied in the idea of a God, as has been proved under the last answer, it is certain that it cannot belong to more than one. As it implies that divine perfection is boundless, so it denotes that he sets bounds to the perfections of all others. If, therefore, there are more gods than one, their perfections must be limited; but that which is not infinite, is not God. And as infinite perfection implies in it all perfection, it cannot be divided among many; for no being that has only a part of it, could be said to be infinitely perfect. And since there is but one who is so, it follows that there is no other God besides him.

4. Since omnipotence is a divine attribute, there can be but one almighty being, and therefore but one God. This will farther appear, if we consider, that if there were more gods than one, all of them must be said to be able to do all things; and then the same individual power which is exerted by one, must be exerted by another,—an idea, than which nothing is more absurd. It will also follow, that he who cannot do that which is said to be done by another, is not almighty, or able to do all things, and consequently that he is not God.

5. There is but one being who has an absolute sovereign will,—who, though he can control all others, is himself subject to no control,—who has a natural right to give laws to all who are his subjects, but is subject to none himself; for absolute dominion and subjection are as opposite as light and darkness. Two persons may as well be said to give being to each other, as to have a right to give laws to each other. Moreover, if there were more Gods than one, there would be a confusion in the government of the world; for whatever one decrees, another may reverse; or whatever is done by one, the contrary might be done by the other. This would follow from a sovereignty of will. And as there might be opposite things commanded or forbidden, pursuant to the different wills of a plurality of gods; so the same

thing, with respect to those who are under an obligation to yield obedience, would be both a sin and a duty, and the same persons would be both condemned and justified for the same action. [See Note 2 H, page 133.]

6. There is but one being who is, as God is often said to be, the best and the greatest. If there were more Gods than one, either one must be supposed to be more excellent than another, or both equally excellent. If we suppose the former of these, then he who is not the most excellent, is not God; and if the latter, that their excellencies are equal, then infinite perfection would be divided. But this, as was before hinted, is contrary to the idea of infinite perfection: it is contrary also to what is expressly said by God, 'To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.' From these, and several other arguments to the same purpose, which might have been taken from every one of the divine attributes, and from all that essential and relative glory which belongs to him, the unity of the divine essence appears, even to a demonstration. Indeed, to assert that there are more Gods than one, is, in effect, to say that there is no God. So the apostle deems it, when he tells the church at Ephesus that, before their conversion, when they worshipped other Gods, 'they were without God in the world.' This implies as much as that they were 'atheists in the world,' as the words may with propriety be rendered.e

Having considered the unity of the Godhead, not only as evinced from scripture, but as it may be demonstrated by the light of nature, it will be necessary that we obviate an objection that may be brought against this latter method of proving it. The objection is, that, if the unity of the Godhead might be known by the dictates of nature, or demonstrated by other arguments besides those which are matter of pure revelation, how comes it to pass that the heathen owned and

worshipped a plurality of gods? It was not one particular sect among them that did so; but the abominable practice of polytheism universally obtained where revealed religion was not known. Though, therefore, the unity of God is an undoubted truth, it does not seem to be founded in the light of nature. Now, that the heathen did worship a plurality of gods, is beyond dispute, especially after idolatry had continued a few ages in the world, and so had extinguished those principles of revealed religion which mankind, before this, were favoured with. Yet it must be considered that, though the ignorant and unthinking multitude among them believed everything to be a god which the custom of the countries where they lived had induced them to pay divine adoration to, yet the wiser sort of them, however guilty of idolatry, by paying a kind of lower worship to idols, maintained, notwithstanding, the unity of the Godhead, or that there is one God superior to them all, whom they often called "the Father of gods and men." It was probably to this supreme Deity that the Athenians erected that altar on which the apostle Paul observed this inscription, 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD;' because he says, in the words immediately following, 'Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.' The heathen sages, however in other instances their conduct seemed to run counter to their method of reasoning, plainly, by their assertions, discover their belief in but one supreme God, who has all the incommunicable perfections of the divine nature. Many of them, in their writings, assert that there is a God, who is the first cause or beginning of all things; that he was from eternity, or in the beginning, and that time took its rise from him; that he is the living God, the fountain of life, and the best of all beings;g that he is self-sufficient, and cannot, without absurdity, be supposed to stand in need of, or to be capable of, receiving advantage from any one; that he is the chief good, or contains in himself whatever is good, and that by him all things consist; and that no one hath enough in himself to secure his own

safety and happiness, but must derive these from him. There are others also who plainly assert the unity of God in as strong terms as though they had learned it from divine revelation,—calling him the beginning, the end, and the author of all things, who was before and is above all things, the Lord of all, the fountain of life, light, and all good, yea, goodness itself, the most excellent being,—and giving him many other designations of a similar nature. I could multiply quotations to this effect from Proclus, Porphyry, Iambliens, Plotinus, Plutarch, Epictetus, and several others; but this has been already done by other hands.k From the sayings of these heathens, it appears that, though they mention other gods, they suppose them to be little more than titular or honorary gods, or at best, persons who were the peculiar favourites of God, and admitted to the participation of divine honours, as well as employed in some part of the government of the world. They frequently speak of them as having derived their being from God, whom they call, "the cause of causes, the God of gods." Some of them speak of God in the singular number, throughout the greatest part of their writings, and only make mention of the gods occasionally; especially when they treat of those works that are worthy of a God, or the greatest honours that are due to him. This is specially the case with Seneca and Plato. The latter, in particular, says, that when he wrote anything in a grave and serious manner, his custom was to preface his epistles with the mention of one God; though, it is true, when he wrote otherwise, he used the common mode of speaking, and talked of other gods. It is observed, that he sometimes, in his writings, uses the phrase, "If it please God," or, "by the help of God," not the gods. Notwithstanding what has been said, however, the heathen sages were all idolaters; for they joined in the rites of worship performed to the false gods of their respective countries. Yea, Socrates himself, who fell under the displeasure of the Athenians for asserting the unity of the Godhead, and in consequence lost his life, did not refuse to pay some religious

honour to the heathen gods. It is plain that they paid some religious worship to them. Yet this was of an inferior and subordinate nature, not much unlike to that which the papists give to saints and angels. They are far from setting them upon a level with God. They confess they were but men who formerly lived in this world; they give an account of their birth and parentage, and of where they lived and died; they write the history of their lives; they mention what procured them the honour they suppose them after death to have been advanced to,m—how some of them attained it as the reward of virtue, or in commemoration of the good they had done to the world in their life,—and some, in consequence of their having been inventors of arts, beneficial to mankind, or conquerors in war, or a public blessing to the country where they lived. Others, especially among the Romans, were deified at the request of their surviving friends. This, after Julius Cæsar's time, was done by the decree of the senate, who, when they ranked them among the number of their gods, at the same time appointed the rites that should be observed in their worship. And some of the Roman emperors obliged the senate to deify them while they were alive. These things are very largely insisted on by many ancient and modern writers. Upon the whole, therefore, it plainly appears that, whatever they say of a plurality of gods, the wiser sort among the heathen did not deny the unity of the divine essence, in the highest and most proper sense. And as they received the knowledge of this truth from the light of nature, we may conclude that it might be known in that way, as well as by divine revelation. [See Note 2 I, page 133.]

As a practical inference from the doctrine that the object of our worship is the living God, let us feel reproved for that lifeless formality with which many address themselves to him in the performance of religious duties, and for the want of reverence of, and due regard to, the divine perfections which are exhibited in this

character of the Godhead. It is also a very great aggravation, not only of apostacy, but of any degree of backsliding in those who have made a profession of religion, that it is 'a departing from the living God.' Is he the God and giver of life, and shall we forsake him who 'has the words of eternal life,'p whose sovereign will has the sole disposal of it? The consideration of his being the living God, likewise renders his judgments most terrible, and his wrath insupportable. 'It is,' as the apostle says, 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

From his being the true God, we infer, that all hypocrisy, both in heart and life, is to be avoided; and that we should draw nigh to him with a true heart and faith unfeigned, and not like those whom the prophet reproves, when he says, 'God was near in their mouth, and far from their reins.' Let us take heed, moreover, that we do not set up any idol in our hearts in opposition to him as the true God. Whatever has a greater share in our affections than God, or is set up in competition with him, is to us a god; and the setting of it up is inconsistent with our paying that regard to him which is due. Accordingly, our Saviour says, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'s On this account, 'covetousness' is styled 'idolatry,' because, where it exists, the world is loved more than him. We read also of some 'whose god is their belly,'u who 'make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,' as though this was their chief good. And when, in a religious way, we confide in anything below God, or expect that from the creature which is only to be found in him, or when we esteem men as lords of our faith, or when God's sovereignty, or right to govern us, is called in question, and we presumptuously or wilfully rebel against him, we, in effect, dethrone him, or deny that he is the true God. But more of this when we consider the sins forbidden in the first commandment.

From the unity of the Godhead, we may infer that we ought to take heed not to entertain any conceptions of the divine Being which are inconsistent with his unity. As we are not to assert a plurality of gods, so we are not to think or speak of God in such a way as tends to overthrow the simplicity of the divine nature. We must therefore not conceive that it is compounded of various parts, all which, being taken together, constitute the divine essence. This conception, as opposed to a proper idea of the divine unity, gives occasion to that known aphorism, generally laid down by those who treat of this subject, that 'whatever is in God, is God.' This we must reckon one of the incomprehensibles of the divine Being, when we attempt to speak of which, we only give an evident proof of the imperfection of our finite understandings, and of our inability to order our words by reason of darkness. It is necessary, however, when we lay down this proposition, that we define what we intend by it, that so we may not be supposed to use words without ideas. It is necessary, in particular, that we should so define it, as to account, in some measure, for those modes of speaking which, agreeably to scripture, describe God as having a plurality of perfections, and perfections in some respects distinct; and yet, at the same time, that we may not be led to infer a plurality of Gods.

Let it be considered, then, that we have not the least similitude or resemblance of divine unity in any finite being. Every thing below God is composed of parts. In some cases, we call these integral; as the parts of matter, which, when taken together, constitute the whole. In other cases, the parts are called essential; as when we say an intelligent being has various powers or properties. These are essential to it; it would not be complete without every one of them; and they are all distinct. We cannot say that whatever is in the soul of man is the soul; but all its powers or properties, taken together, constitute the man. This, however, is by no means to be affirmed of

the divine Being. When we conceive of God as holy, powerful, just, good, &c. we must not suppose that these perfections are so many ingredients in Deity, or that, when taken together, they constitute it, as the whole is constituted of its parts. In that case, each of them would have no other than a partial perfection; and the essential glory of one of them would not be equal to the glory of the Deity, which is supposed to consist of them all. There would, hence, be something in God less than God, or a divine perfection less than all the divine perfections taken together,—which we are not to suppose. Such are the properties of composition; and when we speak of God as a simple or uncompounded being, we mention them as what are inconsistent with his perfection as such. Neither are the divine perfections distinct or different from one another, as the various parts of which the whole is constituted are said to be distinct. This follows from the former consideration, that the divine essence has no parts. We are not to suppose, then, that the divine attributes, considered as they are in God, are distinguished as one thing or being is from another, or as wisdom, power, justice, mercy, &c. are in men. This would be to suppose the divine being to have several distinct, infinitely perfect beings contained in it,—contrary to its simplicity or unity. Or, were we, on such a supposition, to say that it has unity, it would have it only by participation and dependence: just as a general or complex idea is said to be one which partakes of, and depends on, all those particular or simple ideas that are contained in it, or as one hundred is one, as containing such a number of units as taken together, are equal to a hundred. This is not what we mean when we say God is one. Moreover, when we speak of the divine perfections, as being in God, we suppose them all essential to him, as opposed to what is accidental. An accident is generally described as what belongs, or is superadded, to a being or subject, which might have existed without it, or which might have been destitute of it, and yet sustained no loss of that perfection which is essential to it. Thus wisdom, holiness,

justice, faithfulness, are accidents in men; so that they who have them not, do not cease to be men, or to have the essential perfections of the human nature. But this is by no means to be affirmed of the divine being and attributes; for to suppose God to be destitute of any of them, is as much as to say that he is not infinitely perfect, or that he is not God. What I have now stated is, I think, the meaning generally intended, by the saying, 'Whatever is in God, is God.' This proposition may be reckoned by some a metaphysical speculation; and I should for that reason have avoided to mention it, had not an advertence to it been, in some respects, necessary: the unity of God cannot well be conceived of, unless his simplicity be defended; and I do not see how the latter can be well maintained, if this proposition be not duly considered. If in attempting to explain it, I have used more words than are needful, or repeated the same ideas too often, I have done so to avoid some scholastic modes of speaking, or with a design to render what I said more intelligible. [See Note 2 K, page 134.] We may add, that when, as we often, on the warrant of scripture, do, we speak of the divine perfections as many, or as distinct from one another,—when we speak of the justice of God as different from his mercy, or these from his power, wisdom, faithfulness, &c., we must not be thought to speak inconsistently with what has been said concerning the divine simplicity. The nature and perfections of God, it is to be remembered, are incomprehensible. Hence all the ideas which we have of them, are obtained from our discerning some small resemblance of them in intelligent creatures, and, at the same time, separating from this whatever argues imperfection. It follows that we are supposed not to know, or to be able to describe, what God is in himself, and as I humbly conceive, never shall. Such knowledge as this is to great for any but a divine person. Our conceptions of him, therefore, are taken from, and conformed to, those various methods by which he condescends to make himself visible or known to us, or his acts in

reference to objects in which he is said to manifest his perfections. Thus when an effect is produced, we call that perfection that produces it his power; or when divine acts are distinguished with respect to their particular object or to the manner of their glorifying him, we call the perfections displayed in them his wisdom, justice, goodness, &c. This is what we mean when we speak of various perfections in God. Some, however, suppose that they express themselves more agreeably to the nature of the subject, or to the simplicity of God, by speaking of the divine perfections as denominated from their effects. When, for example, they take occasion to mention the power of God, they call it God acting powerfully; or of his justice and faithfulness, they call them, God acting justly or faithfully. But however we express ourselves, when we speak of the distinct perfections of the divine nature, we mean what is strictly consonant with divine unity and simplicity. Here our thoughts must stop; and what is too great for a finite mind to conceive of, we must make the subject of our admiration; and what we cannot comprehend, we must adore: 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it.'

[NOTE 2 H. Proofs of the Unity of God from Reason.—All Dr. Ridgeley's proofs of the unity of God from reason, are variations of one proposition,—God is a self-existent, infinite being, and as such, is necessarily one. The proposition assumes all the points which a polytheist demands to he proved, and gathers all its matter and evidence from revelation. Only a fondness for abstract argumentation, for the claims of what is termed 'natural religion,' or for appearing to establish a great doctrine of theology by the light of reason, could induce any man to parade this proposition as proof of the divine unity, or to exhibit its various phases as separate and independent arguments. Why not rest the unity of God simply on the testimony of revelation,—or on that testimony as directing the mind

to corroborative evidence in the uniqueness and sovereign management of divine works? That God is one, is a doctrine which the scriptures teach with remarkable frequency, and in a great variety of forms. While some other doctrines are but incidentally inculcated, or are silently interwoven with the fabric of faith and precept, this is often and carefully taught,—taught in express terms, and in almost all possible connexions. Does not this fact clearly indicate, that reason is not to be trusted for the conservation and defence of the doctrine,—that here, as truly as with respect to the doctrines of redemption, we must sit under the shadow of God's word, and regard it as the sole bulwark of our faith?

Dr. Ridgeley's fifth argument is an instance of how mere reason will sometimes rather injure than serve the cause of one of the simplest points in theology. He states that God has 'an absolute sovereign will,' and is therefore one. To work this proposition into an argument, he supposes two absolute sovereign wills, or two Gods, and hypothetically depicts the effects of their simultaneous operation. An opponent might justly ask, by what imaginable process a man can suppose or fancy consequences or effects, be they what they may, of an impossibility. That which cannot exist cannot act: that which is contrary to all possibility, cannot be imagined. To suppose two absolute sovereign wills, is a hypothesis of the same idle nature as to suppose that a part is greater than a whole. How, then, can consequences or effects of two absolute sovereign wills be supposed? The hypothetical cause being an impossibility, all the supposed effects are, in the idlest sense, conjectural. An opponent might, therefore, assert just the opposite suppositions to Dr. Ridgeley's,—he might assert that two absolute sovereign wills would be in all respects alike,—that they would be the same in infinite excellence, the same in their designs, the same in all their effects; and if he did assert so, he could be rebuked for the temerity of his

speculations, only in terms which would equally apply to the hypothetizing of Dr. Ridgeley. The doctrine of the divine unity needs no metaphysical abstractions, no abstruse reasonings, no impossible hypotheses, for its defence; but stands out in luminous glory, intrinsically recommended, and divinely demonstrated, in the testimony of revelation. One sentence of scripture, viewed in connexion with the circumstances in which it was spoken, and the history of the people to whom it was addressed, discloses incomparably higher evidence of it than a whole library of scholastic ratiocination: 'Hear, O Israel, Jehovah, our God, is one Jehovah,' Deut. 6:4.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 I. Knowledge of the Unity of God among the Heathen.—One would think that the universal prevalence of polytheism in regions where the light of written revelation is not enjoyed, is a practical demonstration that the doctrine of the divine unity could never have been discovered or proved by mere reason, or by what is termed 'the light of nature.' Dr. Ridgeley thinks otherwise. But how does he support his hypothesis? First by writing what looks very like an apology for polytheism, and next by assuming that the highest theological notions of the heathen sages were acquired without aid from revelation.

He is obliged to grant that the sages, including even Socrates, were all idolaters; yet he asserts, and labours to prove, that they were not polytheists. Idolatry, it seems, consists in 'worshipping false gods;' while polytheism consists in acknowledging supreme gods. How futile a distinction! What matters it whether the object of faith or of adoration,—the object which receives the homage due to Deity, which has ascribed to it the glories peculiar to Jehovah, which attracts the veneration and trust and religious affections of the human heart—what matters it whether this object be an imaginary

spirit or a deceased mortal, a figment of the fancy or a portable and pocketable mass of matter, a hero or a crocodile, the Jupiter or Mincrva of the Romans, or the cat or leek of the Egyptians; does not the divine commandment, the first in the decalogue, exactly define and directly denounce it: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me?' Plato's idea of a supreme God subject to late, was a conception as far distant, in a sense, from the true notion of Deity, as the most grovelling polytheist's idea of the divinity of a stock or a stone. Its quality just as little exempted him from the charge of not knowing the true God, as the quality of the faith of an ancient Egyptian or of a modern Hindoo. All the high titles which he gave it, 'The fountain of life, light, and all good,' 'The cause of causes, and the God of Gods,' only demonstrated, when viewed in their connection, that the idea, besides being false in itself, involved and assumed the notion of a plurality of gods. That all the gods but one were subordinate, was just a demonstration of how resolute, how desperate, the sages were in their polytheism. They knew enough to be convinced that there cannot be two supreme beings; yet rather than want a plurality of gods, or confess the doctrine of the divine unity, they deified mortals, and worshipped fictions of the mind. Such are the facts with respect to the heathen sages; they are the facts even according to Dr. Ridgeley's own showing; and, if ever facts proved anything, they show to demonstration, that the heathens, viewed as disciples of mere reason, were inveterate and incurable polytheists. Their rejection of the doctrine of the divine will, may have been more moral than intellectual,—more a dictate of the heart or an effort of the will, than a deduction of the understanding; but be it what it might, it was invariable and universal—it characterized alike the sage and the savage—it was co-extensive with the absence of written revelation—and it hence speaks volumes as to the utter inadequacy of the vaunted 'light of nature.'

We have stated, however, but half the case. Dr. Ridgeley assumes—without offering a syllable of proof—that such knowledge as the heathen sages had of a supreme Deity, was obtained without aid from revelation. All history opposes his assumption. Reasons and authorities without number might he adduced to show that, not only by traditions from patriarchial revelation, but by intercommunication with the Jews, if not even by immediate access to the pages of the Old Testament scriptures, the heathen philosophers were indebted to a supernatural origin for all their higher and more refined conceptions. Considering what facilities for information they enjoyed, what streams from remote or proximate revelation flowed across their path, we may feel, not wonder that they entertain some theological views akin to truth, but unmingled astonishment that they entertained so few, and entertained them in so distorted and obscure a manner. The doctrine of the divine unity was promulged by revelation after revelation to the ages preceding the Mosaic; it was made known to Adam's family before the flood, and to Noah's family after it; it was inculcated by oral communication upon mankind at large, and was afterwards made the foundation and the apex of the fabric of revealed truth set up among the Israelites; it was exhibited in every laud through which a Jew travelled, in every house in which he lodged, in every company to which the fame of his religion was carried; it went with the ships and the armies of Solomon 'from the river to the ends of the earth;' it was daily, during seventy years, displayed throughout all the provinces of the Babylonian empire; it was attested in the temple-rites of a numerous colony of Jewish emigrants to Egypt, under the successors of Alexander the Great; and it was maintained, toward the close of the Mosaic era, by communities of Jews in almost every section of the civilized world,—by 'Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphilia, in Egypt, and in the parts

of Libya about Cyrene, and by strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians,' Acts 2:9–11. How, in such circumstances, could the heathen sages, by any possibility, have heard nothing, how could they have beard only a little, how could they otherwise than have heard much and often, from revelation, of the doctrine of the unity of God? But when they heard it, they rejected it; when they were, in a manner, forced to receive it in fact, they divested it of its glory, and associated it with ideas of their own multitudinous deities; when they 'saw' it to demonstration in their understanding, they 'perceived' it not in their hearts; 'when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,' Rom. 1:21–23. What a demonstration is this of the utter futility of the light of nature! If heathens—even the best and wisest of them—universally continued polytheists in spite of indirect though valuable lessons from revelation, how absolutely incompetent were they to discover or defend the doctrine of the divine unity by the efforts of mere reason!—ED.]

[NOTE 2 K. The Simplicity of God.—'The simplicity of God' is not a significant or happy phrase, and is altogether unnecessary. As illustrated by Dr. Ridgeley, it is distinguished partly from the unity of God, and partly from his spirituality. As respects the former, there is really no distinction; and, as respects the latter, the distinction attempted is founded on mistake.

That God is not composed of parts,—that his perfections are not a number of ingredients which taken together constitute a whole,—that they are not accidental,—that his perfections are himself, and he

himself is his perfections, are important truths, and ought to he carefully remembered in every contemplation of the divine character. They are truths, however, all embodied in the doctrine that God is one, and fully and correctly expressed in the phrase, 'the unity of God.' To designate them by another phrase, and exhibit them as distinguishable from the doctrine of the divine unity, or as attachable to it in the way of inference, is to produce confusion or error of conception.

Apart from the idea of unity, there is nothing which, with any propriety as to the meaning of words, can be called 'the simplicity of God.' What Dr. Ridgeley says respecting the divine essence not being compounded, as matter or a complex idea is, belongs properly to a view of God's spirituality. But he appears not to he contented with simply the notion of spirituality; and he attempts to show that there is 'a simplicity' in the divine essence which does not exist in created spirits. 'An intelligent being,' he says, 'has various powers or properties which are essential to it, and which'—unlike the divine perfections—'are all distinct. We cannot say that whatever is in the soul of man is the soul; but all its powers or properties taken together constitute the man.' Now, it is true, as he again observes, that 'wisdom, holiness, justice, faithfulness, are accidents in men; so that they who have them not do not cease to be men, or to have the essential perfections of the human nature.' But these properties are moral; they belong to man in his relation to the divine law or administration of mercy; they do not—as the attributes of the same name do in God—belong to the essence of his nature; they are only the properties, not the powers, not the essential faculties of man's mind or soul; they constitute, not his intellectuality, not his spirituality, but simply his moral character,—the aggregate of influences and motives and principles which determine his conduct as a subject of the divine government. But what shall be said of his

knowing and reflecting powers,—of his perception, his consciousness, his memory, his judgment? Are these 'parts,' or 'ingredients,' or 'accidents?' Are they distinct from the intellect, or apart from one another? Or is not perception the entire mind receiving an idea from without, consciousness the entire mind receiving an idea from within, memory the entire mind recalling an idea, and judgment the entire mind comparing one idea with another? The very undividedness of the intellect, its uniqueness, its identity with what are called its powers or faculties, is what we denominate its spirituality, and what is distinguishable in it from a substance which consists of ingredients or parts. To speak of simplicity as something different from spirituality, and, at the same time, inferrible from unity, is, therefore, to speak without warrant, and to occasion confusion or error. That God is one, and that God is a spirit, are the only propositions respecting the indivisibility or oneness of the divine essence, which scripture contains or sanctions. To frame another, and talk of 'the simplicity of God,' is only to adopt one of those unmeaning scholastic distinctions which bewilder and mystify the understanding, and obscure or distort a facile and elementary truth.—ED.]

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

QUESTION IX. How many Persons are there in the Godhead?

ANSWER. There be three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one, true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

QUESTION X. What are the personal properties of the three Persons in the Godhead?

ANSWER. It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity.

QUESTION XI. How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father?

ANSWER. The scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father; ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.

IN these three answers is contained the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity. This is a subject of pure revelation. As it is much contested in the age in which we live, we are obliged to be copious and particular in laying down the reasons of our belief of it, and in our defence of it against those that deny it. It is a doctrine that has been defended by some of the most judicious writers, both in our own and in other nations. Some of these have proved that it was maintained by the church in the purest ages; and their having done so renders it less

necessary for us to enter into the historical part of the controversy. We shall discuss the doctrine, principally, as founded on the sacred writings. And while others, by confining themselves to the scholastic methods of speaking, have rendered some parts of it obscure, we shall endeavour to avoid these, that so it may be better understood by private Christians. As to the method of treating it, we shall, first, premise some things which are necessary to be considered, with relation to it in general. Secondly, we shall consider in what sense we are to understand the words 'Trinity' and 'Persons in the Godhead,' and in what respect the divine persons are said to be One. Thirdly, we shall prove that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have distinct personal properties, and therefore that we have sufficient reason to call them Persons in the Godhead, as they are called in the first of these answers. Under this head, we shall consider also what is generally understood by the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost; and what cautions we are to use, lest, by mistaking the sense of what is said on these subjects, we be led into any error, derogatory to, or subversive of, the doctrine of the Trinity. We shall likewise endeavour to explain those scriptures which are generally brought to establish these doctrines. Lastly, we shall endeavour to prove that the three Persons in the Godhead, especially the Son and the Holy Ghost, are truly divine, or that they have all the perfections of the divine nature; and therefore that they are, in the most proper sense, the one only living and true God.

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The first thing which we premise, as necessary to be considered, with relation to the doctrine of the Trinity in general, is that this doctrine is of the highest importance, and is necessary to be believed by all Christians who pay a just deference to revealed religion. It may probably be reckoned an error in method to speak of the importance

of the doctrine, before we attempt to prove its truth. Our doing so, however, is not altogether unjustifiable; since we not only address ourselves to those who deny it, but also aim to produce some farther conviction or establishment in the faith of it, in those who believe it. We may therefore be allowed to consider it as an important doctrine; in order that we may be excited to a more diligent inquiry into the force of some of those arguments which are generally brought in its defence.

Now to determine a doctrine to be of the highest importance, we must consider the belief of it as subservient to that true religion which is ordained by God, as connected with salvation, or as a means leading to it, without which we have no warrant to expect it. Such doctrines are sometimes called fundamental, as being the basis and foundation on which our hope is built. It will, I think, be allowed, by all whose sentiments do not savour of scepticism, that there are some doctrines of religion necessary to be believed to salvation. There are some persons, it is true, who plead for the innocency of error; or who contend for this, at least, in the case of sincere inquirers after truth, who, in the end, will appear to have been very remote from it,—as though their endeavours would entitle them to salvation, without the knowledge of those things which others conclude to be necessarily subservient to it. All that we shall say on this point, is, that it is not the sincerity of our inquiries after important truths, but the success of them, which is to be regarded as a means of obtaining so valuable an end. We may as well suppose that our sincere endeavours to obtain many of those graces which accompany salvation, such as faith, love to God, and evangelical obedience, will supply, or atone for, the want of them, as assert, that our unsuccessful inquiries after the great doctrines of religion, will excuse our ignorance of them. This especially appears when we consider, that blindness of mind, as well as hardness of heart, is included among those spiritual

judgments which are the consequence of our fallen state; and that God displays the sovereignty of his grace, as much in leading the soul into all necessary truth, as in any other things that relate to salvation. It is not our business, however, to determine the final state of men; or how far they make advances to, or recede from, the knowledge of the most important doctrines; or what will be the issue of their comparative acquaintance with them. Our business is rather to desire of God, that so far as we or others are destitute of a knowledge of fundamental doctrines, he would grant us and them 'repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.' Here we cannot but observe, that the question relating to important or fundamental articles of faith, is not, Whether any doctrines may be so called? but, What those doctrines are? In determining this, many make provision for their own particular scheme of doctrines. Some, particularly the Papists, assert several doctrines to be fundamental, without scripture warrant; yea, they assert some to be so which are directly contrary. Others allow no doctrine to be fundamental, but what will, if adhered to, open a door of salvation to all mankind; and these set aside the necessity of divine revelation. Others, who desire not to run such lengths, will allow that some scripture-doctrines are necessary to be believed to salvation; but they allow only those to be such which are maintained by persons who are in their way of thinking. Accordingly, they who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, are obliged, in conformity to their own sentiments, to deny also that it is an important article of faith. These may justly demand a convincing proof of the truth of it, before they believe it to be of any importance, especially to themselves. It would be a vain thing to tell them, that the belief of it is connected with salvation, or is as necessary as divine worship is, which supposes the belief of the divinity of the Persons whom we adore,—it would be vain to tell them this, without first proving that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are divine Persons. It would be as little to their edification to say that there are several doctrines necessary to

be believed;—such as that of Christ's satisfaction, and of our justification depending on it, and that of regeneration and sanctification, as the effects of the divine power of the Holy Ghost,—all of which suppose the belief of Christ and the Holy Ghost being divine Persons. We must first give some convincing proof of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, with which these doctrines are supposed to stand or fall; else it would be immediately replied, that the one is false, and far from being of any importance, and that therefore so are the others. But as we reserve the consideration of these doctrines to their proper place, we shall only observe at present, that there are some persons who do appear to deny not the doctrine of the Trinity, but rather the importance of it, and express themselves with very great indifference about it, and blame all attempts to defend it as needless or litigious, as though they were only a contest about words. They say, 'Though we hold it ourselves, others who deny it may have as much to say in defence of their own cause as we have, and therefore these disputes ought to be wholly laid aside.' Now, as regards these persons, what we have hinted concerning the importance of this doctrine may not be altogether misapplied. We have taken occasion, therefore, to mention it in this place, that we may not be supposed to plead a cause which is not worth defending; and that the doctrine of the Trinity may appear to be, not an empty speculation, but a doctrine which we are bound to esteem as of the highest importance.

Let us next consider what degree of knowledge of this doctrine is necessary to, or connected with, salvation It cannot be supposed that such a degree of knowledge includes every thing that is commonly laid down in those writings in which the doctrine is attempted to be explained; for when we speak of it as a doctrine of the highest importance, we mean by it the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity. This is what we are to assent to, and to use our utmost endeavours to

defend. As for those explications which are merely human, they are not to be reckoned of equal importance. Every private Christian, in particular, is not to be censured as a stranger to this doctrine, who cannot define personality in a scholastic way, or understand all the terms used in explaining it, or several modes of speaking which some writers tenaciously adhere to,—such as 'hypostasis,' 'subsistence,' 'consubstantiality,' 'the model distinction of the Persons in the Godhead,' 'filiation,' 'the communication of the divine essence by generation,' 'the communication of it by procession.' Some of those expressions rather embarrass the minds of men, than add any farther light to the sense of those scriptures in which this doctrine is taught. When we consider how far the doctrine of the Trinity is to be known and believed to salvation, we must not exclude the weakest Christian from a possibility of knowing it, by supposing it necessary for him to understand some hard words, which he doth not find in his Bible, and which, if he meet them elsewhere, will not add much to his edification. That knowledge which is necessary to salvation, is plain and easy, and is to be found in every part of scripture. Accordingly, every Christian knows, that the word 'God' signifies a Being that has all those divine perfections which are so frequently attributed to him in scripture, and are displayed and glorified in all his works of common providence and grace. Every Christian knows also that this God is one; and he learns from his Bible, and therefore firmly believes, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are possessed of divine perfections, and consequently are this one God. He knows, further, that, in scripture, they are distinguished by such characters and properties as are generally called 'personal;' and he applies the word 'Person' to each of them, and concludes that the divine glory attributed to them is the same, though their personal properties or characters are distinct. This is the substance of what is contained in the first of the Answers at present under consideration. And he who believes this, needs not entertain any doubt that he wants some ideas

of this sacred doctrine which are necessary to salvation; for the degree of knowledge, which he possesses, attended with a firm belief, is sufficient to warrant all those acts of divine worship which we are bound to render to the Father, Son, and Spirit, and is consistent with all those other doctrines, which are founded on that of the Trinity, or which suppose the belief of it.

The Doctrine of the Trinity a Mystery

The doctrine of the Trinity is a great mystery, such as cannot be comprehended by a finite mind. But let us inquire what we are to understand by the word 'mystery,' as it is used in scripture. This word sometimes denotes a doctrine's having been kept secret, or, at least, revealed more obscurely than afterwards, so that it was not so clearly known. In this sense the gospel is called, 'The mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.' It was covered with the ceremonial law, as with a vail, which many of the people, through the blindness of their minds, did not fully understand. Accordingly, when persons are led into a farther knowledge of it, it is said, as our Saviour tells his disciples, that to them it is given to 'know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.'c—Again, when something is revealed in scripture which the world was not in the least apprized of before, it is, by way of eminence, called 'a mystery.' The apostle, speaking concerning the change that shall take place on those that shall be found alive at the last day, says, 'Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.'—There is still another idea affixed to the word 'mystery,' namely, that though a doctrine be revealed, it cannot be fully comprehended. It is in this sense that we call the doctrine of the Trinity a mystery. The word, in some scriptures, seems to occur in two of its senses. When the apostle says, 'Unto me, who am less than

the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God,'e he speaks of the gospel, not only 'as hid,' but as 'unsearchable;' and when he speaks of 'the mystery of God, even the Father and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' the word 'mystery' seems to denote that which had not been fully made known, and that which cannot be fully understood. Few will deny that the glory of the Father, who is here spoken of, as well as Christ, is incomprehensible by a finite mind; and if it be said that the gospel is intended, and that the words ought to be rendered, 'in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' even this must be supposed to be incomprehensible, as well as formerly less known, otherwise the character which the apostle gives of it would be too great.

But suppose the word 'mystery' were always used to signify a doctrine not before revealed, without including the idea of its being incomprehensible, our general position would not be overthrown; for we can prove from other arguments that the doctrine of the Trinity is incomprehensible; and this we shall endeavour to do. That we may prepare our way for this, let it be considered, that there are some finite things not incomprehensible in themselves, which we cannot now comprehend by reason of the imperfection of our present state. How little do we know of some things which may be called mysteries in nature,—such as the reason of the growth and various colours and shapes of plants, and the various instincts of brute creatures! Yea, how little do we know comparatively of ourselves! How little of the nature of our souls, otherwise than as it is observed by their actions, and by the effects they produce,—or of the reason of their union with our bodies, or of their acting by them! As the inspired writer observes, 'Thou knowest not the way of the spirit, nor how the bones

do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all things.' Elihu, mentioning some wonderful works of nature, which he challenges Job to give an account of, speaks of this in particular, 'Dost thou know how thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth, by the south wind?'h These words signify, not only that we cannot account for the winds producing heat or cold, as blowing from various quarters of heaven, but that we know hot the reason of the vital heat which is preserved, for so many years, in the bodies of men, the inseparable concomitant and sign of life, or what gives the first motion to the blood and spirits, or fits the organized body to perform its various functions. These things cannot be comprehended by us.

But when we speak of that which is infinite, we must conclude it to be incomprehensible, not only because of the imperfection of our present state, but because, as has been before observed, of the infinite disproportion that there is between the object and our finite capacities. In this respect, we showed that the perfections of the divine nature cannot be comprehended,—such as the immensity, eternity, omnipresence, and simplicity of God. Yet we are to believe that he is infinitely perfect. Now it seems equally reasonable to suppose the doctrine of the Trinity to be incomprehensible; for the mutual relation of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and their distinct personality, are not the result of the divine will—they are personal perfections, and are therefore necessary, and their glory, as well as that of his essential perfections, infinite. If we are bound to believe one to be incomprehensible, why should we not as well suppose the other to be so? Or if there are some things which the light of nature gives us some ideas of, concerning which we, notwithstanding, know but little, why should it be thought strange, that the doctrine of the Trinity, though the subject of pure revelation, should be equally incomprehensible! This inference appears so evident, that some who

deny the doctrine of the Trinity to be incomprehensible, do not hesitate to deny the perfections of the divine nature to be so. They maintain that there is nothing which is the object of faith but what may be comprehended by us; and thus go to extremities in defence of their cause, which no one who hath the least degree of the humility becoming a finite creature, should venture to adopt. They even, as their cause seems to require, proceed as far as to say, that every doctrine which we cannot comprehend is to be rejected by us; as though our understandings were to set bounds to the truth and credibility of all things.

This, I think, is the true state of the question about mysteries in Christianity. The question is not, whether the word 'mystery' is never used in scripture to signify what is incomprehensible; for if that could be sufficiently proved, which I think hath not yet been done, we would assert the doctrine of the Trinity to be more than a mystery, namely, an incomprehensible doctrine. And the proof of this seems absolutely necessary; for the Anti-trinitarians—some of them, with an air of insult—conclude that our asserting it is a last resort, which we betake ourselves to when they have beaten us out of all our other strongholds. We might suppose, therefore, that the doctrine of the incomprehensiblity of the Trinity would be opposed with the greatest warmth; but I do not find that it has hitherto been overthrown. Indeed, when they call it one of our most plausible pretences, as though we laid the whole stress of the controversy upon it, we might expect that it should be attacked with stronger arguments than it generally is. Sometimes they bend their force principally against the sense of the word 'mystery:' and here they talk not only with an air of insult, but with profaneness, when they compare the doctrine with the abominable mysteries of the heathen, which were not to be divulged to any but those who were in the secret, or when they compare it with transubstantiation, and reckon

it mysterious in the same sense, or, according to their construction, absurd and nonsensical. This way of arguing has so far prevailed among them, that no one must apply the word 'mystery' to any doctrines of religion without exposing himself to scorn and ridicule. This, however, will do no service to their cause, nor prejudice to our doctrine, in the opinion of those who inquire into the latter with that seriousness and impartiality which the importance of the doctrine calls for.

The question, then, is, whether any doctrines of religion may be deemed incomprehensible,—that is, such as we can have no adequate ideas of, because of the disproportion between them and our finite minds? and whether the incommunicable perfections of God are not to be reckoned among these incomprehensible doctrines? If they are not, it will be reasonable to demand that every thing relating to them be particularly accounted for, and reduced to the standard of a finite capacity. If this cannot be done, but some things must be allowed to be incomprehensible in religion, it will be farther inquired, Why should the doctrine of the Trinity be rejected, because we cannot account for every thing that relates to the personal glory of God, any more than we can for those things that respect his essential glory? Or may not some things that are matter of pure revelation, be supposed to exceed our capacities, and yet we be bound to believe them, as well as other things which by the light of nature appear to be true, and, at the same time, are incomprehensible? But that we may enter a little more particularly into this argument, we shall consider the most material objections that are brought against it, and what may be replied to them.

One objection is, that we take up with the mere sound of words, and do not affix any manner of ideas to them. Now there is no Christian, that I know of, who thinks there is any religion in the sound of

words, or that it is sufficient for us to take up with the word 'Trinity,' or 'Persons in the Godhead,' without determining, in some measure, what we understand by it. We allow that faith supposes some ideas of the object,—that is, that we have some knowledge of what we believe it to be. But our knowledge of things admits of various degrees. Of some things we know only that they are what they are determined or proved to be. If we proceed farther in our inquiries, and would know how every matter is to be accounted for which may justly be affirmed concerning them, our ideas are at a stand. Yet our being reduced to this state is not in the least inconsistent with our believing what we conclude them to be. We believe, for example, that God's eternity is without succession, or that his immensity is without extension. This we know and believe, because to assert the contrary would be to ascribe imperfection to him. Our faith, as grounded on this reason of it, extends only as far as our ideas; and as regards what exceeds them, we are bound to believe that there is something in God which is beyond the reach of a finite mind, though, in consequence of its being infinite, we cannot comprehend or fully describe it. So with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, it is one thing to say that the Father, Son, and Spirit, have the perfections of the divine nature, as well as distinct personal characters and properties, attributed to them in scripture, and that because the Godhead is but one, these three are one,—it is one thing to say this, and firmly to believe it, on the ground of its being clearly revealed in scripture; and another thing to say that, though we cannot fully describe all the properties of their divine personality, we, nevertheless, believe that they subsist in an incomprehensible manner. And while we compare them with finite persons, as we do the perfections of God with those of the creature, we separate from the one, as well as from the other, whatever savours of imperfection.

Another objection is, that it is unbecoming the divine wisdom and goodness to suppose that God should give a revelation, and demand our belief of it, as necessary to salvation, when, at the same time, it is impossible for our understandings to yield an assent to it, since nothing that is unintelligible can be the object of faith. Now, we must distinguish between rendering unintelligible, by perplexity or difficulty of style, a doctrine which would otherwise be easy to be understood, and the imparting of a doctrine which none can comprehend. The former of these cannot be charged on any part of scripture; and it is only a revelation liable to be charged with it which could be reckoned inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God. As to the latter, the design of revelation is not to make us comprehend what is in itself incomprehensible. God, for instance, did not design, when he made known his perfections in his word, to give us such a perfect discovery of himself, that we might be said by means of it to find him out unto perfection, or that we should know as much of his glory as is possible to be known, or as much as he knows of it himself; for that is to suppose the understanding of man infinitely more perfect than it is. Whatever is received, is received in proportion to the measure of that which contains it. The whole ocean can communicate no more water than what will fill the vessel which is applied to receive it. Accordingly, the infinite perfections of God being such as cannot be contained in a finite mind, we are not to suppose that our comprehending them was the design of divine revelation. God, indeed, designed that we should apprehend some things of himself, or as much as should be subservient to the great ends of religion, but not so much as might be inconsistent with our humbly confessing that 'we are but of yesterday, and know,' comparatively, 'nothing.' And this is true as regards not only the essential, but the personal glory of God, 'Who hath ascended into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the

ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?'k Our Saviour, indeed, speaks of his having 'ascended into heaven,' as having a comprehensive knowledge of all divine truths; but this he affirms concerning himself as a divine person, exclusively of all creatures. As to the objection stating, that God makes the comprehensive knowledge of mysterious doctrines a term of salvation, we must take leave to deny it. We have already considered what degree of knowledge is necessary to salvation, and have shown it to be such as is subservient to religion,—which teaches us to adore what we apprehend to be its object, though we cannot comprehend it. As to the further allegation in the objection, that that which is unintelligible, is not the object of faith, we must distinguish before we grant or deny it. As the object of faith is some proposition laid down, it is one thing to say that a proposition cannot be assented to, when we have no ideas of what is affirmed or denied in it; and another thing to say that it is not to be believed, when we have ideas of several things contained in it, of which some are affirmed, and others denied. When, for instance, we say that God is an infinite Spirit, there is a positive idea contained in the proposition, or there is something affirmed in it, namely, that he is able to put forth actions suitable to an intelligent being; there is also something denied concerning him, namely, that he is corporeal, and that there are any limits to his understanding. Now, all this we may truly be said to understand and believe. But if we proceed farther, and inquire what it is to have such an understanding or will, not only does the question exceed our comprehension, but it is not a proposition, and consequently not the object of faith. The same principle holds with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. When we affirm that there is one God, that the Father, Son, and Spirit, have all the perfections of the Godhead, and that these perfections, and the personality of each of them, are infinitely greater than what can be found in the creature, we state what we yield our assent to. But if it be inquired how far God

herein exceeds all the ideas which we have of finite perfections, or personality, our understandings are at a loss. So far, however, as this does not contain the form of a proposition, it cannot, according to our common acceptation of the word, be said to be the object of faith.

A third objection is, that practical religion is designed to be promoted in the world by a revelation; and therefore the will of man must follow the dictates of the understanding, and not blindly embrace, and be conversant about, we know not what,—which is to act unbecoming our character as intelligent creatures. Now, the ideas which we have of things subservient to practical religion are of two sorts, such as engage our obedience, or such as excite our adoration and admiration. As to the former, we know what we are commanded to do, what it is to act as becomes those who are subject to a divine person, though we cannot comprehend those infinite perfections which lay us under the highest obligations to obey him. As to the latter, the incomprehensibleness of the divine personality, or perfections, has a direct tendency to excite our admiration, and the infinitude of them our adoration. And since all religion may be reduced to these two heads, the contents of divine revelation, so far from being inconsistent with it, tend to promote it. Things commanded are not, as such, incomprehensible, as was but now observed, and therefore not inconsistent with that obedience or subjection which is enjoined in one branch of revelation; and things incomprehensible do not contain the form of a command, but rather excite our admiration, and therefore are not only consistent with, but adapted to promote, the other branch of it. Is it not an instance of religion to adore and magnify God, when we behold the display of his perfections in his works? And is he less to be adored, or admired, because we cannot comprehend them? Or should we not rather look upon them with a greater degree of astonishment, than if they did not exceed the reach of a finite mind? Must a person be able to

measure the water of the ocean, or number all the particles of matter that are contained in the world, before his ideas can be in any way directed to show forth the Creator's praise? Or must we be able to account for every thing that is a mystery in nature, before we can improve it to promote some of the ends of practical religion to which it incites us? May we not say, with wonder, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches?' So when we behold the personal glory of the Father. Son, and Spirit, as displayed in the work of redemption, or as revealed in scripture, which, as exhibiting it, is said to be an instance of his 'manifold wisdom,'n should we not admire it the more that it is, as the apostle calls it, 'unsearchable?' We conclude, therefore, that practical religion, as founded on divine revelation, is not, in any of its branches, inconsistent with the incomprehensibleness of those things which are, some in one respect, and others in another, its objects. As to what the objection further states concerning the will following the dictates of the understanding, and practical religion being seated in the latter, I own that we must first know what we are to do in matters of religion, before we can act. Thus we must first know what it is to worship, love, and obey the Father, Son, and Spirit, and also that these three divine persons are the object of worship, love, and obedience; and then the will follows the dictates of the understanding. But it is one thing to know these things, and another thing to be able to comprehend the divine, essential, or personal glory which belongs to them, and is the foundation of acts of religious worship.

Another objection is, that the design of divine revelation is to improve our understandings, and render our ideas of things more clear, and not to entangle and perplex them; or, as it is sometimes expressed, that revelation is an improvement upon the light of nature. This objection seems to have a double aspect, or tendency to

advance, or to depreciate, divine revelation. If we take it in the former view, we freely own that revelation is a very great improvement upon the light of nature. It is so, as it leads us into the knowledge of many things which could not be discovered by the light of nature,—such as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, and of that infinite satisfaction which was given by him to the justice of God in order to our discharge from condemnation; and also as it leads us into that communion which believers have with the Father, Son, and Spirit. Since the light of nature gives us no discovery of these doctrines, divine revelation, and particularly the gospel, makes a very great addition to our ideas. Both, it is true, take their rise from God; yet one excels the other as much as the light of the sun does that of a star. The psalmist, when comparing them, says respecting revelation, 'It is perfect, converting the soul,' and 'sure, making wise the simple.' Again, when the same truths are discovered by the light of nature, and by divine revelation, the latter tends very much to improve our ideas. Thus when the light of nature leads us into the knowledge of the being and perfections of God, his wisdom, power, and goodness, as illustrated in the works of creation and providence, we have not so clear ideas of them, as we receive from the additional discoveries of them in divine revelation. Hence, the one does not cloud or darken those ideas which the other gives. But those who bring the objection against the doctrine of the Trinity, intend by it to depreciate divine revelation; and the sense of their objection is,—that though the light of nature leads mankind into such a degree of the knowledge of divine truths as is sufficient, in its kind, to salvation, so that they who are destitute of divine revelation may understand the terms of acceptance with God, and the way which, if duly improved, would lead to heaven; yet God was pleased to give some farther discovery of the same things by his word, which, in consequence, is only an improvement upon the other, as it makes the same truths which were known in some degree

without it, more clear, and frees them from those corruptions or false glosses which the perverse reasonings of men have set upon them; whereas we, by insisting on inexplicable mysteries, which we pretend to be founded on divine revelation, though in reality they are not contained in it, cloud and darken the light of nature, and so make the way of salvation more difficult than it would otherwise be. This objection, however plausible the words, at first view, may appear to be, certainly tends to depreciate divine revelation. It supposes those doctrines now mentioned, and many others of a similar nature, not necessary to salvation. It, therefore, takes its rise from the Deists, however it may be applied by the Anti-trinitarians, in militating against the doctrine of the Trinity. And as the principal design of it is to overthrow this doctrine, by supposing it to be unintelligible, and, according to their method of reasoning, in no sense the object of faith, the only reply which need be made to it is, that the discoveries of the glory of God by the light of nature, are, in some respects, as incomprehensible as the doctrine of the Trinity, while we are not, for that reason, obliged to disbelieve or reject them. No advantage, therefore, is gained against our argument, by supposing that the light of nature contains a discovery of truths, plain, easy, and intelligible, and that the doctrine of the Trinity is otherwise, and, as such, is not contained in divine revelation, and cannot be defended.

The Doctrine of the Trinity not contrary to reason

Another thing that may be premised, before we enter on the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, is, that that doctrine is not contrary to reason, though it be above it, and that our reasoning powers, when directed by scripture-revelation, are not altogether useless, in order to our attaining such a degree of the knowledge of it as is necessary, and ought to be diligently sought. When a doctrine may be said to be above reason, has been already considered, as well as that the

doctrine of the Trinity is so. We are now, then, to obviate the most popular objection brought against that doctrine, namely, that it is absurd and irrational, and that they who maintain it must lay aside their reason before they can be induced to believe it; for it assumes either that three are equal to one, which is contrary to the common sense of mankind, or that there is a plurality of gods, which is contrary to the first principles of the light of nature. Here we are reflected on, as though we demanded that our antagonists should lay aside their reason before we argue with them, and so make it easy to be seen on which side the argument will preponderate. To make way, then, for what may be said in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, we shall in this section, First, consider when a doctrine may be said to be contrary to reason; Secondly, show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not so; and Thirdly, inquire what is the use of reason in establishing it, or any other doctrines which are the subject of pure revelation.

1. First, then, let us inquire when we may conclude that a doctrine is contrary to reason. A doctrine may, in a sense, be said to be contrary to reason, when it is contrary to the methods of reasoning made use of by particular persons, which are not always just; and it may then not be false or absurd, but rather the contrary. It is nothing, therefore, to our present argument, to be asked, with an air of boasting, by those on the other side of the question, that if the doctrine we are maintaining could have been accounted for, how comes it to pass that so many men of sense and learning, as are to be found among the Anti-trinitarians, have not been able to do it? We suppose a doctrine to be contrary to reason, only when it contradicts some of the first principles which the mind of man cannot but yield its assent to,—which it receives as soon as it takes in the sense of the words expressing them, without demanding any proof. Examples of such principles are, that the whole is greater than a part,—that a

thing cannot be, and not be, at the same time,—and that two is more than one. Or a doctrine is contrary to reason which, when any point is proved to be true to a demonstration, is contained in a proposition contradictory to it, in which the words are taken in the same sense.

2. We shall now show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not contrary to reason. That this may appear, it is to be remarked that we do not say that the three Persons in the Godhead are one Person, or that the one divine Being is three divine Beings.

It is objected, however, that as reason establishes and proves the unity of the Godhead, it is contrary to it to say that the divine nature may be predicated of more than one; for, in that case, there is a plurality of Gods, and every distinct Person must be a distinct God. In other words, it is alleged that the Trinitarian doctrine is downright Tritheism, and consequently contrary to reason. Here those-words of the Athanasian Creed are produced as an instance: "The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, yet there are not three Gods, but one God; so that the Father is Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal, yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal; and the Father Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty, yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty." These words they suppose, though without ground, to contain a plain contradiction. When we say the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are God, we do not say they are distinct Gods; for the distinction between them respects their personality, not their deity. When, again, we assert that they are all Eternal, or Almighty, we do not suppose that their duration or power are distinct. And the same thing may be said of all other divine perfections that are attributed to them: the perfections are the same in all of them, though the persons are distinct. The charge of Tritheism thus lies in a narrow compass. The Anti-trinitarians say that there is one divine Being; so do we. But

they add, that this divine Being is a divine person, since existence and personality are the same, and that if there be more divine Persons, there must be more Gods. This they maintain; and this we deny. Now how do they prove it? The proof amounts to no more than this,—that there is no instance in finite things—among angels or men, to whom alone personality can be applied—of any distinct persons who are not, at the same time, distinct beings. From this it is inferred that the case must be the same with respect to the divine Persons. This inference we are bound to deny. Our ideas of personality and of existence are not the same. How inseparable soever these may be in what respects creatures, we may have distinct ideas of them, when we speak of the divine being and personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Here it will, doubtless, be demanded, that we determine wherein the difference consists; or, in particular, since every distinct finite Person is a distinct being, what there is in the divine personality that should exclude the Father, Son, and Spirit, from being distinct beings, because distinct Persons. Must we then, when we conclude that there is a small or faint resemblance between divine and human personality, be able to comprehend, and fully to describe, that infinite disproportion which is between them, or else be charged with using words without any manner of ideas annexed to them, and so let our cause fall to the ground? If, indeed, the divine personality were finite, like that of the creature, it might be required that a finite mind should account for it; but since it is not so, but incomprehensible, we are bound to believe what we cannot comprehend.

But have we no ideas at all of the distinct personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit? To this we may answer, that we have finite ideas of it, and that only such ideas have we of any of the divine perfections. We are taught, by scripture, to say that they are distinct Persons. We also know what those personal characters or properties, whence our

ideas take their rise, signify, when affirmed of men. At the same time, we in our thoughts abstract every thing from these characters or properties which argues imperfection. In short, in our conceptions of them we proceed in the same way, as when we think of any of the perfections of the divine nature. These, as well as the divine personality, are incomprehensible. Yet, while we say they are infinitely more than can be in any creature, we, notwithstanding, retain such ideas of them as tend to answer those ends of religion which suppose that we apprehend something of them which is conducive to its exercise.

3. We are now to consider the use of reason in proving or defending the doctrine of the Trinity, or any other doctrines of pure revelation. Though these doctrines could not have been discovered by reason, nor can every thing that is revealed be comprehended by it; yet reason is not to be laid aside as useless, and has been called by some a servant to faith. While revelation discovers what doctrines we are to believe, and demands our assent to them, reason offers a convincing proof that we are under an indispensable obligation to give it—it proves the doctrine to be true and such as is worthy of God, as it is derived from him, the fountain of truth and wisdom. This office of reason, or the subserviency of it to our faith, is certainly necessary; for what is false cannot be the object of faith in general, and nothing unworthy of God can be the matter of divine revelation or the object of a divine faith.

Now, in order to reason's judging of the truth of things, it first considers the sense of words, what ideas are designed to be conveyed by them, and whether these are contrary to the common sense of mankind. It then proceeds to inquire into those evidences that may give conviction, and enforce our belief of the ideas, and leads us into the nature of the truths revealed, receives them as stamped with the

authority of God, and considers them as agreeable to his perfections. It also leads us into his design in revealing them, and what we are to infer from them; and in doing this, it connects things together, shows their importance, and observes the dependence of one upon another, and how they are to be improved to answer the best purposes. Now this office of reason may be performed in particular with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. That doctrine, as has been already proved, contains in it no absurdity contradictory to reason; and the evidences on which our faith in it is founded, will be farther considered when, by the express words of scripture, or by just consequences deduced from them, we prove it to be a doctrine of revelation, agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost. The proofs which we shall then adduce will make it farther appear, that it is necessary for us to use our reason in stating those doctrines which neither are founded on it, nor can be comprehended by it.

Whence the Doctrine of the Trinity is to be deduced

We shall now consider whence the doctrine of the Trinity is to be deduced, or where we are to search for that knowledge of it in which we are to acquiesce. Here it must be observed, that it cannot be learnt from the light of nature; for then we should certainly be able to behold some traces of it in the works of creation and providence, and, reasoning from the effect to the cause, should understand it from them, as well as the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. We should never have known that God made all things by his essential word, 'without whom,' as the evangelist says,' 'was not anything made that was made,' had we not been told so by divine revelation. In like manner we should never have known that the Spirit, as a distinct Person from the Father, created all things, and performed several other works by which his personal glory is demonstrated, had we not been instructed on the subject by scripture. The light of

nature could discover to us, indeed, that God, who is a Spirit, or an incorporeal Being, has produced many effects worthy of himself; but we could not have known by it that the word 'Spirit' signifies a distinct person,—a doctrine for which we are indebted to divine revelation. As for the work of our redemption, in which, more than in all the other divine works, the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit is demonstrated, we could have known as little of that, by the light of nature, as we do of the Persons to whom it is attributed.

It will, I am aware, be objected, that our first parents knew the doctrine of the Trinity, as soon as they were created, else they could not have given that distinct glory to the Persons in the Godhead that is due to them,—that if we are required not only to worship the Divine Being, but to worship the Father, Son, and Spirit, and if this worship is due from us as creatures, and not merely as fallen and redeemed, it follows that our first parents must have known the doctrine of the Trinity; and they knew it not by divine revelation, but by the light of nature. Now we will concede every thing in this objection, except that they did not know the doctrine by divine revelation. They certainly had some ideas conveyed to them at first by revelation, else they could not have known anything that related to instituted worship,—which, it is plain, they did. And shall it be reckoned any absurdity to suppose that they received the doctrine of the Trinity by divine revelation, though in the short history which Moses gives us of things relating to the state of innocency, we have no particular account of their having so received it? It is sufficient to our purpose to suppose that it was agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God to make known to them this important truth, and that, in consequence, he actually did so, though not by the light of nature.

It is farther objected, that, as appears by their writings, the heathen, though they were unacquainted with scripture, knew something of the doctrine of the Trinity. To support this objection, reference is made to several mystical expressions in the works of Plato, when he speaks of three principles, which seem to look in the direction of the doctrine. One of the three principles of which he speaks, he calls goodness, or a being that is good; the second he calls his word, or reason; and the third a spirit, which diffuses its influence throughout the whole system of beings, and which he sometimes calls 'the soul of the world.' In other passages, he speaks of them as having a distinct sovereignty. He supposes the first to be the cause of things most great and excellent; the second, the cause of things of an inferior nature; the third, the cause of things yet more inferior. And, some of his followers plainly call them 'three hypostases,' and sometimes, 'Father,' 'Word,' and 'Spirit.' Now, the account which Plato and his followers seem to have given of the doctrine of the Trinity, does not appear to have been taken from the light of nature; so that it affords no countenance to the principle of the objection. We have sufficient ground to conclude that Plato travelled into Egypt with a design to make improvements in knowledge; and some suppose that he saw there a translation of part of the Bible into Greek,r more ancient than that which is commonly attributed to the LXX, which was not compiled till a hundred years after his time. Whether he did this, or not, is uncertain. It is not to be doubted, however, that he used several expressions which are contained in the books of Moses, and that he took thence the plan of his laws. On this account some have called him 'a second Moses, speaking Greek.' But whether he received his notions immediately from scripture, or by conversation with the Jews, of whom a great number settled in Egypt after Gedaliah's death, is not material. It is sufficiently evident that he did not obtain all his notions, in a way of reasoning, from the light of nature. As for his followers, such as Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyry, and

others, though none of them pretended to be Christians, and one of them was an inveterate enemy to Christianity, they lived in those ages when Christianity prevailed in the world; and they may well be supposed to have made their master Plato speak several things, as to the mystery of the Trinity, which he never intended, were it only to persuade the Christians that he was not inferior to Moses or any other hero of the scripture.

Having answered objections, we shall take leave to notice the incautiousness of some divines who have defended the doctrine of the Trinity. They have not only asserted that Plato understood a great deal of it, but have made use of this alleged fact as an answer to the Anti-trinitarian objection formerly mentioned, that the doctrine of the Trinity is unintelligible; and they have taken a great deal of pleasure in accounting for the doctrine, in such ways as the philosophers have done. Some of them have taken notice of a few dark hints which they have met with in some of the poetical fictions, and have thence concluded that there was something of the Trinity known, even by the heathen in general. Thus when the word 'Three' is mentioned by the poets, and applied to some things which they relate concerning their Gods, or when they speak of God's delighting in an unequal number, or in the number 'Three,' they are supposed to have had some confused notion of the Trinity. This matter, however, is too gross to be particularly mentioned; for it might give us an unbecoming idea of this divine mystery, or of those who have better arguments to defend it. The reflection which I would make on it is, that what has been called an advantage to the doctrine, has been certainly very detrimental to it, and, as a late learned divine observes, has tended only to pervert the simplicity of the Christian faith with mixtures of philosophy and vain deceit.t I doubt not but the apostle had an eye to it, among other corruptions, which they who were attached to the heathen philosophy had begun to bring

into their scheme of divinity, and which others would notoriously introduce in after-ages, when he said, 'Beware, lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.' 'This corruption so much prevailed, that it has given occasion to some of the Anti-trinitarians to reproach the doctrine of the Trinity, as though it were a system of Platonism; and the fondness of the early Christian writers for using Plato's words, in explaining the doctrine of the Trinity, has given occasion for some of them to be suspected as having been unfavourable to the scripture account of it. Adversaries have, in consequence, laid claim to them as their own; and have produced some unwary expressions out of Justin Martyr, and others, to allege that they were favourable to the Arian scheme, though, in other parts of their writings, they appear remote from it.

This leads us to consider that some divines have used similitudes to explain the doctrine of the Trinity. These, at best, tend only to illustrate, and not to prove a doctrine. We can hardly make use of them for illustrating the doctrine of the Trinity without conveying some ideas which are unbecoming it, if not subversive of it; and while we pretend to explain that which is in itself inexplicable, we do no service to the truth. I shall here give a short specimen, that we may see how some have unwarily weakened the cause which they have been maintaining. Some have taken a similitude from three of the divine perfections. They say that there are three invisibles of God, power, wisdom, and goodness, and that power creates, wisdom governs, and goodness conserves; and so they have gone on to explain this doctrine, till they have almost given it into the hands of the Sabellians. Indeed, they might have instanced in more divine perfections than three, had it been to their purpose. Again, others have explained this doctrine, by some resemblance which they apprehend to be found of it in man; and they speak of the soul, as a

principle of a threefold life, rational, sensitive, and vegetative. Others speak of three causes concurring to produce the same effect, the efficient, the constitutive, and the final cause. Others have taken their similitude from inanimate things,—as the sun, in which there are light, heat, and motion, which are inseparably connected together, and tend to produce the same effects. Others, again, illustrate the doctrine by a similitude taken from a fountain; in which there is the spring in the bowels of the earth, the water bubbling out of the earth, and the stream diffusing itself in a perpetual course, receiving all it communicates from the fountain. I am sorry there is occasion to caution any against this method of explaining the doctrine of the Trinity. But these, and many other similitudes of a similar nature, we find in the writings of some, who consider not what an advantage they give to the common enemy. There are, indeed, in most of the similitudes, three things, which are said, in different respects, to be one. But all the similitudes brought to illustrate this doctrine, lead us to think of the whole divided into those parts of which it consists. Writers notice these parts as three in number; or they speak of three properties of the same thing. And if their wit and fancy saw it needful to speak of more than three, the same method of illustration would serve their purpose, as much as it does the end for which they bring it. I would, therefore, conclude this head, by using the words of God to Job, 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?' Who are these that, by pretending to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity by similitudes, do that, which, though very foreign to their design, tends to pervert it?

Expository Rules respecting the Doctrine of the Trinity

We shall now consider what general rules may be observed for our understanding those scriptures on which our faith, with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, is founded. Since it is a doctrine of pure

revelation, as has been before observed, we must keep close to scripture, to the very words where they are express and distinct on the subject, and to consequences deduced from them so far as these are just and self-evident. At the same time, while we are sensible that we cannot comprehend this mystery, we must take care that we pretend not to be wise above what is revealed. Now there are some rules, which may be of use to us in our inquiries into the sense of scripture concerning this doctrine.

1. We must not suppose that the words of scripture, relating to it, are to be taken in a sense which can be known by none but critics, as though it were designed to be understood only by them, or as if the unlearned part of the world should be left in the dark, or led astray as to several things which it contains. We are not to suppose, for example, that we are at a loss as to the proper sense of the word 'God;' or that we can hardly know how to direct our faith and worship founded on it without the help of criticism, or that we shall be led to ascribe divine honour where it is not due, for want of being acquainted with some distinctions concerning one that may be called God by nature, or the supreme God, and others who may be called God by office, or subordinate Gods. Nor is it incumbent on us that either we must be able to distinguish concerning different kinds of worship; or instead of honouring the Son as we honour the Father, we must give him an inferior kind of divine worship, short of what is due to the Father. For such worship as this, we have not scripture warrant; nor are we led by the scriptures to have any notion of a middle being between God and the creature, or one that is not properly God, as the Father is, and yet more than a creature, as though there were a medium between finite and infinite; nor are we led by scripture to conceive of any being, that has an eternal duration, whose eternity is supposed to be before time, and yet not the same with the eternal duration of the Father. These things we

shall have occasion to mention in their proper place. We need, therefore, make no farther mention of them at present; but may only observe, how unintelligible the scripture would be in what relates to the doctrine of the Trinity, if the words had not a plain and determinate sense, so that we should require to make use of such methods of reasoning in order to arrive at the meaning of them.

2. If some divine perfections are attributed in scripture to the Son and Spirit, all the perfections of the divine nature, by reason of their simplicity and unity, may, by a just consequence, be proved to belong to them. Hence, if we can prove, from scripture, that they have ascribed to them some perfections which are properly divine,—which, I hope, it will not be a difficult matter to do,—we are not to suppose that our argument is defective, or that the doctrine of the Trinity is not sufficiently maintained, though we cannot produce a scripture to prove every perfection of the divine nature to be ascribed to them.

3. When any thing is mentioned, in scripture, concerning our Saviour, or the Holy Spirit, which argues an inferiority to the Father, it is to be understood consistently with other scriptures, which speak of their having the same divine nature; for scripture does not, in the least, contradict itself. How the two classes of texts on this subject are to be understood, will be farther considered under a following head.

4. If we have sufficient arguments to convince us of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, our faith ought not to be shaken though we cannot fully understand the sense of some scriptures, which are brought to oppose it. Not that we are to suppose that the scripture gives countenance to two opposite doctrines; but a person may be fully satisfied concerning the sense of those scriptures, which contain

the doctrine of the Trinity, and yet not be supposed perfectly to understand the meaning of every word, or phrase, used in scripture, or of some particular texts, which are sometimes brought to support the contrary doctrine; so that objections may be brought, which he is not able readily to reply to. Shall he, therefore, deny the truth, because he cannot remove all the difficulties that seem to lie in the way of it? That would be to part with it at too easy a rate; and when he has done this, he will find greater difficulties attending the contrary scheme of doctrine. Do Anti-trinitarians object that we believe things contrary to reason, because we assert the incomprehensibleness of divine mysteries? or that we are Tritheists, because we believe that there are three Persons in the Godhead, and cannot exactly determine the difference between divine and human personality? We could, on the other hand, point at some difficulties, that they cannot easily surmount. What shall we think of their giving divine worship to our Saviour, when, at the same time, they deny him to have those perfections that denominate him God in the same sense as the Father? The Socinians found it very difficult, when the matter was disputed among themselves, as to their worshipping him whose deity they denied, to reconcile their practice with their sentiments. The Arians will find that this objection equally affects their scheme; and it will be no less difficult for them to reconcile Christ's character, as Redeemer, Governor of the world, Judge of quick and dead, with their low ideas of him, when denying his proper deity. These things we only mention occasionally atpresent, that it may not be thought that the doctrine of the Trinity is exposed to greater difficulties than the contrary doctrine; and that they who are not furnished with all those qualifications which are necessary for its defence, may not reckon those arguments, by which they have been convinced of the truth of it, less valid, because they are not able, at present, to answer all objections that may be brought against them.

5. The weight of several arguments taken from scripture to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, is to be considered as well as the arguments themselves. We do not pretend that every one of them is equally conclusive. There are some which are often brought to support it, which we can lay no great stress upon; and these we shall omit to mention, lest we should give occasion to the adversary to insult, or conclude that we take anything for an argument that has been brought as such to prove this doctrine. We will not pretend to prove, therefore, or peremptorily to determine, that the doctrine of the Trinity is contained in those words of the psalmist, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.' Nor will we pretend to prove this doctrine from the threefold repetition of the word 'Jehovah,' in the form of a benediction to be used by the High Priest, 'The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.'a Nor do we lay any stress on the threefold repetition of the word, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts;' though we shall show, in its proper place, that there are several things in the context which evidently prove this doctrine. Yet if, together with arguments that are more conclusive, we, at any time, bring some that are less so, we may at least infer that the scripture way of speaking is consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity in places that do not so directly prove it. This we have thought proper to mention, because it is a very common thing for those who cannot answer the most weighty arguments that are brought to support a doctrine, to bend their greatest force against those which have the least strength, and then to triumph as though they had gained the victory, when they have done it only in what respects that which is less material.

Definition of Terms on the Subject of the Trinity

We shall now consider in what sense we are to understand the words 'Trinity' and 'Persons in the Godhead;' and in what respect the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are said to be one. The word 'Trinity' is not to be found in scripture, yet what we understand by it is plainly contained in it. We therefore use the word as agreeable to scripture. Thus we read that there are 'three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost,' and that 'these three are one.' The three here mentioned are Persons, because they are described by personal characters. We shall take occasion elsewhere, when we prove the Deity of the Son and Spirit, to consider their being one, that is, their having the same nature. This subject we shall waive at present, as we are considering only the sense of words commonly used by us in treating of the doctrine.

All contending parties, however they have explained the word 'Trinity,' have, in compliance with custom, used the word, and have so far defined it as to understand by it 'three, who are, in some respect, one.' Some writers, however, have not cared to use the word 'person;' or if they have, it is without the most known and proper idea contained in it. The Sabellians, for example, whenever they use the word, intend nothing by it but three relations, which may be attributed to the same person, as when the same person may be called a father, a son, and a brother, in different respects; or as when he that, at one time, sustains the person of a judge, may, at another time, sustain that of an advocate. This is what some call a Trinity of names; and they might as well have declined to use the words altogether, as to explain them in this sense. Again, the Arians use the word 'person.' They have run, however, into another extreme; and while they avoid Sabellianism, they would lay themselves open to the charge of Tritheism, did they not deny the proper deity of the Son and Spirit. They suppose that every distinct Person is a distinct being, agreeably to the sense of personality as applied to men. This

sense of the word, however, as has been already considered, is to be abstracted from the idea of personality, when applied to the Persons in the Godhead. The Arians also understand the oneness of the divine Persons in a sense agreeable to their own scheme, and different from ours: they speak of them as one in will, consent, or design,—in which respect, God and the creature may be said to be one. Accordingly, Arius and his adherents, in the council at Nice, refused to allow that the divine Persons were Ὁμοουριοι consubstantial, and, with a great many evasions and subterfuges, attempted to conceal their sentiments. All that they could be brought to own was, that the Son was Ὅμοιος, or Ὁμοιουσιος; which amounts to no more than this,—that whatever likeness there may be, in some respects, yet he has not the same proper divine nature with the Father and Holy Ghost.

We are now led to consider the sense in which the word 'person' is generally used by those who defend what we think to be the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity. There are some, it is true, both among ancient and modern writers, who attempt to explain what they mean by the word 'person,' who are so unhappy as to leave the sense of it more dark than they found it: they define it, agreeably to the usages of metaphysicians and schoolmen, to this effect,—that it is a supposition, endowed with reason,—or that it is one entire, individual, incommunicable, rational subsistence. Others, when they define Personality, tell us, that it is a positive mode of a being, terminating and completing its substantial nature, and giving incommunicability to it,—words which need to be explained more than the thing defined by them. Here I cannot but take notice of that warm debate which there was between the Greek and Latin church about the words 'Hypostasis' and 'Persona.' The Latin church concluding that the word 'Hypostasis' signified substance or essence, thought that to assert that there were three divine Hypostases, was to

say that there were three Gods. On the other hand, the Greek church thought that the word 'Persona' did not sufficiently guard against the Sabellian notion, of the same being sustaining three relations. On these grounds, each part of the church was ready to brand the other with heresy; till, by a free and mutual conference, in a synod at Alexandria, A. D. 362, they made it appear, that their dispute was but a contention about the grammatical sense of a word. It was then allowed, by men of temper on both sides, that the two words might be indifferently used. But what signifies the use of them, when perplexed with the scholastic explications of them? These have given occasion to some whose sentiments have been very conflicting as to the doctrine of the Trinity, to express themselves with some dislike. On the one hand, the Socinians, and some among the Remonstrants who made very great advances towards their scheme, such as, Curcellæus, Episcopius, and others,'b have complained that this doctrine was clouded with hard words; and, though their design might be to substitute such words as would make the remedy worse than the disease, their complaint is not altogether groundless. On the other hand, some who have embraced the doctrine of the Trinity, would not have liked its advocates the worse, had they chosen to have defended it in a more plain and intelligible manner. Calvin himself wishes that some words which are so warmly opposed and defended on each side, were altogether laid aside and buried, provided that such might be retained as express our faith in the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Spirit, being the one God, but distinguished by their personal properties. This is that plain sense of the word 'person' which I shall make use of, in what I shall attempt to lay down in its defence.

We never call any thing a person that is not endowed with understanding and will. The most glorious inanimate creatures, either in heaven or earth, whatever excellencies they have, or how

useful soever they are to the world, are not persons. When the sun is described as though it were a person, and is compared to 'a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race,' the words are never understood in any other but a metaphorical sense. So 'behemoth' and the 'leviathan,' mentioned in Job, being no other than brute creatures, are described with personal characters, in the same figurative way of speaking. We always suppose a person to have an understanding and will. Again, whenever, 'I,' 'Thou,' and 'He,' are applied to any subject, they always denote a person,—'I,' a person speaking; 'Thou,' a person spoken to; and 'He,' or 'Him,' a person spoken of. When such modes of speaking are sometimes applied to things that are destitute of reason, or to any moral virtues or principles of acting, which, from the nature of the thing, cannot be denominated persons, they are very easily understood in a figurative sense; and this may, without any difficulty, be distinguished from the proper sense, whereby those who are so denoted are denominated persons. There are also some characters which always denote persons, and some works performed which are properly personal, and can be performed by none but persons. Thus a father, or a son, a Creator, a Redeemer, a benefactor, a Mediator, an advocate, a surety, a judge, a lord, a lawgiver, and many others of a similar nature, are all personal characters. Hence, whoever acts with design, and has such characters attributed to him, we call, according to the proper acceptation of the word, a person. These characters we shall endeavour to apply to the Persons in the Godhead, to prove their distinct personality. But since we are at present considering only the acceptation of words, we shall briefly observe the difference between a divine and a human person, when some personal properties, characters, or works, are attributed to each of them.

Human persons are separated one from the other. Thus, Peter, James, and John, were three persons, but they were separated one from the other. On the other hand, the Persons in the Godhead, however distinguished by their characters and properties, are never separated, as having the same divine essence or nature. As for human persons, one of them might have had a being and personality had the other never existed, because it exists by the will of God. But the divine Persons have a necessary existence and personality, as being, in all respects, independent; so that as they could not but be God, they could not but be divine Persons. The personality of the Son and the Spirit are equally independent with that of the Father, and as much independent as their being and divine perfections.—Again, human persons have only the same kind of nature, which is generally called a common specific nature, but not the same individual nature with another person. Though every man has a nature like that of the rest of mankind, yet the human nature, as attributed to one person, is not the same individual human nature that is attributed to another; for then the power and act of reasoning, or the ideas that there are in one man, would be the same power and the same individual ideas that are in another. But when we speak of the Persons in the Godhead as having the divine nature and perfections, we say that this nature is the same individual nature in all of them, though the Persons are distinct; otherwise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, could not be said to be truly and properly God, and to have the same understanding, will, and other perfections of the divine nature.—Further, when we speak of human persons, we say that as many persons as there are, so many beings there are. Every human person has its own proper being, distinct from all other persons or beings. But we do not say so with respect to the divine Persons; for the divine Being is but one, and the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the very same. This is what we understand when we say, that though there are three Persons in the

Godhead, yet they are the same in substance, or the one only living and true God.

This leads us to consider in what respect the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are said to be one. By this we mean that the Son and Holy Ghost have all the perfections of the divine nature, in the same sense as the Father has. To say less than this, is to assert no more than what our adversaries will allow. They will not deny them perfections, nor would they be thought to deny them to have divine perfections; yea, many of them will not stick to say, that they are truly and properly God,—by which they mean, that whatever deity is attributed to them in scripture, by the appointment of the Father, that is, whatever divine authority they have, properly belongs to them. I think, however, that none of them will allow that they have the divine nature in the same sense in which the Father is said to have it. This is what we shall endeavour to prove; and more than this needs not be said in order to establish that the same supreme worship is due to the Son and the Spirit, as to the Father. In order to this, we shall consider the force of those arguments contained in one of the Answers, and, together with them, the sense of that scripture, in which our Saviour says, 'I and my Father are one;' as also that scripture 'the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, who bear record in heaven, are one.'f But the consideration of these we shall reserve to a following head.

As to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost being 'equal in power and glory,' we may observe, that there are two expressions, which we often use, to set forth the deity of the Son and Spirit: we sometimes say that they are God, equal with the Father,—at other times, that they have the same essential perfections. Some may, perhaps, reply, that if they are equal, they cannot be the same; or, on the other hand, if they are the same, they cannot be equal. Now, for understanding

what we mean by such expressions, let it be observed, that when we consider them as having the divine essence, or any of its perfections, we choose to describe them, not as equal, but as the same. We, for example, do not say that the wisdom, power, or holiness, of the Son and Spirit, is equal to the same perfection as ascribed to the Father. But when we speak of them as distinct Persons, then we consider them as equal. The essential glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the same; but their personal glory is equal. In this sense we would be understood, when we say the Son and Holy Ghost are each of them God, or divine Persons, equal with the Father.

We shall now, by applying what has been observed as to the meaning of the word 'person,' prove that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinct Persons in the Godhead, and we shall add something concerning those personal properties mentioned in one of the Answers we are explaining with respect to the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost.

The Personality of the Son

As to the personality of the Son, in as much as the Arians and Socinians never yet called it in question, we own that it is not necessary, when we dispute with them, to prove it. The Sabellians, however, deny it; and also a late writer, who plainly gives in to their scheme, and concludes the Son of God to be no other than the eternal reason of God. Accordingly, he thus renders John 1:1. 'In the beginning was the word,' that is, reason, 'and by him,' that is, by it, 'were all things made.' And when it is objected, that this mode of speaking signifies nothing more than a quality in God, the only answer that he gives is, that it signifies no more a quality, than if we should translate it, 'The Word,' as is generally done. Now if persons, whether they pretend to be Sabellians or not, express themselves in

such a manner, it is necessary for us to prove the personality of the Son. We shall, therefore, state two arguments to show that the Son is a distinct Person from the Father.

1. We often read, in scripture, of two divine Persons speaking to or of one another, the distinguishing personal characters, 'I,' 'Thou,' and 'He,' being applied to them. Thus it is said, 'The Lord,' that is, the Father, 'said unto my Lord,' namely, the Son, 'Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' This may be observed throughout the whole psalm. Thus, 'Thy people shall be willing;'i and 'He,' meaning the Son, 'shall judge among the heathen;' and 'He shall drink of the brook in the way.'l So, in another psalm, speaking of the Son, 'Thou art fairer than the children of men;' and 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' The places of scripture where we have such modes of speaking concerning the Son, are almost innumerable. We, therefore, proceed to consider that,

2. Other personal characters are given him. Thus, when he is called the Son of God, whatever we are to understand by that relation or character, (of which more shall be said under a following head,) it certainly denotes him a Person distinct from the Father. His being sent into the world by the Father, which is frequently affirmed of him in the New Testament, also proves this; for a quality, relation, or property, cannot be said to be sent, as the Son is. So when he is described as a Redeemer, a Mediator, a Surety, a Creator, and when he is styled, by the prophet, the everlasting Father, and often described as a Prophet, Priest, or King, and when he is called, 'Lord of all,' or 'the Prince of peace,' or 'the Prince of the kings of the earth,' all these characters sufficiently prove his personality. All those works likewise which he performs, as sustaining these relations or characters, are properly personal; and some of them are never ascribed to any other person. Thus the Father, or Holy Ghost, are

never said to assume the human nature, or to become sureties for the salvation of men, or to execute mediatorial offices. From all these considerations it evidently appears, that the Son is a distinct Person. That he is a divine Person, will be proved under a following head; and objections to his personality will be answered along with those to the personality of the Holy Ghost.

The Personality of the Holy Spirit

The distinct personality of the Holy Ghost is denied, not only by the Sabellians, but by some of the Socinians. Socinus himself denies it. He describes the Holy Ghost as the power of God,—intending hereby, as his mode of speaking seems to denote, the energy of the divine nature, or that whereby the Father, who is the only one to whom, according to him, the divine nature is attributed, produces those effects which required infinite power. The Socinians, accordingly, call the Spirit, the power of God essentially considered. They set aside all those proofs that may be produced from scripture to evince his personality,—proofs which are so plain and evident, that many of them have, in this particular, dissented from Socinus, and owned the Spirit to be a Person. Accordingly some of them, while they deny his divine nature, have described him as the chief of created Spirits, or the Head of the Angels. A bold writer expresses himself thus: "I believe that there is one principal Minister of God and Christ, peculiarly sent from heaven, to sanctify the church, who, by reason of his eminency and intimacy with God, is singled out of the number of the other heavenly Ministers, or Angels, and comprised in the holy Trinity, being the third Person thereof; and that this Minister of God and Christ is the Holy Spirit."

We shall prove the Personality of the Holy Ghost, by considering some personal characters ascribed to him, and works performed by

him. There are several such characters, by which he is denominated a Person. When, in particular, he is called a Sanctifier; a Reprover, a Witness, a Comforter, it evidently appears that he is a Person. It is said, that 'when he,' that is, 'the Comforter, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;' and also, that 'he will guide you into all truth; he will show you things to come,' &c. In one passage, the distinct personality of the three Persons, and particularly of the Holy Spirit, is asserted: 'I will pray the Father, and lie shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth;' and 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.' Now, it is certain, that to teach, or to instruct, is a personal character. So also is to speak or to dictate to another what, he should say, and this the Holy Ghost is said by our Saviour to his disciples to do: 'Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.'n Moreover, to witness, or testify, is a personal character, when the testimony is not merely objective, as when Job calls his 'wrinkles' and his 'leanness' a witness against him. When there is a formal testimony given, he that gives it is, according to our common way of speaking, generally considered a person. And thus the Holy Ghost is described: 'We are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.'p Here the Holy Ghost being a witness, is as much a personal character as their being witnesses. And it is also said, 'The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.' Again, dwelling is a personal character. No one ever supposes that anything that is in a house dwells there, excepting persons. But the Holy Ghost is said to dwell in believers;r and, alluding to this, it is also said: 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.' As a house is the dwelling-place of a person, so a temple is the dwelling-place of a divine person. Again, to send any one is a personal character. But this also is attributed to the Holy Ghost: The

apostles 'being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed.'t Again, acting with a sovereign will and pleasure, is what belongs only to a person; and this is applied to the Holy Ghost: 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.' Again, prohibiting or forbidding a person to act, is a personal character. This likewise is applied to the Holy Ghost: The apostles 'were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.'x Again, to constitute or appoint any one to execute an office, is a personal character. This the Holy Ghost is said to have done, when he made the elders of Ephesus overseers of the flock. There are several other personal works and characters, which might have been mentioned; but these are, I humbly conceive, sufficient to prove that the Holy Ghost is a Person. I have no more than mentioned the scriptures which exhibit these personal characters; because I shall have occasion, under a following head, to refer to some of them for the proof of his Deity.

It will be objected, by those who are favourers of the Sabellian scheme, that the characters which we have laid down to prove the personality of the Son, and Holy Ghost, are not sufficient to answer that end; for they are often applied, in a metaphorical way, to those things which no one supposes to be persons, and may be taken in this sense when applied to the Son and Spirit. To support this objection, they produce several instances out of the book of Job, and some other parts of scripture, where things which are not really persons are described with personal characters. Thus, speaking concerning the unicorn, it is said, 'Wilt thou trust him? Wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?' So, concerning the horse, as though he acted with design as an intelligent creature, it is said, 'He goeth on to meet the armed men; he mocketh at fear; neither believeth lie that it is the sound of the trumpet; he saith among the trumpets, Ha! ha!'a Concerning the eagle, 'She dwelleth

on the rock.' And concerning the leviathan, 'Will he make many supplications unto thee? Will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. Darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of the spear; he beholdeth all high things; he is a king over all the children of pride.' There are many other personal characters given to brute creatures, which are taken in a metaphorical sense; and sometimes they are applied to inanimate creatures. Thus, 'Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?'d By this description nothing is intended but the signs in the zodiac, or some of the constellations, together with the particular stars of which they consist; yet these are described as though they were persons. So, 'Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?' Again, the powers and faculties of the soul of man have sometimes personal characters ascribed to them. Thus conscience is said to 'bear witness.'f And some instances may be brought from scripture of a person's speaking to himself; yet these do not prove that there are two persons in man, one speaking, and the other spoken to. It is therefore inferred, that we cannot prove the personality of the Son and Holy Ghost from those personal characters ascribed to them; which may be taken in a metaphorical sense, as well as in the instances now mentioned.

In answer to this objection, several things may be considered. 1. Though the scripture often uses figurative, and particularly metaphorical, ways of speaking; yet these may be easily distinguished from similar phrases used elsewhere, concerning which we have sufficient ground to conclude that they are to be taken

in a proper sense. Though it is true, therefore, that there are personal characters given to things which are not persons; yet we are not to conclude, that whenever the same modes of speaking are applied to those who are capable of performing personal actions, they must be taken in a metaphorical sense; for that sense is a known exception to the common idea contained in words. 2. Most of those passages of scripture, where personal characters are attributed, in a metaphorical sense, to things which are not persons, are in the poetical books, or in some particular places where there is a peculiar beautiful mode of speaking taken from poetry. Will it therefore follow, that these personal characters are used in other parts of scripture, in which the Holy Ghost does not think fit to express himself in such an elegancy of style? Now it is certain, that the personal characters before-mentioned are, throughout the whole scripture, given to the Son, and Holy Ghost, in places where there is no design of using a lofty figurative or uncommon way of speaking, as in the instances of the poetical passages. 3. We must not suppose that the Holy Ghost uses any figurative ways of speaking, so as to cast a veil on plain truths, or to endanger our being led out of the way, as we should certainly be, if the many hundreds of places in scripture in which these personal characters are applied to the Son and Spirit, were to be taken in a metaphorical sense, without any intimation given in the context that they are so to be understood. And it will certainly be very difficult to find out any place in scripture that may serve to direct us in our application of these characters, and to show, as applied to the persons in the Godhead, when they are to be taken in a metaphorical sense, and when not. 4. Though we find many metaphors in scripture, yet the most important truths are laid down in the plainest manner, so that the injudicious and unlearned reader, who understands nothing of the art of rhetoric or criticism, is able to understand them. They are, at least, not universally wrapt up in figurative ways of speaking. Now, it would be strange, if the

account we have of the personality of the Son and Holy Ghost, which is a doctrine of the highest importance, and such as renders them distinct objects of worship, should be expressed in such a way, as that we should be at the greatest uncertainty whether they are persons or not. 5. If personal characters are not metaphorical, when applied to men or angels, who are subjects capable of having personality attributed to them, why should they be reckoned metaphorical, when applied to the Son and Spirit, who, though they are not distinct beings, yet have a divine understanding and will, and therefore are not rendered incapable of having personality ascribed to them, as signified by these characters? 6. To assert that personal characters, attributed to the Son and Spirit, are always to be understood in a metaphorical sense, would give equal ground to conclude that they are to be so understood when applied to the Father. Accordingly, if we militate against their personality, we shall, at the same time, overthrow his personality; and if we deny that there are three Persons in the Godhead, we shall, in effect, suppose that there are no Persons in the Godhead, any otherwise than as the Godhead, which is common to the Father, Son, and Spirit, is often described as though it were a Person; and if ever the word 'personality' is used or applied in a metaphorical sense, it must be when the Godhead is so described. 7. Though some personal characters are occasionally applied, in a metaphorical sense, to things that are not Persons, yet it is not usual for these to be described as performing personal works. When, in particular, any statements describe personal works, not in the way of occasional hint, or in connexion with metaphorical modes of speaking, but as a long series of action, and in a variety of performances, they must certainly be understood in a proper sense. Thus, when the Son and Spirit are set forth in scripture as performing those works which are expressive of their personal glory,—the one in what respects the purchase of redemption, and the other in the application of it; and

when each of them is described as standing in those relations to men which are founded in the performance of these works, certainly what is said of them must be understood in a most proper sense. We must take heed, lest, while we attempt to prove that the Persons in the Godhead are to be taken in a figurative sense, we do not give occasion to any to think that the great benefits which we receive from them are to be understood in the same sense.

The Personal Properties of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

We shall now take notice of some other personal properties, whereby the Son and Spirit are distinguished from one another, and from the Father. We shall notice these as they are expressed in one of the Answers under our present consideration. 'It is proper to the Father to beget the Son,' or, as it is sometimes expressed, to be unbegotten, 'and to the Son, to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost, to proceed from the Father and the Son, from all eternity.' This is certainly one of the most difficult heads of divinity that can be insisted on; and some have made it more so, by their attempting to explain it. I have sometimes thought that it would be the safest and most eligible way, to pass it over, as a doctrine less necessary to be understood. There are, however, several scripture-expressions, on which it is founded, which we ought to pay the greatest deference to, much more than to those explications which are merely human. The properties also plainly prove the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be distinct Persons; and we must therefore humbly inquire into the meaning of those scriptures in which they are mentioned. We must thus say something as to what is generally called the eternal generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Ghost. And I hope, through divine assistance, we shall advance no doctrine that is either subversive of our faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, which we are endeavouring to maintain; or derogatory to the essential or

personal glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit; or altogether contrary to the sense in which many Christians, who are unacquainted with those modes of speaking used by the fathers and schoolmen, understand those scriptures upon which this doctrine is founded.

Here we shall give a brief account of what we apprehend to be the commonly received sentiments of divines, who, in their writings, have strenuously maintained, and judiciously defended, the doctrine of the Trinity, concerning the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost. This I shall endeavour to do with the greatest deference to those who have treated of these subjects, as well as with the greatest impartiality; and I shall take occasion to show how far the Arians conclude that we give up the cause to them, and yet how little reason they have to insult us upon this head.

As to the eternal generation of the Son, it is generally explained in this manner. The Father is called by some, 'the fountain of the Godhead,' an expression taken from some of the fathers who defended the Nicene faith. But others, of late, have rather chosen to call the Father the fountain of the Trinity; and he is said to be of himself, or unbegotten. This they state as his personal character, distinct from that of the Son. On the other hand, the Son, as to his personality, is generally described as being from the Father. Many choose to express themselves about this mystery in these terms,—'the Father communicated the divine essence to the Son.' This is the most common mode of speaking; though others think it safer to say, that he communicated the divine personality to him. I cannot tell, however, which is least exceptionable. But when I find others using the phrase, 'the Father gave the divine essence to the Son,' their mode of speaking being founded, as they apprehend, on that scripture, 'As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself,' I cannot but think it is an unguarded

expression, and foreign to the design of the Holy Ghost in that scripture, as will be hereafter considered. The Arians are ready to insult us upon such modes of speaking, and suppose us to conclude that the Son receives his divine perfections, and therefore cannot be God equal with the Father. None of those, however, who use such expressions, suppose that the Son's deity is founded on the arbitrary will of the Father; for they all assert that the divine nature is communicated necessarily, and from all eternity, as the sun communicates its rays necessarily, which are of equal duration with it. Hence, while they make use of a word which, according to its most known acceptation, seems subversive of the truth, they happily, for truth's sake, explain away the proper sense of it; so that all they can be blamed for by the adversary, is an impropriety of expression. Again, others speak a little more exceptionably, when, explaining the eternal generation of the Son, they say that the Father produced him. But this idea they also happily explain away; saying that the production of which they speak, is not such as in the case of the cause producing the effect. Some of the fathers, indeed, who have been in the Trinitarian scheme, have unwarily called the Father the cause of the Son. Yet our modern divines seldom or never use that expression; or, if they speak of an eternal production, they suppose it to differ vastly from the production of creatures, or from production in that sense in which the Arians suppose the Son to be produced. The expression, however, had certainly better be laid aside, lest it should be thought that we conclude the Son not equally necessary, and, from all eternity, co-existent with the Father; which our divines, how unwarily soever in other respects they may express themselves, are very far from denying,

We shall now consider how some divines express themselves, concerning the procession of the Holy Ghost. On this subject, they generally speak as though the divine essence were communicated by

the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost. Hence, they suppose that the Holy Ghost, at least as he is a divine Person, or has the divine nature communicated to him, cannot, any more than the Son, be said to be of himself, but is from the Father and the Son, from whom he proceeds, or receives, as some express it, the divine nature, or as others say, the divine personality. Others speak of the Spiration of the Holy Ghost, which they suppose to be the same with his procession. The world, however, is much at a loss to understand what they mean by the word 'Spiration.' It seems to be a mere metaphorical expression, as when they call him the breath of the Father and the Son; and if so, it will not express his proper personality. But since we are much in the dark about the reason of this mode of speaking, it would be better to lay it aside, as many modern writers have done.

As to the manner of the procession of the Holy Ghost, there was, about the eighth and ninth centuries, a very warm dispute between the Greek and the Latin church, whether the Spirit proceeded from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son. The controversy rose to such a height, that they charged one another with heresy and schism; though neither side well understood what they contended about. Had they agreed to the healing expedient, afterwards proposed, that they should mutually acknowledge that the Holy Ghost was from the Father by the Son, the matter would have been left as much in the dark as it was before. Some speak of the procession of the Holy Ghost, as though he was produced by the Father and the Son, as the Son, as was before observed, is said, in his eternal generation, to be produced by the Father. Yet they suppose that the production of neither of them was such that they may be called effects,—for that would be to give away the cause we contend for; and they term it the production of a Person in, and not out of, the divine essence. But which way soever we understand the phrase,

it contains such an impropriety of expression as can hardly be defended. It is much better indeed to explain away the proper and grammatical sense of words, than to corrupt the truth; yet I would not follow them in this mode of speaking. Moreover, some have pretended to determine the difference between the eternal generation of the Son, and the Spirit's procession. They, with modesty, premise indeed that the matter is not to be explained; but, as far as they enter into it, they suppose the difference to be this,—that in the eternal generation of the Son, the Father communicated the divine essence, or, at least, personality to him, which is his act alone, and herewith he communicated a property, or power, to him, to communicate the same divine essence to the Holy Ghost, while in the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, there is no power conveyed to him to communicate the divine essence to any other as a fourth Person in the Godhead. These things may be observed in the writings of those who treat of this subject. It is to be feared, however, that they enter too far into the explication of this unsearchable mystery; and some will be ready to conclude that they attempt to be wise above what is written.

In giving my own sense of the communication of the divine essence, I shall probably be thought not to say enough concerning it; yet I hope that, in other respects, none will conclude that I advance any thing subversive of the doctrine of the Trinity. I assert that the divine essence is not communicated by the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost, as imparting or conveying it to them. I take the word 'communicate' in another sense, and say that all the perfections of the divine nature are communicated, that is, equally attributed to, or predicated of, the Father, Son and Spirit. This sense of the word is what some intend when they say the human nature is communicated to every individual, on which account they are denominated men. The word is sometimes used in this sense by logicians and

schoolmen; and it seems to be taken in the same sense in Heb. 2:14. where the Greek words, τα παιδια κεκοινωνηκε σαρκος και αἱματος, which we render, 'the children were partakers of flesh and blood,' might be rendered, as in the vulgar Latin Version, Communicaverunt carni et sanguini, that is, they have the human nature communicated to, and predicated of, them, or they are truly and properly men. It is in this sense that we use the word, when we say that the different properties of the divine and human nature are communicated to, that is, predicated of the Person of Christ. This, divines generally call a communication of properties. In this sense I would be understood, when I say that the divine perfections are communicated to, or predicated of, the Father, Son, and Spirit; and this all who maintain the doctrine of the Trinity will allow of. [See note 2 L, page 241.] The other sense, of communication—namely, imparting, conveying, or giving the divine essence—I shall be very ready to agree to, when the apparent difficulties, which, to me, seem to lie in the way of it, some of which have been already considered, are removed.

As to what concerns the farther explication of this mystery, we may observe, that the more nice some have been in their speculations about it, the more they have seemed bewildered. Thus some have inquired whether the eternal generation is one single act, or an act continued,—or whether, when it is said, 'This day have I begotten thee,' the meaning is, that the divine nature was communicated at once, or is perpetually communicating. The difficulties that attend their asserting either the one or the other—which they who inquire into these matters, take notice of—I shall entirely pass over, apprehending that this doctrine receives no advantage by such disquisitions. Neither do I think it tends much to our edification to inquire, as some have done, whether, in the eternal generation, the Father is considered as acting, and the Son as the subject on whom the action terminates; or whether—as they farther inquire, but are

not willing to assert—the Son, in this respect, is said to be passive. And I cannot but take notice of another nicety of inquiry,—namely, whether, in the eternal generation, the Son is considered as coexistent with the Father, or as having the divine essence, and hereby deriving only his sonship from him, from all eternity; or whether he derives both his sonship and his essence. The former of these is the more generally received opinion. But I am not desirous to enter into this inquiry; especially without first determining what we mean by 'sonship.' Yet whatever explication be given of the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, it is at least necessary to inquire, whether they are each of them self-existent, or, as some call it, αυτοθεος. It is generally determined, that the Son and Holy Ghost have the same self-existent divine nature. With respect, however, to their manner of having it, some say that the Son has his divine nature from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and Son; or that the Father only is self-existent. Most others say, that the Father is self-subsistent; and that this is his personal property, as he is distinguished from the Son and Holy Ghost, whom they conclude not to be self-subsistent, but the one to subsist from the Father, and the other from the Father and the Son. This is a generally received opinion. I must confess myself, however, to be a little at a loss to account for it. Hence, the principal thing in which I am obliged, till I receive farther conviction, to differ from many others, is, whether the Son and Spirit have a communicated or derived personality. This many assert, but, I think, without sufficient proof; for I cannot but conclude that the divine personality, not only of the Father, but of the Son and Spirit, is as much independent and underived, as the divine essence.

We have thus considered how some have embarrassed this doctrine, by being too nice in their inquiries about it. We shall now proceed to consider how others have done prejudice to it, by pretending to

explain it; and how, when they make use of similitudes for that purpose, they have rather prejudiced its enemies, than given any conviction to them. I shall mention only what I have found in the writings of some whom, in other respects, I cannot but exceedingly value, as having deserved well of the church of God, in defending this truth with good success. Yet when they take this method to explain this doctrine, they have, to say the best of it, done but little service to the cause which they have maintained. We find them, for example, expressing themselves to this effect:—The soul of man sometimes reflects on itself, and considers its own nature, powers, and faculties, or is conversant about itself as its object, and then it produces an idea which contains the moral image of itself, and is as when a man sees his face in a glass, and beholds the image of himself; so, in the eternal generation of the Son, God, beholding himself or his divine perfections, begets an image of himself, or has an eternal idea of his own perfections in his mind, which is called his internal word, as opposed to the word spoken, which is external. By this illustration they set forth the generation of the Son; and allege that for this reason, or as the wax expresses the character or mark of the seal that is impressed on it, he is called, 'The brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' Again, they say, that there is a mutual love between the Father and the Son, which brings forth a third Person, or Subsistence, in the Godhead, namely, the Holy Ghost. There is in the divine essence, they say, an infinite understanding reflecting on itself, whereby it begets a Son, as was before observed, and an infinite will, which leads him to reflect on himself with love and delight, as the chief good, whereby he brings forth a third Person in the Godhead, namely, the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, they describe this divine Person, as being the result of the mutual joy and delight that there is between the Father and the Son. These explications many are at a loss to understand. We humbly conceive it would be much better to let them alone, and to confess

this doctrine to be an inexplicable mystery; or else some other way may be found out, less liable to exception, for explaining those scriptures which speak of the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost.

The Sonship of Christ

The scriptures generally brought to prove the eternal generation of the Son are various. A principal one is that in which the Father is represented as saying to him, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee;' that is, say they, 'I have, in my eternal, unsuccessive duration, communicated, or imparted, the divine essence, or, at least, personality to thee.' Another scripture brought for this purpose, is this: 'The Lord possessed me,' speaking of his eternal Word, or Son, 'in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.'b In this passage, they suppose that God's possessing him, which is certainly to be taken in a different sense from his being the possessor of all creatures, is to be understood of his being God's proper Son by nature; and his being said to be 'brought forth,' they suppose, proves his eternal generation. Another scripture brought for the same purpose, is that in which it is said of the Son, 'His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.' From these words they attempt to prove his being begotten in the divine essence. But how that can be called his 'going forth,' I do not well understand. Moreover, they adduce the scripture before-mentioned: 'Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;'d and the parallel scripture: 'Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature;' where, by 'first-born,' they understand, that he was begotten before all worlds,—the divine essence, or, at least, personality, being communicated to him from eternity.

Another scripture, before referred to, is brought to prove this doctrine: 'As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;'f that is, say some, 'As the Father hath all divine perfections in himself originally, so the Son hath these perfections by communication from him,'—which they suppose to be not an arbitrary, but a necessary donation. Again, they adduce the texts where he is said to be 'the only-begotten of the Father,' and 'the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.' From the former of these, they prove the eternal generation of the Son; and from the latter, his being begotten in the divine essence, which distinguishes it from all finite productions, which are out of himself. There are also many other scriptures that speak of our Saviour as the Son of God; particularly those in which he is called, 'the Son of the living God,'h 'his beloved Son,' 'his own Son,' ιδιος υιος, which some render, 'his proper Son,' that is, his Son, not only as having the same divine nature with himself, but as implying the manner of its communication.

These are the scriptures which are generally brought to prove the eternal generation of the Son. But we shall take occasion to inquire whether there may not be another sense given of them, which is less liable to exception, as well as more intelligible. It is to be owned that they contain some of the deep things of God; and therefore it is no wonder if they are reckoned among those scriptures that are hard to be understood. But so far as I have any light, either from the context of the respective scriptures, or from the analogy of faith, I cannot but conclude that those I have mentioned, and all others of a similar nature, which are brought to prove the eternal generation or sonship of Christ, respect him as God-man, Mediator. Here we shall consider these scriptures; and then answer some objections that may be brought against our sense of them. And in what we shall say, it will, I hope, appear, that, without being tenacious of those modes of

speaking which have the sanction of venerable antiquity, and are supported by the reputation of those who have used them, we assert nothing but what tends to the glory of the Son and Spirit, establishes the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and agrees with the commonly received faith, so far as it is founded on scripture.

The first scripture before-mentioned, which was brought to prove the eternal generation of the Son, was this, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' That this cannot respect the communication of the divine nature or personality to the Son, appears, as I humbly conceive, from the words immediately foregoing, 'I will declare the decree,' or what I had before decreed or determined. Far be it from us to suppose that the divine nature or personality of the Son, was the result of an act of the divine will. Indeed, the whole Psalm plainly speaks of Christ as Mediator. As such he is said, to be 'set as God's King on his holy hill of Sion;'b and, as such, he is said to intercede, or ask of God; and, as the result of this, the Father is said, to 'give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.' All this is spoken of him, as a farther explication of those words: 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' The apostle refers to this scripture when speaking of him as Mediator, he describes him as 'having, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than the angels;'d which he has done, as he is constituted heir of all things. The apostle subjoins the promise, 'I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son;' that is, 'He shall perform that obedience which is due from him as a Son; and I will give unto him those rewards which are due from a Father, who has committed this work to him, with a promise of conferring those revenues of mediatorial glory on him, which should ensue on his fulfilling it.' Moreover, this scripture is referred to by the apostle, when he says, that 'the promise, which was made to the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again,

as it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.' It is plain from this, that the psalmist speaks of him as having finished his work of redemption; at the time of his doing which, he was raised from the dead; and then, in the fullest sense, he had 'the heathen for his inheritance.' On this account, he is also called, 'The first-begotten of the dead,'f and, 'The first-born from the dead.'

The next scripture brought to prove the eternal generation of the Son, refers to Christ as Mediator. When God is said to 'possess him in the beginning of his way,' the meaning is, that in his eternal design of grace relating to the redemption of man, the Father possessed or laid claim to him as his Son, or Servant, appointed in the human nature, to bring about that great work. Accordingly it follows, 'I was set up from everlasting;' that is, fore-ordained of God, to be the Mediator and Head of his elect. This agrees very well with what follows: 'I was daily his delight;' that is, God the Father was well-pleased with him, when foreseeing, from all eternity, what he would do in time, to secure the glory of his perfections in the redemption of man; just as he publicly testified his well-pleasedness in him, when he was actually engaged in this work. It is farther added, that 'he was always rejoicing before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.' This signifies the great pleasure Christ had in his eternal foresight of what he would do for the sons of men, whom he is elsewhere said to have 'loved with an everlasting love.'

The next scripture is in Micah 5:2, where, speaking of the Son, it is said, 'Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.' For understanding this let us consider that God's goings are sometimes taken in scripture for what he does, whereby he renders himself the object of his people's astonishment and praise. These are his visible

goings. Thus, 'They have seen thy goings, O God, even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary;' that is, they shall see the great things, which thou wilt do for man, in the work of redemption. So in the passage in Micah, we read of Christ's goings forth, his invisible goings, as we may call them, or his secret purposes, or designs of grace, relating to the redemption of his people. 'His goings forth were from everlasting;' that is, he did, from eternity, design to save them; the outgoings of his heart were towards them; and, as the result of this, he came into the world, and was born in Bethlehem, according to this prediction.

The next scripture is in Heb. 1:3, where he is said to be 'the brightness of his,' that is, his Father's 'glory, and the express image of his Person.' By the former expression, I humbly conceive, is meant, that the glory of the divine perfections shines forth most illustriously in Christ, our great Mediator; as the apostle expresses it elsewhere, 'God hath shined in our hearts, to give the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.' By the latter expression, in which Christ is called 'the express image of his Person,' I humbly conceive is meant, that, though his divine nature is the same as the Father's, yet his personality is distinct. Accordingly, it is not said to be the same, but 'the image' of his Father's. The passage proves also his proper divine personality, or shows it to be, in all respects, like that of the Father, though not the same.

The next scripture is in John 5:26. 'As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' We cannot think that the Father's having 'given to the Son to have life in himself,' implies his giving him the divine perfections; for the propriety of that mode of speaking cannot be defended consistently with his proper underived deity. I humbly conceive, that the meaning of it is, that 'as the Father hath life in himself,' that is, as he has, at his own disposal,

eternal life, or all that fulness of grace and glory which his people are to be made partakers of, and has designed to give it in his eternal purpose; so hath he given to the Son, as Mediator, to have life in himself, that is, that, as such, he should be the treasury of all this grace, and that he should have life in himself to dispense to them. This is very agreeable to his character and office, as Mediator; and to the words which follow: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life;' and 'He,' namely, the Father, 'hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.'c These words plainly denote, that the life which he has received from the Father, is that eternal life which he, as Mediator, is empowered or commissioned to bestow on his people. This he has in himself. Accordingly he is said to be 'full of grace and truth;' and it is elsewhere said, 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.'e

The next thing to be considered, is the sense of the many scriptures in which our Saviour is described as 'the Son of God,' 'the Son of the living God,' 'his only begotten Son,' 'his own or proper Son,' as distinguished from all others. These names, I humbly conceive, set forth his glory, as Mediator; and this we shall endeavour to prove. But, to prepare our way for the prosecution of the argument, as well as to prevent any misconstruction which might prejudice it, we shall premise a few remarks. 1. When we read of the Son of God as dependent on the Father, inferior and obedient to him, and yet as being equal with him, and having the same divine nature, we cannot conceive of any character which answers to all these ideas of sonship, except that of Mediator. If we consider the properties of sonship among men, every one who stands in this relation to a father, is dependent on him. In this respect, the father is the cause of his son.

Sonship is not like any other production; for no effect can, properly speaking, be called a son, but that which hath the same kind of nature with his father. The relation of sonship also, always implies inferiority, and an obligation to yield obedience. I do not apply this, in every respect, to the sonship of Christ; which no similitude, taken from mere creatures, can sufficiently illustrate. His character, as Mediator, however, seems to answer to it, more than any thing else than can be said of him; since he has, as such, the same individual nature with the Father, and also is inferior to, and dependent on him. As a son, among men, is inferior to, and dependent on, his father, and as the prophet says, 'honoureth his father;' so whatever Christ is as Mediator, he receives it from the Father, and, in all that he does, as he himself says, he 'honoureth his Father.'g As the whole work of redemption is referred to the Father's glory, and the commission by which the Son acts as Mediator is received from the Father; so, as a Son, he refers all the glory of it to him. 2. This account of Christ's sonship does not take away any argument by which we prove his deity. When we consider him as Mediator, or speak of the person of Christ as such, we always suppose him to be both God and man; so that, as God, he is equal with the Father, and has an equal right to divine adoration. This belongs to him as much when considered as Mediator, as it can be supposed to do if we consider his sonship in any other respect. 3. Our account of Christ's sonship does not take away any argument to prove his distinct personality from the Father and Holy Ghost. If it sets aside that which is taken from the dependence of his personality on the Father, as received from him by communication, it substitutes another in the room of it. To be a Mediator, is, without doubt, a personal character; and because neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost can be said to be Mediators, it implies that his personality is distinct from theirs. Likewise his acting as Mediator from the Father, and the Holy Spirit's securing the glory which arises to him from hence, and

applying the redemption purchased by him, are a farther proof of the distinction of the Persons in the Godhead. 4. While we consider the Mediator as both God and man, in one Person, we do not suppose that his mediatorial character respects either of his two natures considered separately. It does not so respect his divine nature. It is true, his having the same nature with the Father, might be reckoned by some a character of sonship; as it contains one ingredient in the common idea which we have of sonship among men. They, as sons, are said to have the same kind of nature as their fathers. So our Saviour's having the same individual nature with the Father, might give occasion to some to denominate him his Son. But though this may be the foundation of his being called God's 'proper Son,' ιδιος υἱος, yet it is not his distinguishing character as a Son. For it would follow, that the Holy Ghost, who has the same nature with the Father, would, for the same reason, be called his Son. But this is contrary to the scripture account given of him, as proceeding from the Father and the Son. Again, the character of Christ as God-man, Mediator, does not respect his human nature, considered separately from his divine, nor any of those peculiar honours conferred upon it beyond what any mere creatures are made partakers of.

This leads us to consider the difference between our view of his sonship, and that which was generally entertained by the Socinians. These, for the most part, speak of Christ as being denominated the Son of God, on account of the extraordinary and miraculous conception, or formation, of his human nature in the womb of the Virgin. For this they refer to that scripture: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.' The sense in which they understand this text, is, that Christ is called the Son of God on account of this extraordinary event. We cannot think, however, that a miraculous

production is a sufficient foundation to support this character, and must conclude that the glory of Christ's sonship is infinitely greater than what arises thence. I humbly conceive, that that scripture is to be understood, with a small variation of the translation, thus, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, &c. because that Holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called,' as he really is, 'the Son of God;' that is, 'He is, as Mediator, an extraordinary Person appointed to execute a glorious office, the Godhead and the manhood being to be united, on which account he is called the Son of God; and it is therefore expedient that the formation of his human nature should be in an extraordinary way, namely, by the power of the Holy Ghost.' Again, the Socinians suppose that his being called the Son of God, refers only to some dignities conferred upon one whom they suppose to be no more than a man. This is infinitely below the glory which we ascribe to him as Mediator. Their idea of him, as the Son of God, how extraordinary soever his conception was, argues him to be no more than a creature; but ours, as has been before observed, proves him a divine Person, since we never speak of him as Mediator, without including both natures.

Having premised these things, to explain our sense of Christ's being called the Son of God, as Mediator, we proceed to prove our view from scripture. Here we are not under a necessity of straining the sense of a few scriptures, to make them speak agreeably to our notion of Christ's sonship. I think the whole scripture, whenever it speaks of Christ as the Son of God, gives countenance to it. I cannot find one place in the New Testament, in which Christ is called the Son of God, without sufficient evidence appearing in the context, that he is so called as Mediator. Thus Peter's confession, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' speaks of him as Christ, or the Mediator, that is, as the person who was invested in the office, and came to perform the work, of a Mediator; and as such it calls him, 'the Son of

the living God.' So when the High Priest asked our Saviour, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?'d his question means, Art thou the Messiah, as thou art supposed to be by thy followers? Our Saviour replied to him, 'Thou hast said;' that is, It is as thou hast said; and then he describes himself in another character, by which he is often represented, namely, as Mediator, and speaks of the highest degree of his mediatorial glory to which he shall be advanced at his second coming: 'Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'f Doubtless, the centurion, also, and they who were with him, when they confessed that 'he was the Son of God,' understood by the phrase, that he was the Messiah, or the Christ; which is a character by which he was most known, and which had been supported by so many miracles, and was now confirmed by the miracle of the earthquake which gave them conviction. Again, when the devils are represented as crying out, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of God,'h it is added, that 'they knew that he was Christ;' so that the commonly received notion of our Saviour's sonship, was, that he was the Christ. Further, when Jesus says, concerning Lazarus, that 'his sickness was not unto death,' that is, not such as that he should continue in the state of the dead, 'but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby;' the meaning is, that he might give a proof of his being the Christ, by raising him from the dead. Hence, when he speaks to Martha, with a design to try whether she believed he could raise her brother from the dead, and represents himself to her as the object of faith, she replies, 'I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.'k Again, it is said, that Saul, when converted, 'preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God;' that is, he proved him to be the Messiah. Accordingly, when he was establishing the same doctrine, it is said, that 'he proved that he was the very Christ.'m

Moreover, our Saviour is described in scripture as executing some of his mediatorial offices, or as having received a commission to execute them from the Father, or as having some branches of mediatorial glory conferred upon him, at the same time that he is called the Son of God; and this affords us ground to conclude that the view we have given is the true import of his sonship. Thus it is said, 'We have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.' John the Baptist also gives a public testimony to him, as sustaining a character which belongs to him as Mediator, when he says, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world;'o and afterwards, referring to the same character, he says, 'I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.' At another time, he gives a noble testimony to him, as God-man, Mediator, when he calls him, 'The Bridegroom which hath the bride,' that is, who is related to, and has a propriety in, his church; and adds, that 'he testifies what he has seen and heard,' and that it is 'he whom God hath sent, who speaks the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;'q and then, as a farther explication, he says, 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.' This is, in effect, the same as when Christ is called elsewhere, 'his beloved Son.' Again, Christ is said to be 'a Son over his own house, whose house are we;'s which denotes, not only his propriety in his church, but his being the Head of it as Mediator. The apostle farther speaks of him as 'the Son of God, whom we are to wait for from heaven; whom he has raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come;' as the Son of God, 'who loved him, and gave himself for him;' as 'God's dear Son,' and, at the same time, as having 'a kingdom,' into which his people are 'translated;'x and as the Person 'in whom we have redemption through his blood, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.' This last passage seems to be taken in the same sense as

that in which he is said to have been 'appointed heir of all things,'z and so refers to him as God-man, Mediator.

Farther, when he is considered as a Son, related to his Father, he appears from the context to be viewed as Mediator. Thus, he says, 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God;' that is, 'My Father, by whom I am constituted Mediator; and your Father, namely, the God who loves you for my sake: he is first my God, as he has honoured, loved, and glorified me; and then your God, as he is reconciled to you for my sake.' So the apostle says, 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.'b

It may be objected that, in these scriptures, and others of a similar nature, there are two ideas,—namely, one of our Saviour as the Son of God by eternal generation, the other of him as Mediator. We answer, that if Christ's sonship, in the sense in which it is generally explained, were sufficiently proved from other scriptures which take no notice of his mediatorial character or works, or could be accounted for without being liable to the difficulties before-mentioned, and if his character, as Mediator, did not contain in it an idea of personality, the objection would have more weight than otherwise it seems to have.

It is farther objected that, as 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,' he was the Son of God before he was sent into the world, or made of a woman, and under the law,—that is, he was the Son by eternal generation. The answer I would give to this objection is, that it is not necessary to suppose that Christ had the character of a Son before he was sent, though he had that of a divine person. The words may, without any strain or force upon the sense, be understood thus: 'When the fulness of time was come, in which

the Messiah was expected, God sent him forth, or sent him into the world, with the character of a Son, at which time he was made of a woman, made under the law, in order that he might redeem them that were under the law.' But even if we suppose that Christ had the character of a Son before he was sent into the world, it will not overthrow our argument. He was, by the Father's designation, an eternal Mediator, and, in this respect, God's eternal Son. He, therefore, who before was so by virtue of the eternal decree, is now actually sent, that he might be and do, what he was, from all eternity, designed to be and do. He was set up from everlasting, or appointed to be the Son of God; and now he is sent to perform the work which this character implies.

It is objected again, that his sonship is apparent from his being Mediator; in as much as it is said, 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.' It cannot, it is alleged, be said, in propriety of speech, though he were Mediator, yet he learned obedience; since he was under an obligation to obey and suffer as Mediator. The meaning, therefore, must be, though he were a Son by eternal generation, yet he condescended to put himself into such a capacity, as that he was obliged to obey, and suffer, as Mediator. The stress of this objection lies on the word which we render 'though.' But the passage, Και περ ων υἱος, &c., may be rendered, with a small variation, 'Though, being a Son, he learned obedience by the things he suffered; but being made perfect,' that is, after his sufferings, 'he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' This translation takes away the force of the objection. I see no absurdity, however, if it be rendered, as in the vulgar Latin version, 'And, indeed, being a Son, he learned obedience.' The passage, then, proves the argument we are endeavouring to defend, as if it said, It is agreeable to the character of a Son to learn obedience; it was with this view that the character

was conferred upon him; and, in performing obedience and suffering as Mediator, and thereby securing the glory of the divine perfections in bringing about the work of our redemption, he acted in pursuance of that character.

It will be farther objected, that what we have said concerning the sonship of Christ, as referring to his being Mediator, has some consequences which seem derogatory to his person. It will be alleged, in particular, as a consequence from it, that had not man fallen, and stood in need of a Mediator, our Saviour would not have had that character, and therefore would never have been described as the Son of God, or worshipped as such; that our first parents, while in the state of innocence, knowing nothing of a Mediator, must have known nothing of the sonship of Christ, and therefore could not give him the glory which is the result of it; and that as God might have prevented the fall of man, or, when fallen, might have refused to recover him by a Mediator, our Saviour might not have been the Son of God, that is, in the sense of a Mediator between God and man. This objection may be very easily answered, and the charge of Christ's mediatorial sonship being derogatory to his glory, removed. We allow that, had not man fallen, our Saviour would not have been a Mediator between God and man. The commonly received notion is true, that his being a Mediator, is, according to the tenor of several scriptures, by divine ordination and appointment. But I see no absurdity in asserting, that his character, as the Son of God, or Mediator, is equally the result of the divine will or decree. This, I hope, if duly considered, will not contain any derogation from his glory, for we farther assert that, though our Saviour would not have sustained this character if man had not fallen, or if God had not designed to bring about the work of redemption by him, yet he would have been no less a distinct Person in the Godhead, but, as such, would have had a right to divine glory. This appears from what was formerly said, as to his personality being

equally necessary with his deity; which, if it be not communicated to him, certainly has not the least appearance of its being the result of the divine will. Indeed, his divine personality is the only foundation of his right to be adored; and not his being invested in an office, which only draws forth or occasions our adoration. When we speak of Christ being adored as Mediator, it is his divine personality, included in that character, which renders him the object of adoration, and not his taking the human nature, or being or doing what he was or did, by divine appointment. I question whether they who assert that he had the divine nature or personality communicated to him, will place his right to divine adoration, on its being communicated; they will place it rather on his having the divine nature or personality abstractedly from his manner of having it. So when we speak of Christ as Mediator, it is his having the divine glory, or personality, included in that character which renders him the object of adoration. Hence, if man had not fallen, and Christ had not been Mediator, he would have had a right to divine glory as a Person in the Godhead. I doubt not but that our first parents, before they fell, had an intimation of his being a divine person, and adored him as such. If, therefore, Christ had not been Mediator, it would follow only, that he would not have had the character of a Son. He would still have had the glory of a divine Person; for though his sonship be the result of the divine will, his personality is not so. [See note 2 M, page 241.]

The Procession of the Holy Spirit

Having inquired into the sense of those scriptures which treat of the sonship of Christ, we shall next consider those that are generally brought to prove the procession of the Holy Ghost. The principal of these, are John 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7, in which he is said to 'proceed from the Father,' or to be 'sent by the Father in Christ's name,' or to

be 'sent by the Son.' When he is said to be 'sent by the Son from the Father,' and 'to proceed from the Father,' they suppose that his 'proceeding from the Father,' signifies the communication of his divine essence, or, at least, his personality, and that his being 'sent by the Son,' implies that this communication is from him, as well as from the Father. So it is said, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son;' and our Saviour says, 'I will send him unto you;' and, 'he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.'h These scriptures, if not brought directly to prove this doctrine, are, notwithstanding, supposed sufficient to evince the truth of it; in as much as the Son could not send him, if he had not proceeded from him; nor could the Spirit have received that which he shows to the Son's people, if he had not, from all eternity, received his divine essence or personality from him. There is another scripture, brought by some very valuable divines, to prove the Spiration of the Holy Ghost; a term which is used either as supposed to be expressive of the manner of his having his personality as a Spirit, or else as taken from the words of scripture brought to prove it. This scripture is that, in which our Saviour is said to have 'breathed on' his disciples, saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Here the external sign, or symbol, used in the act of conferring him on them in time, is thought to prove his procession from him from eternity; as a temporal procession supposes an eternal one. We shall now inquire whether there may not be another sense given of these scriptures, agreeable to the analogy of faith, that may be acquiesced in by those who cannot so well understand, or account for, the common interpretation. The sense, I humbly conceive, is this: the Spirit is considered, not with respect to the manner of his subsisting, but with respect to the subserviency of his acting, to set forth the Mediator's glory, and that of the Father who sent him. I choose to call it a subserviency of acting, such as does not imply any inferiority in the agent. But if we suppose that it argues any inferiority in the Holy Spirit, this is only an inferiority in acting;

the works which he does being subservient to the glory of the Mediator, and of the Father, though his divine personality is, in all respects, equal with theirs. This explication of these texts is allowed by many, if not by most, of those who defend the doctrine of the Trinity, notwithstanding their maintaining the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son, from all eternity, in the sense before considered. I need only refer to that explication which a great and learned divine gives of these and similar texts, notwithstanding his adhering, in other respects, to the common mode of speaking, as to the eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Ghost. His words are these: "All that discourse which we have of the mission and sending of the Holy Ghost, and his proceeding and coming forth from the Father and Son, for the ends specified, John 14:26. and 15:26. and 16:7, 13. concerns not at all the eternal Procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and Son, as to his distinct Personality and subsistence, but belongs to that economy, or dispensation of ministry, that the whole Trinity proceedeth in, for the accomplishment of the work of our salvation." Now if these scriptures, which are the chief in all the New Testament on which this doctrine is founded, are to be taken in this sense, how shall we find a sufficient proof, from other scriptures, of the procession of the Holy Ghost in any other sense?

The Economy of the Persons in the Godhead

That we may farther explain this doctrine, let us consider, that whatever the Son, as Mediator, has purchased, as being sent by the Father for that end, is applied by the Holy Ghost, who therefore acts in subserviency to them. This is generally called, by divines, 'the Economy of the Persons in the Godhead.' As this phrase is often used when we consider the distinct works of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in their respective subserviency to one another, we shall take occasion

briefly to explain it, and shall show how it may be applied to them, without inferring any inferiority as to what concerns their personal glory. We shall say nothing concerning the derivation or use of the word 'economy;' though we cannot forbear to mention, with indignation, the sense which some of the opposers of the blessed Trinity have given it. Laying aside all the observances of decency and reverence, which this sacred mystery calls for, they represent us, as speaking of the family government of the divine Persons. This is the most invidious sense they could put upon the word, and most remote from our design in the use of it. A few considerations will explain it and apply it to our present purpose.

All those works, which are the effects of the divine power, or sovereign will, are performed by all the Persons in the Godhead, and attributed to them in scripture. The reason of this is very evident,—the power and will of God, and all other divine perfections, belong equally, and alike, to the Father, Son, and Spirit. If, then, that which produces the effects, belongs to them, the effects produced must be equally ascribed to them. Hence the Father is no more said to create and govern the world, or to be the Author of all grace, and the Fountain of blessedness, than the Son and Spirit. Yet since the Father, Son, and Spirit, are distinct Persons, and so have distinct personal considerations in acting, it is necessary that their personal glory should be demonstrated, or made known to us, that our faith and worship may be fixed on, and directed to them, in a distinct manner. But this distinction of the Persons in the Godhead cannot be known, as their eternal power or deity is said to be, by the works of creation and providence, it being a doctrine of pure revelation. We are therefore given to understand, in scripture, when it treats of the great work of our salvation, that that work is attributed, first to the Father,—then to the Son, as Mediator, receiving a commission from him to redeem and save his people,—and then to the Holy Ghost,

acting in subserviency to the Mediator's commission. This is what we are to understand when we speak of the distinct economy of the Father, Son, and Spirit. I cannot better express it than by considering it as a divine determination, that the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit, should be demonstrated in such a way.

I shall now give instances of the economy of divine persons, in some particular acts or works. When a divine Person is represented in scripture as doing, or determining to do, any thing relating to the work of our redemption or salvation, by another divine Person, who must, for that reason, be considered in the matter as Mediator, it is to be understood in the economic sense, of the Father. By this means it is that he declares, or demonstrates, his personal glory. Thus it is said, 'He,' that is the Father, 'hath chosen us in him,' namely, in the Son; it is also said, 'He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.' Though election and predestination are applied also to the Son and Spirit, when they have a reference to the demonstration of their personal glory, yet, in this place, they are applied only to the Father. There are several other scriptures, in which things done are, for the same reason, particularly ascribed to the Father. Thus, it is said, 'God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;' and 'He was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;'m and, 'Of him,' namely, the Father, 'are ye in Christ Jesus, who, of God,' that is, the Father, 'is made unto us wisdom,' &c. In these and several other scriptures to the same purpose, the Father is, in a peculiar manner, intended; because he is considered, as no other divine Person is, as acting by the Mediator, or as glorifying the perfections of the divine nature which belong to him, by what this great Mediator did by his appointment.

Further, when a divine Person is considered as acting in subserviency to the Father's glory, or executing a commission which

he had received from him, relating to the work of redemption, and accordingly performing any act of obedience in a human nature assumed by him for that purpose, this is peculiarly applied to the Son's personal character, and designed to demonstrate it, as belonging to no other Person in the Godhead. Of this, we have several instances in scripture. Thus, though to judge the world is a branch of the divine glory which is common to all the Persons in the Godhead, yet there are some circumstances in the character of a divine Person in particular, who is denominated as Judge of quick and dead, that are applicable to none but the Son. So we are to understand that scripture, 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;' that is, the Son is the only Person in the Godhead who displays his mediatorial character and glory, as the Judge of the whole world. Yet when there is another personal character ascribed to God, as when he is called 'the Judge of all,' or when he is said to 'judge the world in righteousness, by that Man,' namely, our Lord Jesus, 'whom he hath ordained,' this personal character determines that it belongs to him in particular. Again, to give eternal life is a divine prerogative, and consequently belongs to all the Persons in the Godhead. Yet when a divine Person is said to give eternal life to a people that were given to him for that purpose, and to have received power, or authority, from another, to confer this privilege as Mediator, it is peculiarly applied to the Son. Thus, 'Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.'q

Moreover, when a divine Person is said to do anything in subserviency to the Mediator, it is to be understood peculiarly of the Spirit. Thus it is said, 'He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.' So when he is said to give his testimony to the mission or work of the Mediator, by any divine works performed by him, or when he is said to sanctify and comfort

believers or to seal and confirm them unto the day of redemption, the things done are to be ascribed peculiarly to the Spirit. Though, as divine works, they are applicable to all the Persons in the Godhead; yet when he is said to perform them in a way of subserviency to Christ, as having purchased them, his distinct personal character as displayed in them is demonstrated, and the works are more especially applied to him. This is what we understand by that peculiar economy, or dispensation, which determines us to give distinct personal glory to each of the Persons in the Godhead.

And now that we are speaking of the Spirit, considered as acting so as to set forth his personal glory, we may observe that, in accordance with this way of speaking, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, are, by a metonymy, called 'the Spirit.' Thus, it is said, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost? They said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.' We are not to understand this passage as though they had not heard whether there were such a Person as the Holy Ghost. What they had not heard was that there was such an extraordinary dispensation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost conferred on men. Again, it is said, 'the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'t The word 'given' being here supplied in our translation, and not found in the original, the passage ought rather to be rendered, 'the Holy Ghost was not as yet;' by which we are to understand the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and not his personality, which was from all eternity. Here we may farther observe, that when the Holy Ghost is spoken of as a Person, the word which denotes his personality, ought to be rendered, not 'It,' but 'He,' as expressive of his personal character; and when it is taken in a figurative sense, for the gifts or graces of the Spirit, then it should be translated 'It.' This rule is sometimes observed. In John 16:13, it is said of the Spirit, 'He will guide you into all truth;' where the personal character of the Spirit is expressly mentioned, as it ought to

be. The rule, however, is not duly observed in every scripture. Thus, the words, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness,' ought to have been rendered, 'The Spirit himself;' [See Note 2 N, page 250.] as also the passage, 'the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.' The same rule ought to be observed in all other scriptures; so that we may be led to put a just difference between the Spirit, considered as a divine Person, or as producing those effects which are said to be wrought by him.

What I have said, in attempting to explain those scriptures that treat of the Person of Christ, as God-man, Mediator, and of his inferiority, in that respect, or as he is said to sustain that character, to the Father, and those which speak of the subserviency of the Spirit, in acting to the Father and the Son,—does not, as I apprehend, run counter to the common faith of those who have defended the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity. I hope, therefore, that when I call one the sonship of Christ, and the other the procession of the Holy Ghost, what I teach will not be deemed a new and strange doctrine. I cannot but persuade myself, that what I have said concerning the Mediator as acting in obedience to the Father, and concerning the Spirit as acting in subserviency to the Mediator, will not be contested by those who defend the doctrine of the Trinity. If I have a little varied from the common way of speaking, I hope none will be offended at the acceptation of a word; especially as I have endeavoured to defend my sense of it, by referring to many scriptures. If I cannot acquiesce in the common explication of the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, I am well satisfied I do no more than what many Christians do, who have received the doctrine of the Trinity from the scripture, and are unacquainted with those modes of speaking which are used in the schools. These appear as much to dislike them, as any other can do, when used in public discourses about this doctrine.

Proofs of the Doctrine of the Trinity

We shall now proceed to consider, under four general heads of argument, the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Spirit, as maintained in one of the answers we are explaining. We shall consider it, from those divine names which are given to them, that are peculiar to God alone; from their having the divine attributes ascribed to them, and consequently the divine nature; from their having manifested their divine glory, by those works that none but God can perform; and from their having a right to divine worship, which none but God is worthy to receive. If these things be made to appear, we have all that we need contend for; and it will be evident that the Son and Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father. These heads of argument we shall consider first in reference to the Son.

Proofs of the Deity of Christ from his Titles

I. That the Son is God equal with the Father appears from those divine names given to him that are peculiar to God alone.

Here we shall premise something concerning the use of names given to persons, together with the design of them. Names are given to persons, as well as things, with a twofold design. Sometimes nothing is intended by them but to distinguish one object from another. In this sense the names are not in themselves significant, or expressive of any property, or quality, in what they describe. Thus most, though not all, of those names we read of in scripture, are designed only to distinguish one man from another; and this is the most common use and design of names. On the other hand, they are sometimes given to signify some property in those to whom they are applied, such as what they should be or do. We have many instances in scripture, of persons called by names, which have had some special signification annexed to them, assigned as a reason of their being given. Thus

Adam had his name given him, because made of earth; and Eve, because she was the mother of all living. The same may be said concerning Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and several others; whose respective names have a signification annexed to them, agreeable to the proper sense of the words, and the design of their being given. As regards our present purpose, we may conclude, that when names are given to any divine Person, they are designed to express some excellency and perfection belonging to him. We shall, therefore, have sufficient reason to conclude the Son to be a divine Person, if we can make it appear that he has those names given to him in scripture, which are proper to God alone.

The name 'Jehovah,' which is peculiar to God, is given to him.

Here we shall first prove that the name 'Jehovah' is peculiar to God, and that he is distinguished by it from all creatures. It is said, 'I am the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another;' or, as the text may be rendered, 'I am Jehovah, that name of mine, and my glory,' which is signified thereby, 'will I not give to another.' It follows, that this is an incommunicable name of God. When he says, 'I will not give it to another,' he declares that it necessarily belongs to him. He cannot, therefore, give it to another; for that would be unbecoming himself. Hence, this name, which is expressive of his glory in so peculiar a manner, is never given to any creature. There are other scriptures in which the name 'Jehovah' is represented as peculiar to God. Thus when the prophet Amos had been speaking of the glory of God, as displayed in the works of creation and providence, he adds, that 'the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'is his name.' So that those works, which are peculiar to God, might as well be applied to creatures, as the name 'Jehovah,' which is equally

peculiar. The same prophet gives another magnificent description of God, with respect to those works that are peculiar to him, when he says, 'It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth;' and then he adds, 'the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'is his name.'a Again, it is said, 'that men may know, that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth.' This is never said of any other divine names; which are, in a limited sense, sometimes given to creatures. Indeed, all creatures are expressly excluded from having a right to this name.

There are scriptures in which the name 'Jehovah' is applied to God, and an explication of it subjoined which argues that it is peculiar to him. When Moses desired of God, that he would let him know what 'his name' was, for the encouragement of the faith of the Israelites to whom he sent him, the meaning is, he desires to know what are those divine glories which would render him the object of faith and worship, or how he might so describe him to the children of Israel, as to elicit from them the reverence and regard which were due to the great God, who sent him about so important an errand. In answer to this, God says, 'I AM THAT I AM.' 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.'d This description sets forth, not one single perfection, but all the perfections of the divine nature; as though he had said, 'I am a God of infinite perfection.' And then he adds, 'Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, The Lord,' or Jehovah, 'the God of your fathers, hath sent me unto you;' where 'Jehovah' signifies the same as 'I AM THAT I AM.' He further adds, 'This is my memorial unto all generations.' This glorious name, therefore, is certainly peculiar to God.

What has been already observed is sufficient to prove that the name 'Jehovah' is proper to God only. We might add another argument of less weight; which, though we do not lay a stress upon it as if it were of itself sufficient proof, may not improperly be mentioned in connection with what has been already suggested. It is, that the word 'Jehovah' has no plural number, as being never designed to signify any more than the one God; neither has it any emphatical particle affixed to it, as other words in the Hebrew language have. Several of the other names of God are sometimes applied to others, and are made to designate him, as distinguished from them, by means of an emphatic particle. Now, the reason why the name 'Jehovah' has not such a particle is, that it is never given to any creature.

As the Jews best understood their own language, they may, in some respects, be depended on, as to the sense they give of the word 'Jehovah.' It is certain they paid the greatest regard to this name, even to superstition. Accordingly, they would never pronounce it; but, instead of it, used some expressions by which they described it. Sometimes they call it, 'that name,' or 'that glorious name,' or 'that name that is not to be expressed.' By this they mean, as Josephus says,f that it was not lawful for them to utter it, or, indeed, to write it. If any one presumed to do this, they reckoned him guilty not only of profaneness, in an uncommon degree, but even of blasphemy. The name is, therefore, never found in any writings of human composition among them. The modern Jews, indeed, are not much to be regarded, as retaining the same veneration for this name. Yet Onkelos, the author of the Chaldee paraphrase on some parts of scripture, who lived about fifty years after our Saviour's time, and Jonathan Ben-Uzziel, who is supposed to have lived as many years before it, never insert it in their writings; and, doubtless, they were not the first that entertained these sentiments about it, but had other writings then extant, which gave sanction to their practice. Some

critics conclude, from Jewish writers, that the name was never pronounced, even in the earliest ages of the church, except by the high-priest; and that when he was obliged, by the divine law, to pronounce it, in the form of benediction, the people always expressed an uncommon degree of reverence, either by bowing or prostration. This, however, is not supported by sufficient evidence. Others think the great veneration for it took its rise soon after their return from captivity, which is more probable. At all events, the reason assigned for it is, that they reckoned it God's incommunicable name. Here I cannot but observe, that the translators of the Greek version of the Old Testament, commonly called the LXX., which, if it be not altogether the same with that mentioned by Aristæus, which was compiled almost three hundred years before the Christian era, is, without doubt, of considerable antiquity, never translate the word 'Jehovah,' but, instead of it, write Κυριος, 'Lord;' and, even when it seems absurd not to translate it, as when it is said, 'by my name, Jehovah, was I not known,' they render it, 'by my name, the Lord, was I not known.'h This practice we have taken occasion to observe, not as supposing it a sufficient proof in itself of the argument we are maintaining, but as it corresponds with the sense of those scriptures before-mentioned, from which it appears that Jehovah is the proper or incommunicable name of God.

It is objected by the Antitrinitarians, that the name 'Jehovah' is sometimes given to creatures, and consequently that it is not God's proper name, nor evinces our Saviour's deity, when given to him. To prove that it is sometimes given to creatures, they refer to several scriptures; as Exod. 17:15, where the altar that Moses erected is called 'Jehovah Nissi,' that is, the Lord is my banner; to Judges 6:24, where another altar that Gideon built is called, 'Jehovah Shalom;' Gen. 22:14, where it is said that Abraham called the name of the place in which he was ready to offer Isaac, 'Jehovah Jirch;' and Ezek.

48:35, where it is said that Jerusalem, from that day, should be called, 'Jehovah Shammah.' They add, also, that the ark was called 'Jehovah,' on several occasions, and particularly when it was carried up into the city of David; for it is said, 'The Lord,' that is, Jehovah, 'is gone up with a shout, even the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.' They say, too, the name 'Jehovah' is often, in the Old Testament, given to angels; and is therefore not proper to God only.

When they pretend that the name 'Jehovah' was given to inanimate things, and in particular to altars, as the instance of one being called 'Jehovah Nissi,' it is very unreasonable to suppose that the name and glory of God were put upon them. Had the altar been a symbol of God's presence, it would not have been called by this name; especially in the sense in which our Saviour and the Holy Spirit have it applied to them. The meaning of this scripture, as I apprehend, is nothing but this,—that there was an inscription written on the altar, containing these words, 'Jehovah Nissi,' the design of which was to signify to the faith of those that came to worship there, that the Lord was their banner. The name, strictly speaking, was not given to the altar, but to God. Accordingly, some, not without good reason, render the words, 'He built an altar, and called the name of it the altar of Jehovah Nissi.' The same may be said with respect to the altar erected by Gideon, which was called 'Jehovah Shalom,' or 'the altar of Jehovah Shalom.' It was so called, that all who came to offer sacrifice upon it might be put in mind that God was a God of peace, or would give peace to them. As for the place to which Abraham went to offer Isaac, which is called 'Jehovah Jireh,' it was the mount Moriah; and it is certain that this was not known by the name 'Jehovah Jireh,' or, whenever spoken of, mentioned by that name. Nor had Abraham any right to apply to it any branch of the divine glory, as signified by the name. When, therefore, he called the place 'Jehovah Jireh,' it is as though he had said, 'Let all that travel over

this mountain know that the Lord was seen, or that he provided a ram instead of Isaac, who was ready to be offered up; let this place be remarkable, in future ages, for this amazing dispensation of providence; and let them glorify God for what was done here, and take encouragement from it to their faith.' Or we may consider him as having spoken as a prophet, and then the meaning is, 'This place shall be very remarkable in future ages, as it shall be the mount of vision; here Jehovah will eminently appear in his temple, which shall be built in this place.' Or, if you take the words in another sense, namely, 'God will provide,' it is as if he had said, 'As God has provided a ram to be offered instead of Isaac, so he will provide the Lamb of God, who is to take away the sin of the world, which was typified by Isaac's being offered.' The place, therefore, was not really called Jehovah; but Abraham takes occasion, from what was done there, to magnify him who appeared to him and held his hand,—whom alone he calls Jehovah. We may add that, when Jerusalem is called Jehovah Shammah, 'the Lord is there,' the meaning is, that it shall eminently be said, in succeeding ages, of the new Jerusalem, that 'the Lord is there.' The city which was commonly known by the name Jerusalem, is not called Jehovah, as though it had any character of divine glory put upon it. The name, as given to it, simply implies, that the gospel church, which was signified by it, should have the presence of God in an eminent degree; or, as our Saviour promised to his disciples, that 'he would be with them alway, even unto the end of the world,' and, in consequence, that 'the gates of hell should not prevail against it.'l As for the ark, it was not called Jehovah. The psalmist simply takes occasion, from its being carried up into the city of David with a joyful solemnity and an universal shout, with the sound of a trumpet, to foretell the triumphant and magnificent ascension of our Saviour into heaven, which was typified by the event. Concerning him he says, 'Jehovah is gone up.' He is speaking in a prophetic style,—the present, or time past, being put

for the time to come, and his words are as if he had said, 'The Lord, when he has completed the work of redemption on earth, will ascend into heaven, which shall be the cause of universal joy to the church; and then he shall,' as the psalmist farther observes, 'reign over the heathen, and sit on the throne of his holiness.' Again, it does not appear that the ark was called Jehovah, in Exod. 16:33, 34. When Aaron is commanded to 'lay the pot full of manna before the testimony,' that is, the ark, he is said to have laid it 'before Jehovah.' But the reason of the expression is this,—God had ordained that the mercy-seat over the ark should be the immediate seat of his residence, whence he would condescend to converse with men. Accordingly he is elsewhere said to 'dwell between the cherubims.' On this account, that which was laid up before the ark, might be said to be laid up before the Lord. But since none are so stupid as to suppose that inanimate things can have the divine perfections belonging to them, the principal thing contended for is, that the ark was called Jehovah, because it was a sign and symbol of the divine presence. And thence they conclude, that the name of God may be applied to a person that has no right to the divine glory, as the sign is called by the name of the thing signified by it. It is to be observed, however, that the ark was not only a sacramental sign of God's presence, for that many other things relating to ceremonial worship were, but it was the seat of his presence. It was therefore the divine Majesty who was called Jehovah, and not the place of his residence; and it was he alone to whom the glory was ascribed that is due to his name.

When it is farther objected, that the name Jehovah is often applied to angels, the answer is, that it is never ascribed to any but him who is called, by way of eminence, 'the Angel,' or 'the Messenger of the covenant,' that is, our Saviour. Whenever it is given to this angel, such glorious things are spoken of him, or such acts of divine

worship demanded by and given to him, as argue him to be a divine Person. This will plainly appear, if we consider what the Angel, as he appeared to Moses, says concerning himself, 'I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' It is said, 'Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God;' and it is added, 'The Lord,' or Jehovah, 'said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and I am come down to deliver them,' and 'I will send thee unto Pharaoh.'o Then in the following verses, the Angel makes mention of his name, as the great 'Jehovah,' the 'I AM who sent him.' Jacob gives divine worship to this Angel, when he says, 'The Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.' I might refer to many other scriptures, where the Angel of the Lord is said to have appeared, in which, from the context, it is evident that he was a divine Person, and not a created angel. The most ancient Jewish writers generally call him 'the Wordq of the Lord.' It is not denied, however, by the Anti-trinitarians, that the Person who so frequently appeared in the form of an Angel, made use of such expressions as can be applied to none but God; and they say that he personated God, or spake after the manner of his representative, not designing that the glory of the divine perfections should be ascribed to him, but to Jehovah, whom he represented. We reply, that the Angel appearing to Moses, in the scripture before-mentioned, and to several others, doth not signify himself to personate God, as doubtless he ought to have done had he been only his representative, and not a divine person. An ambassador, when he speaks in the name of the king whom he represents, always, when personating him, uses such modes of speaking as may be understood to apply, not to himself, but to him that sent him; and it would be reckoned an affront to him whom he represents, should he give occasion to any to ascribe to himself the honour that belongs to his master. Now there is nothing in those texts which speak of this Angel's appearing, that intimates his disclaiming divine honour, as

what belonged, not to him, but to God. Hence we must not suppose that he speaks in such a way as God doth, only as representing him. We read, indeed, of a created Angel appearing to John, who was supposed by him, at the first, to be the same that appeared to the church of old, and accordingly John offered him divine honour; but he refused to receive it, knowing that the character of being the divine representative would not be a sufficient warrant for his receiving it. We must conclude, therefore, that the Angel who appeared to the church of old, and is called Jehovah, was a divine Person. [See Note 2 P, page 250.]

Having considered that the name Jehovah is peculiarly applied to God, we now proceed to prove that it is given to the Son. The first scripture that we shall refer to is Isa. 40:3, 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,' or Jehovah; 'make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' If we can prove that this is a prophecy of John's preparing the way of our Saviour, it will appear that our Saviour, in this scripture, is called Jehovah. Now that it is a prediction of John's being Christ's forerunner, appointed to prepare the Jews for his reception, and to give them an intimation that he whom they had long looked for would suddenly appear, is plain from those scriptures in the New Testament, which expressly refer to the passage and explain it in this sense. Thus, 'This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight.' Hence, he whose way John was to prepare, whom the prophet Isaiah calls Jehovah, is our Saviour.

Again, it is said, 'Sanctify the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.' Here the prophet not only speaks of a person, whom he calls 'Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts,' which alone would prove him to be a divine Person; but he further

considers him as the object of divine worship,—'Sanctify him, and let him be your fear and your dread.' Certainly, if we can prove this to be spoken of Christ, it will be a strong and convincing argument to evince his proper deity. Now that it is spoken of him, is very evident, if we compare it with what immediately follows, 'And he shall be for a sanctuary.' This I would choose to render, 'For he shall be for a sanctuary;' the Hebrew particle Vau, which we render 'and,' being often rendered elsewhere 'for.' The person's being a sanctuary is thus assigned as a reason why we should sanctify him; and then it follows, that because the Jews will not give that glory to him which they are under obligation to render, he will be 'to them for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence,' as he shall 'be for a sanctuary' to those that are faithful. That this is spoken of Christ, appears from the subject of which it treats; for it is only he who, properly speaking, is said to be a rock of offence, or in whom the world was offended, by reason of his appearing in it in a low condition. That it is spoken of Christ appears also by comparing it with other scriptures, and particularly with Isa. 28:16, 'Behold I lay in Sion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste.' Here he is styled, a foundation-stone, the rock on which his church is built; and in the passage under consideration, he is called 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.' Now both scriptures are referred to, and applied to him in 1 Pet. 2:6, 8, 'Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that are disobedient.' Here the apostle proves plainly, that our Saviour is the Person who is spoken of, in both these texts, by the prophet Isaiah, and consequently that he is Jehovah, whom we are to sanctify and to make our fear and our dread.

Again, the name Jehovah is applied to Christ in Numb. 21:5–7, 'And the people spake against God, and against Moses; and the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died; therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'and against thee.' He, who is called 'God,' whom they spake against, is called 'Jehovah,' who sent fiery serpents among them, which destroyed them for their speaking against him. Now this is expressly applied to our Saviour by the apostle, 'Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.'

Again, the prophet Isaiah, having had a vision of the angels adoring and ministering to that glorious Person who is represented as sitting on a throne, reflects on what he had seen, and expresses himself in these words, 'Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'of Hosts.' Now this is expressly applied to our Saviour, in John 12:41, 'These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.' That John refers here to this vision, is evident from the preceding verse, which contains a quotation from a part of it, in which God foretells that he would blind the eyes, and harden the hearts, of the unbelieving Jews. It follows that the Person who appeared to Isaiah, sitting on a throne, whom he calls 'Jehovah,' was our Saviour.

Again, our point may be further argued, from Isa. 45:21, 'There is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.'

This text is a glorious proof of our Saviour's deity, not only from his being called Jehovah, but from several other divine characters being ascribed to him. The Person whom the prophet speaks of, styles himself Jehovah, and adds, that there is no God besides him; and he is represented as swearing by himself, which none ought to do but a divine Person; and he encourages all the ends of the earth to look to him for salvation. If, therefore, it can be made to appear that this is spoken of our Saviour, it will be an undeniable proof of his proper deity; since nothing more than this can be said to express the glory of the Father. Now that the words are spoken of our Saviour, must be allowed by every one who reads them impartially; for there are several things—such as that all the ends of the earth are invited to look to him for salvation—which agree with his character as Mediator. We have a parallel scripture, which is plainly applied to him, 'And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse,' that is, the Messiah, who should spring from the root or stock of Jesse, 'which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it,' or to him, 'shall the Gentiles seek.' This is the same thing as for the ends of the earth to look to him. Besides, the phrase, 'looking to him,' is a metaphor, taken from a very remarkable type of men's looking to him as the Saviour,—namely, Israel's looking to the brazen serpent for healing. Thus he who is here spoken of, is represented as a Saviour, and as the object of faith. Again, he is represented as swearing by himself, 'That unto him every knee should bow, and every tongue should swear.' This is expressly applied to our Saviour, in the New Testament, as containing a prophecy of his being the Judge of the world, 'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God; so then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.'z The same words are used, with a little variation, in Phil. 2:10, 11, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things

under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Again, the person of whom the prophet speaks, is one against whom the world was incensed; which can be meant of none but Christ, as signifying the opposition that he should meet with, and the rage and fury that should be directed against him, when appearing in our nature. Again, he is said to be one in whom 'we have righteousness,' and in whom 'the seed of Israel shall be justified;' which very evidently agrees with the account we have of him in the New Testament, as a Person by whose righteousness we are justified, or whose righteousness is imputed to us for that end.

This leads us to consider another scripture, in which Christ is called Jehovah; 'This is his name, whereby he shall be called, the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'our righteousness.' His being called 'our righteousness,' as was before observed, implies, that the Messiah, our great Mediator, is the Person spoken of, who is called Jehovah. This is farther evinced from the context; for it is said, 'Behold the days come,' namely, the gospel day, 'that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.'b This any one who judges impartially of the sense of scripture, will conclude to be spoken concerning our Saviour's erecting the gospel-dispensation, and being the sole Lord and Governor of his church. How the exercise of his dominion over it proves his deity, will be considered under a following head. All we need to observe at present is, that this description is very agreeable to his character in scripture, as Mediator. We conclude, therefore, that, in this passage, he is called Jehovah. It is objected, however, that the words may be otherwise translated, namely, 'This is the name, whereby the Lord our righteousness,' that is, the Father, 'shall call him.' But the Father is never called in scripture, 'our righteousness,' as was but now

observed; this being a character peculiar to the Mediator, as is fully explained in several places in the New Testament. Besides, it is well-known that the Hebrew word signifies either actively or passively, as it is differently pointed, the letters being the same. We shall not enter into a critical disquisition concerning the origin or authenticity of the Hebrew points, in order to prove that our translation, rather than that mentioned in the objection, is just; but shall prove this from the context. It appears thence, that if the passage were translated according to the sense of the objectors, it would be little less than a tautology; for it would then read: 'I will raise to David a righteous branch; and this is the name whereby Jehovah, our righteousness, shall call him, namely, the Branch.' Hence, the sense of our translation of the text, seems, at least, more natural. It is also more agreeable to the grammatical construction observed in the Hebrew language; in which the words of a sentence are not transposed posed as they are in the Greek and Latin, which they are supposed to be, in the sense of the text contained in the objection. But it is farther objected, that though our translation were just, and Christ were called Jehovah, yet the passage will not prove his deity, since it is elsewhere said concerning the church, 'This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord,' or Jehovah, 'our righteousness.' It is evident, however, from the context, that this is a parallel scripture to the one in question. The same Person, 'the Branch,' is spoken of; and the same things are predicted concerning the gospel-church, that was to be governed by him. While it is plain that our translators understood this text as spoken of the church of the Jews, or rather of the gospel-church, as many others do; yet, if we consider the sense of the Hebrew words here used,e it is very evident that they might, with equal, if not with greater propriety, have been rendered, 'shall be called by her.' The sense, therefore, is the same as that of the other passage; the Branch, namely, our Saviour, is to be called, 'the Lord our righteousness,' and adored as such by the church.

There is another scripture, in which our Saviour is called Jehovah; 'And ye shall know that I am the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'your God, and none else;' compared with the words in the context: 'And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'shall be delivered.'g In both these verses, it is evident that our Saviour is called 'Jehovah.' The Person who is so called in the former of them, is said to 'pour out his Spirit upon all flesh,' &c. These words are expressly applied to Christ in Acts 2:16, 17. The pouring out of his Spirit on all flesh, which they predict, is particularly ascribed to him: 'Therefore being, by the right hand of God, exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' The argument, then, is this: He who was, according to this prophecy, to 'pour out his Spirit on all flesh,' is called 'Jehovah, your God;' but our Saviour is said to have poured out the Spirit,—therefore the name Jehovah is justly applied to him. As to the latter of the verses, 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered,' this also is applied to Christ, by Paul in the epistle to the Romans, and explained as spoken of him.k That the apostle there speaks of calling on the name of Christ, is plain from the preceding and following context. What he terms 'calling on the name of the Lord,' he previously terms, 'confessing the Lord Jesus;' and he there connects this with salvation. He then proceeds to consider, that, in order to our 'confessing him,' or 'calling on his name,' it is necessary that Christ should 'be preached.'m He farther adds, that though Christ was preached, and his glory proclaimed in the gospel, yet the Jews believed not in him, and consequently called not on his name. This he treats as an accomplishment of what had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah, 'Who hath believed our report?' &c.; intimating that it was predicted, that our Saviour should be rejected, and not be believed in, by the Jews. It is hence very evident that the apostle is speaking concerning him, and applying to him what is mentioned in

the passage in Joel, in which he is called Jehovah. This glorious name, therefore, belongs to him.

Several other scriptures might have been quoted, to prove that Christ is called Jehovah—scriptures which are applied to him in the New Testament, and some of which may be incidentally mentioned under some following arguments. I think, however, that what has been already said is abundantly sufficient to prove his deity, from his having this glorious name given to him. I shall proceed, therefore, to consider some other names given to him for the proof of this.

He is styled 'Lord' and 'God,' in a sense which plainly proves his proper deity. We will not, indeed, deny that the names 'Lord' and 'God' are sometimes given to creatures; yet we are not left without sufficient light, whereby we may plainly discern when they are applied to the one living and true God, and when not. To assert the contrary, would be to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God. Not only would it render those scriptures in which they occur like the trumpet that gives an uncertain sound; but we should be in the greatest danger, in a matter of the highest importance, of being led aside into a most destructive mistake, and induced to give that glory to the creature which is due to God only. We shall always find something either in the text or in the context, which evidently determines the sense of these names, when they are applied to God, and when to the creature.

Let it be observed, that whenever the word 'God' or 'Lord' is given to a creature, there is some diminutive character annexed to it, which plainly distinguishes it from the true God. Thus when it is given to idols, it is intimated, that they are called or falsely esteemed gods or lords by their deceived worshippers. Accordingly they are styled 'strange gods,' 'molten gods,'p and 'new gods;' and their worshippers

are reproved as 'brutish and foolish.'r Again, when the word 'God' is applied to men, there is something in the context which implies, that, whatever characters of honour are given to them, they are, notwithstanding, subject to the divine control. Thus it is said, 'God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.' They are described also as at best but mortal men: 'I have said, ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High; but ye shall die like men.' They are depicted, it is true, as partakers of the divine image, consisting in some lesser branches of sovereignty and dominion; but this is infinitely below the idea of sovereignty and dominion which is expressed by the word, when applied to the great God. God says to Moses, indeed, 'See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh.'t But by this we are not to understand that any of the divine perfections were communicated to or predicated of him; for God cannot give his glory to another. The sense is plainly, that he was set in God's stead. Thus he is said to be instead of God to Aaron; and the same expression is used by Elihu to Job,x 'I am according to thy wish in God's stead.' Hence, Moses being made a god to Pharaoh, implies, not that he should have a right to receive divine honour, but merely that he should, by being God's minister in inflicting the plagues which he designed to bring on Pharaoh and his servants, be rendered formidable to them. Again, when the word 'God' is put absolutely, without any additional character of glory or diminution annexed to it, it must always be understood of the great God; this being that name by which he is generally known in scripture, and which is never otherwise applied, without an intimation given that he is not intended by it. Thus the Father and the Son are described in John 1:1, 'The Word was with God, and the Word was God,' and in many other places of scripture. Hence, if we can prove that our Saviour is called God in scripture, without any thing in the context tending to detract from the most known sense of the word, we shall furnish sufficient evidence of his proper deity. We shall find, however, that

he is not only called God, but that there are some additional glories annexed to that name, by which his deity will more abundantly appear.

As to the word 'Lord,' though it is often applied to creatures, and is given to superiors by their subjects or servants, yet it also is sufficiently distinguished when applied to a divine person, and when applied to creatures. Now, if we can prove that our Saviour is called 'Lord' and 'God' in the supreme sense, the names will sufficiently evince his proper deity. In order to this, we shall consider several scriptures in which he is so called; and in which also several characters of glory, and divine honours are ascribed to him, which are due to none but a divine Person, and which abundantly determine the sense of the words as applied to him.

He is called 'Lord' in Psal. 110:1, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' That our Saviour, the Messiah, is the Person whom David calls his Lord, is very evident from the words being quoted and applied to him in the New Testament. It is evident also from a passage in our Saviour's history, that, by calling him Lord, David ascribes divine honour to him. When the question was put to the Pharisees, If Christ were David's Lord, how could he be his Son? they might easily have replied to it, had it been taken in a lower sense; for it is not difficult to suppose that David might have a son descending from him, who might be advanced to the highest honours short of what are divine. But the Pharisees, not understanding how two infinitely distant natures could be united in one person, so that he should be called David's Son, and yet his Lord, in such a sense as proves his deity, they were confounded, and put to silence. But whether they acknowledged him to be a divine Person or not, it is evident that David considers him to be such,—that he considered him to be the

Person who, pursuant to God's covenant made with him, was to sit and rule upon his throne, in whom alone it could be said that it should be perpetual, so that of his kingdom there should be no end. And in as much as speaking of the Person whom he calls his Lord, who was to be his Son, he says, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,' he plainly infers, that he should exert divine power, and consequently evince himself to be a divine Person.

If the word 'Lord' be applied to Christ, as denoting his sovereignty over the church, and his being the Governor of the world, it will be considered under the next head, when we speak concerning those glorious titles and attributes ascribed to him which prove his deity. We shall therefore wave it at present as applied in this sense; and shall only name two or three scriptures, in which he is called 'Lord' in a more glorious sense than when it is applied to any creature. Thus in Rev. 17:14, speaking of the Lamb, which is a character that can be applied to none but him as Mediator, he is called, 'Lord of lords.' In Rev. 1:5, he is called, 'the Prince of the kings of the earth;' and in 1 Cor. 2:8, 'the Lord of glory.' These texts will be more particularly considered, when we speak concerning his glorious titles, as an argument to prove his deity. All that we shall observe at present is, that this is the same character by which God is acknowledged by anti-trinitarians to be described in Deut. 10:17, 'The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords; a great God, and terrible.' As truly, therefore, as the deity of the Father is proved from this scripture, so truly have we ground to infer the deity of Christ, when he is called Lord, with additional marks of glory.

Christ is often in scripture called 'God,' in a sense in which the name is never applied to a creature. In Psal. 45:6. it is said, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' Many glorious things are spoken of him in that psalm, which farther prove that he whom it calls 'God' is a divine

Person, in the same sense as God the Father is. He is said, in particular, to be 'fairer than the children of men,' that is, infinitely above them. Addressing the church it is also said, 'He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.'b The psalm likewise describes the church's complete blessedness as consisting in her being brought into his palace who is the King of it; and so it denotes him to be the spring and fountain of complete blessedness. It adds that 'his name,' or glory, 'is to be remembered in all generations, and that the people shall praise him for ever and ever.' This glory is ascribed to him who is called 'God;' and many other things are said concerning him, relating to his works, his victories, his triumphs, which are very agreeable to the divine character. It hence evidently appears that the Person spoken of in this psalm, is truly and properly God. The anti-trinitarians, I am aware, will object, that several things are said concerning him in this psalm, which argue his inferiority to the Father. These only prove, however, that the Person spoken of is considered as God-man, Mediator; in which respect he is, in one nature, equal, and, in the other, inferior to him. Were the psalm understood otherwise, one set of expressions contained in it would be inconsistent with and contradictory to another. We shall only add, as an undeniable proof that it is Christ who is here spoken of, and that he is considered as Mediator, that the apostle, speaking of him as Mediator, and describing his divine glory as such, quotes these words of the psalm, 'Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.'

Another instance of the name 'God' being applied to our Saviour in the sense of deity, occurs in Matt. 1:23, 'Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.' His incarnation, as is plain from the words, is what gives occasion to his

being described by the name or character, 'God with us.' This title imports the same thing as the phrase which occurs in John 1:14, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' This cannot be applied to any but Christ. To say that the Father is called Emmanuel, is such a strain upon the sense of the text as no impartial reader will allow of. It is obviously a name given to the Son upon the great occasion of his incarnation; and it intimates as glorious a display of his deity, as the text in Exodus does of the deity of the Father, if we suppose it to apply to him, 'I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.'

Again, Christ's deity is proved from his being styled 'God, manifest in the flesh.' These words imply that the second Person in the Godhead was united to our nature; for neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost were ever said to be manifested in the flesh. Besides, he is, in the context, distinguished from the Spirit, as justified by him. Nor is he called 'God,' on account of his incarnation, as some Socinian writers suppose; for to become incarnate supposes the pre-existence of that nature to which the human nature was united. Accordingly, the incarnation is elsewhere called assuming, or taking flesh; as it is here called, being manifested in it. Christ, therefore, was God before the act of incarnation. And there is certainly nothing in the text which determines the word 'God' to be taken in a less proper sense, than when it is applied to the Father. It is objected, however, that the word 'God' is not found in all the manuscripts of the Greek text, nor in some translations, particularly the Syriac, Arabic, and vulgar Latin, which render the passage, 'the mystery which was manifest in the flesh,' &c. But it is not pretended that the word is left out in more than two Greek copies; and it is very unreasonable to oppose these to all the rest. As to the Syriac and Arabic translations, some suppose that it is not true in fact that the word 'God' is left out in the Arabic; and though the Syriac leaves it out, it retains it in the sense, which is,

'great is the mystery of godliness that he was manifested in the flesh.' As to the vulgar Latin version, it has not credit enough, especially among protestants, to stand in competition with so many copies of scripture in which the word is found. We can by no means, therefore, give up the argument which is taken from this text to prove our Saviour's deity. Besides, we might appeal to the very words of the text itself, from which it plainly appears, that if the word 'God' be left out, the following part of the verse will not be so consistent with 'a mystery' as it is with 'our Saviour.' It is a very great impropriety of expression to say that 'a mystery,' or as some Socinian writers explain it, 'the will of God,'f was manifest in the flesh, and received in a glorious manner. Such an idea is not agreeable to the sense of the Greek words; for it is plain that the phrase εν σαρκι εφανερωθη, which we justly render 'was manifest in the flesh,' is never used in scripture to signify, as the Socinians understand it, the preaching of the gospel by weak mortal men. On the other hand, it is often used to denote the manifestation of our Saviour in his incarnation; and it is explained in John 1:14, where it is said that he was 'made flesh, and we beheld his glory,' As for the gospel, though it met with reception when preached to the Gentiles, and there were many circumstances of glory which attended the dispensation of it, yet it could not be said for that reason to be received up into glory. Now, since what is said in this verse agrees to our Saviour, and not to the mystery of godliness, we are bound to conclude that he is God manifest in the flesh, and that the objection of the Anti-trinitarians is of no force.

The next scripture which we shall consider is Acts 20:28, 'Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.' He who is here spoken of is said to have an ownership in the church. This no mere creature can be said to have. Our Saviour is not only here but elsewhere described as having it. Thus it is said, 'He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded

the house hath more honour than the house; and he that built all things is God.' This is as though the apostle had said, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ hath built not only his church but all things, and therefore must be God.' Again, he is called 'a Son over his own house;'i so that he is the purchaser, the builder, and the proprietor of his church, and therefore must be a divine person. Then, in the passage under consideration, it is observed, that he who hath purchased this church is God, and that God hath done this with his own blood. Now this cannot be applied to any but the Mediator, the Son of God, whose deity it plainly proves.—Some object against this sense of the text, that the word 'God' is here referred to the Father; and so the sense is, 'Feed the church of God,' that is, of the Father, 'which He,' that is, Christ, 'hath purchased with his own blood.' This seems, however, a very great strain and force upon the grammatical sense of the words; for certainly 'He' must refer to the immediate antecedent, and that is 'God,' to wit, the Son. If such a method of expounding scripture were to be allowed, it would be an easy matter to make the word of God speak anything we please. We must therefore take the passage in the most plain and obvious sense; and then it appears that God the Son has purchased the church with his own blood, and that he has a right to the church.—But it is objected, again, that God the Father is said to have purchased the church by the blood of Christ; which is called his blood, as he is the Proprietor of all things. But though God is the Proprietor of all things, no one who does not labour very hard to maintain the cause he is defending, would understand 'his blood' in this sense. According to this method of speaking, God the Father might be said to have done every thing that the Mediator did, and so to have shed his blood upon the cross, as well as to have purchased the church by it.

The next scripture we shall notice as proving our Saviour's deity by applying to him the name 'God,' is Rom. 9:5, 'Of whom, as

concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.' Here he is not only called 'God,' but 'God blessed for ever.' This is a character too high for any creature; and is the very same that elsewhere is given to the Father, who is styled, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore,' that is, not only the object of worship, but the fountain of blessedness. Now, if Christ be so called, as it seems evident that he is, then the word 'God' is, in this text, applied to him in the highest sense, so as to argue him a divine Person. That the text does apply it to our Saviour, is plain; because he is the subject of the proposition which it contains, and is considered as being 'of the fathers concerning the flesh,' that is, with respect to his human nature. It is objected, however, that the words may be rendered thus: 'Let God,' namely, the Father, 'who is over all, be blessed for ever,' that is, for the great privilege that Christ should come in the flesh. In defence of our translation, it may be remarked, that it is very agreeable to the grammatical construction of the words. Erasmus, it is true, defends the other sense of the text, and so gives countenance to many after him, to make use of it against our argument; and that sense, he says, may be plainly proved from many other scriptures. It is very strange that, with one hand, he should build up, and, with the other, overthrow Christ's proper deity. Shall we attribute this to that affectation which he had to appear singular, and, in many things, to run counter to the common sense of mankind; or to the favourable thoughts which he appears to have had, in some instances, of the Arian scheme? Most of the ancient versions render this text in the sense of our translation. Most of the ancient Fathers also do so, as a late writer observes,l in their defence of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is certain, too, that the sense given by the Anti-trinitarians, is so apparently forced and strained, that some of the Socinians themselves, whose interest it was to have adopted it, have not thought fit to insist on it. A learned writer, who has appeared in the Anti-trinitarian cause, and who certainly would have

defended his sense of the text better than he does had it been defensible, seems to argue below himself, when he attempts to give a turn to it agreeable to his own scheme: "It is uncertain," he alleges, "whether the word 'God' was originally in the text; and if it was, whether it be not spoken of the Father." To say no more than this, is not to defend the Anti-trinitarian sense of the text; for if there were any doubt whether the word 'God' was left out of any ancient manuscripts, he would have obliged the world had he referred to them. This neither he, nor, I think, any one else has done. As to his supposing it uncertain whether the name be not there applied to the Father, he ought to have proved and not suggested this. We might observe, in defence of our translation, that whenever the words are so used in the New Testament that they may be translated, 'Blessed be God,' they are disposed in a different form, or order, from that in which they occur here. But though this is a probable argument, we shall not insist on it, but shall rather prove our translation to be just, from the connection of the words with what goes immediately before. There the apostle had been speaking of our Saviour, as descending from the fathers, according to the flesh; or he had been considering him as to his human nature. It is hence very reasonable to suppose that he would speak of him as to his divine nature. Both natures are spoken of together, in John 1:14. and elsewhere; and why they should not be so spoken of here, cannot well be accounted for. [See Note 2 Q, page 251.] Hence if our translation be only supposed to be equally just with that of the Anti-trinitarians—and I think none pretend to deny that it is—the connection of the parts of the proposition laid down in the passage determines the sense in our favour.

Here I cannot pass over that proof which we have of our Saviour's divinity, in 1 John 5:20, 'This is the true God, and eternal life.' In this passage 'the true God' is opposed to those idols which, in the following verse, the apostle advises believers to 'keep themselves

from.' In this sense the Anti-trinitarians themselves sometimes call Christ the true God; that is to say, he is not an idol. On this account, a learned writer observes, that they deal with him as Judas did, when he cried, 'Hail Master,' and then betrayed him. They would be thought to ascribe every thing to him but proper deity. That this belongs to him, however, will evidently appear, if we can prove that these words are spoken of him. The learned author of the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity,p indeed, takes a great deal of pains to prove that it is the Father who is here spoken of; and his exposition of the former part of the text, which does not immediately support his cause, seems very just: 'The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true,' namely, the Father, 'and we are in him that is true,' speaking still of the Father, 'by or through his Son Jesus Christ.' But, I humbly conceive, he does not acquit himself so well in the sense he gives of the following words, on which the whole stress of the argument depends. He takes for granted, that the word οὐτος, 'this,' refers back, not, as is most natural and usual, to the last word in order, but to the last and principal in sense, namely, 'the Father.' This is, at least, doubtful. Any unprejudiced reader, who hath not a cause to maintain which obliges him to understand it so, would refer it to the immediate antecedent, namely, 'the Son,' by whom we have an interest in the Father. When the apostle had been speaking of him as Mediator, and, as such, as the Author of the great privilege of our knowing the Father and being in him, it seems very agreeable to describe him as a Person every way qualified for this work, and consequently as being the true God. Besides, the apostle had, in the beginning of the verse, spoken of the Father as 'him that is true,' or, as some manuscripts have it, 'him that is the true God,' as the same author observes. What reason, theta, can we assign why this should be repeated,—why the apostle should be supposed to say, 'We know the Father, who is the true God, and he is the true God?' This certainly, to say the best of it,

does not run so smooth as when we apply the latter clause to our Saviour. The author referred to attempts, indeed, to remove the impropriety of the expression, by giving an uncommon sense of the words, namely, 'This knowledge of God is the true religion, and the way to eternal life;' or, 'This is the true worship of God by his Son unto eternal life.' But though this is a truth, it can hardly be supposed to comport with the grammatical sense of the words. Why should 'the true God' be taken in a proper sense in one part of the verse, and a figurative sense in the other? If, too, we take such liberty of supposing ellipses in texts, and supplying them with words which make to our own purpose, it would be no difficult matter to prove almost any doctrine from scripture. The plain sense of the text is, that the words designate our Saviour as the true God; and it is as evident a proof of his deity, as when the Father is called, 'the true God,' or 'the only true God.' The Father is called so in John 17:3; yet he is not, as so designated, to be considered as the only Person who is God in the most proper sense, but as having the one divine nature. In this sense the word 'God' is always taken, when God is said to be one. Moreover, let it be observed, that he who, in the passage under consideration, is called the true God, is styled, 'life eternal.' This, I humbly conceive, the Father never is called; though, in one of the foregoing verses, he is said to 'give us eternal life.' On the other hand, not only is it said concerning our Saviour, that 'in him was life,' but he says, 'I am the life,'r and it is said, 'The life was manifested, and we have seen it,' or him, 'and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father,' προς τον πατερα. This is an explanation of his own words, προς τον Θεον, 'with God:' it is also an explanation of what the apostle had said elsewhere, The word of Life, or the Person who calls himself the life, 'was manifested unto us.' This seems to be a peculiar phrase, used by this apostle, whereby he sets forth our Saviour's glory under this character. He calls him 'Life,' or 'Eternal life;' and he that is so, is the same Person who is called 'the true God.'

The character of being 'true,' is often applied to Christ, by the same inspired writer; it is applied by him more than by any other, as appears from several scriptures.x And though, indeed, it refers to him, as Mediator, as does also the name, 'Eternal life,' it agrees very well with his proper deity. We cannot but think, therefore, that our Lord's true deity is plainly evinced by this text.

There is another scripture which speaks of Christ, not only as God, but with some other divine characters of glory added to this name, which prove his proper deity. In Isa. 9:6, he is styled, 'the mighty God;' and several other glorious titles are given to him, as 'the Wonderful, Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.' These are all applied to him, as one whose incarnation was foretold, 'To us a child is born,' &c. He is farther described as a person who was to be the Governor of his church; for it is said, 'the government shall be upon his shoulder.' All these expressions so exactly agree with his character as God-man, Mediator, that they contain an evident proof of his proper deity. They, however, who deny our Saviour's deity, object, that the words ought to be otherwise translated, 'the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, shall call him, the Prince of peace.' We have before observed, in defence of our translation of another text, that the Hebrew word which we translate, 'he shall be called,' which is the same with that used in this text, does not fully appear to have an active signification, and that such transpositions as are, both there and here, made use of by the Anti-trinitarians, are not agreeable to that language. Our sense of the text is so plain and natural, that any one who reads it impartially, without forcing it to speak what they would have it, would understand it in the sense in which we translate it; and it then contains a very evident proof of our Saviour's divinity.

There is another scripture which speaks of Christ, not only as God, but as 'the great God:' 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.' None ever denied that he, who is said 'to appear,' is true and proper God; and the principal thing we have to prove is, that the text refers only to our Saviour, or that the apostle does not speak of two persons, the Father and the Son, but only of the Son. Though we often take occasion to vindicate our translation, we cannot but think that here it ought to be corrected. The word 'and,' should be rendered 'even.' But as I would not lay too great stress on a grammatical criticism, how probable soever it may be, we may consider some other things in the text, such as are agreeable to his character as Mediator, by which it appears that our Saviour is the only person spoken of in it, from what is said of him. The apostle speaks of his 'appearing.' Elsewhere, he speaks of the same thing, 'He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.'b The apostle John also says, 'When he shall appear, we shall be like him,' &c. Then he who is said to appear, is called 'the blessed hope,' that is, the object of his people's expectation,—who shall be blessed by him when he appears. In the same way, he is elsewhere called 'our hope,'d and 'the hope of glory.' Now, we do not find that the Father is described in scripture as appearing, or as the hope of his people. A late writer,f it is true, gives that turn to the text: he supposes that, as the Father is said to judge the world by Jesus Christ, and as when the Son shall come at last, it will be in the glory of his Father; so the Father may be said to appear by him, as the brightness of his glory shines forth in his appearance. But such a mode of interpretation is not used with other scriptures of a similar character, which speak of every eye seeing him in his human nature, and which plainly refer to some glories that shall be put upon that nature as the object of sense. Why, then, should we say that the text imports only that the Father shall appear, in his appearing? This is such a strain upon the sense of the words,

as they who make use of it would not allow of in other cases. I might have added, as a farther confirmation of the sense we have given of this text, that it agrees with what the apostle says in his epistle to Titus. There he calls the gospel, 'The doctrine of God our Saviour,' and, having described him as our Saviour, he proceeds to show wherein he was so,—namely, 'by giving himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.'h Christ is also called 'God our Saviour,' in 2 Pet. 1:1, where the church is said 'to have obtained like precious faith, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ;' or, as the marginal reading has it, 'of our God and Saviour.' This seems to be so just a reading of the text we are considering, that some, on the other side of the question, allow that the words will very well bear it. They think, however, as the author but now mentioned says, that their view of it agrees with the whole tenor of scripture. This is little other than a boast, as though the scripture favoured their scheme of doctrine; but whether it does or not, they who consider the arguments on both sides may judge. We think we have as much reason to conclude that our sense of the words, which establishes the doctrine of our Saviour's being the great God, is agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture. We proceed, however, to another argument.

There is one scripture in which our Saviour is called both 'Lord' and 'God:' 'And Thomas answered and said unto him, 'My Lord and my God.' The manner of address to our Saviour, in these words, implies an act of adoration, given to him by this disciple, upon his having received a conviction of his resurrection from the dead. There is nothing in the text but what imports his right to the same glory which belongs to the Father, when he is called his people's God. Herein they lay claim to him as their covenant God, their chief good and happiness. Thus David says, 'I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God;' and God promises that 'he would say to them

which were not his people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God;l 'Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee;' and the apostle Paul, speaking of the Father, says, 'My God shall supply all your need,'n &c.; that is, the God from whom I have all supplies of grace, the God whom I worship, to whom I owe all I have or hope for, who is the Fountain of blessedness. Now, if there be nothing in the text we are considering which determines the words to be taken in a lower sense, as there does not appear to be, we are bound to conclude, that Christ's deity is fully proved from it. But some of the Socinians suppose that the words, 'My Lord, and my God,' are a form of exclamation, or admiration,—that Thomas was surprised when he became convinced that our Saviour was risen from the dead, and so cried out, as one in a rapture, 'O my Lord! O my God!' intending hereby the Father, to whose power alone this event was owing. But such exclamations, though often used in common conversation, and sometimes without that due regard to the divine Majesty which ought to attend them, are net agreeable to the scripture way of speaking. Even, however, if any scriptures could be produced to justify it, it is sufficiently evident that no such exclamation is contained in these words. Not only will the grammatical construction not admit of it, but the words are brought in as a reply to what Christ had spoken: 'Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord,' &c. Now, it is very absurd to suppose that an exclamation contains the form of a reply. The words must therefore be understood as an explicit acknowledgment of Christ as his Lord and his God. The objection represents the words so contrary to the known acceptation of them, that many of the Socinians themselves, and other late writers who oppose our Saviour's proper deity, do not think fit to insist on it, but have recourse to some other methods to account for those difficulties which lie in their way in this and other texts where Christ is plainly called God, as in John 1:1, and many other places in the New Testament.

Here we may take occasion to consider the method which the Anti-trinitarians use to interpret those scriptures in which Christ is called God. Some have recourse to a critical remark on the word Θεος, 'God,'—namely, that when it has the article ὁ before it, this adds an emphasis to the sense, and determines it to be applied to the Father. And as the word is sometimes applied to him, when there is no article—a fact which, to some, would appear an objection sufficient to invalidate this remark—they add, that it is always to be applied to him, if there be nothing in the text which determines it otherwise. This remark, as Dr. Clark observes, was first made by Origen, and afterwards largely insisted on by Eusebius. Dr. Clark so far agrees with it that, in his opinion, the word θεος, when put absolutely in scripture, is never applied to any other Person. Let us inquire into the justice of the remark. By the word 'God' being absolutely taken, whether Θεος have an article before it or not, we understand simply being used without any thing to determine its application, either to the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. On the other hand, when it is not absolutely used, there are several things, by which we may certainly know to which of the divine Persons it belongs. Thus it is particularly-applied to the Father, when there is something in the text that distinguishes him from the Son or Spirit. So, 'Ye believe in God,' namely, the Father, 'believe also in me.' In all those scriptures in which Christ is called the Son of God, the word 'God' is determined to be applied to the Father. It is so determined also, when God is said to act in relation to Christ as Mediator; as in Heb. 2:13, 'Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.' And the word 'God' is determined to be applied to the Son, when he is particularly mentioned, or called 'the Son,' or described by any of his mediatorial works or characters, as the phrases, 'God,' that is, the Son, 'with us,' and 'God manifest in the flesh;'s or when there is any thing in the context which discovers that the word 'God' is to be applied to him. With respect to the Holy Ghost, when any of his

personal works or characters are mentioned in connection with the word 'God,' these determine the name to belong to him. Thus, speaking concerning lying to the Holy Ghost, it is said, 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.' Again, it is said, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?'u We shall say more of this, however, when we speak of the deity of the Holy Ghost. Now in these and similar cases, the word 'God' is not put absolutely. On the other hand, it is put absolutely when there is nothing of the nature which we have specified to determine its application. It is thus put, for example, in those scriptures which speak of the divine Unity, as, 'There is none good but one, that is God;' 'There is none other God but one;'y 'Thou believest that there is one God,' &c.; and 'Thou, being a man, makest thyself God;'a and in many places in which there is an idea expressed of the divine perfections, without intimation as to which of the Persons in the Godhead is intended. This is what we are to understand by the word Θιος, 'God,' being put absolutely, without any regard to its having an article before it or not. It hence appears that nothing certain can be determined concerning the particular application of the word from its having the article. Many scriptures might easily be referred to, in which it is used without an article, though applied to the Father. On the other hand, it has very often an article when applied to the Son, and sometimes when applied to idols, or false gods. The devil also is called, ὸ θεος του αιωνος τουτου, 'the god of this world.' And it may be observed, that in two evangelists, referring to the same thing, and using the same words, one has the word with an article, and the other without.

Setting aside, then, this critical remark about the application of the word 'God,' when there is an article before Θεος, the main thing in controversy is, how we are to apply it, when neither the context, nor any of the rules above-mentioned, give us any direction whether it is

to be understood of the Father, or indifferently of any of the Persons in the Godhead. The author above-mentioned, in his Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity, always applies it to the Father; and it may easily be perceived, that he has no other reason than its being used absolutely to apply many scriptures to the Father, which others, who have defended the doctrine of the Trinity in another way, for reasons contained in the context, applied to the Son.

This is, indeed, the method used by all the Anti-trinitarians, in applying the word 'God.' That which principally actuates them is their taking it for granted, that as there is but one divine Being, so there is but one Person, the Father, who is truly and properly divine. They hence assume that the word 'God' is to be applied to him, when not determined in scripture to signify any finite being, as the Son, or any creature below him. But this supposition, that the one divine Being is a Person, that this is only the Father, and that he is supreme or most high God, as compared with the Son and Spirit, as well as with all creatures, is not sufficiently proved. We cannot allow of it, and therefore cannot see sufficient reason to conclude that the word 'God,' when put absolutely, is to be applied to no other than the Father. That which I would humbly offer regarding this word when thus found in scripture, is, that when the Holy Ghost has left it undetermined, our safest way is to consider it as such, and to apply it indifferently to the Father, Son, or Spirit, and not to one Person, exclusive of the others. Thus, when it is said, 'The Lord our God is one Lord;' and 'there is one God, and there is none other but he,'f the meaning is, that there is but one divine Being, who is called God as opposed to the creature, or to all who are not God by nature. Hence, when in the first of these texts, the unity of the Godhead is asserted, and Israel are exhorted to 'serve him,' they are, at the same time, forbidden to 'go after other gods.' And when it is said, that 'to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, is more than all

burnt-offerings and sacrifices,'i the words imply that religious worship was performed to God. But it is certain that this was performed to all the Persons in the Godhead; and hence none of them are excluded, in the assertion which follows, 'There is one God, and there is none other but he.' Though Dr. Clark concludes Athanasius, from his unguarded way of speaking, in some other instances, to be of his side; yet, in the very place which he refers to, Athanasius expressly says, that when the scripture saith the Father is the only God, and 'there is one God,' and 'I am the First and the Last,' this does not destroy the divinity of the Son, for he is that one God, and first and only God, &c., and so is the Holy Ghost. Again, when it is said, 'There is none good but one, that is God,'l the words imply that the divine nature, which is predicated of all the persons in the Godhead, hath those perfections that are essential to it, and particularly that goodness by which God is denominated all-sufficient. So when it is said, 'Known unto God are all his works,' where the word 'God' is absolute, and not, in a determinate sense, applied to either Father, Son, or Spirit, the meaning is, that, as is expressly declared also in other scriptures, all the Persons in the Godhead created all things, and that, as the consequence of this, they have a right to all things, which are known unto them.

It will probably be objected, that we appear to speak of four divine Persons,—that, in addition to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we speak of the Godhead, which is common to them all, and which we call 'God,' a word which, in other instances, denotes a personal character; and, if so, it will follow, that we are chargeable with a contradiction in terms, when we say that there are three Persons in the Godhead, namely in one Person. To this it may be replied, that though the divine nature, which is common to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is, when called 'God,' represented in scripture, as though it were a Person; yet it is then, in the sense of a person, to be

understood only metaphorically. The Father, Son, and Spirit, on the other hand, as has been before considered, are called divine persons properly, or without a metaphor. Moreover, the divine nature, though it is called God, is never considered as co-ordinate with, or as distinguished from, the divine persons; as though it were a person in the same sense as they are. Whenever, therefore, it is so called, it must be considered as opposed to the creature; just as 'the one God' is opposed to those who are not God by nature. It may also be remarked, that those divine perfections which are implied in the word 'God,' understood in this sense, are known by the light of nature; while the divine personality, as regards either the Father, Son, or Spirit, is a matter of pure revelation. Hence, all the force of the objection has reference to the sense of a word; and the principal thing in debate is, whether the word 'God,' absolutely and indeterminately considered, is a proper mode of speaking to set forth the divine nature? Now, if the scripture so uses the word, it is not for us to inquire about its propriety or impropriety. We must take heed, however, that we do not pervert or misunderstand the sense of it as they, on the one hand, do, who speak of the Godhead, when called 'God,' as though it were distinct from the Father, Son, and Spirit, and they, on the other, who understand it only of the Father, as opposed to the Son and Spirit. The Anti-trinitarians thus pervert the word, when they so explain the divine unity, and set aside the true deity of the Son and Spirit, as in effect, to maintain that there is but one Person in the Godhead.

Having thus considered the sense in which the Anti-trinitarians understand the word 'God,' when it is taken absolutely in scripture, we proceed to consider in what manner they understand that word when applied to Christ. They suppose that our Saviour is called God, in the New Testament, by a divine warrant, as a peculiar honour put upon him. Here, they think it not difficult to prove, that a creature

may have a right conferred on him to receive divine honour. This, if they were able to prove it, would tend more to weaken our cause, and establish their own, than any thing they have hitherto advanced. We shall have occasion to expose it when we come to prove the deity of the Son, from his having a right to divine worship. We shall therefore pass it over at present; and consider them as intending by the word 'God,' when applied to our Saviour, nothing more than what imports an honour infinitely below that which belongs to the Father. This they suppose to have been conferred upon him, on some occasions, relating to the work for which he came into the world. The Socinians, in particular, speak of his being called God, or the Son of God, on account of his having been 'sanctified,' and 'sent into the world,' that is, to redeem it, in that peculiar and low sense in which they understand the word 'redemption.' Of this we shall say more hereafter. They also speak of his being called God, or the Son of God, on account of his extraordinary conception and birth, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and they appeal, for this view of the matter, to the words: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.'p Another reason of his having this honour conferred upon him, they take from his resurrection; they found this on the saying, that he was 'declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.' Another reason they take from his ascension into heaven, or being glorified; at which time they suppose that he was made an high-priest, and had, in an eminent degree, the name and character of God conferred upon him. For this they refer to the words: 'Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.'r Now they obviously pervert the sense of these texts to which they appeal. They suppose that Christ's mission, incarnation, resurrection, and ascension, are the principal reasons of his being called God,—that his

deity is founded, not in the excellency of his nature, but in these relative circumstances,—and that it was an honour which was conferred upon him, by an act of grace, and which God, had he pleased, might have conferred on any other creature, capable of yielding obedience to him, or receiving a similar commission. In reality, however, these scriptures refer to that glory which he had as Mediator, and which are a demonstration of his deity; and the honours they ascribe to him were agreeable to his character as a divine Person, but did not, as they suppose, constitute him God. These things, however, are not so particularly insisted on by some late Anti-trinitarians. They all, indeed, agree in this, that his right to divine honour is the result of that authority which he has received from God, to perform the works ascribed to him relating to the good of mankind. Yet we cannot but conclude, from the scriptures formerly brought to prove his proper deity, in which he is called 'Lord' and 'God,' in as strong a sense as when those words are applied to the Father, that he is God equal with the Father.

Having thus considered our Saviour's proper deity, as evinced from his being called 'Lord' and 'God,' and also, that these names are given to him in a sense which denotes Godhead, as much as when they are applied to the Father; we shall close this head, by considering two scriptures in which the divine nature is ascribed to him. The first of these is Coloss. 2:9, 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Here it is not said merely that God dwelleth in him. This would not so evidently have proved his deity; because God is elsewhere said to dwell in others. Thus, it is said, 'God dwelleth in us.' But here it is said, 'the Godhead dwelleth in him,'—language which is never applied to any creature. The expression is very emphatical, 'The fulness,' yea, 'all the fulness of the Godhead, dwelleth in him.' What can we understand by these words, but that all the perfections of the divine nature belong to him? The apostle

had been speaking of 'the mystery of Christ,'t as what the church was to know and acknowledge, as well as that of the Father. He also considers him as the Fountain of wisdom, 'In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' And what is here spoken concerning him, very well corresponds with these other views of his character, as being expressive of his divine glory. The fulness of the Godhead is said, indeed, to 'dwell in him bodily;' by which we are to understand his human nature, as the body is, in some other scriptures, taken for the man. Thus, we are exhorted to 'present our bodies,' that is, ourselves, 'a living sacrifice to God.' So here the divine nature, as subsisting in him, is said to dwell in his human nature, that is, to have the human nature united to it. This is meant by its 'dwelling in him bodily.' The account which some give of the sense of this text, to evade the force of the argument taken from it to prove our Saviour's deity, does little more than show how hard the Anti-trinitarians are pressed to maintain their ground. They say that the word Θεοτης, which we render 'Godhead,' signifies some extraordinary gifts conferred upon him,—especially such as tended to qualify him to discover the mind and will of God; or, at least, that nothing else is intended but that authority which he had from God, to do the work which he came into the world to perform. But it is certain, that this falls infinitely short of what is intended by the word 'Godhead.' That word must signify the divine nature, subsisting in him who assumed, or was made, flesh; and so dwelling in that flesh, as in a temple.

There is another scripture, which seems to attribute to him the divine nature, namely, that in which it is said, that 'he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' By 'the form of God,' I humbly conceive, we are to understand the divine nature. It was, therefore, no instance of robbery in him to assert, that he was equal with God. If this sense of the text can be defended, it

will evidently prove his proper deity; for it is never said, concerning any creature, that he is in the form of God, or, as the words may be rendered, that he subsisted in the form of God. It is well known, that the word which we render 'form,' is used not only by the schoolmen, but by others before their time, to signify the nature, or essential properties, of that to which it is applied. This sense of the word was well known in the apostle's days. Why then may we not suppose, that the Holy Ghost, in scripture, may once, at least, use a word which would be so understood? It will farther appear that Christ's deity is signified by it, if the following words are to be understood in the sense expressed in our translation, 'He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' The word, ἡγησατο, 'he thought,' is taken in the same sense in the third verse of this chapter: 'Let every man esteem,' or think, 'others better than themselves;' and it is used about twenty times in the New Testament, five times in this epistle, besides in this text, and never understood otherwise than as signifying 'to think,' 'esteem,' or 'account.' The sense of the respective texts where it is used, would be destroyed if it were understood otherwise. This the Anti-trinitarians themselves will not deny, in as much as it does not affect their cause. Yet they determine that it must be otherwise translated in this text; and so they render the words, ουχ ἁρπαγμον ἡγησατο το ειναι ισα Θεῳ, 'he did not covet to be honoured,' or was not greedy, or in haste of being honoured, 'as God,'—that is, he did not affect to appear like a divine Person, or catch at those divine honours that did not belong to him. Could this sense of the text be made out to be just, it would effectually overthrow our argument, founded on it, to prove Christ's proper deity. It is as foreign, however, from the sense of the words, as any sense that could be put upon them; and all that is pretended to justify it, is a reference which they make to a phrase, or two, used in a Greek writer, which is not at all to their purpose.a Moreover, the sense of this text, as agreeable to the words of our translation, will farther appear, if we consider that

our Saviour's being 'in the form of God,' is there opposed to his having afterwards been 'in the form of a servant,' or 'in the fashion of a man.' If the latter is to be understood of his being truly and properly man, and not to be understood as merely something in him which resembled the human nature,—or if his 'taking on him the form of a servant,' imports his being in a capacity to perform that obedience which was due from him, as man to God, in a proper, and not a theatrical sense,—then it follows, that his being in the form of God, as opposed to this, must be understood to mean his being truly and properly God, or his having the divine nature. I might here consider the sense which Dr. Whitby, in his Annotations, after having given up the sense of the words, as in our translation, to the adversary, gives of our Saviour's being 'in the form of God,' as opposed to that of a servant. It is, that his being in the form of God, implies his appearing, before his incarnation, in a bright shining cloud, or light, or in a flame of fire, or with the attendance of an host of angels, as he is sometimes said to have done. This appearance the Jews call 'Shechinah,' or the divine Majesty, as being a visible emblem of his presence. This Dr. Whitby calls 'the form of God;' and he calls the absence of it in our Lord's incarnate state in this lower world, 'the form of a servant.' He adds, that when he ascended into heaven, he re-assumed the form of God; and therefore whenever he has occasionally appeared, as to the martyr Stephen at his death, or to the apostle Paul at his first conversion, it has been in that form, or with like emblems of majesty and divinity, as before his incarnation. Now what he says of Christ's appearing with emblems of majesty and glory before his incarnation, and the glory that was put upon his human nature after his ascension into heaven, is a great truth. But this is never styled, in scripture, 'the form of God;' nor is the symbol of the divine glory, however denominated by Jewish writers, ever called in scripture 'the divine majesty.' Dr. Whitby's interpretation, therefore, has no reference to the sense of this text; nor does it in the

least enervate the force of the argument, taken from it, to prove our Saviour's proper deity, just as his critical remark on the words does not affect the sense of our translation. I might also observe the sense which another learned writer gives of 'the form of God' in this text; which is the same that is given by several of the Socinians,—namely, that it has a relation to his working miracles while upon earth. This is certainly very disagreeable to the scope and design of the text; for he is said to have been 'in the form of God' before he took upon him the form of a servant, that is, before his incarnation. Besides, the working of miracles never was deemed sufficient to designate a Person to be in the form of God; for if it had, many others, both before and after him, might have been so designated. To be 'in the form of God,' however, is a glory appropriate to him who 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God.'

I would not wholly pass over that which some call a controverted text of scripture, 'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one,' lest it should be thought that I conclude the arguments brought by the Anti-trinitarians sufficiently conclusive to prove it spurious. I shall, however, say little respecting it, because it is a very hard matter to advance any thing that has not been very largely insisted on by various writers. Among these, I cannot but mention, with great esteem, one who has defended the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity with a great deal of learning and judgment, and who has given a particular account of several that have written on either side of the question. No one pretends to deny that this text is not to be found in a great number of manuscripts, among which some are generally allowed to be of great antiquity. It is hence the less to be wondered at, that it is left out in some ancient versions, which were taken from copies that were destitute of it; for the fact proves only that the text has been corrupted. The main question is, Which copies are to be

reckoned genuine,—those which have it, or those which have it not? It must be allowed, that there is a considerable number in which the text is inserted, as Beza and others observe; and it will be a hard matter to prove that these are all spurious,—which must be done, before we shall be obliged to expunge it from scripture. If it be objected, that the manuscripts which have the text are not so ancient as those that are without it, it will be a difficult matter for the objectors to determine the antiquity of them with such exactness as, by comparing one with another, to demonstrate which has the preference, and by what a number of years. Besides, it is certain that more manuscripts of scripture by far are lost, than are now known to exist in the world; unless we suppose that religion, in ancient times, was contracted into a very narrow compass, or that very few, in the first ages of the church, had copies of scripture by them, which is not to be supposed. It will hence be hard to prove that those manuscripts which have the text, did not take it from some others which were in being before them. The genuineness or spuriousness of the text, therefore, is not to be determined only, or principally, by inspection of ancient manuscripts. Nor can I think it very material to offer conjectures concerning the manner how the text came first to be corrupted. Dr. Hammond and others suppose that, in consequence of the repetition of the words in the following verse, 'There are three that bear record,' some one who transcribed the epistle might have left out the text by mistake. It is, indeed, a hard thing to trace to its origin every mistake made by a transcriber. This, however, must be concluded, that it was possible for it to be left out through inadvertency; and that it could not have been put in without a notorious fraud. No one, likewise, would have attempted to do the latter, unless some end, which he thought valuable, were to be answered. As to maintaining the doctrine of the Trinity by making such an interpolation, I will not say that every one who ever defended it had honesty enough to abhor so vile an act; but this I am

bound to say, that if any one made the interpolation, he was guilty, not only of fraud, but, at the same time, of folly; for the divinity of the Son and Spirit, as well as of the Father, is maintained throughout the whole scripture, and the principal thing asserted in this text concerning the Son—that he is one with the Father—is expressly laid down in his own words, 'I and my Father are one.'e I know the Arians take occasion to censure the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, as if they had been guilty of this fraud; though Father Simon is a little more sparing of his reflections on them. Even he, however, maintains, that some person or other, in the margin of a copy which he had by him, which he supposes to have been about five hundred years old, had affixed the words in question to the eighth verse as an explanation of it, intimating that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are intended by 'the Spirit, water, and blood;' and he hence concludes, that the next person who transcribed from this manuscript, mistook the note for a part of the text, and so inserted the seventh verse. This Le Clerc calls setting the matter in a clear light; for some persons are ready to believe that which supports their own cause, how feebly soever it may be maintained. We might easily reply, that this text was known in the world long before Father Simon's manuscript was written, and consequently that it did not take its rise in the manner he conjectures. To produce a single instance of the nature of the one he mentions, is, I humbly conceive, nothing to the purpose.g

But, passing by what respects manuscripts, there is more stress to be laid on the writings of those who have referred to this text. Now it is certain, that it was often quoted in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, by ancient writers, in the fifth and following centuries; and it must therefore have been found in the manuscripts that they used. It is not quoted indeed by the Fathers who wrote in the fourth century, namely, Athanasius, Cyril, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom,

Augustin, and some others. Nothing, however, can be inferred from this, but that it was not in the copies they made use of. Yet it does not follow that it was in no copy at the time when they wrote; for if we look back to the third century, we find it expressly referred to by Cyprian,—a fact on which I cannot but lay a very great stress. He has it in two places: in the former he incidentally mentions the words, 'These three are one;' and, in the latter he expressly quotes the text, and says, It is written of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that these three are one.' This evidently proves, that he found it in some manuscript extant in his time; which was before any manuscript, now in being, is pretended to have been written,—for even the Alexandrian manuscript is, I think, supposed by none to be of greater antiquity than the fourth century. The text's having been seen by Cyprian seems to me to be of greater force than any thing that is suggested, concerning its not being found in manuscripts of later date. Cyprian too does not speak of it as a certain manuscript, which was reserved, as a treasure, in some private library,—a situation in which it might be adulterated; nor does he pretend to prove the authority of it, or to make formal use of it, to establish the genuineness of the text; but he quotes the text, as we do any other place of scripture, supposing it generally acknowledged to be contained in it. And Cyprian was reckoned a man of the greatest integrity, as well as piety; and so would not refer to any text, as a part of the sacred writings, which was not so. It is objected, by the Anti-trinitarians, that he quotes, not the text in question, but the eighth verse, and that he does this, not in the words of the verse, but in a mystical sense,—interpreting 'the Spirit, water, and blood, agreeing in one,' to be the Father, Son, and Spirit, being one. They allege, also, that Facundus, an African bishop, who lived about the middle of the sixth century, quotes it in this way, and puts this sense upon it. It may be replied, however, that Facundus' judgment is no more to be valued, who lived three hundred years after Cyprian, than if he had

lived in the present age, and that he had no farther light to understand Cyprian's meaning than we have. We know very well, too, that Cyprian was not so unreasonably fond of mystical interpretations of scripture as Origen and some others of the Fathers were. Yet even they never presumed to quote any mystical sense, which they put on scripture, as being scripture itself, or to say of it, as this Father says of his quotation, 'It is so written.' Much less are we to suppose that Cyprian did this. And whatever Facundus' sense was of his words, another who lived in the same century with him, or a little before him, namely, Fulgentius, refers, (as the learned author above-mentionedi observes,) to this passage of Cyprian, not as a mystical explanation of the eighth verse, but as distinctly contained in the seventh verse, and, as such, makes use of it against the Arians. As for that known passage in Tertullian, in which he says that the union, or connexion, as he calls it, of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Comforter, make three joined together, and that these three are one, that is, one divine Being, not one Person, and so refers to our Saviour's words, 'I and the Father are one,' it is a very good explanation of the sense of this text, and discovers that, in that early age of the church, he had a right notion of the doctrine of the Trinity. But whether it be sufficiently evident, that, though defending the doctrine contained in it, he refers to the scripture under consideration, I will not determine. I shall add no more in the defence of the genuineness of this text, [See Note 2 S, page 252.] but rather refer the reader to others who have written professedly on the subject.' I shall simply notice that some Anti-trinitarians have supposed, that if this scripture were genuine, it does not prove the doctrine of the Trinity; alleging that the words ought to be taken as implying, that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one only in testimony. Now though it is an undoubted truth that they agree in testimony; yet this truth does not amount to the sense of the words, 'They are one.' If that had been the principal idea designed to be conveyed by

them, no reason can be assigned why the phrase should be different from what it is in the following verse; and it would, doubtless, have been expressed, εις το ἐν εισις, 'They agree in one.'

Proofs of Christ's Deity from his own Statements

We have endeavoured thus to prove our Saviour's proper deity, not only from those scriptures which speak of him as being called 'Lord' and 'God.' but from others which assert him to have the divine nature, or to be equal with God the Father. We shall now proceed to consider some scriptures in which he asserts this concerning himself; or, rather, we shall consider what proofs we have of his deity from his own words. These occur in several conferences which he held with the Jews, when he gave them reason to conclude that he was God equal with the Father,—and when they showed themselves to understand his words in this sense, by opposing him, and charging him with blasphemy. It is often replied, indeed, that nothing can be inferred to prove his deity from their misunderstanding his words and charging him, without ground, with calling himself God. But though we do not lay much stress on what they understood to be the meaning of his words; yet it plainly appears, that he intended them to understand him as they did; and if they misunderstood him, he did not undeceive them,—which certainly he ought to have done, had he not been a divine Person. If any one seems to assume to himself any branch of the glory of God which does not belong to him, though the ambiguity of words, provided they may be taken in two contrary senses, may, in some measure, excuse him from having had such a design, yet if he apprehends that they to whom he directs his discourse are in the least inclined to misunderstand him, he is obliged, from the regard which he has to the divine glory, and the duty which he owes to those with whom he converses, as well as in defence of his own character, to undeceive them. If, therefore, our

Saviour had not been equal with God, he would, doubtless, upon the least suspicion which the Jews might entertain that he asserted himself to be so, immediately have undeceived them, and would have told them that they took his words in a wrong sense, that he was far from usurping that glory which belonged to God, and that, had he intended to do so, they might justly have called him a blasphemer. This he would, doubtless, have done, had he, by his words, given them occasion to think him a divine Person if he were not so. When the people at Lystra, upon the apostles Paul and Barnabas having wrought a miracle, concluded that they were gods, with what zeal and earnestness did they undeceive them? It is said that when they perceived they were going to offer sacrifice to them, 'they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you.' At another time, when Peter and Johnn had cured the lame man, and when they perceived that the people, though they did not conclude them to be divine persons, were amazed, they became jealous lest some thoughts might arise in their minds that they had a right to that glory which belongs to God alone, or that the miracle was to be ascribed to themselves; and 'when Peter saw that they marvelled, and that the people ran together, he answered, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' and he accordingly took occasion to show that the glory of the miracle was due to none but God. But our Saviour takes no such method to exculpate himself from this charge of blasphemy. We must therefore suppose that the Jews did not mistake his words, and that he intended that they should understand him to be a divine Person.

Yea, Christ is so far from undeceiving them, if they were deceived, that he rather confirms than denies the sense which they put upon his words. This appears from Matt. 9:2–5. The people brought to him

a man sick of the palsy, to whom, when he healed him, he said, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;' and he perceived that 'certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth,' supposing that 'none had power to forgive sins but God.' The words, it is to be remarked, might have been understood as though he had said, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' and as signifying, only in a declarative way, that the man had obtained forgiveness from God; and they might not have been viewed as insinuating that he had power, as a divine Person, to forgive sins. But it is plain, from their charging him with blasphemy, that the Jews understood his words in the latter sense. Yet, instead of rectifying the mistake, if it were one, he asserts that, notwithstanding the meanness of his appearance while in his humbled state on earth, he had power to forgive sins. He not only asserts, but proves this, when he says, 'Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise, and walk?' Many suppose that our Saviour intended in this instance to establish his deity, by asserting his infinite power in working a miracle; and so the meaning of his words was, He that can produce any effect which is above the laws of nature, as miracles are, at least if he does it by his own power, must be God. But this he had done; and so had proved his deity by it, and consequently his right to forgive sins.—It will be objected, however, that as creatures have wrought miracles, which were as truly and properly so as this which Christ wrought, the working of a miracle does not prove the divinity of the person that wrought it, unless we could prove that he did it by his own power, and, in consequence, take for granted that he wrought his miracles by his own power. Some have attempted to prove that he wrought his miracles by his own power, from that scripture in which he says, 'He cast out devils by the finger of God,'p supposing that by this phrase is meant his own divine power. Others take notice of something peculiar to himself, as they suppose, in the way of his working miracles,—that, in his performing them, he spake

and acted like a God. But since neither of these arguments will be reckoned conclusive, I would take a method somewhat different to account for this matter; and that is, that our Saviour first tells the man that his sins were forgiven him, knowing beforehand how his saying so would be resented by the scribes, who would take occasion from it to charge him with blasphemy, and then, to convince them that he was a divine Person, and had power to forgive sin, he wrought a miracle, and so bade the man sick of the palsy 'arise and walk.' Now, though miracles do not, from any visible circumstance contained in them, argue the divinity of the person who works them, yet they effectually prove it when it is the thing contested, and an explicit appeal is made to the divine power to confirm it by miracle. In this case, miracles are an undoubted proof of the deity of him who works them; and they prove it as truly as they prove anything relating to the Christian religion. In this sense, I humbly conceive, Christ proved his deity by miracles. Accordingly, he is elsewhere expressly said to have done this. Concerning his first miracle in Cana of Galilee, it is said, that thereby 'he manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him.' Here, by 'his glory,' is doubtless meant his divine glory; for the faith of his disciples, which was consequent on beholding it, was a divine faith. We never read of the glory of Christ, more especially in his humbled state, but it must import the glory of his deity. This his disciples are said, in some measure, to have beheld, when they believed in him. Now, Christ confirmed this by his miracles, in the same way as by means of them he confirmed his mission. By his miracle on the man sick of the palsy, then, he proved his deity, and consequently his right to forgive sin; and, therefore, so far was he from endeavouring to convince the Jews, that they were mistaken in thinking him a divine Person, that he farther inculcated and proved that he was so.

Another conference which our Saviour held with the Jews, is mentioned John 5. There we read, that when he had healed a lame man on the sabbath-day, and when 'the Jews sought to slay him,' as a sabbath-breaker, he said, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'s On hearing this, they were more enraged, and 'sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.' It is plain that they understood his words, as importing that he was equal with God. Indeed they could not do otherwise; for he compares his works with God's, and speaks of himself as working co-ordinately with him. Certainly our works ought not to be mentioned at the same time with God's; and they therefore suppose that he asserted himself to be a divine Person. They supposed also that he repeated his assertion or persisted in it, by calling God his Father,—language which, as they understood it, denoted an equality with him. They hence charged him with blasphemy, and went about to kill him. Now it is certain, that, if he had not been equal with God, he ought to have undeceived them. This he might easily have done, by telling them, 'Though I call God my Father, I intend nothing hereby but that I worship, reverence, and yield obedience to him;' or 'I am his Son, by a special instance of favour, in such a sense as a creature may be; but far be it from me to give you the least occasion to think that I am equal with God, for that would be to rob him of his glory.' Our Saviour, however, is far from denying his equality with the Father, but rather establishes and proves it in the following verses. In some parts of the context, it is true, he ascribes to himself the weakness of a man; and when he does so, he refers to his human nature, which, as well as his divine, is included in his being the Messiah and Mediator. Thus he says, 'The Son,' that is, as man, 'can do nothing of himself;' and, 'The Father showeth him all things.'x But, in other passages, he proves that he had a divine nature, and farther confirms what he had before asserted, namely, that he was equal with God. 'For as the Father,'

says he, 'raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.' Observe, he speaks of himself, as having not only divine power, but divine sovereignty; the former, in that he quickeneth; the latter, in that he does it according to his own will or pleasure. Again, he signifies his expectation that 'all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.'z Further, while he thus lays claim to divine glory, he ascribes to himself the prerogative of raising the whole world, at the general resurrection, and of determining their state, as to either happiness or misery. 'Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.' We may conclude, therefore, that our Saviour, so far from disclaiming the charge of being equal with God, which they called blasphemy, proves it by additional and more convincing arguments.

Another conference, which he held with the Jews about this matter, we read of in John 8. Taking occasion to speak concerning Abraham, who rejoiced to see his day, he tells them plainly, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' By this he did not intend, as the Arians suppose, that he was the first creature, but that he was equal with God. Indeed, there seems to be something in his mode of speaking which argues his asserting his eternal and unchangeable deity. The phrase used is the same, with a little variation, as that which is elsewhere used to set forth the eternity and immutability of God, 'Before the day was, I am he.'c If the prophet is to be understood, as asserting that God the Father existed before time, 'before the day was,' or the course of nature began, why may we not suppose our Saviour to mean the same thing regarding himself, when he says, 'before Abraham was, I am?' As it will be objected, however, that this is, at best, but a probable argument, though it is such as many of the Fathers have

made use of in defending his deity, we will not lay the whole stress of our cause upon it; but may observe, that whatever critical remark others may make on the sense of the words, it is certain the Jews understood them no otherwise than as implying that he thought himself equal with God. Accordingly, it is said, that 'they took up stones to cast at him.' This was a punishment inflicted, under the law, on blasphemers; and ought he not, had they misunderstood his words, to have cleared himself from the imputation, if he had not been equal with God? But he is far from doing this; for it is said, in the following words, that 'he hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.'

There is still another conference, which ho held with the Jews, in which he speaks like a divine Person. This is recorded in the tenth chapter of John. In the fourteenth verse, he says, 'I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.' Here he claims to himself the same character which the psalmist ascribes to God, 'The Lord is my Shepherd;' and he also lays claim to his church, whom he calls his sheep, his own sheep. In the eighteenth verse, he speaks of himself as having power over his own life, 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' This is a greater instance of dominion than belongs to a creature, who has not a power to dispose of his own life at pleasure. In the twenty-eighth verse, he ascends yet higher in his expression, and speaks of himself as having power 'to give eternal life' to his people. This certainly is the gift of none but God. And while, in the twenty-ninth verse, he owns himself, as man, to be inferior to his Father, he, notwithstanding, plainly asserts his deity in the verse following, and says, 'I and my Father are one.'—The Anti-trinitarians object, that Christ did not speak of himself as one with the Father, any otherwise than in consent, or, at least, as having power and authority derived from him. But to say that these words, 'I and my Father are one,'

imply nothing more than that they are one in consent, does not well agree with the sense of the foregoing words, in which he speaks of the greatness and the power of his Father, and of his being one with him in these. Besides, as to his being one with him only in consent, as implying the subjection of all the powers and faculties of his soul to him, every good man may be said to be one with God. Had he meant that he was one with him only in this sense, the Jews would not have charged him with blasphemy. But it is plain that they did charge him with it, and took up stones to stone him for it. His own words, therefore, must have given them ground to conclude that he claimed to be one in nature with God.—But it is farther objected, that though the Jews misunderstood him, nothing can be inferred from their stupidity, to prove his deity. It is alleged also, that, in the following verses, he did more to undeceive them than he had done in some other instances; for he tells them plainly the reason why he spake of himself as a God, namely, that he was a prophet, and he asks them, If 'those were called gods to whom the word of God came,' had not he a right to be so called, from his being 'sanctified, and sent into the world?' We reply, that, by these expressions, he does not intend to set himself upon a level with the prophets of old; but they contain an argument from the less to the greater. The meaning of them is as if he had said, 'If some persons, who made a considerable figure in the church of old, and were sent about important services, are called gods, I have much more reason to claim that character, as having been sanctified, and sent into the world about the great work of redemption,—consecrated, or set apart, to glorify by it the divine perfections.' This work, as will be observed under a following head, proves his deity; and we are therefore not to suppose that he disclaims deity when he speaks of himself, as engaged in it. Besides, he proceeds to assert again his deity, when he speaks of his 'being in the Father, and the Father in him.' These words, it is certain, the Jews understood in a very different sense from that in which they are

applied to creatures. They concluded, that he spake of himself as a divine Person; for it follows, that 'they sought again to take him, but he escaped out of their hand.'f He still, therefore, gave them occasion to con elude, that he was God equal with the Father.

Thus he asserted his deity in all these conferences with the Jews. And had he not been what they apprehended him to insinuate that he was, many charges must have been brought against him. Not only would he have been viewed as violating common prudence, by incensing the people by ambiguous expressions, and thereby hazarding his own life; but his holiness would have been called in question, had he given occasion to them to think that he assumed to himself divine glory, had he not had a right to it.

This leads us to consider that last public testimony which he gave to his deity, in the presence of the Sanhedrim, which, in some respects, may be said to have cost him his life, when he stood before Pontius Pilate. On this occasion, the apostle says, that 'he witnessed a good confession.' This we have recorded in Matt. 26:61. When false witnesses were suborned to testify against him, who contradicted one another in their evidence, and when the high priest desired that he would make a reply to what they said, in his own defence, he did not think their statements worthy of an answer, and held his peace. But when he was asked, in the most solemn manner, and adjured, by the living God, to tell them, 'whether he were the Christ, the Son of God?' that is, the Messiah, whom the Jews expected, who governed his church of old, and whom they acknowledged to be a divine Person, or the Son of God,—the whole matter was left to his own determination. Had he denied this, he would have saved his life; and, if he confessed it, he was likely to die for it, On this occasion, he does not hold his peace, or refuse to answer; but replies, 'Thou hast said.' This is as if he had said, 'It is as thou hast said; I am the Christ, the Son of God.'

Then he adds, 'Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' The high priest now rent his clothes, and appealed to the people, that they had heard his blasphemy; and accordingly they judged him worthy of death. Here we observe, that he not only asserts himself to be the Son of God, and to have a right to the glory of a divine Person, but, as a farther confirmation, applies to himself a text which the Jews supposed to belong to the Messiah, 'I saw in the night-visions, and behold, one, like the son of man, came with the clouds of heaven,'i &c. From all this, it follows, that if Christ, when he conversed occasionally with the Jews, or when he was called before the Sanhedrim, asserted himself to be the Son of God, which includes in it his deity, and so does not shun to speak of himself as equal with God, we have the doctrine which we are defending maintained by himself. We must conclude, therefore, that he really is what he declared himself to be, namely, God equal with the Father.

Proofs of Christ's Deity from his Perfections

We proceed now to consider how our Saviour's deity appears, from those attributes ascribed to him, which are proper to God only, and from his high and glorious titles. The attributes of God, as was formerly observed, are all essential to him, and therefore cannot, in a proper sense, be ascribed to a creature, as they are to Christ. This will be particularly considered in some following sections.

1. One divine attribute ascribed to him is eternity. He is said to be, not only without end, as the angels and saints in heaven shall be, but from everlasting. This appears from Micah 5:2, 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' If his goings forth have been from everlasting, then he existed from everlasting; for action supposes existence. Nothing more than this can be said to prove that the Father was from everlasting. That this is spoken of our Saviour, is very plain from the reference to this text in Matt. 2:6. There the former part of the verse is quoted, and explained as signifying our Saviour's being born in Bethlehem. Hence the latter part of it, 'whose goings forth,' &c. must relate to him. Again, he is said to have been 'in the beginning.' Observe, it is not said he was from, but in, the beginning. It is plain, therefore, that he existed when all things began to be, and consequently was from eternity.

When we consider this divine perfection as belonging to our Saviour, we oppose both the Socinians and Arians. As to the former, they deny that he had any existence, properly speaking, before his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and interpret all those scriptures which speak of his pre-existence, such as, 'Before Abraham was, I am,' and 'The Word was in the beginning,' as importing, either that he was from eternity, in the decree or purpose of God relating to his incarnation,—a sense in which every thing that

comes to pass, as fore-ordained by God, was eternal, and which is a very absurd exposition of such texts; or that he was from eternity as being the Founder of the gospel-state. This, however, cannot be the sense of the evangelist's words; for Christ is said to be 'with God,' and it is added, 'and all things were made by him,'—words which every unprejudiced reader would suppose to describe the creation of the world, and not the erecting of the gospel-dispensation. The Socinian interpretation evidently appears, therefore, to be a perversion of the sense of the text. As to the Arians, they distinguish between Christ's being in the beginning of time, and his being from eternity; and they suppose the meaning of the text, 'The Word was from the beginning,' to be, He was from the beginning of time. Whatever disguise they seem to put upon their mode of speaking, when they say there was not a point of time in which Christ was not, or that he was before the world, they are far from asserting that he was without beginning, or properly from eternity. Now, let it be considered, that we cannot conceive of any medium between time and eternity. Whatever was before time, must be from eternity, in the same sense in which God is eternal. Time is the measure of finite beings. It is hence very absurd, and little less than a contradiction, to say that there was any finite being produced before time. This is, in effect, to assert that a limited duration is antecedent to that measure whereby it is determined or limited. If we suppose some things to have been created before God began to create the heavens and the earth, though these things might be said to have had a being longer than time has had, yet they could not have existed before time, for time would have began with them. Had Christ been created a thousand millions of ages before the world, it could not be said that he existed before time; but it would be inferred that time, which would have taken its beginning from his existence, had continued so many ages. That which existed before time, therefore, must have existed before all finite beings, and consequently was not produced out of nothing, or did not begin to

be, and is properly from eternity. I cannot but think that the Arian objection is evasive, or a fruitless attempt to take off the force of this argument for our Saviour's deity; for the expressions of scripture by which his eternity is set forth, are as strong and emphatic as those whereby the Father's is expressed, and consequently his deity is equally evident.

2. Again, our Saviour is said to be unchangeable. This perfection not only belongs to God, but is that whereby he is considered as opposed to all created beings,—which are dependent upon him, and therefore changed by him, at his pleasure. Now that Christ is immutable, is evident from the words of the psalmist: 'Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.' These words are quoted by the apostle Paul,o and applied by him to Christ. It will hence be a very hard matter for any to evade the force of this argument. I am persuaded, that if the apostle had not applied these words to Christ, the Anti-trinitarians would have allowed that the psalmist gives as plain an account of the immutability of God, as can be found in scripture, or, indeed, as words can express. Some of their writers have passed over this scripture, thinking, I suppose, that it is better not to attempt to account for it consistently with their scheme, than to do it in such a way as will not in the least support it. Others are not willing to acknowledge that the words are applied to Christ; alleging that such an application of them would break the chain of the apostle's reasoning, and fasten an absurdity upon it. But by attending to the connection between this and the foregoing verses, it will evidently appear that our Saviour is the person here described as unchangeable. The design of the chapter is to set forth the

mediatorial glory of Christ,—to establish his superiority to angels; and, after the apostle had referred to that scripture which speaks of the eternity of his kingdom, he speaks of him as unchangeable, and so applies to him the words of the psalmist.q—We may observe also, that he is said to be unchangeable, not only as to his existence, but as to his duration. This farther confirms what was observed under the last head,—that he is eternal as God is, or is without succession, as well as from everlasting. This seems to be asserted in that expression, 'Thou art the same, thy years shall not fail,' that is, Thy duration does not slide, or pass away by successive moments, as the duration of time and created beings does.

We might quote, as another proof of his unchangeableness, the words of the apostle, that 'he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' These words mean that, throughout all the changes of time, he remains unchangeably the same in his being, and in all the perfections of his divine nature. A late writers supposes the meaning to be nothing but this, that the doctrine of Christ, once taught by the apostles, ought to be preserved unchanged. He says elsewhere, indeed, that it is certainly true that the Person of Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Whether, by 'yesterday,' he means any thing more than a limited duration of time past, which he must do, or else give up the doctrine that he everywhere contends for, I cannot tell. He thinks, however, that this text respects not the Person of Christ, but his doctrine. The principal argument by which he supports his view, is the supposed connection of the text with the foregoing verse; and he would paraphrase the passage thus: 'Have regard to what has been delivered to you by those who have preached the word of God; for though they are no more among you, yet the doctrine they have delivered is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' It seems, however, to be too great a strain on the sense of words, to suppose 'Christ' to import the same with his doctrine; and,

with submission, I cannot think that this is to be inferred from what goes before, or what follows. The sense seems to be as if the apostle had said, 'Adhere to the doctrines you have formerly received from those who have preached the word of God to you, and be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, so as to change your sentiments with your teachers; for that would not be to act in conformity to Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' He designs to establish their faith from the consideration of Christ's immutability, whatever changes they are liable to from the death of their teachers, or the innovations of those who succeed them, and endeavour to carry them away by divers and strange doctrines. Hence, the text seems to be as plain a proof of our Saviour's immutability, as that scripture is of the immutability of God, in which it is said, 'He is, and was, and is to come.' If, by his being 'yesterday,' we are to understand, as some do, his managing the affairs of his church under the legal dispensation; and 'to-day,' his governing them under this present dispensation; and 'for ever,' the eternity of his kingdom, the passage plainly proves, that whatever changes he has made in the affairs of the government of the church and of the world, he is himself the same, and consequently a divine person.

3. Another divine attribute ascribed to our Saviour, is omnipresence. In Matth. 18:20, he says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' This expression imports the same thing as that by which, as is allowed by all, the divine omnipresence is set forth, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' That Christ's presence in the midst of his people, in all places, argues his omnipresence, is very evident. He designs, by this promise, to encourage them in all places, and at all times, to perform religious duties, with an eye to the privilege of enjoying his presence. Hence,

wherever there is a worshipping assembly, they have ground to expect that he will be present with them. Now it is certain, that no creature can be in two places at the same time, much less in all places. This is the same as 'to fill heaven and earth,' and is ascribable to God only.y Moreover, when Christ says, that he will be with his people in all places, it must be meant that he will be with them at the same time, and not successively, otherwise he could not be wherever two or three are met in his name. This passage, therefore, is a plain proof of his omnipresence, which is an incommunicable perfection of the divine nature, and consequently argues him to be true and proper God.

In order to weaken the force of the argument taken from this scripture, it is objected to the view we have given of it, that our Saviour is here said to be present, only by his authority, and that, accordingly, his words are to be understood in a metaphorical sense, as when a king is said to be present in all parts of his dominions, where persons, who are deputed to represent him, act by his authority. Now, though we allow that whatever is done in Christ's name, must be said to be done by his authority, yet we cannot allow that his being in the midst of them is to be understood only of his being so by his authority. We must not suppose that our Saviour, in these words, makes use of a tautology. Indeed, it would be a very jejune and empty way of speaking to say, 'Where two or three are met together in my name, that is, by my authority, there am I in the midst of them, by my authority.' Certainly, Christ's being in the midst of them, must be taken in the same sense as the parallel scripture before referred to, where God's 'coming to his people' in those places where he records his name, is explained as having a very great privilege attending it, namely, his 'blessing them,'—which he is said to do, when he confers blessedness upon them, and gives them a full and rich supply of all their wants. This must be the sense of our

Saviour's being in the midst of his people. Moreover, as God is said to be present where he acts, so Christ's powerful influence, granted to his people in all places, which supposes his omnipresence, implies a great deal more than his being present by his authority. If that were the only sense in which this scripture is to be understood, it might as well be alleged, that all the scriptures which speak of the divine omnipresence, might be taken in that sense; and this would be to set aside all the proofs we have of this perfection of the divine nature. This objection, therefore, seems to be rather an evasion than an argument.

Others suppose that Christ, being in the midst of his people, when met together in his name, implies nothing more than his knowing what they do when engaged in acts of religious worship. Yet they who make use of this objection in order to impugn the argument which is brought to prove his deity from his omnipresence, will, for argument's sake, allow him to be omniscient, not considering, that, as will be shown in our next particular, that equally proves him to be a divine Person. To prove that Christ's being present with his people, is to be understood of his knowing what they do, they refer to the text in which Elisha says to Gehazi, as knowing what he had done, when he followed Naaman, the Syrian, for a reward, 'Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?' But as this scripture signifies nothing else but that this secret was revealed to him, which is, in a figurative way of speaking, as though he had been present with Gehazi, it will not follow that the prophet pretended to know whatever was done in all places, and at all times. Such knowledge as this, as will be farther observed in our next particular, is more than what seems communicable to any creature. But this is intended by Christ's knowing all things; and more than this, doubtless, is meant by his being in the midst of his people. When he speaks of the latter, he encourages them to expect from him

those blessings which they stand in need of; and he, consequently, promises to be with them in a way of grace. And certainly he that is so present with his people, must be concluded to be, in the most proper sense, a divine Person.

There is another scripture which is generally brought to prove Christ's omnipresence, and consequently his proper deity, namely, John 3:13: 'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.' To understand these words, we must consider their connection with what goes immediately before. Thus, by 'No man hath ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven,' it is plain our Saviour means, that no man, but he that came down from heaven, has a full and comprehensive knowledge of heavenly things. Of this he had been speaking in the foregoing verse. There he asserts his divine omniscience, as the Person, according to a description elsewhere given of him, 'in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' He says that none knows the mysteries which are hid in God, but he who is in the bosom of the Father, and who came down from heaven,—or, as the apostle expresses it, who is 'the Lord from heaven.'c Then, as a farther proof of his deity, he adds, that 'he is in heaven;' that is, while he was on earth, in one nature, as being omnipresent, he was in heaven in the other nature. Agreeably to this sense of the passage, he is said to 'come down from heaven;' because his divine nature manifested its glory here on earth, when the human nature was united to it. This is the only sense in which God is said to come down into this lower world. We have the same mode of speaking in Gen. 11:7, Exod. 3:8, and other places. If, then, Christ is thus omnipresent, we must conclude that he is a divine Person.

The Arians give a very different sense of this text, especially those words, 'The Son of man, who is in heaven.' They suppose that the

words ought to be rendered, 'was in heaven;' and that the passage does not argue his omnipresence, but asserts that that nature which they call divine first resided in heaven from the beginning, when it was produced by the Father, and afterwards was said to come down from thence in his incarnation. But, before we allow of this sense of the text, they must prove that Christ was the first creature; that, in a finite nature, he resided in heaven till his incarnation; and that he afterwards, by a change of place, descended into this lower world. Even if they could make this appear, there is still, as they understand the words, a difficulty in the passage. It is not usual to say, 'I came from a place, and was in that place before I came from it.' Whether their exposition of the words, or ours, be most proper, I leave any one to judge. As for the Socinians who deny that Christ had any existence before his incarnation, they are very much at a loss to account for the sense of this scripture. Socinus himself, and many of his followers, have concluded from it, that Christ was taken up into heaven-some time after his incarnation; and they suppose this to have happened during some part of the forty days in which the scripture says he was in the wilderness tempted of the devil. But how he could ascend into heaven, and yet be in the wilderness, where one of the evangelists says he was all the forty days, cannot be easily understood or accounted for. Indeed, the scripture is altogether silent as to such a matter; and it is very strange, if it had occurred, that when we have an account of other circumstances in his life which are of less importance, no mention should be made of this, which, had it been related, would have been a great inducement to his followers to have paid the highest regard to his doctrine,—especially as the Socinians suppose he was taken up into heaven, that he might be instructed in those things which he was to impart to the world. Instead of offering proof, they only say that it is a parallel instance to that of Moses, who was called up to the top of Mount Sinai, which was then the immediate seat of the divine presence, and

who there received the law which he was to impart to Israel. They suppose that it was, in like manner, necessary that our Saviour should ascend into heaven, that he might there be instructed in that doctrine which he was to communicate to his church. We cannot, however, but conclude that, being omniscient, as will be proved in our next particular, and having, in his human nature, had an unction from the Holy Ghost, in as much as 'God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him,'e he had no need to receive instructions, or to ascend into heaven to receive the doctrines which he was to deliver. Moreover, according to the Socinian conjecture, his coming from heaven, in the end of time, to judge the world, should have been called his third coming. His first coming from heaven was in his incarnation; and, according to this conjecture, his second coming was his return to the world after he ascended into heaven during the period of his temptation. But, according to scripture, his coming at the end of the world is called, 'his coming the second time, without sin, unto salvation.' Indeed, the supposition in question is so ungrounded, that some of the Socinians themselves reckon it, at most, but a probable conjecture, and do not pretend to say that it is sufficiently founded in scripture. We cannot think, therefore, that it will have any tendency to enervate the force of our argument for Christ's deity, founded on the above-mentioned sense of the text: 'The Son of man, which is in heaven.'

4. Our Saviour's deity may farther be proved, from his being omniscient. The apostle Peter says, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' This is too great a glory to be ascribed to any creature. Had it been spoken of the Father, the Anti-trinitarians themselves would have acknowledged, that it is as great a proof of his deity as any contained in scripture. It imports the same thing as what the psalmist says, 'His understanding is infinite.'— There is, however, another expression which abundantly asserts the

divine omniscience; it is that in which he is denominated the searcher of hearts. This is a glory which God appropriates to himself, 'I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways.'i 'The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.' All creatures are excluded from having any branch of this glory, when it is said, 'Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men.'l Now such a knowledge as this is ascribed to Christ. Sometimes he is said to know the inward thoughts and secret reasonings of men within themselves. If it be said, that this is only a particular instance of knowledge, such as he might have had by an immediate divine inspiration, and therefore does not prove his Godhead, there is a scripture which speaks of his knowledge as more extensive, asserting, that he knows the thoughts of all men, 'He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.'n Another scripture asserts that his knowledge respects not only men's present, but their future thoughts, which are not known to themselves, 'He knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.' But if all this be not reckoned sufficient to prove him to be the heart-searching God, nothing can express it in plainer terms than the following text, 'All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.'p

It is objected to the argument for Christ's omniscience, taken from Peter's confession, 'Lord, thou knowest all things,' &c. that nothing more is intended by the words, than that he had a very great degree of knowledge,—not that he was strictly and properly omniscient. The words are thus supposed to be an hyperbolical expression, not altogether unlike that of the woman of Tekoa to David, 'My Lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.' This expression of the woman, it is true, is

either an unwarrantable strain of compliment or flattery, occasioned by David's suspecting that Joab had employed her to plead the cause of Absalom; or it is a sincere acknowledgment of his great wisdom, without supposing him to be absolutely omniscient,—as if she had said, 'Thou knowest all things that are done in the land; there is no plot or contrivance, how secretly soever it may be managed, but thou wilt, some way or other, find it out, as thou hast done this that I am sent about.' But what reference has this to Peter's confession? Does it follow, that because there are hyperbolical expressions in scripture, as well as in other writings, this must be one? or because a wise governor may have a conjectural knowledge of what is done by his subjects, when considering the various circumstances which attend their actions, that the apostle intends nothing more than such a conjectural knowledge? It is plain he appeals to Christ as the heart-searching God, concerning the inward sincerity of his love to him, as well as of his repentance, after a public and shameful denial of him, which might have given just occasion for his love being called in question; and his confession is as evident a proof of Christ's omniscience, as that text is of the Father's, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me,'r &c.

Others, especially some of the Arians, do not so much deny Christ's omniscience, as the consequence deduced from it, namely, his proper deity. They make use of an abstruse and metaphysical way of reasoning. They suppose that a creature may know all things, that is, all finite objects, and consequently all things that are done in the world, namely, all creatures, and all their actions; since the object of this knowledge is, at most, but finite. They suppose, also, that it is possible for a finite mind to be so enlarged as to take in all finite things, or to have the knowledge of all things communicated to it; since the object and the recipient are commensurate with each other.

They, hence, admit that our Saviour may know all things, and yet deny that his understanding is infinite, or that his knowledge is so properly divine as the Father's is; and they, therefore, regard his knowing all things as not a sufficient argument to prove his deity, in the sense in which we understand it. Now this method of reasoning might as well be used to evade the force of every argument, brought from scripture, to prove the Father's omniscience, or, indeed, to prove his infinite power. All effects produced, which are the objects of power, are but finite; and it might, hence, according to this way of reasoning, be inferred, that the producing of all things does not require infinite power, or prove God's eternal power and Godhead. Moreover, as this would tend to destroy the infinite disproportion between God and the creature in acting; so it supposes that God can communicate a branch of his own glory to a creature, by enlarging it to such a degree, as to take in all finite objects. There are some things not so properly too great for God to do, as for a creature to be the subject of. We do not pretend to set limits to the divine power; yet we may infer, from the nature of things, and the powers of finite beings, that it is impossible for any one, below God, to know all things past, present, and to come, at one view. Yet this, our Saviour must be supposed to do; else the attribute of omniscience is not justly applied to him, nor, as will be observed in a following particular, would he be fit to govern the world. We must conclude, therefore, that he is truly and properly a divine Person.

To what has been said concerning Christ's omniscience, we may subjoin those scriptures which speak of him as 'the wisdom of God,' the fountain of all communicated wisdom, 'the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' It is supposed by many, that 'Wisdom,' spoken of in Prov. 8 is to be understood of our Saviour, as the personal wisdom of God; in as much as there are several personal characters ascribed to him. Thus it is said, 'I was set

up from everlasting,' &c., and, 'Then,' that is, before the creation of all things, 'I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.'u This cannot, properly speaking, be applied to God's essential wisdom; and must therefore be a description of an eternal divine Person, distinct from the Father. Many suppose, indeed, that whatever is spoken of Wisdom, in this and some other chapters of this book, is only metaphorical, or a beautiful description of divine wisdom, as the instructor of mankind. But we cannot see how this, if nothing else be intended by it, can agree with some of the personal characters before-mentioned, which seem applicable to our Saviour. We find also that he is elsewhere called 'the Wisdom God,' in a sense which can by no means be supposed to be figurative. Thus, the words, 'Therefore also said the Wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles,' &c. are certainly understood of our Saviour. If it be objected, that, by 'the Wisdom of God,' is meant there the wise God, namely, the Father, we answer, that another evangelist, referring to the very same thing, explains what is meant by 'the Wisdom of God,' and represents our Saviour as speaking in his own Person, 'Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes,'y &c.

5. The next divine perfection which we notice as ascribed to Christ, is almighty power. This attribute is appropriated, by the Arians, to the Father. They accordingly suppose that it implies his supremacy not only over all creatures, but over the Son and Holy Ghost. They hence peremptorily conclude that it is never applied to them, and consequently that the deity of our Saviour cannot be proved by it. That they may turn our own weapons upon us, or improve some unwary concessions made by some very considerable writers who have, in other respects, very well defended the doctrine of the

Trinity, they seem to insinuate, that their view of the subject is a matter to be, as it were, taken for granted. Yet it might easily be made appear, that they strain, beyond what was ever intended, the sense of those expressions whence they conclude the cause to have been given up to them; and, besides, there are many Trinitarian writers who are far from making such concessions as those on which they rely.

As for the word παντοκρατωρ, 'Almighty,' there is nothing in the derivation of it, whence it may justly be inferred, that the perfection denoted by it contains a greater display of the divine glory, than the other perfections which are attributed to all the Persons in the Godhead. It contains, indeed, an idea of the universal extent of divine power, with respect to its objects; and this is not to be separated from the sense of it, when power is ascribed to God in those scriptures in which he is called 'the Almighty.' If, therefore, we can prove that Christ has ascribed to him power which is properly divine, this will evince his deity, as much as though we could produce several scriptures in which he is indisputably called 'the Almighty.' This we shall first endeavour to do, and then we shall inquire whether we have not as much or more reason to conclude that he is called Almighty, than the Anti-trinitarians have to deny it.

That power, such as is properly divine, is attributed to Christ, may be proved from the scripture formerly mentioned, which is evidently applied to him, and in which he is called, 'the mighty God.' This point may, be proved also from Psal. 45:3, which, as has been before observed, is spoken concerning him, and in which he is called 'most mighty.' It may further be proved from Phil. 3:21, where we read of his 'changing our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.' This is such an effect of power as plainly argues it divine, as much as the production of all things out of nothing could

do. Accordingly, it is said to be done, 'according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.' We might observe many other things which he has done, and will do, which require infinite power; but these we shall have occasion to consider, when, under a following head, we prove his deity from his works.

All this, however, is to no purpose with those who deny his proper deity, unless we can prove that he is called 'Almighty.' They lay the whole stress of the argument upon this, for no other reason, as I presume, but because they think it impossible for us to prove it. I shall attempt it; and I hope to make it appear that we have greater probability, on our side, that he is so called, than they have ground to deny it. Here I shall take notice of this perfection of the divine nature, as we find it mentioned in the book of Revelation, in which this attribute is mentioned nine times, and, in some places, seems to be applied to the Father, but in others to the Son.

The first we shall mention is in chap. 1:8, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.' This seems to be spoken of our Saviour; because he is described at large in the three foregoing verses. There is nothing which gives the least ground to question its application to him, unless that character's being given to the Person here spoken of, which is given to the Father, namely, 'Which is, and which was, and which is to come.' But we find, in other scriptures, the same divine glories ascribed to the Son that had before been ascribed to the Father. In John 5:21, it is said, 'As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will;' and in Tit. 3:4, the Father is called 'God our Saviour,' as appears by comparing it with the fifth and sixth verses, while Christ is so called in the same epistle. Why, then, may not the Father and the Son be each described by this character, 'which was, is, and is to

come,'—especially if we consider that the ascribing of this to Christ is, in effect, the same as what is said of him elsewhere, 'He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?'d—That the text in question in which the person spoken of is called 'Almighty,' is applied to Christ, appears farther from the fact that the character, 'Alpha and Omega,' seems to be applied to none but him. In the other place where it is used in this chapter, namely, in the eleventh verse, it is indisputably applied to him; as will appear by comparing it with the following verses. In chap. 21:6. he is again called 'Alpha and Omega;' and that the name is applied to him there, appears from the context. It is he who 'makes all things new,' or puts a new face upon the affairs of his church; and it is he who commands John to write what he saw and heard: 'He said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful.' We may observe, that wherever John is commanded, in this book, to write, it is Christ that gives the command. Thus he said to him before, 'Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.' Again, John is commanded by him who is called the Son of man, to write, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.'g Further, in chap. 22:13. he is called 'Alpha and Omega,' who is described in the foregoing verse, as 'coming quickly, whose reward is with him.' This is undoubtedly meant of our Saviour; for it is said concerning him. 'Surely I come quickly, Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus.' Now that which I infer is, that if Christ be styled 'Alpha and Omega,' in all other places in this book, it is more than probable that he is so in the eighth verse of the first chapter, in which he is said to be 'the Almighty.' And as he is called the 'Alpha and Omega,' so the explanation of the title, wherever we meet with it in this book without the words themselves, is applied to Christ. Thus he is called, 'The first and the last;'i and, 'The beginning of the creation of God.' From these facts, I humbly conceive we have more ground to conclude that Christ is called 'the Almighty' in the verse in question, than the Arians have to deny it.

There is another place in this book where he seems to be styled 'the Almighty.' 'And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.' This triumphant song is occasioned by one of the greatest victories which the church expects to obtain in this world. By 'the song of Moses,' I humbly conceive, is meant the church's celebrating the glory of God, for the greatest victory that ever was obtained under the legal dispensation; and 'the song of the Lamb,' is an acknowledgment of the greatest that is, or shall be, obtained under the gospel-dispensation. Now, in celebrating the Lamb's victories, they set forth the praises of this mighty Conqueror in the following words, 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.' It is the Lamb that is everywhere described in this book, as fighting the church's battles, and obtaining victory for it; therefore it is his glory which is here set forth.

And as he is always described, in this book, as thus fighting the church's battles, so it is he who is described as taking vengeance on its enemies. I cannot but conclude, therefore, that he is spoken of in chap. 16:6. where he is said to have given his church's persecutors 'blood to drink, for they were worthy;' and in the following verse, where it is said to him, 'Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.' Again, in chap. 16:14. we read of the 'battle of that great day of God Almighty;' and then it immediately follows, 'Behold, I come as a thief in the night,' &c. Now, this expression is known to be elsewhere applied to our Saviour, and to none but him. And that it is he who fights the church's battles, is evident from chap. 17:14, 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them;' and, from chap. 19:12, &c., as elsewhere, where it is said, 'His eyes were as a flame of fire,' to denote that the great day of his wrath was come. His name is called,

in the thirteenth verse of the nineteenth chapter, 'the Word of God;' and we read that 'armies followed him,' and that 'out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that he might smite the nations.' We may hence conclude, that since Christ is represented, in so many places in this book, as fighting with, and triumphing and reigning over, his enemies, inflicting his plagues upon them, and delivering his church from their persecutions, which is a work of divine power, he is fitly styled, in several places, 'Lord God Almighty.'

6. We might consider several other divine attributes ascribed to Christ, which prove his deity, namely, holiness, truth, and faithfulness. Thus it is said, 'These things saith he that is holy, he that is true;' and he is described, in the following words, as having uncontrollable power: 'who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.' That this is spoken of Christ, is beyond dispute. Again, 'They cried out, with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'o To whom did they cry but to the Lamb, who is said to have opened the seals, or to have discovered the mysteries that were thereby revealed? When he had opened the sixth seal, he is described as hearing his church's prayer, and avenging their blood; and so is represented as coming to judgment in a very awful and terrible manner. On this occasion it is said, 'the great day of his wrath is come;' and therefore it is he who is described as 'holy and true.' If it be replied, that creatures are sometimes called holy and true, we may add, that it is Christ to whom it is said, 'Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.'q This I infer from what has been before considered,—that it is he who obtains victory over, and pours forth his judgments on, his church's enemies; and

that it is he whose praises are celebrated in the song of the Lamb, mentioned in the verse immediately preceding.

We have thus considered several divine perfections, as ascribed to our Saviour, and these so glorious, that nothing greater can be mentioned to set forth the glory of a divine Person. We may add a view of those glorious titles which are given him with a design to excite in us adoring and admiring thoughts of him. Amongst these we shall only mention some which are either the same with, or are equivalent to, those which are given to the Father; which they, who deny Christ's deity, cannot but own to be distinguishing characters of a divine Person.—Is the Father styled 'The God of peace?' Our Saviour is styled 'The Prince of peace.'s He is also said to be 'our peace;' and as peace includes in it all the blessings which accompany salvation, Christ's being styled the Author of it denotes him to be the Fountain of blessedness,—which he could not be were he not a divine Person.—Again, as God is called 'a Sun and Shield;'u so Christ is called 'The Sun of righteousness,' and 'An hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'y—Again, is it said of God the Father, 'He is thy life, and the length of thy days?' Our Saviour says, concerning himself, that he is 'the life.'a He is also called 'the Prince of life,' and 'our life.'c —Again, is the Father called 'The Shepherd of Israel?' Christ is called 'That great Shepherd of the sheep.'e—Moreover, is God often described in scripture as a glorious King,—'The King of Israel, even the Lord in the midst of thee?' Our Saviour is styled 'The King, the Lord of Hosts,'g 'the King of Israel,' and 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'i—Again, is God styled 'the Hope of Israel?' Our Saviour seems to be so called by the apostle, when he says, 'For the Hope of Israel I am bound with this chain;'l that is, for Christ's sake, who is the object of his people's hope. But whether Christ is referred to in that scripture or not, he is elsewhere called 'our Hope.'—Moreover, is God

the object of desire, as the psalmist says,n so that there is nothing in heaven or earth, or within the whole compass of finite beings, that is to be desired besides, or in comparison with, him? Our Saviour is called' The Desire of all nations.'—I might refer to many other glorious titles that are given to him in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, in the epistles to the seven churches; every one of which is prefaced with such a character of him as is designed to strike them with a holy reverence and esteem of him as a divine Person. Here, however, I finish my view of those proofs of Christ's deity, which are taken from the names, attributes, and titles, which are given to him.

Proofs of Christ's Deity from his Works

I shall now proceed to consider those works done by our Saviour, which are proper to God only. Divine works argue a divine agency; they prove that he who performs them has infinite power, and consequently that he is an infinite Person, or truly and properly God. These works are of two sorts; they are either of nature and common providence, or they are of grace, that is, such as immediately respect our salvation. In all of them, Christ acts beyond the power of a creature, and hence appears to be a divine Person.

1. He created all things; and therefore must be God. He that made the world, must be before it; and since time, as has been before observed, began with the first creature, he must have been before time, that is, from eternity. Again, he who created all things must have a sovereign will. 'For his pleasure they are, and were created.' It follows, that he has an undoubted right to all things, and that he might have annihilated them, had it been his pleasure; and also, that he has a right to dispose of them as he will, as the potter has power over his clay. All these things are consequences of the work of

creation; and therefore that work is an undeniable argument that he who performed it is God. It may be observed, also, that to create, is to exert infinite power, or to act above the power of a creature, which, at best, is but finite. Now, whatever is more than finite, must be infinite; and consequently he who created all things must exert infinite power, and that is certainly such as is truly divine. We might farther consider, that there are many scriptures which appropriate creation to God. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise; for to suppose that a creature gave being to itself, is to suppose him to be both a cause and an effect, and consequently to be, and not be, at the same time;—to exist as a Creator, and not to exist as to be brought into being. It is evident, also, that in scripture the creature is opposed to the Creator. Thus, it is said, 'They worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.'q And there are several scriptures which speak of creation as a distinguishing evidence of divine glory. Thus, we have a magnificent description of God, taken more especially from this work, when he is called, 'The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth.' Again, 'Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it, he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.'s In these and many other scriptures of a similar nature, which might be referred to, it appears that creation is a work peculiar to God.

We shall now prove that our Saviour created all things. There are many who think that this may be proved from the work of creation being ascribed to more persons than one. In the original, we read of 'Creators,' in the plural number. Thus, 'Remember thy Creator,' or Creators; and, in reference to the creating of man, God says, 'Let us make man after our own image,' &c. These texts seem to imply, that there were more divine Persons engaged in this work than the

Father. I do not, indeed, lay so much stress on this argument as many do; yet it is not to be wholly neglected. I confess, I cannot see any reason why there should be such a mode of expression used, were it not to signify the divine mystery of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, to whom this work is ascribed.

The Anti-trinitarians, especially the Socinians, bring an objection, that this mode of speaking is such as is used in conformity to the custom of kings, who speak in the plural number. But though kings do often speak in the plural number, yet this is only a modern way of speaking, implying, that whatever a king does, is by the advice of some of his subjects, who are his peculiar favourites, and who are made use of to fulfil his will. This way of speaking is not so ancient as scripture-times, much less as Moses' time, or the beginning of the world, which is referred to, when God is represented as speaking in the plural number. It is the custom of kings, in scripture, to speak in the singular number; and it is very absurd to pretend to explain any mode of speaking used in scripture, by customs of speech not known till many ages after. I am sensible, some think that the mode of speaking used by Ahasuerus, 'What shall we do unto the queen Vashti, according to law?' is a proof that it was used in former ages. But the words may be rendered, 'What is to be done, according to law?' &c. or, 'What is it expedient for me to do?' This instance, therefore, does not prove that kings used, in ancient times, to speak of themselves in the plural number. It cannot, then, be argued that, when God is represented as speaking so in scripture, it is in compliance with any such custom. Besides, in all other instances, except those which are referred to by our argument, he is always represented as speaking in the singular number. It is hence additionally probable, that this variation from his usual way of speaking, is not without some reason, and that it intimates to us the doctrine, that there are more divine Persons than one who created all

things. But we shall not insist on this; as we have more plain proofs in scripture.

It evidently appears that Christ made all things, not only from what is said in John 1:3, that 'all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made;' but from Col. 1:16, 'By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him.' Here he is said to be not only the Creator, but the end of all things. This is the same as what is said in Prov. 16:4, 'The Lord hath made all things for himself.' That Christ created all things, farther appears from Psal. 102:25, 'Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.' This text is expressly applied to Christ by the apostle.

From these and similar scriptures, it evidently appears that Christ made all things. The Socinians, indeed, who are sensible that creation was an evident proof of divine power, and that the Creator of all things must be God, labour very hard to prove that all those scriptures which ascribe this work to our Saviour, are to be understood in a metaphorical sense, as signifying nothing else but his being the Author of the gospel-state, which is a kind of new creation, peculiar to him. He did this, as they say, as a prophet, revealing those doctrines which relate to the gospel-dispensation. Accordingly they understand that scripture which speaks of his being 'in the beginning,' and of 'all things being made by him,' as intending nothing else, than that he was in the beginning of the gospel,—that whatever was made or ordained to be a standard and rule of faith was by him,—and that, in the discharge of this work, he was to restore decayed religion, and to correct several mistaken notions which the Jews had entertained concerning the moral law, to add

some new precepts to it, and to give directions concerning that mode of worship which should be observed in the church for the future. This is all they suppose to be intended by that work which is ascribed to Christ, as a Creator. In this scripture, on the contrary, it is plainly said, that there was nothing in the whole frame of nature, nothing that was an effect of power, which was made without him. There is another scripture also, which cannot, with any colour of reason, be understood in their sense: 'By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.'y Here the apostle speaks of the creation of angels and men, as well as all other things. Now, certainly, Christ did not come into the world to rectify any mistakes, or restore decayed religion, among the angels. Hence the apostle here plainly proves that our Saviour created all things.

But as this opinion of the Socinians is now almost universally exploded by the Anti-trinitarians, we have no occasion to say any thing farther in opposition to it; and we shall proceed to consider what the Arians say concerning Christ's creating all things. They allow that the work of creation is ascribed to him; but they deny that this argues him to be God in the same sense as the Father is. The account which they give is, that God, namely, the Father, created all things by the Son, as an instrument created by him immediately for that purpose; so that the Son was an inferior or second cause of the production of all things; and, as such, he cannot be concluded to be God, equal with the Father. I shall offer several remarks in opposition to this theory.—First, in this account of creation, there is not a just difference put between the natural and the supernatural production of things; of which the latter only can be called creation. If these two be confounded, the distinguishing character of a Creator is set aside; and the glory arising from it cannot be appropriated to God. Nor is that infinite perfection which is displayed in creation duly considered; but, according to this scheme, or method of

reasoning, a creature may be a Creator, and a Creator a creature. Nor, according to this scheme, can 'the eternal power and Godhead' of the divine Being be demonstrated 'by the things that are made,' or created, as the apostle says they are.—From that first mistake arises another. In natural productions, that which was created by God may be rendered subservient to the production of other things; and, in this respect, it may be termed an instrument made use of by a superior cause, and may have an energy, or method of acting, peculiar to itself, whereby it produces effects, according to the course and laws of nature, fixed by God, the first cause of all things. From this they suppose, though without sufficient ground, that God might create all things by an instrument, or second cause, as they conclude he did by the Son.—Now, we must assert that, creation being a supernatural production of things, what has been said concerning natural production is not applicable to it.—Though things may be produced in a natural way by second causes, whose powers are limited and subjected to the laws of nature, yet supernatural effects cannot be produced by anything short of infinite power. Hence, as creation is a supernatural work, it must be concluded to be a work of infinite power.—It follows, that it is not agreeable to the idea of creation, or the producing of all things out of nothing, for God to make use of an instrument. That this may appear, let it be considered, that whatever instrument is made use of, must be either finite or infinite. An infinite instrument cannot be made use of; for then there would be two infinites, the one superior, the other inferior. Nor can a finite one be made use of; for that, according to our last proposition, cannot produce any supernatural effect, as creation is supposed to be. That work requires infinite power, and this cannot be exerted by a finite medium. Hence, no finite instrument can be used. Moreover, if it requires infinite power to create all things, this power, in its method of acting, would be limited by the instrument it makes use of; for whatever power a superior

cause has in himself, the effect produced by an instrument will be in proportion to the weakness thereof. This some illustrate by the similitude of a giant's making use of a straw or a reed in striking a blow, when the weakness of the instrument renders the power of the person who uses it insignificant. Thus, if God the Father had made use of a creature in the creation of all things, the power exerted by him could be no other than finite; but that was not sufficient for the production of things supernatural,—which require infinite power.—Again, the creation of all things is ascribed to the sovereignty of the divine will. The psalmist, describing it, says, 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;'a and it is recorded, 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' When we read that the other parts of the creation were produced by his almighty word, this implies that they were produced by an act of his will. Now, it seems impossible, from the nature of the thing, that an instrument should be made use of in an act of willing, any more than in an act of understanding.—Moreover, no cause can reasonably be assigned, why God should make use of an instrument in the production of all things. Certainly he who, by his immediate power, produced the instrument, might, without any difficulty or absurdity attending the supposition, have created all things immediately without one. We must suppose, too, that if there were nothing in the nature of things which required him to make use of an instrument, he would not, by making use of one, namely, the Son, administer occasion to him for his assuming so great a branch of his own glory as that of being the Creator of the ends of the earth, or for his being, as the result of this, worshipped as a divine Person.

But, say the Arians, though no one supposes that God stood in need of an instrument, or could not have created all things without it, yet we must not conclude that he did act without one, because the scripture speaks of the Father's creating all things by the Son; and

when one person is said to do anything by another, it implies that he makes use of him as an instrument. This allegation of the Arians seems to be the only foundation on which their doctrine is built. But there is no necessity of understanding the words which speak of God's creating all things by the Son, in the sense in which they interpret them. All effects are produced by the power of God. This power—supposing the Son to be a divine Person, which we have endeavoured, by other arguments, to prove—must belong to him; and the Father and the Son being united in the same Godhead, one cannot act without the other. Hence, whatever is said to be done by the Father, may, in this sense, be said to be done by the Son; for though the Persons are distinct, the power exerted is the same. Thus a learned writer accounts for this matter, when he says: "The Son is of the same nature and substance with the Father; so nearly allied, so closely united, that nothing could be the work of one, without being, at the same time, the work of both. Hence it was, that the Son was Joint-creator with the Father, that all things were made by him, and nothing without him. It was not possible for them either to act, or to exist separately; and therefore it is that the work of creation is, in scripture, attributed to both." This is a very safe as well as a just way of reasoning, consistent with, and founded on, the doctrine of the Father and Son's being united in the same Godhead, though distinct Persons, and it is agreeable to the sense of those scriptures which attribute this work to the Son, in the same sense as when it is attributed to the Father.

The Arians, I am aware, will reply, that this does not sufficiently account for that subordination in acting which seems to be implied in the sense of those scriptures in which the Father is said to have created all things by the Son. I shall therefore take leave to notice, more particularly, the texts in which this mode of speaking is used. Though there are several scriptures which represent the Son as a

Creator, or consider all things as having been made by him, as well as the Father, or exhibit him as a Joint-creator with the Father; yet there are but two places in the New Testament in which the Father is said to have created all things by the Son,—namely, Eph. 3:9, in which it is said, 'God,' that is, the Father, 'created all things by Jesus Christ,' and Heb. 1:2, where it is said, 'By whom also he made the worlds.' We have already considered the absurdity of the Socinian way of expounding those other scriptures which speak of Christ as a Creator, in which he is said to act, not in subserviency to, but co-ordinately with, the Father. But as God the Father is, in the scriptures now in question, said to create all things by Jesus Christ, I humbly offer it, as my opinion, that though the other scriptures, in which Christ is set forth as a Creator, have no reference to him as Mediator, or to his work of the new creation, yet such a reference seems to be the probable sense of both these scriptures. As to the former, some suppose that it is needless to give the sense of it; because the words, 'by Jesus Christ,' are wanting in some ancient copies, as well as in the vulgar Latin and Syriac versions. But as there are many copies which have the words, we shall suppose the reading to be genuine; and that we may ascertain the sense of it, we may observe that the apostle makes use of the word 'create' three times in this epistle. We find it, in chap. 2:10, and in chap. 4:24, in both which places it is taken for the new creation, which is brought about by Christ, as Mediator. I humbly conceive, that it may be understood in the same sense, in the verse which we are now considering. The new creation by Jesus Christ is hence a part of that mystery, of which the apostle says in the foregoing words, 'that was hid in God.' This sense seems not to be excluded by those who suppose, that, in other respects, it has some reference to the first creation of all things. The other scripture in question is, 'By whom also he made the worlds,' δι οὐ και τους αιωνας εποιησεν; that is, by whom he made, instituted, or ordained, the various dispensations which the church was under,

either before or since his incarnation. This was certainly done by him as Mediator; and in it, as well as in all other works performed by him in his mediatorial character, he acted in subserviency to the Father. I would not be too peremptory in determining this to be the sense of the text; for the apostle speaks, in the following verse, of his 'upholding all things,' which is well put after this account of his having created them. I am sensible also that the word which we translate 'worlds,' is used in Heb. 11:3, to signify the world that was at first created, in the most proper sense of the word 'creation.' There the apostle says, that, 'through faith, we understand that the worlds,' τους αιωνας, 'were framed by the word of God,' &c. But yet when I find that in many other places of the New Testament, where the word is used, it is taken in the sense I have stated, I cannot but conclude that the sense most probably belongs to the text. That which most of all determines me to acquiesce in it, is, that the subserviency of the Son to the Father in the mediatorial work is most agreeable to it. If it be objected, that this sense of the text coincides with that which is given of it by Socinus and his followers, which we before-mentioned and opposed, I answer, that it is very foreign to theirs. They endeavour, by their view of the text, to evade the force of the argument brought from it to prove our Saviour's deity; while we only exchange one argument in proof of this for another. It seems to me to be as great an evidence of his being a divine Person, that he is considered as the Author and Founder of the church, in all ages, or the Rock on which it is built, as that he is called, as he is, in many other scriptures, the Creator of the world. If he is the supreme Head, Lord, and Lawgiver of his church, in all ages,—if the faith and hope of all that shall be saved, are founded on him as their great Mediator, Redeemer, and Sovereign, he certainly is God, equal with the Father.

To what was mentioned as the chief prop of our reasoning, namely, that a finite creature cannot be an instrument in supernatural

productions, it is objected, that miracles are supernatural productions, and yet have been wrought by men, as instruments in the hand of God; and it is hence inferred that the creation of all things may as well be supposed to have been performed by the Son, as an instrument made use of to this end by the Father. Now, that miracles are supernatural productions, no one denies; and it follows, that they are either a species of creation, or equivalent to it. If it be allowed, therefore, that a creature can have power communicated to him to work them, and therein may be said to be an instrument made use of by God, we cannot reasonably deny that God the Father might use the Son as an instrument in creating all things. But we must take leave to deny that any who are said to have wrought miracles, have had infinite power communicated to them for that purpose. They were not properly instruments in the hand of God, to produce supernatural effects. All that they did, was only to address themselves to God, that he would put forth his immediate power in working the miracle,—to give the people, for whose sake it was to be wrought, occasion to expect it,—and afterwards to improve it for their farther conviction. It is true, miracles are often said to have been wrought by men; but I humbly conceive that nothing more is intended than what I have stated. That this may appear, let it be observed, that sometimes they who wrought them did not make use of any action, but only gave the people ground to expect the divine interposition. Thus, immediately before the earth swallowed up Korah and his company, Moses gave the people to expect the miraculous event: 'And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me. If these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord;' and as soon as he had spoken the words, the ground clave asunder, and swallowed them up. This may be reckoned among the miracles wrought by

Moses; though all that he did was only what tended to raise the people's expectation, that the extraordinary event should immediately happen. Again, at other times, when a miracle was wrought, we read of nothing done, but only a word spoken to signify that God would work it. Thus when the captain, with fifty men, was sent by the king of Israel to the prophet Elijah, to command him to come to him, the prophet said, 'If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty;' and the event immediately happened accordingly. At other times, when miracles were wrought, the person who, in the sense but now mentioned, is said to have wrought them, made use of some external and visible sign. This, if no one was present but himself, was an ordinance for his own faith; as when the prophet Elisha smote the waters of Jordan with Elijah's mantle, and said, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'h Or when it was a sign given by divine direction, it was an ordinance for the faith of the people present, whose conviction was intended. Yet they were not to suppose that the action used had any tendency to produce the miracle. It was designed only to raise their expectation, that God would work the miracle by his immediate power. Thus when Moses was commanded to lift up his rod, and stretch out his hand over the sea, and divide it, that Israel might pass through, the event intimated immediately took place; and when he was commanded to 'smite the rock,'k God caused water to come out of it. He used also, by divine direction, several other actions, when other miracles were wrought. Hence, though he was said, in a less proper way of speaking, to have wrought them, yet he was no more than a moral instrument in working them; so that the divine power was not communicated to, or exerted by him. Now, if creatures have been instruments in working miracles in no other sense than this, it cannot be inferred that Christ might be made use of by the Father, as an instrument in creating the world. A moral instrument he could not be; for there was no doctrine contested, no truth to be confirmed,

no subjects present to expect a divine interposition. Indeed, no one ever supposed that the Son of God was an instrument in this sense. Hence, if no one ever was an instrument in any other, nor could be, from the nature of the thing, as has been already proved, the force of the argument which we have laid down is not in the least weakened by the objection we have been considering.

2. Having thus endeavoured to prove the divinity of Christ from the work of creation, we shall proceed to consider how it appears, from those works of providence which are daily performed by him. Providence is as much a divine work, and contains as glorious a display of the divine perfections, as creation; and it is twofold, namely, preserving and governing. With respect to the former of these, some divines have asserted, that it is, as it were, a continued creation, and not formally so. As creation produces a creature, preserving providence prevents its sinking into nothing. And because the creature is, in all respects, dependent on the power of God, as much so for the continuance of its being, as it was for its being brought into being, preserving providence is an evidence of the divine power of him who sustains all things.

Now that this glory belongs to our Saviour, is plain from scripture. It is said, 'He upholds all things by the word of his power;' and, 'By him all things consist.'m Both these scriptures respect this branch of divine providence, namely, his preserving all things in being; and they certainly affirm more of him than can be said of any creature. It is not pretended that in this work he acts as the Father's instrument, even by those who suppose that he did so in the creation of all things. Scripture does not speak of God's upholding all things by him, but of Christ's upholding them by his own, that is, the divine power. We have, therefore, as plainly a proof of his deity, from his upholding

providence, as there is evidently to be inferred from it the being of a God.

As to the other branch of providence,—the governing of the world in general, or of the church in particular—this also is ascribed to Christ, and affords proof of his Godhead. Whatever degree of limited dominion may be said to belong to creatures, universal dominion belongs to God only. This is assigned as one ground and reason of his right to divine honour. Accordingly it is said, 'Dominion and fear are with him;' that is, there is a holy reverence due to him, as the supreme Lord and Governor of the world. Again, it is said that 'he shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth;'o and this is considered as the foundation of universal joy, 'O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy,' and of praise, 'Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.' Again, it is said, 'The kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the Governor among the nations;'q and this is assigned as the reason of their worshipping him, 'All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.' This, therefore, is undoubtedly a branch of the divine glory. Hence, if we can prove that universal dominion belongs to Christ, or that he is the Governor of the world, and of the church on earth, this will plainly evince his deity.

Let us consider him as the Governor of the world. That he sustains this character, seems to be the meaning of several expressions of scripture, in which royal dignity is ascribed to him. He is represented as sitting upon a throne; while his 'throne is forever and ever,' and he himself is infinitely greater than all the kings of the earth. On this account he is called 'The Prince of the kings of the earth;'t and they are commanded to testify their subjection to him, and all are represented as blessed that 'put their trust in him.' His kingdom is

considered also, as 'not of this world,'x and the honours due to him, such as are divine. These things farther prove his deity. Moreover, his universal dominion, and consequently his Godhead, are evinced by the glorious character of 'the Lord of Hosts,' which we have already considered as belonging to him. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the vision which he had of his glory, says, 'Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.' This character denotes his sovereignty over all the hosts of heaven, and all creatures in this lower world,—his governing them, and making one thing subservient to another, and doing all to set forth his own glory.

His deity will farther appear, if we consider him as the Governor of his church. In this he has access to the souls of men, working in them those graces which are the effects of almighty power. This he does, when they are effectually called; and also in the work of sanctification, which is consequent on their being called, and is carried on till it is perfected. We shall have occasion, under some following Answers, to prove that these are divine and supernatural works; and we shall reserve the more full and particular proof of this to its proper place. At present, we shall only observe that they are spoken of as such in scripture, and ascribed to the exceeding greatness of the power of God,—no less than that 'which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.'a Elsewhere they are called 'a new creation,' 'a quickening' or 'resurrection,' 'a breaking of the rock in pieces,' 'taking away the heart of stone,' 'giving a heart of flesh,' or 'a new heart.'c These expressions would never have been used, if the work were not divine and supernatural. It follows that, as Christ is the Author of this internal work, he is a divine Person. Now that he is so, is obvious from many places in the New Testament. He is styled 'The Author and Finisher of our faith.' The apostle Paul speaks of 'faith and love abounding, which is in Christ Jesus,'e and at the same time, speaks of the grace of our Lord abounding, as the

spring and fountain thereof. The apostles desired him to 'increase their faith,' not in an objective way, as affording some greater foundation for it, but subjectively, by an internal work, exciting and promoting the principle of it, which was before implanted in them, and so causing all those graces which accompany it to abound, as the effects of his divine power.

We might farther consider Christ's spiritual government as extended to his church, collectively considered. The church is exposed to many dangers and difficulties, and meets with much opposition from its enemies, who attempt its ruin, but in vain; for it is the object of the divine care, kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, and 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Now this is, in a peculiar manner, the work of Christ. He is the rock on which it is built. His presence, in the midst of his people, is not only their glory, but their safety; and this it would not be, if he were no more than a creature. We might also consider the subserviency of the various dispensations of providence in the world to their good. He is 'Head over all things to the church;' and his being so could not cause that subserviency, were he not a divine Person.

We might farther consider how the divine glory of Christ will be demonstrated, in his second coming to complete the work of salvation, begun in this world. To prepare a way for this, there will be an universal resurrection of the dead; which will be no less an effect of almighty power, than the creation of all things was at first. I need not say anything to prove that this will be a divine work; but need prove only that the general resurrection will be performed by Christ. This might be proved from several scriptures. In one of these he himself expressly asserts it in words very plain and particular: 'The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth,' &c. Moreover he is represented as

coming in the clouds, with power and great glory,—in his 'own glory,' as well as in 'his Father's, and of the holy angels.'i The most natural sense of this text seems to be, that his divine glory, which is called 'his own,' and which was comparatively hid from his people while he was on earth, shall eminently be demonstrated in his second coming; and that his mediatorial glory, which he has received from the Father, as what he had a right to on his having accomplished the work of redemption, shall also be then displayed. Then as to the glory of his retinue, as appearing with all his holy angels, this bears some resemblance to the description by which the majesty of God is set forth on occasion of his appearing on Mount Sinai, to give the law, 'The Lord came with ten thousands of saints.'

We may add, that the work which he shall, immediately after this, be engaged in, namely, that of judging the world in righteousness, plainly proves his deity. None but a divine Person can judge the secrets of all men, and bring to light every thing that has been done from the beginning to the end of time. But this is to be done in the final judgment; for it is said that 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' This is an. extension of that argument, before laid down, to prove his divinity from his omniscience. If his judgment must be, as the apostle says, 'according to truth,'m and consequently performed with the greatest impartiality, as well as with an exquisite knowledge or discernment, without which it could not be said that 'the Judge of all the earth does right,'—if rewards shall be proportioned to every work done, so that every one shall receive, as the apostle says, 'according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,'o—if persons are to be rewarded, or punished, for all the secret springs of action, which, as well as the actions themselves, must be reckoned either good or bad, according to what they produce,—and if this respects not particular persons only, but all men who have lived, or

shall live, from the beginning to the end of the world,—it evidently follows, that He to whom this glorious work is ascribed, must be a divine Person. Moreover, the manner of his appearing with the terror as well as with the majesty of a Judge, being such as shall strike his enemies with the utmost horror and confusion, is a farther proof of his deity. This is represented in a lively manner where it is said that 'the kings of the earth, and the great men,' those who once rendered themselves formidable to their subjects, shall desire to 'hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?' And he will not only pronounce the sentence, but execute it; and he will do this with respect both to his saints and subjects, and to his enemies. As to the former, he will command them to come and possess not only the kingdom prepared for them, but the blessedness which he will confer upon them. This blessedness is called the beatific vision, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;'q and the happiness of heaven is described in such a way as plainly proves our Saviour to be the Fountain of it, and consequently a divine Person. It is represented as a state in which they will 'behold his glory;' and certainly the beholding of the glory of the most exalted creature, falls infinitely short of this ingredient in the heavenly blessedness. On the other hand, the immediate impressions of the wrath of God on the consciences of his enemies, or the power of his anger, which shall render them eternally miserable when banished from his 'presence,' proves him to be a divine Person. The highest degree of misery consists in a separation or departure from him; and this it could not do, if he were not the Fountain of blessedness. Nor could the punishment of sinners be proportioned to their crimes, if it were not to be inflicted by 'the glory of his power.' The apostle joins this and banishment from his presence together; though some

understand his words as implying, that their punishment proceeds from Christ's immediate presence, in the display of the greatness of his power, as a sin-revenging Judge. In either sense, it argues him to be a divine Person. And that it is our Saviour who is spoken of, is evident, from the context. It is he who shall appear 'in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel;' and it is he that shall 'come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.' We have thus a very plain proof of his deity, from the exercise of his government, either in this or in the other world.

Having endeavoured to prove the divinity of Christ, from his works of creation and providence, and, under the former of these, offered some things in answer to the methods taken by the Socinians, and especially the Arians, in accounting for the sense of those scriptures which speak of the Father's creating all things by the Son; it is necessary for us now to consider the most material objections, brought by the Anti-trinitarians in general, against what has been said in defence of this doctrine, from the works of common and special providence, as ascribed to him, and, in particular, from the administration of his kingdom of grace. It is objected by them that his kingdom, and power of acting in the administration of the affairs relating to it, are wholly derived from the Father. Thus he says, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;' and, 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father.'u Again it is said, 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' As to his managing the affairs of his kingdom, being by the Father's commission and appointment, he speaks of the works which he was to perform as those which 'the Father had given him to finish.'y As to his power of executing judgment, which is one of the greatest glories of his kingly government, being derived from the Father, it is said, 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;'

and, 'He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained,'a meaning our Saviour. When he speaks of his ruling his enemies with a rod of iron, and breaking them to shivers, as the vessels of a potter, he adds, that this 'he received of his Father.' The Anti-trinitarians hence infer that, as he received his dominion, or right to govern the world and the church, from the Father, he cannot be God equal with the Father. As we say, in opposition to their scheme of doctrine, that a derived deity, such as they suppose his to be, cannot be the same with that which the Father has; so they allege this, by way of reprisal, against the argument we have but now insisted on, that a derived dominion cannot be made use of to prove that he who has it is a divine Person, in the sense in which we maintain him to be. Again they say, that in all his works, and particularly in the administration of the affairs of his kingdom, he acts for the Father's glory and not his own; whereas a divine Person cannot act for any other end than for his own glory. This, they allege, disproves, rather than evinces, his proper deity. He says, 'I honour my Father;'c and, 'I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me.' He also speaks of the Father's giving him a commandment to do what he did: 'I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak;'e and, 'As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.' Again, he speaks of his having 'kept his Father's commandment,'g and, pursuant to this, of his 'abiding in his love.' They hence argue, that he who is obliged to fulfil a commandment, or who acts in obedience to the Father, is properly a subject or a servant, and therefore cannot be God in the same sense as the Father, who gave this commandment. They add, that in the government of his church, and in that of the world in subserviency to it, he acts in the Father's name, as his deputy and vicegerent. He says, 'The works that I do, in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.' Accordingly his works are called the Father's, 'If I do not the

works of my Father, believe me not;'i and these works are said to be done from the Father, 'Many good works have I showed you from my Father.' As the consequence of all this, he acknowledges, say they, as he ought to do, that 'the Father is greater than he.'l How then, they ask, can he be a divine Person, in the sense in which we assert him to be, when there is a God above him, in whose name he acts in all he does? They farther argue, that, as is expressly stated, he was 'made both Lord and Christ,' and made so by the Father. They argue again, that the donatives of his kingdom, or those honours which are bestowed on his subjects, are not his to give, but the Father's. 'To sit,' says he, 'on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.'n Finally, they remind us that this kingdom which he received from the Father, and thus administers in subserviency to him, is, in the end, to be resigned, or delivered up. 'Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;' 'and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.' Accordingly, say they, he shall lay aside those divine honours which he now has, or cease to perform those works which give him a right to claim them. These are the strongest arguments which are brought by the Anti-trinitarians against our Saviour's proper deity. Indeed, as though they had little else to object, there is scarcely an argument against it, but what is supported by this reasoning, which they think to be altogether unanswerable, and which is supported by many more scriptures than those quoted. It is necessary, therefore, that we should consider what may be said in reply.

The sum of what has been objected, as branched into several particulars, is, that since Christ is represented as below the Father, or inferior to him, he cannot be equal with him, for that is no other than

a contradiction. To this it may be replied that, though the scripture speaks of our Saviour as receiving a commission from the Father, and as acting in subserviency to him; yet this does not respect the inferiority of his divine nature, but the subserviency of what is done by him, as Mediator, to the glory of the Father, as this character and office is received from him. Indeed, whenever the Son is represented as engaged in the great work of redemption, or in anything tending to it, or in any work consequent upon it, whereby what was before purchased is said to be applied by him, the reference is peculiarly to him as Mediator. Nothing is more common in scripture, than for him to be represented as Mediator; especially in all those things which concern the spiritual advantages or salvation of his church,—which is the principal thing to be considered in his government. In this sense we are to understand those scriptures which have been brought to support the objection. It is plain that our Saviour generally speaks of himself under this character; which is included in his being the Messiah or Christ, and which is the main thing that he designed to evince by his doctrine and his miracles. If, therefore, we duly consider the import of this character, it will not only give light to the understanding of the scriptures referred to, but sufficiently answer the objection against his deity taken from them. Now, our adversaries will not deny that Christ is represented as a Mediator; but they widely differ from us, when they take occasion to explain what they understand by his being so. Sometimes they seem to mean nothing else by it but a middle being betwixt God and the creature. The work performed by him as such, is not, they say, what requires him to be, in the most proper sense, a divine Person; and consequently, whatever inferiority to the Father is contained in this character, they conclude to respect his deity. We, on the contrary, distinguish between the subserviency of the work performed by him, as Mediator, to the glory of God the Father, together with the subjection or real inferiority to the Father, of the human nature in

which he performed it, and the inferiority of his divine nature. The former we allow; the latter we deny. When we speak of him as Mediator, we always suppose that he is God and man in one person, and that these two natures, though infinitely distinct, are not to be separated. As God, without the consideration of a human nature united to his divine person, he would be too high to sustain the character or to perform the work of a servant, and, as such, to yield that obedience which was incumbent on him as Mediator. On the other hand, to be a mere man is too low for this end; and would be altogether inconsistent with that infinite value and dignity which was to be put on the work he was to perform. It was necessary, therefore, that he should have two distinct natures, a divine and a human, or that he should be God incarnate. This will be more particularly considered under some following answers; and we shall reserve the proof for its proper place, and shall there consider the distinct properties of each nature. All that we shall observe at present is, that the evangelist John, in whose gospel our Saviour, agreeably to his mediatorial character, is often described as inferior to the Father, as well as equal with him, lays down this as a kind of preface to lead us into the knowledge of such descriptions: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'q Now, it follows that several things may be truly spoken concerning or applied to him, which are infinitely opposite to one another, and yet be both true in different respects,—for example, that he has almighty power, as to what concerns his deity; and yet, that he is weak, finite, and dependent, as to what respects his humanity. In one nature, he is God equal with the Father, and so receives nothing from him, is not dependent on him, nor is under any obligation to yield obedience. In this nature, he is the object of worship, as all worship terminates on that deity which is common to all the Persons in the Godhead. But, in the other nature, he worships the Father, and receives all from him, and refers all to his glory. Hence, those scriptures which speak of him as receiving a

kingdom, doing all things from or in obedience to the Father, or in his name and for his glory, and as inferior to and dependent on him, are not only applied to him as Mediator, but have a particular respect to his human nature. All, therefore, which can be inferred from those modes of speaking which are quoted as objections against the doctrine which we are defending, is, that he who is God is also man, and, as such, has those things predicated of him which are proper to a nature infinitely below, though inseparably united with, his divine nature.—As to its being said that 'the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son,' or that 'he judgeth the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained,' all that can be in erred is, that, so far as this work is performed by Christ in his human nature, which will be rendered visible to the whole world at the day of judgment, it is an instance of the highest favour and glory conferred upon this nature, or upon God-man Mediator, as man. But so far as, according to descriptions elsewhere given of him, he has a right to judge the world as God, and possesses those infinite perfections whereby he is fit to do it, these are the same which belong to the Father, and therefore not derived from him.—Again, though it is said, 'God hath made him both Lord and Christ,' it is not said that the Father hath made him God, or given him any branch of the divine glory. The words refer to the unction which he received from the Father to be the King, Head, and Lord of his church. This, so far as it is an act of grace, or implies his dependence on the Father, has an immediate respect to him in his human nature; in which, as well as in his divine nature, his dominion as Christ is exercised. On the other hand, his sovereignty and universal dominion over the church and the world, or those divine perfections which render him, in all respects, fit to govern it, belong to the Mediator more especially as God, and are the same as when they are affirmed of the Father. Moreover, when he says, 'I seek not mine own will, but the Father's that sent me,' and elsewhere, 'Not my will, but thine, be done,' his words argue that he

had a human will, distinct from his divine, in which he expresses that subjection to the Father which becomes a creature. This is plainly referred to him as man. On the other hand, when he says, speaking of himself co-ordinately with the Father, 'As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will,' his words, though spoken of his character as Mediator, have a peculiar reference to his divine nature.—Again, his words, 'The Father is greater than I,' are applied to him as man. On the contrary, when he says, 'I and my Father are one,' he speaks of himself as God, having the same nature with the Father.—Thus, if we suppose our Saviour to be God and man, as he is plainly proved to be from scripture, it follows that whatever is said, as importing his right to divine honour on the one hand, or as to his disclaiming it on the other, is equally true, when we consider him in his different natures. In this manner are we to understand those scriptures which speak of the real inferiority of the Son to the Father. But when, in other places, nothing is intended but the subserviency of what is done by the Son as Mediator, or its tendency to set forth the Father's glory, this may be applicable to those divine works which the Mediator performs. We may thus distinguish between the subserviency of the divine actions to the Father's glory, and, the inferiority of one divine Person to another. The former may be asserted, without detracting from his proper deity; while the latter is denied, as inconsistent with it. Thus have we endeavoured to explain those scriptures which are referred to by the Arians, to overthrow our Saviour's divinity; and, by the same method of explanation, I humbly conceive, all others which can be brought for that purpose may be understood. I have passed over that scripture, indeed, which respects Christ's 'delivering up the kingdom to the Father, and being subject to him,' which it might have been expected I should have endeavoured to explain; but I choose rather to reserve the consideration of it to its proper place,

when we come to speak of Christ's kingly office, and of his being exalted in its execution.

Proofs of Christ's Deity from his being the object of worship

The next argument to prove the divinity of Christ, is taken from his being the object of religious worship. When, in any act of worship, there is an agreement between our words and actions, we, in both, acknowledge him to be a divine Person, and to have the perfections of the divine nature. This argument is so strong and conclusive, that it is very difficult to evade the force of it. Indeed, it affects the very essentials of religion.

Now, that we may proceed with greater plainness, let us consider, what we are to understand by worship in general, and by religious worship in particular. I am very sensible that the Anti-trinitarians understand the word in a sense very different from what we do. They view it as expressing some degree of humility or reverence to a person whom we acknowledge, in some respect, to be our superior. Whatever words or external signs of reverence we use to express our regard to him who is its object, our worship, as offered to our Saviour, is no more than what they suppose to be due to a person below the Father. Now, that we may not mistake the meaning of the word, let it be considered, that worship is either civil or religious. The former contains in it that honour and respect which is given to superiors, and is sometimes expressed by bowing or falling down before them, or by some other marks of humility which their advanced station in the world requires. This, however, is seldom called worshipping them; and is always distinguished from religious worship, even when the same gestures are used. It is true, there is one scripture, in which the same word is applied to both, 'All the

congregation bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king.' But the meaning of this is, they paid civil respect to David, accompanied with those actions which are expressive of humility, and of that honour which was due to him; while their worship, as given to God, was divine or religious. The latter is the only sense in which we understand 'worship 'in this argument; and it includes in it adoration and invocation. In the former, we ascribe infinite perfection to God, either directly, or by consequence. An instance of this we have in 1 Chron. 29:11, 12, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.' Instances of it occur also in those texts, in which we are said to 'ascribe greatness to him,' to 'glorify him as God,'u or 'to give unto him the glory due unto his name.' Invocation is that wherein we glorify God as the fountain of blessedness, when we ask those things from him which none but God can give. This is sometimes called 'seeking the Lord,'y or 'calling upon him.' It includes all those duties in which we consider him as a God of infinite perfection, and ourselves as dependent on him, and as desirous to receive all those blessings from him which we stand in need of. Faith, in particular, is, in the various acts of it, a branch of religious worship; for it implies its object to be a divine person. Religious worship includes also supreme love, and universal obedience, and, indeed, the whole of religion; in which we have a due regard to that infinite distance that there is between God and the best of creatures. Religious worship is nowhere understood in a lower sense than this in scripture. As thus described, religious worship is to be given to none but a divine person. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,' said our Saviour, 'and him only shalt thou

serve.'a This is evident from the idea we have of religion in general; which is a giving of that glory, or an ascribing of those perfections to God, which belong to him as founded in his nature. It is the highest instance of blasphemy and profaneness to ascribe these to any creature; for this is in effect to say that he is equal with God.

Now, it plainly appears from scripture, that Christ is the object of religious worship, and consequently that the argument we are maintaining is just,—namely, that, for this reason, he must be concluded to be a divine person. Many examples occur in scripture of religious worship having been given to him; while they who gave it were not reproved or restrained, but rather commended, for performing it. We have some of these in the Old Testament, of which I shall mention two or three: 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.' When Jacob here speaks of Abraham and Isaac having walked before the great Being whom he addresses, his words imply, that, in their whole conversation, they considered themselves as under his all-seeing eye; and Jacob acknowledges him as the God who had sustained, preserved, and provided for him hitherto, the support of his life, and his deliverer, or redeemer, from all evil. This divine person he addresses himself to, in a way of supplication, for a blessing on the posterity of Joseph; and that he intends our Saviour is evident, because he refers to his appearance in the form of an angel, and describes him under that character. We cannot suppose that this holy patriarch is here represented as praying to a created angel; for that would be to charge him with idolatry. Moreover, this is the same description which is elsewhere given of Christ: 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old;'c and, 'The Lord, whom ye seek, shall

suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger,' or angel, 'of the covenant, whom ye delight in.' The latter passage contains a very plain prediction of our Saviour's incarnation; whose way is said to be prepared by John the Baptist, who is spoken of in the words immediately foregoing. It is certain, also, that God the Father is never called an angel in scripture; for this name is a peculiar description of the Mediator, who, as such, is never mentioned as the person sending, but as the person sent. Described as an angel, he is considered as one who was to be incarnate, and who, in our nature, was to execute those offices which he was therein obliged to perform. This, then, is the person whom Jacob adored and prayed to.

We have another instance, not only of his being worshipped, but of his demanding this divine honour of him that performed it. When he appeared as 'the Captain of the host of the Lord,' Joshua 'fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy; and Joshua did so.' It cannot be supposed that it was any other than a divine person that appeared. Not only did Joshua fall on his face and worship him, and express his willingness to fulfil his command; but the object of his worship bade him loose his shoe from his foot, for the place on which he stood was holy. This expression is nowhere else used in scripture, except in Exod. 3:5, in which our Saviour, as we before considered, appeared to Moses, with the majesty and glory of a divine person, and whose immediate presence made the place relatively holy, which the presence of a creature never did. Moreover, the character which he here gives of himself to Joshua, that of 'the Captain of the Lord's host,' not only implies that all Joshua's success was owing to his conduct and blessing on his warlike enterprises; but it also corresponds with the description which is elsewhere given of our Saviour. He is called, 'A

leader and commander to the people,' 'The Captain of our salvation,'g 'The Prince of life,' and 'The Prince of the kings of the earth.'

There are also in the New Testament various instances of worship given to Christ, which, by several circumstances attending it, was evidently divine or religious. Thus he had divine honour given him, by the wise men from the East, who 'fell down and worshipped him,' &c. And when he ascended up into heaven, 'his disciples worshipped him.'i In these instances, there is nothing in the mode of expression which distinguishes the worship given him from that which is due to God. There is a very illustrious instance of his being thus worshipped by a numerous assembly, represented in the vision of John. 'I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, saying, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever.' In these words there are such glories ascribed, that higher expressions cannot be used by any who adore the divine majesty. And it is plain that our Saviour is intended; for he is described as the Lamb that was slain; and he is also considered co-ordinately with the Father, when it is said that this glory is given to him that 'sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.' Now, if our Saviour be thus worshipped, he must have a right to it; else his worshippers would have been reproved, as guilty of idolatry. Peter reproved Cornelius, or rather prevents his paying divine adoration to himself, who was no more than a man. 'Stand up,' said he, 'I myself also am a man.'l The angel, in Revelation also, when John, through mistake, thought him to be a divine person, and fell at his feet to worship him, expressly forbade him, saying, 'See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-

servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God.' But our Saviour never forbids any to worship him. We must hence conclude that he is the object of worship, and consequently a divine Person.

1. We shall now proceed to consider the various branches of divine worship that are given to him. And the first we shall mention, is swearing by his name. By this an appeal is made to him, as the Judge of truth, and the Avenger of falsehood. Some think that the apostle intends as much as this, when he says, 'I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not;' as if he had said, 'I appeal to Christ, as the heart-searching God, concerning the truth of what I say.' But there is another sense of swearing,—namely, when, in a solemn manner, we profess subjection to him, as our God and King. This agrees with, or is taken from the custom of subjects, who swear fealty or allegiance to their king. Thus it is said, 'Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.'o In doing this, his people acknowledged him to be the object of faith, and to have a right to universal obedience, as well as to be the Fountain of blessedness. This religious worship, as the prophet foretells, was to be given to the Person of whom he speaks, who is particularly said by the apostle to be our Saviour.

2. Another act of religious worship, which has some affinity to the former, is the baptismal vow; in which, according to the divine command, there is a consecration, or dedication, of the person baptized to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or a public profession that it is our indispensable duty to exercise an entire subjection to them, in a religious manner. This is one of the most solemn acts of worship which can be performed; and there is explicit mention in it of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Here we may consider, in general, that the Son is put co-ordinately with the Father, which no creature ever is. It will also be necessary for us to

inquire what is meant by being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that so it may farther appear to be an act of religious worship. Some understand nothing by it but our being baptized by the authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or by a warrant received from them. But though this is sometimes the meaning of our acting in the name of God; yet more is intended by it in reference to this ordinance, otherwise baptism is not sufficiently distinguished from other acts of religious worship, none of which can be rightly performed without a divine warrant. According to this sense of the phrase, ministers may as well be said to preach the gospel, and the church to attend on their ministration, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; for these cannot be done without a divine warrant. Moreover, to suppose that the instituted form of administering baptism, conveys no other idea than that of a divine warrant, is to conclude that there is in it no determinate meaning of the action performed, and that the administrator is to intend nothing else but that he has a warrant from God to baptize. But the administration being made in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, seems plainly to intimate, as the principal thing signified, that they who are baptized are consecrated or devoted to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, devoted to God professedly, and called by his name, in the sense in which the phrase is elsewhere used in scripture. His right to them is hereby signified, and their indispensable obligation to be entirely his; and a peculiar acknowledgment is made of the distinct personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the concern which each of them has in our salvation. The apostle, speaking of our being baptized in the name of Christ, calls it, 'putting on Christ;r which seems to imply a consecration, or dedication, to him. Persons, as well as things, before this ordinance was instituted, were consecrated to God by divers washings, as well as other rites, used under the ceremonial law; and this consecration seems to be the sense in which the apostle himself explains 'putting on Christ;' for he

infers, from this action, that they who had so done were Christ's, not only by that right which he has to them as their Creator and Redeemer, but by another which is the immediate result of their professed dedication to him. This, therefore, is such a comprehensive act of worship, that it includes in it the whole of that subjection which is due to the Father, Son, and Spirit; and as the Son, in particular, is considered as the object of it, together with the Father, it follows that he is God, equal with the Father. We may add, that it would be not only an unwarrantable action, but an instance of the greatest profaneness, to be baptized in the name of any one who is not a divine Person. This farther argues that baptism is an act of divine worship. The apostle Paul, remarking that some of the church of Corinth were disposed to pay too great a veneration to those ministers who had been intrumental in their conversion, as though, for this reason, they were to be accounted the lords of their faith, and, in particular, that some said 'they were of Paul,' and being apprehensive that they thought the minister who baptized them had a right to be thus esteemed, not only reproves their ungrounded and pernicious mistake, but takes occasion to thank God, that he had baptized none of them, but Crispus and Gaius, together with the household of Stephanas, lest any should say he had baptized in his own name. Thus, while he testifies his abhorrence of his giving any just occasion to any, to conclude that he was the object of this branch of divine worship, he takes much pleasure in reflecting that the providence of God had not led them, through the ignorance and superstition which prevailed among them, to draw this false conclusion from his administering baptism, which probably they would not have drawn from any other's having baptized them who had not so great an interest in their affections as he had. This I apprehend to be the meaning of what the apostle says, in the passage refered to. And I take occasion to refer to it, as a farther proof of baptism being an act of religious worship, unalienable from the

Father, Son, and Spirit, in whose name alone we are to be baptized. And I cannot but conclude, as a just consequence from its being an act of religious worship, that if the Son were not a divine Person, we might as well be baptized in the name of Paul, or any other of the apostles, as in his name. He would never, therefore, have joined his own name with the Father's, when he gave the commission to baptize, if he had not had a right to it, as well as the Father.

It is objected that, though this ordinance, as it respects the Father, contains, properly, an act of divine worship, in which we consider him as the great Lord of all things, to whom divine worship, in the highest sense, is due; yet we consider the Son, as well as the Holy Ghost, only as having a right to an inferior kind of worship, in proportion to the respective parts which they sustain, by the will of the Father, in the work of our salvation. In particular, to be baptized in the name of Christ, implies, it is said, nothing else but a declaration that we adhere to him, as the Father's Minister, delegated by him to reveal his mind and will to us, and to erect that gospel-dispensation, which we, in this ordinance, professedly submit to. Accordingly, to be baptized in the name of Christ, it is inferred, is to be understood in the same sense as when the Israelites were said to be 'baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.' They signified thereby their consent to be governed by those laws which Moses was appointed by God to give them; on which account, they were denominated a particular church, separated from the world, and obliged to worship God in the way which was prescribed in the ceremonial law. Even so, it is said, we, by baptism, own ourselves Christians, under an obligation to adhere to Christ, as our Leader and Commander, who has revealed to us the gospel; by subjecting ourselves to whom, we are denominated Christians. To this they add, especially the Socinians, that as baptism was first practised as an ordinance, to initiate persons into the Jewish church, and was

afterward applied by our Saviour, to signify the initiating of the heathen into the Christian church; so it was designed to be no longer in use, than till Christianity should be generally embraced; and consequently we, being a Christian nation, are not obliged to submit to it, since we are supposed to adhere to the doctrines of Christianity, and it is needless to signify our adherence by this ordinance. It was upon this account that Socinus, and some of his followers, denied the baptism not only of infants, but of all others who were supposed to be Christians.—Now, as to the first part of this objection, that baptism does not signify the same thing when it is administered in the name of Christ, as when administered in the name of the Father, —this is founded on a supposition, that the Son has not a right to the same honour which is due to the Father. But this ought to be proved, and not taken for granted. It altogether sets aside the consideration that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are co-ordinately represented, as the objects of this solemn dedication. This, on the Anti-trinitarian hypothesis, tends very much to derogate from the Father's glory; for God might as well have ordained, that we should have been baptized in his name, together with the name of any of his prophets and apostles who were appointed to be his ministers in revealing his will to us, as in the name of the Son and Spirit, unless they are accounted worthy of having an honour infinitely superior given to them. Again, when it is supposed that our professed subjection to Christ in baptism, is nothing else but our consent to be governed by those laws which he has given us in the gospel, and is compared to that declaration of subjection to the law of Moses which was made in the baptism of the Israelites unto Moses,—this supposes that Christ is only a Lawgiver, that to be a Christian, is nothing else but to be professedly a member of a society which goes under the Christian name, and that to 'put on Christ,' is not to consecrate or devote ourselves to him as a divine Person. This is a very low idea of Christianity. The character of a Christian does not imply so much,

when assumed by an Anti-trinitarian, as when assumed by those who suppose that they are obliged to honour Christ as they honour the Father, or to submit to his government as truly and properly divine. A Christian, however, is not merely one who is of Christ's party, in the same sense as a Mahommedan, who adheres to the laws of Mahommed, is of his; for Christianity involves an obligation to perform those religious duties of trust, universal obedience, and love, which are due to Christ as a divine Person. As to the supposition, that, baptism being an ordinance of proselytism to the Christian faith, a Christian nation is not obliged to submit to it, this is directly contrary to what our Saviour says, in the words immediately following the institution of the ordinance, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;' that is, 'You may expect my presence with you in administering this ordinance, as well as in preaching the gospel, not only during the first age of the church, till Christianity shall triumph in the world, but as long as there shall be a society of Christians in it.' Even in fact, if Christianity were nothing more than a public declaration of our obligation to adhere to the laws of Christ, it does not follow, that, because we are born in a Christian nation, such a public declaration is no longer necessary. But since, as was formerly observed, more than this is implied in it, namely, our professed subjection to Christ, in a religious way, as a divine Person, the baptismal obligation extends much farther than to our being called Christians, and argues the necessity of our observing this ordinance, as long as Christ is the object of faith, or to be acknowledged as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his church, and, as such, the object of religious worship,—in other words, to the end of the world.

3. Divine worship is due to Christ, as he is the object of faith. We are to depend upon whatever he has revealed, as a matter of infallible verity; otherwise the faith of the church, especially under the New

Testament dispensation, would be built on an uncertain foundation. It will be objected, indeed, that whatever is transmitted to us by divine inspiration, is infallibly true, though the instruments made use of were not divine Persons. "When we assert that what Christ delivered was infallible, in a higher sense than this, we rather suppose than prove his deity. The Anti-trinitarians will not deny, that what he imparted was infallibly true, and therefore the object of faith; but they suppose, at the same time, that whatever was imparted to the world by the apostles and prophets, was equally true and infallible. They hence infer that the inspired writers are the objects of faith, in the same sense as our Saviour himself. Now I would not compare what was delivered immediately by our Saviour, with what was transmitted by those who spake and wrote by divine inspiration, or suppose that one was more infallibly true than the other. That which I would principally insist on, when I speak of Christ as the object of faith, whereby he appears to be a divine Person, is that we are obliged, not only to yield an assent to what he has taught us, but also to place a firm reliance on him, or trust in him, for all we expect in order to make us completely happy. In this sense we are to understand the apostle's words, when he says, 'I know whom I have believed,' or trusted, 'and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' This is such a faith, as no creature is the object of. Trust in man is prohibited, and called a departure from God. 'Cursed be the man,' says the prophet, 'that trusteth in man,'z or, by a parity of reason in any other creature, 'and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart' herein 'departeth from the Lord.' Trust is such an act of faith as is appropriated to a divine Person. And I cannot but observe that, when Christ is represented as the object of trust, there is something peculiar in the mode of speaking, which is never applied to any creature. His worshippers are said to 'believe in him.' Thus he says, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' Here he commands his people

to believe in him in such a way that their faith is accompanied with other graces, and argues him to be a divine Person.

4. Christ is the object of supreme love and universal obedience, which also are acts of religious worship. The former respects him as our chief good and happiness; the latter, as our undoubted Sovereign and Proprietor. We do not say that a person's having a right to be obeyed, or loved, or trusted, in a limited degree, argues him to be a divine Person; but when these graces are to be exercised in the highest degree, without any possibility of our going to excess in them, and when the exercise of them is inseparably connected with salvation, as it is often in scripture said to be, and when our not exercising them is declared to exclude from salvation, I cannot but conclude that they constitute religious worship. And it is certain, that our Saviour is often represented, in scripture, as the object of them.

5. The last thing that we shall consider, under this head, is, that he is the object of prayer and praise. That these are parts of religious worship, needs no proof. Some think, and the conjecture is not altogether improbable, that Christ's being the object of prayer is intended in these words of the psalmist, 'Prayer also shall be made for him continually.' This text might as well be rendered, 'continually made to him,' which agrees with what follows, 'and daily shall he be praised.' That this psalm respects the Messiah, who had a right to more glory than Solomon, appears from several things, which are said in it concerning him. I will not, however, insist on this; as we have more evident proofs in other scriptures. It is also foretold concerning him, that 'to him,' for so the words ought to be rendered, 'shall the Gentiles seek.' This mode of speaking is frequently used, to signify our addressing ourselves to a divine Person with prayer and supplication, for the supply of our wants. But we have yet more evident proofs in the New Testament. The Syrophenician woman's

prayer, which was directed to him, was, indeed, short, but very comprehensive: 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.'d Again, 'She came and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me.' Her act of religious worship was commended by our Saviour, and her prayer answered. Again, can we suppose any other than an act of religious worship to be contained in the petition of the man who solicited him to cast the devil out of his son, who said, with tears, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief?'f We are to understand that he desired that his unbelief should be removed, not in an objective way, by our Saviour's giving him more convincing arguments to confirm his faith, but by a powerful access to his heart, as the Author and Finisher of faith, which is the peculiar gift of God. Accordingly, he is considered as a divine Person, by those who thus address him.

We shall conclude by giving a few instances of short prayers directed to Christ, together with doxologies, or ascriptions of praise, in which he is sometimes joined with the Father and Holy Ghost, and the scope of which proves him to be a divine Person. The apostle Paul thus concludes his epistles: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen;' 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit;'h 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.' Each is a short and comprehensive prayer directed to Christ, that he would bestow on them all those graces which are necessary to their salvation, and that his grace may so govern and influence their spirits, as to fit them for his service. This supposes him to be the God and Giver of all grace. Again, Paul offers a prayer to the three Persons in the Godhead: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.'k He here desires that they would communicate those blessings which accompany salvation, by which the divine perfections, and in particular the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are demonstrated; and herein the Son is as much considered the object

of prayer as the Father, and consequently is proved to be a divine Person. We may add those doxologies in which praise is given to Christ; and which also exhibit him as the object of divine worship. Thus, Peter, speaking of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, says, 'To him be glory, both now and for ever, Amen;' and Jude says, 'Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever, Amen.'m Here it is plain that he ascribes this divine glory to Jesus Christ; for he had spoken of him in the immediately preceding context: 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life,' that is, for that mercy which shall preserve us unto eternal life, and shall then confer that life upon us. This, with a small variation of the phrase, is the sense of those words, 'Keeping us from falling, and presenting us faultless before the presence of his glory.' The very same thing Christ is elsewhere expressly said to do, namely, 'to present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.'o He presents it to his own view, as taking a survey of his workmanship, when brought to perfection, just as God is said to have taken a view of all things that he had made at first, when he pronounced them good; and, when he has thus taken a survey of his church, or presented it to himself, he presents it to the view of the whole world of angels and men, causing them, as it is said, exceeding joy. This makes it plainly appear that our Saviour is the Person of whom Jude speaks. And that he is so, is agreeable also to what follows. He is there called, as he is elsewhere, 'God our Saviour;'q which is a character corresponding with the name by which he was most known, namely, 'Jesus.' Another doxology we have in Rev. 1:4–6, 'Grace be unto you, and peace from Jesus Christ,' &c. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,

to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.' There are two places more, in which, to me, it seems more than probable, that doxologies are directed to Christ. The first of these is 1 Tim. 6:15, 16, 'Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen.' All allow that nothing greater can be said of God than is here spoken. Hence, the only thing denied by the Arians is, that this is applied to any but the Father. But to me, it seems very obvious that it is spoken of Christ; because he is mentioned immediately before. Thus, in the thirteenth verse, it is said, 'I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall show; who is the blessed and only Potentate,' &c. Here by 'his times' is meant that season in which his glory shall shine most brightly,—when, what he witnessed before Pontius Pilate, namely, that he was the Son of God, he will demonstrate in the highest degree, and when he will eminently appear to have a right to that glory which the apostle ascribes to him. The other scripture, in which a glorious doxology is addressed to Christ, is 1 Tim. 1:17, 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen.' A late learned writer, without assigning any reason, puts this among those scriptures which he applies to the Father. The context, however, seems to direct us to apply it to the Son, who is spoken of in the foregoing verses thus, 'I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;' 'The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant,'u &c.; 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;' 'Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a

pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.'y Having thus mentioned the great things which Christ did for him, it is natural to suppose that the apostle would take occasion to ascribe glory to him. This accordingly he does in the words immediately following, 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal,' &c.

Having considered the argument for Christ's deity taken from divine worship being ascribed to him, we shall proceed to observe the methods used by the Anti-trinitarians to evade it. Some of the Socinians, as though there were no scriptures which speak of him as the object of religious worship, have peremptorily denied that it is due to him; and have thought very hardly of their brethren who were of a different opinion, as if they were involved in the common guilt of idolatry, which they suppose his worshippers to have been chargeable with. This occasioned warm debates in Transylvania and Poland, where Socinianism most prevailed towards the close of the sixteenth century. Indeed, the method of reasoning made use of by those who denied that he was the object of worship, though it tended more to his dishonour, yet it carried in it a greater consistency with the Socinian scheme of doctrine, than the opinion of those who, while they viewed him as an object of worship, denied his divinity. As for the Arians, they do not expressly deny him to be the object of worship, but rather deviate from the true sense of the word, when they maintain his right to it. They speak of great honours that are to be ascribed to him, by which one would almost be ready to conclude that they reckoned him a divine Person. But when these honours are compared with those that are due to the Father, we very plainly discover that they mean nothing more by them than what, in consistency with their own scheme, may be rendered to a creature. Thus a late writer,a in his explanation of the text, 'That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father,' plainly

discovers his sense of divine worship, as due to our Saviour, to be very remote from that which is defended by those who maintain his proper deity. He says: "The meaning is not that the Son's authority should, like that of the Father, be looked upon as underived, absolute, supreme, and independent; but that as the Jews already believed in God, so they should also believe in Christ; as they already honoured God the Father, so they should also for the future, honour the Son of God,—honour him, as having all judgment committed unto him,—honour him, to the honour of the Father, which sent him, —acknowledge him to be God, to the glory of the Father." This is a very low idea of divine honour; for it is as much as to say, that as the Father is to be honoured as God, so there is a degree of honour which he has conferred on the Son, infinitely below that which is due to himself, but yet called divine, because it is given him by a divine warrant. Whether, in this sense, an angel might not have had a warrant to receive divine honour, I leave any one to judge. Indeed, nothing is contained in this sense, but what tends rather to depreciate than to advance the glory of Christ. But that we may better understand how far the Arians allow that religious worship may be given to our Saviour, as well as that we may take occasion to defend that right to divine worship which we have proved to be due to him, we shall briefly consider, and endeavour to make some reply to several objections.

To what has been stated, that a right to religious worship is founded only in a person's having the perfections of the divine nature, and that our Saviour's having this right is an argument that he is truly and properly God, equal with the Father, it is objected, that if God commands us to worship a creature, we are bound to obey him,—that, without considering any right which is founded in his nature, we are, by divine direction, or in obedience to a command given us for that purpose, to give divine worship to Christ,—and that evidence

of such a command having been given, is contained in the text, 'When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him,' which supposes that they did not worship him before, nor would have done so afterwards, without this divine intimation. Now, as to our yielding obedience to a divine command, provided God should require us to give divine worship to a creature, we do not deny that all the divine commands are to be obeyed. Yet this supposition is groundless; it is, in effect, to suppose what can never be; for God cannot command us to worship a creature, any more than he can discharge us from an obligation to worship himself. We might as well say, that if God should cease to exist, he would cease to be the object of worship; or if a created being had divine perfection, he would have a right to equal honour with God; as to say that it is warrantable for us to pay divine worship to a creature; for each of these is to suppose a thing which is in itself impossible. This will farther appear, from what was formerly said in explanation of the nature of religious worship. Adoration is a saying to a person who is the object of it, 'Thou hast divine perfections,' and to say this to a creature, is contrary to truth; and certainly, the God of truth can never give us a warrant to say that which is false. And if we consider worship as an addressing of ourselves to him whom we worship, in such a way as becomes a God, he cannot give us a warrant to render it to a creature; for that would be to divest himself of his glory; it would also disappoint our expectations, by causing us to put our trust in one who cannot save us; and it would place us among those who are justly reproved, as 'having no knowledge, who pray unto a god that cannot save.'d We must conclude, therefore, that since God cannot give his glory to another, he cannot, as is supposed in the objection, give any warrant to us to pay divine worship to a creature. As for the scripture referred to, in which God commanded the angels to worship our Saviour when he brought him into the world, it is not to be supposed that he had no right to divine

worship before his incarnation. If he be a divine Person, as the scriptures assert him to be, the angels, doubtless, adored him as such before. The only new discovery which was made to them, when he came into the world, was, that the second Person in the Godhead was now God incarnate. This instance of infinite condescension was to be considered as a motive to excite their adoration, but not as the formal reason of it. We are, on the same principle, sometimes commanded to adore and magnify God, for the visible displays of his divine perfections in his works. Thus the psalmist says, 'O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!' In many other scriptures, also, the works of God are represented as a means or motive to excite our worship or adoration. Yet the divine perfections, which are displayed or rendered visible in them, are the great foundation or reason of worship. We worship God because he is infinitely perfect; though from the visible display of his perfections we take occasion to worship him. In this sense we understand the worship given to Christ by the angels, when brought into the world. They took occasion from this amazing instance of his condescension, to adore those perfections which induced the Son of God to take the human nature into union with his divine;—not that they supposed his right to divine worship was founded in that event.

It is further objected that, as our worshipping Christ includes the ascribing of all that glory to him which is his due, it is enough for us, when we worship him, to confess that he has an excellency above the angels, or that he is the best of all created beings, as well as the most honourable, and the greatest blessing to mankind,—that he was sent of God to instruct us, as a Prophet, in the way of salvation, to intercede for us as a Priest, and to give laws to us as a King,—and that he has done all this faithfully, and with great compassion to us. These things, and whatever else he does for the advantage of

mankind, may, it is said, and ought to be, acknowledged to his praise as a debt due to him, and constitute him the object of worship; yet we are not to give him that glory which is due to the Father, as though he were a Person truly and properly divine. Now, while it is agreed, that that glory which is due to him, is to be ascribed; we humbly conceive, that the ascribing to a person of that honour which he has a right to, unless we suppose it to be divine, is not religious worship; or that to confess that those works which he has done are wonderful, and of great advantage to mankind, unless we suppose them to be such as none but a Person who has the divine nature can perform, is no instance of adoration. Yet all those works which the Arians ascribe to him, may, according to their opinion, be performed by a finite being; else they must allow the arguments which have been founded on them, to prove his proper deity. Again, if the works which are ascribed to him be considered as properly divine, as they are represented to be in scripture, it must not be concluded that he is to be adored, as performing them; but we are rather to take occasion from them, as was formerly observed, to adore those divine perfections which are evinced by them, and which render him the object of worship. The works of God are motives to induce us to worship him, and not the formal reason of worship. When, in the first commandment, God lays claim to divine honour, or obliges the Israelites 'to have no other gods before him, because he brought them out of the land of Egypt,' their deliverance, indeed, is to be considered as a motive to worship, but it is the divine power exerted in the deliverance, which was properly the object of worship. So in Psal. 136:1, we are commanded to 'give thanks to the Lord, whose mercy endureth for ever;' and in the following verses, there is a particular mention made of some glorious works which God had done: 'Who alone doth great wonders; who, in wisdom, made the heavens, and stretched out the earth; who made the sun to rule by day, and the moon by night,' &c. These and several other works there

mentioned, are all considered as motives to excite our adoration; but his being 'Jehovah, the God of gods, and Lord of lords,' as he is called in the first, second, and third verses, is the great foundation of his right to worship. This character is in itself infinite; whereas his works are only the effects of infinite power, and so only a demonstration of his right to divine glory. Now, to apply this to those works which are done by our Saviour,—if we suppose them, as we ought, to be properly divine, they are to be considered only as evincing his right to divine honour, or as demonstrating his possession of that true deity which alone constitutes him the object of divine worship.

But some Arians proceed a little farther, when they speak of Christ as the object of worship, and allow that honours, truly divine, may be given to him. Yet this, they say, does not prove him to be God equal with the Father; for he is herein considered only as the Father's representative, on whom the worship which is offered immediately to him, must be supposed to terminate; as when an ambassador, who represents the prince that sent him, is considered as sustaining the character of representative, and receives some honour which otherwise he would have no right to, or rather is honoured as personating him whom he represents. Now, whatever may be said to be done by an ambassador, as representing the prince who sent him, there is always something in the manner of his address, or in the honours ascribed to him, which denotes him to be no more than a subject; and it would be strongly resented, should he assume that honour to himself which is due to his master. Our Saviour, therefore, were he not a divine Person, but only the Father's representative, could not have a right to claim that divine honour which is ascribed to him. Nor have we any foundation in scripture to distinguish between a supreme and a subordinate worship, or a worship given to a person which does not terminate in him, but in another whom he represents. If there be any apparent foundation for this distinction, it

must be sought in those expressions in which Christ is represented as Mediator, as acting in the Father's name, and as not seeking his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him, or as referring all the honour which is given to him as Mediator to the Father. Now, when our Saviour uses such a mode of speaking, he disclaims any right to divine honour due to him as a man; in which capacity he received a commission from the Father, and acted in his name. But when the honour of a divine person is given to him, as God, though considered as Mediator, he is to be looked upon, not as representing the Father, or as transferring the divine glory which he receives to the Father, but as having the same right to it as the Father has, in as much as he has the same divine nature. We cannot, on any other supposition, account for those modes of speaking, frequent in scripture, in which the glory of a divine person is ascribed to him, without restriction or limitation.

Another objection against the argument for Christ's deity from his being the object of divine worship, is taken from his having refused to have one of the divine perfections ascribed to him, and having directed the person who gave it to ascribe it to the Father. 'He said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.' These words the Anti-trinitarians understand in a sense as if he had said, 'There is but one Person who is good, as goodness is properly a divine attribute; and that is the Father.' They hence infer that he alone is the object of that worship which consists in ascribing to him the perfections of the divine nature; in which sense we have before supposed religious worship to be understood. Now, as to our Saviour's words, 'There is none good but one, that is God,' they are doubtless to be understood in the same sense as all other scriptures which deny a plurality of gods, in opposition to the principles and practice of idolaters. But it does not follow that the Father is the only Person who is God, or the object of divine worship. This has already

been considered; so that all I shall reply to this part of the objection is, that the word 'God' is sometimes taken for the Godhead, without a particular restriction or limitation to either Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, and may be equally applied to them all. In this sense it is to be taken, when the being of a God is demonstrated by the light of nature; as when, from the effects of the divine power, we argue that there is a God, who is the Creator of all things. But this cannot, if we have no other light to guide us but that of nature, be applied to the Father as a distinct Person in the Godhead; for the distinction between the divine Persons is a matter of pure revelation. Hence all that our Saviour intends by the expression in question is, that no one has a right to have divine perfections ascribed to him, but he who has a divine nature; and whether they be meant of the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, he is denominated, 'The one only living and true God.' It follows, that when such modes of speaking are used in scripture, though the Father be called the one or only God, the Son is not, as a late judicious writer well observes, excluded.g As to that part of the objection which concerns our Saviour's blaming the man for calling him good, there are two senses given of it. One is taken from a different reading of the words, namely, 'Why dost thou ask me concerning good?' But it will not be much to our purpose either to defend or disprove this reading, since Mark and Luke read it, 'Why callest thou me good?' Passing this over, therefore, and supposing that it ought to be read as we generally do, the common answer which is given to the objection founded on it is, that our Saviour considers the man as ascribing a divine perfection to him whom, at the same time, he concluded to be no more than a creature. Hence his words are as if he had said, 'Either first acknowledge me to be a divine Person, or else do not ascribe divine honours to me; for then, by consequence, thou mightest as well ascribe them to any other creature.' By the same method of reasoning, had he conversed with any Anti-trinitarian, in his day, who had given divine worship to him,

and yet denied his proper deity, he would have reproved him for his mistake, arising from an erroneous conscience, as much as he does the man, whom he reproves, in the same sense, for styling him 'good.' That Christ does not exclude himself from having a right to this divine perfection, is evident from those several scriptures, formerly referred to, which ascribe perfections to him that are equally divine; for he who has a right to one divine perfection, has a right to all. Besides, he styles himself, 'The good Shepherd,'—a title which certainly imports as much as the expression, 'good Master,' used by the man referred to. And that his being the good Shepherd argues him to be the Fountain of blessedness, which is certainly a divine perfection, is evident; because he speaks of himself as communicatively good in the highest sense: 'I give unto them,' namely, my sheep, 'eternal life.'k

The Divinity of the Holy Spirit

Having proved the deity of the Son, we proceed to consider that of the Holy Ghost. Here we are obliged to oppose the Socinians and the Arians, though in different respects. The Socinians seem to be divided in their sentiments on this subject. Some of them consider the Holy Ghost no otherwise than as a divine power; and they call him Virtus Dei, or the divine energy, or power of acting, and seem to deny his distinct personality, as the Sabellians do that of the Son and Spirit. Others of them, convinced that there is sufficient proof of his personality in scripture, deny his deity, supposing him to be no other than a created ministering Spirit. As for the Arians, the council at Nice was so much employed in defending the deity of our Saviour, by proving him to have the same essence with the Father, that the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Holy Ghost did not come to be discussed. This doctrine, however, is universally denied by those who adhere to the Arian scheme. It is true that, as they do not

question his personality, so they allow that he has many glories ascribed to him, and agree in words with the scripture account of his character; but they are, notwithstanding, far from asserting his proper deity, any more than that of the Son.

We have already proved him to be a distinct Person. Nothing, therefore, remains, but that we consider him as having a divine nature. In discussing this subject, we shall draw our arguments from the same sources as when we proved the divinity of the Son, namely, from those divine names, attributes, works, and worship, which are ascribed to him. We have no occasion, however, to insist on the proof of the proposition, that he who is thus described is God; for we have done that already under each class of arguments in defence of our Saviour's deity. We need only consider the arguments as applied to the Holy Ghost. And,

I. It appears that he is God, equal with the Father and Son, from the same divine names being given to him which are given to them.

1. He is called 'God,' without any thing tending to detract or diminish from the proper sense of the word; or he is called so in the same manner as when the name is applied to the Father or the Son. Thus, 'Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.' Here he is not only called 'God,' but put in opposition to the creature. The words are as if the apostle had said, 'Thou hast endeavoured to deceive him by whom I am inspired, which is a greater crime than if thou hadst lied to me only.' It is objected, however, that it is not the Holy Ghost who is here called 'God,' but the Father, In defence of this sense of the text, it is supposed that, though the lie was immediately designed to deceive the apostles, or the Holy Ghost, by whom they were known to be inspired, yet it was interpreted by God the Father,

as an attempt to impose upon him through the medium of his ministers; for, in the character of ministers, the objectors regard not only the apostles, but also the Holy Spirit. Accordingly they thus argue: He who does any thing against God's ministers, to wit, the Father's, may be said to do the same against him. Here they refer to some scriptures which, they think, give countenance to their argument,—namely, Exod. 16:8, where Moses tells the Israelites, when they murmured against him, 'Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord;' 1 Sam. 8:7, where God says to Samuel, speaking concerning the Israelites, 'They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me;' the words of our Saviour to his disciples, 'He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me;' 1 Thess. 4:8, 'He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.' Now, how plausible soever this objection may seem to be, yet, if duly considered, it will not appear sufficient to overthrow the argument we are maintaining. It is true, indeed, that what is done against any one who acts by a commission, as a servant to another, is interpreted as done against him who gives him the commission. He, for example, who affronts a judge, or an ambassador, affronts the king whom he represents; or if an inferior servant is ill treated, in delivering a message from his master, there is always supposed to be a reflection on him who sent him. But I humbly conceive, this cannot be applied, as it is in the objection, to Ananias, 'not lying unto men, but unto God.' To make this appear, let it be considered, that here are two terms of distinction; and these respect either God the Father and the apostles, or God the Father and the Holy Ghost, or God the Holy Ghost and the apostles. Now God the Father cannot be said here to be distinguished from the apostles, so as to give countenance to this phrase, 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God;' because it is said, in the foregoing verse, that 'they had lied to the Holy Ghost.' If the Holy Ghost had not been

mentioned, indeed, there might have been more ground to conclude, that Peter distinguished himself from God the Father, or intimated that Ananias, in attempting to deceive him, attempted to deceive God who sent him. But even then the passage would not have fully corresponded with the sense of those scriptures which are quoted by the objectors as of a similar character. For though he who despises a servant, despises him who sent him, and he who despises a minister, when he is preaching the gospel, or despises the message which he brings, may be said to despise God, whose message it is; yet it does not follow that, if a person design to impose, in other respects, upon a minister, he imposes upon God who sent him. He may not disown the divine authority, or commission, which the minister has to preach the gospel, and yet may conclude that he can deceive him,—though he is sensible that he cannot deceive God, who knoweth all things. Again, let us consider whether God the Father be here distinguished from the Holy Ghost. To suppose this would make the passage say, 'Thou hast lied to the Holy Ghost, wherein thou hast not lied to man, but to God, namely, the Father.' Now, had the apostle designed to distinguish the Holy Ghost from the Father, and by doing so to deny his deity, he ought to have expressed himself thus: 'Thou hast not lied unto the Holy Ghost, but unto God.' This would effectually have determined him not to have been God, and removed any suspicion that by the expression, 'Thou hast not lied unto men,' we were to understand the apostles. Or if it be objected, that to have said this would have been contrary to fact, since Ananias lied both to the apostles and to the Holy Ghost, the words might have been, 'Thou hast not lied to the Holy Ghost, or to men, that is, not to them only; but thou hast, interpretatively, in lying to them, lied unto God, namely the Father.' Had Peter expressed himself thus, the sense would have been plain and obvious, in favour of the Anti-trinitarians, as well as agreeable to their interpretation of the texts quoted in their objection. But as the words are not so, we must conclude that in this

text there is no other distinction than between God the Holy Ghost and the apostles. Accordingly, the sense is very plain and natural; and is as if the apostle had said, 'Thou hast endeavoured to deceive me, who am under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is a greater crime than if thou hadst only lied to me, at a time when this honour was not conferred upon me; for thou hast committed a double crime,—thou hast not only lied to me, which thou oughtest not to have done, but thou hast lied to the Holy Ghost, and, in so doing, hast not lied unto men, but unto God.' Hence, it is said, that, Ananias and his wife had agreed together to tempt the Holy Ghost.' What is called 'a lying to him,' in one verse, is styled 'a tempting him' in another. This, then, seems to be a plain and easy sense of the words, which any unprejudiced reader would be inclined to accede to. And as scripture is written to instruct the most injudicious Christians, as well as others, I cannot conceive that modes of speaking would be used in it, especially in a matter of so great importance as this, which have a tendency to lead persons out of the way, by deviating from the common sense of words, and which, in this case, might induce some, by adhering to the most proper sense, to acknowledge the Holy Ghost to be God, if he were not so.

In another scripture the Holy Ghost is called, 'The God and the Rock of Israel.' Now, by comparing the passage with the foregoing and following words, it seems very evident that it is applied to him. It is said in the context, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.' Then we have an account of what he said: 'He that ruleth over man must be just,' &c. It cannot, with any colour of reason, be supposed that there is more than one Person here intended, who spake to the prophet. And as this Person is called not only 'the God,' but also 'the Rock of Israel,' he is plainly intimated to

be the almighty God of Israel; for that, in other scriptures, is the sense of the metaphor, 'a rock,' when applied to God.

Again, it is said, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' Here it must be observed, that their being called the temple of God, who is said to dwell in them, denotes the inhabitant to be a divine Person; for a temple, according to the known acceptation of the word, always implies a deity, and so is called the house of God. Now, he who dwelt in them, and on account of whose dwelling in them they are called his temple, is expressly said to be the Spirit of God; and the passage corresponds with what is said concerning him elsewhere, 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which,' or who, 'is in you?'u

2. In further proof of the Holy Spirit's deity, we observe that he is called, 'Lord.' This seems very evident from Isa. 6:8, 9, 'And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not,' &c. Here the person sending speaks both in the singular number and the plural, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' By the former expression, 'Whom shall I send?' he evinces his divinity, as having a right to give a commission to the prophets, to declare his mind and will to man; and this right, as will be observed in a following section, none but a divine Person possesses. By the latter, 'Who shall go for us?' he includes himself among the Persons in the Godhead; for, as has before been observed, when God is represented as speaking in the plural number, a Trinity of Persons seems to be intended. But that which we principally consider is, that the Holy Ghost is here called 'Lord.' This appears from what the apostle says in Acts 28:25, 26, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Esaias the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall

not understand,' &c. It cannot be reasonably objected, that the apostle refers only to the book of Isaiah, and not to this particular part of it. For though the words, 'Thus saith the Holy Ghost,' might be used as a preface to any quotation from scripture, as all scripture is given by his inspiration, yet the message referred to by the apostle was not only transmitted by Esaias to the church, but is distinguished from all the other things which the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. It cannot be supposed, therefore, that the apostle, when referring to this scripture, and saying, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by him,' means anything else than the Holy Ghost's giving him this commission. He, consequently, who gave this commission, or spake thus to him, is the Holy Ghost; who is, in the foregoing words, called 'the Lord.'

In another scripture it is said, 'We are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord;' or, according to the margin, 'As by the Lord the Spirit.' This reading is certainly as proper as any other, and is, by some, preferred to all others. The passage contains, therefore, at least a probable argument that the Spirit is expressly called 'Lord.'y

II. The Holy Ghost appears to be God, from those divine attributes that are ascribed to him.

1. He is eternal. In Heb. 9:14. it is said, 'Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself, without spot, to God.' I am sensible that, according to the opinion of many the phrase 'eternal Spirit' here signifies Christ's eternal Godhead, which is so called on account of the spirituality of its nature; and that it is designed to set forth the infinite value which the oblation he made of himself, in his human nature, to God, received from the divine nature, to which it was united. Now though this is a very great truth, yet there does not seem

to be so great a propriety in the expression, when 'the eternal Spirit' is taken for the divine nature, as when understood of the Holy Ghost. Christ may be said to have, by him, offered himself, without spot, to God, as implying, that the unction which he received from the Holy Ghost, was the means to preserve him from all sinful defilement,—on which account his oblation was without blemish. Indeed it was no less necessary, in order to his oblation being accepted, that it should be spotless, than that it should be of infinite value. I must conclude, therefore, that it is the Holy Ghost who is here called 'the eternal Spirit.' [See Note 2 T, p. 253.]

Moreover, his eternity may be evinced from his having created all things; for he who made the world and all finite things, wherewith time began, must have been before them, and consequently from everlasting. By this, the eternity of Christ was proved, under a foregoing Head; and that the Holy Ghost made all things, will be proved under our next argument.

2. His immensity, or omnipresence, is a further proof of his deity. This attribute seems to be plainly affirmed of him in Psal. 139:7, 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?' The import of these words is, there is no place where the Spirit is not. It is allowed by all, that they describe the divine immensity in a very elegant manner. It is objected, indeed, that one part of this verse is exegetical of the other; and that the psalmist, by 'the Spirit,' intends nothing else but the presence of God. But it is equally probable, if not more so, that the Spirit is distinguished from the presence of God, and consequently that he is a distinct Person in the Godhead. This interpretation does not make any strain upon the sense of the words; for the Spirit, as has been before observed, is often spoken of in scripture as a Person. It is not strange, therefore, that he should be mentioned as such in this text; and, if he be spoken

of as a Person, it is beyond dispute that he is here proved to be a divine Person

3. His deity farther appears from his omniscience. This perfection is ascribed to him in 1 Cor. 2:10, 'The Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God.' To search, indeed, is a word used in condescension to our common mode of speaking. We arrive at the knowledge of things by searching, or inquiry. But this idea is to be abstracted from the word, when applied to God. For him to search is to know all things. In this sense, the word is used in Psal. 139:23, 24, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me,' &c. The word implies, not the manner of his knowing, but the exquisiteness of his knowledge. In this sense we must understand it in the text in question; for while the Spirit is said to search all things, we have an account of the objects of his knowledge, namely, 'the deep things of God.' Thus he knows all those things which were hid in the divine mind from all eternity, and the infinite perfections of the divine nature, which are incomprehensible to a creature, and which none can, 'by searching, find out to perfection.' In this respect, the highest creatures, the angels, are said to be 'charged with folly;'b for their knowledge is comparatively imperfect. Besides, the manner of the Spirit's knowing all things is not like ours, that is, by inferring consequences from premises, in a way of reasoning; for it is said, in the verse immediately following, that 'he knows the things of God,' in the way in which a 'man knoweth the things of a man;' that is, he knows his own thoughts, by an internal principle of knowledge, not by revelation, or by any external discovery. Thus the Spirit knows the divine nature, as having it. His omniscience, therefore, is a plain proof of his deity.

III. The deity of the Holy Ghost may be farther evinced, from his performing those works which are proper to God only.

1. He created all things. In Gen. 1:2. it is said, 'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' Here, by 'the Spirit of God,' cannot be meant, as some suppose, the air or the wind; for that was not created till the second day, when God made the firmament. Again, it is said, 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens;' and, 'The Spirit of God hath made me.'d Some of the Arians are so sensible that the Spirit, as well as the Son, is represented as the Creator of all things, that they suppose him to have been an instrument to the Son in the work of creation. This, according to the Arian scheme, is as much as to say, he is an instrument of an instrument. Indeed, to say the Son created all things, as an instrument, has been proved to be an indefensible notion; but to say that the Spirit is his instrument is much more so.

2. Extraordinary or miraculous works, which are equivalent to creation, have been performed by the Spirit. The apostle, speaking concerning extraordinary gifts, which were subservient to the propagation of the gospel in the first preaching of it, attributes them to the Spirit. This he largely insists on, in 1 Cor. 12; and in particular, he says, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all.' Many who defend the doctrine of the Trinity, take for granted, that this passage speaks of all the Persons in the Godhead,—that it calls our Saviour 'Lord,' and the Father 'God.' Some of the Anti-trinitarians, hence, argue, that the Spirit is not God, because he is distinguished from the Father, whom they suppose to be called God. I cannot but conclude, however, that the Holy Spirit is set forth under all the three names. The works attributed to him,

notwithstanding the variety of expressions, are the same, and are included in the general term 'spiritual gifts.' I hence take the meaning of the text to be this, There are diversities of gifts, or extraordinary operations, which some are enabled to put forth in the exercise of their ministry, and which are all from the same Spirit, who is Lord and God, who has an infinite sovereignty, and bestows these blessings as he pleases, as becomes a divine person. This interpretation agrees very well with what is said, in the eleventh verse, 'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.'

3. The Spirit of God commissioned and qualified ministers to preach the gospel, and thereby to gather and build up churches, determining that their ministry should be exercised in one place, and not in another. This work is a peculiar branch of the divine glory; and no one has a right to do it, but a divine Person. A creature may as well pretend to command the sun to shine, or to stop its course in the heavens at his pleasure, as to commission a minister to preach the gospel, or to restrain the preaching of it. But the Holy Ghost is plainly said to have called and appointed the apostles to exercise their ministry in the first preaching of the gospel, after he had, by conferring extraordinary gifts upon them, qualified them for it. Accordingly, in Acts 13:2, he speaks in a style truly divine, 'The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.' In Acts 20:28, also, the apostle tells the elders or ministers of the church at Ephesus, that 'the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.' We read, likewise, of the Spirit's determining where they should exercise their ministry. Thus he commanded Philip to go and preach the gospel to the eunuch: 'Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.' At another time, the Spirit bade Peter, when he doubted whether it were lawful for him to do it or not, go and preach the gospel to Cornelius: 'The Spirit said

unto him, Behold three men seek thee; arise therefore and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.'h At another time, it is said, 'They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia; and they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.' Again, it is said, that the apostle Paul was ordered, in a vision, to go to Macedonia, and that he obeyed, 'assuredly gathering that the Lord,' that is, the Spirit, 'had called him to preach the gospel unto them.'k Nothing can be a greater proof than what these instances furnish of the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost. They relate to a work of the highest importance, and one which evidently proves his divinity.

4. His divinity farther appears from the unction which he conferred on. our Saviour, to perform the work of a Mediator in his human nature. In Isa. 61:1. it is said, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek,' &c.; and these words are particularly referred to, in Luke 4:18, 19, as signifying our Saviour's unction by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, it is not denied, even by those who do not infer his deity from them, that they are spoken of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly it is inserted, by a late writer, among those scriptures which speak particularly of the Holy Ghost. It would be a great strain on the sense of the text, to suppose that the clause, 'he hath anointed me,' refers to the Father, and not to the Spirit. As to the meaning of the word 'unction,' it is borrowed from the ceremonial law, under which the prophets, priests, and kings, were publicly anointed with oil, to signify the warrant or commission they had received from God, to execute their offices, together with the qualifications which were to be expected for the discharge of them. In this sense our Saviour is said to have been anointed by the Holy Ghost. He was anointed in his human nature, in which he was obliged to yield obedience and subjection to God; and he was authorised and qualified to perform this obedience by the

Holy Ghost. However difficult to be performed, it was, in consequence of the Spirit's unction, discharged by him, without the least failure or defect; and owing to the same thing, as we observed before, his oblation was without spot. The work was certainly extraordinary, and consequently the glory redounding from it, to the Holy Ghost, is such as proves him to be a divine person.

5. A farther proof of his divinity is that the work of grace, both as to the beginning, progress, and completing of it, in the souls of believers, is ascribed to him, as well as to the Father and the Son. That this is a work of God's almighty power, and consequently too great to be performed by any creature, and that the Holy Ghost, in particular, is the Author of it, we shall here take for granted, without attempting to offer proof. This indeed is not in itself a just method of reasoning; but we shall be led to insist on the subject, under some following Answers, and shall there prove the point in question. And if the work whereby we are regenerated and sanctified, and enabled to overcome all opposition till we are brought to glory, appear to be the effect of the exceeding greatness of the power of God, then he who is the Author of it is evidently the God of all grace.

IV. The Holy Ghost appears to be God, in as much as he has a right to divine worship. That none but a divine Person has this right, has been already proved. That the Spirit has a right to it, might be evinced, from his having those divine perfections which, as has been before observed, are ascribed to him in scripture. As he has the perfections of the divine nature, which are the objects of adoration, it follows that he is to be adored. If, likewise, he has performed those works which argue him to be the Proprietor of all things, the same consequence follows. And if all that grace which is necessary to make us meet for the heavenly blessedness, be his work and gift, it follows that he is to be supplicated for it; and to do this is a great branch of

religious worship. But this being only an improvement of, or a deduction from arguments already laid down to prove his deity, we shall inquire whether we have not the obligation of a command, or some examples equivalent to this, which will farther warrant our giving divine worship to him.

Some suppose, that the prayer is directed to the Holy Ghost, which is mentioned in Acts 1:24, 25, 'Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostle-ship.' The designation of persons to the exercise of their ministry, as well as the extraordinary gifts with which they were furnished, is peculiarly ascribed, in the book of Acts, to the Holy Ghost. It is supposed, therefore, that the disciples prayed to the Holy Ghost, that he would signify whom of the two nominated by them he had chosen to the apostleship, in the room of Judas. But this being, at most, but a probable argument, I shall lay no stress upon it.

I humbly conceive, however, that we have a more evident example of prayer to the Holy Ghost, in 2 Thess. 3:5, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.' It seems more than probable that the Holy Ghost, who is here called Lord, is prayed to; for he is distinguished from the Father and Son, and the apostle prays to him that he would direct them into the love of the Father, and enable them, patiently, to wait for the Son.

There is another instance in 1 Thess. 3:12, 13, 'The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, to the end that he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Here the Holy Ghost seems to be the Person prayed to; for he is plainly distinguished from the Father and Son, in as much as what is prayed

to him for, is that the believers may be holy before the Father, at the coming of the Son.

There is another scripture, in which it is still more evident, that the apostle prays to the Holy Ghost together with the Father and Son, namely, 2 Cor. 13:14, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.' In that part of this prayer which respects the Holy Ghost, is an humble supplication, that he would be pleased to manifest himself to them, or that he would communicate to them those graces which they stood in need of. As the church is elsewhere said to have 'fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' so here the apostle prays that they may have fellowship with the Holy Ghost. And how could he have prayed for this blessing unless he be supposed to have addressed himself to the Holy Ghost? Whenever any thing is desired, or prayed for, which can be considered no otherwise than as an effect produced by a free agent, the prayer or desire for it, is supposed more immediately to be directed to the agent. Should a person say, in presence of a disobliged friend, 'O that he would look upon me, that he would converse with me, or that he would discover his wonted love unto me!' though, according to the form of expression, it seems not to be directed to him, yet every one would suppose it to be equivalent to an immediate address made to him. Hence, for the apostle to desire that the Holy Ghost would have communion with believers, that is, converse with, and manifest himself to them, in performing all those works which were necessary for their edification and salvation, cannot amount to less than a prayer to him.

We shall now proceed to consider some objections, brought by the Anti-trinitarians, against the deity of the Holy Ghost. A divine person, they say, cannot be the gift of God, for that supposes him to

be at his disposal, and inferior to him. But the Spirit is said to be given by him: 'Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them;' 'God gave them the like gift,'p meaning the Spirit, 'as he did unto us;' 'Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' Again, the Spirit is said to be sent, and that either by the Father, or by the Son, 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name;' 'If I depart, I will send him unto you.'s Again, he is said to receive from another what he communicates, 'He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.' But this, it is alleged, is inconsistent with the character of a divine Person, who is never said to receive what he imparts to others. Hence, the apostle says, concerning God, 'Who hath first given to him?'u Again, the Holy Ghost is said to speak not of himself, but what he hears, when he shows things to come. It is hence inferred, that he did not know that which he was to communicate before he heard it. Again, it is alleged, that he is said to have a mind distinct from God, unless we suppose that there are a plurality of gods, and so more distinct divine minds than one. In support of this, the text is quoted, 'He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.'y Again, he is represented as making intercession, 'The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us,' &c. This, it is alleged, is an act of worship; so that he himself cannot be the object of worship, or possess those blessings for which he intercedes. Again, he is not only said to be resisted and grieved, expressions which, in an improper sense, or speaking after the manner of men, are sometimes applied to God, but he is said to be quenched, or extinguished.a This, together with other things said concerning him, is alleged to be not applicable to a divine Person.

These are the most material objections which are brought against the doctrine which we have been endeavouring to maintain. The sum of them all is this,—that it is inconsistent with the character of a divine Person to be dependent on, and subjected to the will of another, as

the Spirit is supposed by the objectors to be. That we may defend the Godhead of the Holy Ghost against them, we shall premise something respecting all those scriptures which speak of the Spirit, as given or sent by the Father, and then apply it to the sense of those in particular which are brought to support the objections.

It may be easily observed, that in several places of scripture, especially in the New Testament, 'the Holy Ghost' is often taken for the gifts or graces of the Spirit, and more particularly for that extraordinary dispensation, in which the apostles were endowed with those spiritual gifts which were necessary for the propagation and success of the gospel. These, by a metonymy, are called 'the Spirit.' I humbly conceive, that all those scriptures which speak of the Spirit's being 'poured forth,' are to be understood in this sense. On the occasion when 'the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word,' it is said, that 'upon the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.'c Thus we are to understand that scripture, 'We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost;' and this, 'The Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'e In the latter passage, the word 'given' is supplied by our translators, probably to fence against a weak argument of some Anti-trinitarians, taken from that text, to overthrow the eternity of the Spirit. But whether the word be supplied or not, the sense of the text is plainly this,—that the gifts of the Holy Ghost were not conferred before Christ's ascension into heaven. The passage is thus a farther confirmation that the name 'Holy Ghost' is sometimes used to denote the Spirit's gifts. Again, all those scriptures which seem to represent the Holy Ghost as in ferior to the Father and Son, some of which are noticed in the objection, may be understood as denoting the subserviency of the works of the Spirit, which also are called 'the Holy Ghost,' to those works which are said to be performed by the Father and Son. Now it is certain, that the subserviency of one work

to another, performed by different persons, does not necessarily infer the inferiority of one person to the other. We must, accordingly, distinguish between the Spirit, as subsisting, and as acting. In the former sense, he is a divine Person, equal with the Father and Son; in the latter, he may be said to be subservient to them.

But now we shall proceed, in consistency with what has been premised, to consider the sense of those scriptures which are brought to support the objection. The first is that in which it is said, 'Thou gavest them thy good Spirit to instruct them.' Here the Holy Ghost is described with a personal character; and probably the name is not to be understood metonymically for his gifts and graces. The meaning seems to be this,—the Spirit's efficiency in guiding and instructing them was a special gift of God conferred upon them. In this respect, though he was a sovereign Agent, yet he is said to act by the will of the Father, which is the same with his own will; for though the Persons in the Godhead are distinct, yet they have not distinct wills. Now, it is not an improper way of speaking to say, when a divine Person displays his glory in conferring a blessing upon men, that the display he makes of himself, and the blessing he bestows, are given. God is said, for example, to give himself to his people, when he promises to be a God to them. According to this mode of speaking, indeed, there is a discriminating act of favour conferred on men, which is called a gift; but this does not militate against the divinity of the Holy Ghost, though he is said to be given to them.

Another scripture quoted in the objection is that in which it is said, 'God gave them the like gift, as he did to us,' meaning the Holy Ghost. Here the phrase 'Holy Ghost' is plainly taken for the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; the conferring of which is called, in the foregoing words, a being 'baptized with the Holy Ghost.' This is particularly explained in the scripture, formerly referred to, in which

it is said, that 'on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.' What this gift was, we learn from the following words, 'They spake with tongues, and magnified God.'

Again, the phrase 'Holy Spirit' in the passage, 'Your heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' is explained by another evangelisth to mean good things in general, and so includes the graces of the Spirit which accompany salvation. He reads the words, 'Your Father who is in heaven shall give good things to them that ask him;' so that here the Spirit is taken for all those blessings which he bestows upon his people in answer of prayer.

As for those scriptures in which the Spirit is said to be sent, either by the Father or the Son, they are not to be understood in the same sense as when the Son is said to be sent in his human nature, appearing in the form of a servant, to fulfil the will of God. When God is said to send his Spirit, the word 'send' is to be taken in a metaphorical sense. Sending imports as much as giving; and, when the Spirit is said to be given, the language has a peculiar reference to the grace which he was to bestow upon them. By this metaphorical way of speaking we are probably to understand, that the Spirit, who was to produce the effects, is a divine Person; and that the effects themselves are subservient to those works which are performed, and which demonstrate the personal glories of the Father and Son.

Again, when it is said by our Saviour, 'the Spirit shall receive of mine, and show it unto you,' the words plainly mean, that the Spirit should apply those blessings which Christ had purchased by his blood, and so should show forth his glory. Still they signify the subserviency of the Spirit to the Son, only in working, or in so far as the application of redemption tends to accomplish its designed end.

As to the scripture, in which the Spirit is said 'not to speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak,' it does not argue, in the least, that he receives what he communicates; as if he were dependent on the Father for the knowledge of the things he is to impart, or that he has ideas impressed on his mind, as creatures are said to have. To suppose this is inconsistent with what has been before proved from scripture, namely, that 'the Spirit knoweth the deep things of God, even as the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man,' or as an intelligent being is conscious of his own thoughts, or actions, not by information, but by an immediate internal perception. The sense, therefore, of the text in question is, that the Spirit shall communicate no other doctrines, and give no other laws, than what Christ had before given in the gospel; or that what he reveals is the same which Christ had given his disciples ground to expect. So far from militating against the Spirit's divinity, it proves the harmony and consent of what is suggested by one divine Person, with what had been before delivered by another. As to the peculiar expression, 'Whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak,' it is spoken after the manner of men, and is no more inconsistent with his divine omniscience, or the independence of it, than when God is said, in other scriptures, to know things by searching them, or, as it were, by inquiry. These, and similar expressions, by which God is represented by words accommodated to our usual way of speaking in reference to men, are, when applied to the Holy Ghost, to be understood in a way agreeable to the divine perfections, by abstracting from them every thing which argues the least imperfection; and they are to be viewed in the same light when some expressions, agreeable to human modes of speaking, are elsewhere used, with a particular application to the Father, without detracting from his divine glory.

It is again objected, as we saw, that the Spirit is said to have a distinct mind from God, as in the passage, 'God knoweth the mind of the Spirit;' and that he is represented as engaged in an act of worship, or as praying, or 'making intercession for us, according to the will of God.' But it is plain, that, by 'the mind of the Spirit,' we are to understand those secret desires in prayer which are wrought in believers by the Spirit, when they want words to express them. They are said, instead of words, to address themselves to God, 'with groanings which cannot be uttered.' These are from the Spirit, as the Author of those secret desires which are known only to the heart-searching God, who knows the meaning of them, what it is we want. Our desires are hence called 'the mind of the Spirit,' as the Author of them, though they are subjectively our own mind or desires, which we want words to express. And when the Spirit is said to 'make intercession for us,' the phrase implies nothing else but his enabling us, whether in more or less proper modes of speaking, to plead with God for ourselves.

As to those expressions, in which the Spirit is represented as 'quenched,' or 'extinguished,' they are to be understood as a metonymy, whereby, as before mentioned, the gifts of the Spirit are put for the Spirit. When extraordinary gifts were first promised, the disciples were led to expect that they should be 'baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire;' that is, they should have the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, conferred upon them, and signified by the emblem of fiery tongues, that sat on them. The reason of this emblem might probably be, that, as a necessary qualification for their preaching the gospel, they should be filled with an holy flame of love to God, and zeal for his glory, as well as with the gift of tongues, by which they might communicate his mind to the world. This privilege, which they had received, the apostle exhorts them not to forfeit or abuse, so as to provoke the Holy Ghost to take it from

them; and the forfeiture or abuse of it is called 'quenching the Spirit.' This metaphorical way of speaking, therefore, must not be supposed to be inconsistent with his divinity.

The Practical Use of the Doctrine of the Trinity

I shall conclude my observations on questions connected with the doctrine of the Trinity with some inferences which more especially respect the practical improvement of the doctrine.

1. We may take occasion to observe the difference that there is between natural and revealed religion. The former respects the knowledge of God, so far as it may be attained without the help of divine revelation, and the worship which the heathen, who have nothing else to guide them but the light of nature, are obliged to give to the divine Being. The latter, which is founded on scripture, contains a display of the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is necessary to be known and believed; as it is the foundation of all revealed religion. The sum of Christianity consists in our subjection to, and adoring the Godhead, as subsisting in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. As the doctrine of the Trinity is eminently displayed in the work of our redemption, it is necessary for us to consider how it is accommodated to, and demonstrated by, all the branches of that work. The price which was given by our great Redeemer, has a value put upon it, in proportion to the dignity of his person; and lays a sure foundation for our hope of being accepted in the sight of God, on account of his obedience and sacrifice, which were of infinite value. And the application of redemption being a work which the Spirit, who is a divine person, has undertaken to perform, we have reason to expect that it shall be brought to perfection. Hence, they who are the

objects of redeeming love and sanctifying grace, shall in the end be completely saved.

3. As it is necessary for us to adore and magnify the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for our inestimable privilege in the gospel; so we must observe the distinct glory which is to be given to each of the divine persons for the work of redemption. Whatever is done by the Mediator to procure this privilege for us, is considered, in scripture, as taking its rise from the Father, and affording reason for giving him glory. 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' Whatever was done in the human nature, or by God incarnate, is, in a peculiar manner, the work of the Son; and a revenue of glory is due to him for it, who 'gave his life a ransom for many,' and thus displayed the highest condescension, enhanced by the infinite dignity of his person. And whatever work is performed in subserviency to the Mediator's glory, whereby the Spirit demonstrates his distinct personal glory, gives us occasion to adore him, in all the displays of his power, in beginning, carrying on, and completing the work of grace in the souls of men.

4. As to what respects that fellowship, or communion, which believers have with the Father, Son, and Spirit, it depends on the account we have, in scripture, of the distinct methods in which their personal glory is set forth. We have access to God the Father, through the mediation of the Son, by the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit. 'Through him,' says the apostle, 'we have an access, by one Spirit, unto the Father.' And our hope of blessedness is the gift of the Father, who has prepared an inheritance for us; the purchase of the Son, on whose death it is founded; and the work of the Holy Ghost, as bringing us to, and putting us into, the possession of it.

5. This directs us as to the way of performing the great duty of self-dedication, to the Father, Son, and Spirit; to the Father, as our covenant God in Christ; to the Son, as the Mediator, head, and surety of this covenant; and to the Spirit, by whom we are made partakers of the blessings promised. In all these, and many other respects, we are to have a particular regard to the Persons in the Godhead, correspondingly to the way in which their personal glory is set forth in scripture.

6. As the Father, Son, and Spirit, are one, though we distinguish them as Persons, we must consider them as having the same divine perfections, the same divine understanding and will, lest, while we give glory to each of the Persons in the Godhead, we should suppose that there are more Gods than one. Hence, though the Person of the Father is distinct from that of the Son and the Holy Ghost, we are not to suppose that power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, or any other divine perfections, belong, in a more or a less proper sense, to one Person than another.

7. The doctrine of the Trinity is of use to direct us how we are to address ourselves to God in prayer. When in prayer, we call him our Father, we are not to consider him in the same sense, as when he is represented as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we address ourselves to him, as the author of our being, the God of all grace, and the fountain of blessedness. Accordingly, the Son and the Holy Ghost are not to be excluded; unless we especially consider him as our Father in Christ, and so express our faith, with respect to his distinct personality from that of the Son and the Spirit. Though only one divine Person be particularly mentioned in prayer, the blessed Trinity is to be adored. Whatever personal glory we ascribe to one, as subsisting distinctly from the other, we must, notwithstanding,

consider the Father, Son, and Spirit, as the one only living and true God.

Thus we have gone through this great and important subject, and have taken occasion, particularly, to insist on the chief matters in controversy relating to the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and considered the various methods taken to oppose it, both by the Socinians and the Arians, and endeavoured, not only to defend the deity of our Saviour and the Holy Ghost, by inquiring into the sense of those many scriptures on which our faith therein is founded, but to answer the most material objections which are brought against it. Our having enlarged more on it, than we shall do on several following answers, cannot be reckoned a needless work; for much has been written in opposition to it, whereby the faith of some has not only been shaken, but overthrown. I would never attempt to speak of this doctrine, or of any of the divine perfections, without being sensible of the difficulty of the subject, it being such as is not to be comprehended by a finite mind. I hope nothing will appear to have been suggested inconsistent with the essential or personal glory of the Father, Son, or Spirit. I may reasonably expect that allowances should be made for great defects; for it is but a little of God that can be known by us. When we pretend to speak concerning him, it will not be thought strange if we give occasion to any to say, what we have the greatest reason to acknowledge, that, in many instances, we cannot order our words, by reason of darkness.

[NOTE 2 L. The Communication of the Divine Perfections.—When Dr. Ridgeley had so well exposed the inappropriateness of the word 'communication,' he ought to have entirely discarded it. He tries to invest it with a new meaning, but, in reality, renders it meaningless and absurd. His views—quite justly as appears—will not allow him to say more respecting the modus of personality in the Godhead, than

that 'all the perfections of the divine nature are equally attributed to, or predicated of, the Father, Son, and Spirit.' In using this language, he is on safe ground: he speaks consistently with the simple phraseology of scripture; he throws off the mystifying, pseudo-profound, and mischievous jargon of the scholastic theology; he is free from pretension to explain or define what scripture has not revealed, and what reason cannot comprehend; and he offers no premium and no incitement, by 'great swelling words of vanity,' to daring speculation, to Arian misconstruction, or to a man's 'intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.' But why does not Dr. Ridgeley content himself with the language of his direct statement? why does he translate it into a technical synonyme, and try to make it comport with the phrase, 'All the perfections of the divine nature are communicated?' The word 'communicate'—except when utterly explained away, and made arbitrarily to signify something altogether foreign to its ordinary acceptation—is far, very far from expressing Dr. Ridgeley's views, or harmonizing with correct conceptions of the divine subsistence. Followed by the preposition 'to,' it denotes a person's participation in anything by reception of it from another; and, followed by the preposition 'in,' it denotes his participation in it absolutely or by his own act. In both cases, however, it supposes the thing to exist before the participation takes place. One man communicates to another ideas or information; or one man communicates in a privilege which is common to a class. In either case, the object of communication, the thing participated, the information or the privilege, exists apart from the participant, independent of his causation, and prior to his act of receiving or enjoying it. Whether the words, κεκοινωνηκε σαρκος και αἱματος, may, as Dr. Ridgeley proposes, be justly translated, 'They bad flesh and blood communicated to them,' is more than questionable; but if they be so translated, they must be understood as affirming or

assuming that, abstractedly, flesh and blood are as extrinsic to the beings who 'communicate' in them, as the lessons of childhood are to the untutored intellect. Explain and restrict the word 'communicate' as he may, any writer who employs it to define the mode of the divine subsistence, will invariably convey to the mind of his reader some outline of the gross and egregiously wrong idea that the divine perfections were originally extrinsic to the persons of Deity. The simpler, the freer from technical terms, and the more directly accordant with the phraseology of scripture, any language on the incomprehensible or higher doctrines of revelation is, the more adapted will it be to edification, and the less likely to produce obscurity or phantasmagoria before the moral vision of a reader.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 M. The Sonship of Christ.—Dr. Ridgeley's view of the Sonship of Christ is, that he is Son as Mediator. He denies, not only his generation, but the eternity of his Sonship. The name 'Son,' or 'Son of God,' in other words, appears to him to designate, not our Lord's Deity, but his mediatorial person He is not to be charged, indeed, with derogating from the doctrine that Christ is God; he is not to be charged even with denying that those passages assert him to be so which call him 'Son;' but he distinctly maintains that the name in question does not designate him as God,—that it does not in itself, like the name 'God' or 'Jehovah.' affirm his Deity,—that it is generically of the same import as the names 'Christ,' Saviour,' 'Redeemer,' 'Mediator,'—and that it did not appropriately or actually belong to him till the date of his incarnation. His doctrine may, accordingly, be termed the doctrine of mediatorial Sonship.

Now, to what is this doctrine opposed? What view of our Lord's Sonship does it impugn and condemn? Dr. Ridgeley—if we conjecture his sentiments from the entire scope of what he says—

would at once answer, it is opposed to the doctrine of Christ's generation. All the antagonist views which he states, all the extravagancies which he enumerates, all the censurable definitions and expositions which he quotes, have reference, not to the Sonship itself, but to the mode of its subsistence. He deals simply with the question of the eternal generation; and, having confronted and despatched this, he arrives, per saltum, at the doctrine of mediatorial Sonship. Now, the real question at issue is not, Is the Son generated, or is he not? Does his Sonship consist in the mode of his divine subsistence, or does it consist in the hypostatical union of his deity and his manhood? but it is, In what person, in his divine or in his mediatorial, is he the Son of God? How long—from eternity, or merely from the incarnation—has his Sonship existed? In what sense —as designative of his deity, or as designative of God-man Mediator —is the name 'Son' to be understood? The mode of his divine subsistence may not once be glanced at; the manner in which he is divinely a Son may be pronounced an improper subject of inquiry; the doctrine of his eternal generation may be ranked among the dogmata of the Platonizing fathers, or the bold speculations of the schoolmen; and, so far from the doctrine of the divine, eternal Sonship, being impaired or surrendered, it will appear in greater clearness than before, and stand out in stronger evidence, and be maintained with firmer tenure.

Sonship and generation are far, very far from being correlative ideas. Scripture speaks of sonship by creation, by adoption, by a renovating divine influence, by a pervading moral affection, by reception of Christian instruction, by ancestral connexion, and by literal generation. We read in it of the son of a parent, the son of an ancestor, the son of an adopting stranger, the spiritual son of a Christian minister, a son of God by the renewing agency of the Holy Spirit, a son of God by the creation of a holy but fallible nature, and a

son of God by the creative and continually sustaining agency of divine power and beneficence. Thus, in senses all distinct and widely different from one another, a child, a remote descendant, a protege of benevolence, a converted hearer of a Christian minister, a regenerated soul, man in his paradisaic capacity, and a holy angel, or 'angel of light,' are all denominated sons. To say that the word 'son,' in most of these instances, is metaphorical, and has a figurative allusion to generation, is to beg the question at issue and to contradict fact. What resemblance to generation is there in adoption, in pastoral usefulness, in an act of creation, or in the sustaining manifestation of the divine power? Just one general idea seems applicable to the various and apparently conflicting senses of sonship,—and that is sameness of nature; and this idea appears to be the key to the very frequent scripture Hebraism of which 'son of the vine,' 'son of consolation,' and 'son of thunder,' are examples. The juice of the grape partakes the properties of the vine; a child partakes the nature of his parent, a descendant that of his ancestor, an adopted son that of his benefactor; a complacent speaker exerts the same influence as consolation, an arousing one the same as thunder; a convert homologates in principles and character with his spiritual teacher; a soul renewed by the Holy Spirit is 'a partaker of the divine nature' in knowledge and true holiness; and our first parents in paradise, as well as the unfallen angels, were created in the divine image. Sameness of nature with the objects to which they are allied, seems the only categorical idea which includes the whole under the name of sons. In the light of that idea, they are all styled sons, without violence to language, or extravagance of fancy; they all have sameness of substance, sameness of properties, or sameness of character and influence, with the objects constructively called their father. Yet how diversified are their sonships! How widely different in their origination, in their mode of subsistence, in the properties which distinguish them, and in the substances in which they exist!

Who, then, will say that, according to the inspired use of it, the word 'Son' always or generally, or, in more than one of seven or eight distinct modes of application, includes the idea of generation? Who will deny that it expresses any relation, however remote, however sublimated, whether vegetable, animal, moral, rhetorical, or divine, which simply developes identity of nature?

Now, when the word is used to denote sameness of nature amid such an extensive variety of objects and relations,—to denote this without allusion to mode of subsistence, or the law by which the sameness exists,—why may it not be employed to denote sameness of nature, apart from any human analogy, between two persons of Deity? A believer in Christ is a son of God, because he homologates with him in will and in moral principle; Adam in paradise was a son of God, because he bore his image in intellectual and spiritual character, and in dominion over the inferior creation; and the second person of Deity is 'the Son of God,' 'God's only Son,' his 'proper Son,' his 'only begotten Son,' because he is 'in the form of God, and thinks it not robbery to be equal with God,' and is 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.'

There is peculiar appropriateness in the epithets 'only,' 'proper,' 'begotten.' They show the second person of Deity to have sameness of nature with the Father in an eminent and distinguishing sense,—a sense exclusive of all creatures, and peculiar to a divine person. As he is called 'a Son' to denote sameness of properties, so he is called 'a begotten Son' to denote sameness of essential nature. That sonship among creatures which is highest and most dignified, is the sonship of a child. Believers in Christ are, in consequence, not only called sons, to intimate their bearing God's moral image; but they are said to be begotten and born to denote the dignity and value of their spiritual character and life. Now, the second person of Deity is called

'a Son,' to show that he has sameness of nature with his Father.—'the Son,' to show that he has that sameness in a way of eminence,—'the only Son,' to show, that he has it in a sense exclusive of all other sons, —'God's proper son,' to show that he has it as regards essential deity, —and 'God's only begotten Son,' to show that, as to dignity and glory and essential nature, he is God equal with the Father.

The doctrine of Christ's Sonship, when thus stated, appears to me clear, consistent, and scriptural; and is no more to be charged with the mysticisms and extravagancies of the scholastic advocates of eternal generation, than the doctrine of justification by faith is with the licentious inferences and expositions of Antinomians. Dr. Ridgeley, then, was far from being correct, when he passed, by one step, from the confutation of the mode of subsistence by generation, to the assertion of mediatorial Sonship. The doctrine which I have stated—the doctrine of divine or eternal Sonship—is that only which deserved or ought to have drawn his attention; and it is that which stands confronted to his views, and challenges them to the proof. He achieves nothing, except to shake off some idle dreams of the schoolmen, when he disproves 'the communication of the divine essence or personality to the Son.' He was to deal, not in speculations as to the manner of the divine Sonship, but with plain scriptural testimonies simply as to the fact. Eternal filiation, not eternal generation,—the fact, and not the mode of divine sonship, is what his theory principally opposes. What should be thought or an Anti-trinitarian who amasses daring, confused, contradictory, disparaging speculations of scholastic writers, respecting the manner in which God is three and yet only one; and who, after exposing their unwarrantableness and absurdity, persuades himself that he has disproved the fact of the Trinity? Yet the Anti-trinitarian would, in this case, act exactly the part, with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, which Dr. Ridgeley, throughout the greater portion of his

discussion, acts with respect to the doctrine of divine sonship or eternal filiation.

In one place, indeed, he notices the true question at issue, and attempts to show that Christ's participation of the divine nature is not the reason of his being called 'the Son.' Yet, in that very passage, he admits, or rather states, that the participation of his divine nature is the reason of his being called 'God's proper Son.' His words and reasoning are remarkable. "It is true," he says, "Christ's having the same nature with the Father, might be reckoned by some a character of sonship; as it contains one ingredient in the common idea we have of sonship among men. They, as sons, are said to have the same kind of nature as their fathers. So our Saviour's having the same individual nature with the Father, might give occasion to some to denominate him his Son. But though this may be the foundation of his being called God's proper Son, ιδιος υἱος, yet it is not his distinguishing character as a Son. For it would follow that the Holy Ghost, who has the same nature as the Father, would, for the same reason, he called his Son. But this is contrary to the scripture account given of him, as proceeding from the Father and the Son." Now, to say nothing of Dr. Ridgeley's rejecting the doctrine of the Spirit's procession, and, in consequence, of his not being entitled to assume it as true, and to adduce it as an objection, might be not have seen that what he says respecting the Spirit might have been said also respecting the Father,—that personal participation in the divine nature is equally, and in the same sense, true of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Either, then, that participation is consistent with exclusive and distinguishing titles, else the distinction of persons must cease to be recognised. 'In the beginning was the Word,' says the apostle John, 'and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Here, the affirming of Christ to be God, clearly proves that his title, 'the Word,' is a designation of his deity. But are

we to be told that, because the Holy Ghost also is God, either he too must be called 'the Word,' else the title is not divine? Christ's being called 'the Son,' while it affirms his identity of nature with the Father, at the same time correlatively affirms the Father's identity of nature with him. The general idea of sameness of nature is as truly expressed in the relation of father to son, as in the converse relation of son to father. This idea, apart from all analogy to relations between creatures, is what the personal titles of Godhead appear eminently to express. Accordingly, while one is called the Father and another the Son, the third is called the Spirit. Now, with an intellectual, an intelligent being with a being who is 'a Spirit,' what more exactly expresses identity of nature than spirituality. But though the third person of Deity is called 'the Spirit,' 'the Holy Spirit,' to show that he has sameness of nature with the other persons of Godhead, or that he is 'the High and Holy One,' must we, after all, conclude that his name does not designate his deity, unless it is applied also to the Father and the Son? 'The Father,' 'the Son,' 'the Holy Spirit,' are distinctive names of the persons of Godhead; they appear all to denote just identity of nature; and, in beautiful and expressive consistency, they exhibit the great fundamental truth of revelation, that the one only God is three in personality. But what comes of Dr. Ridgeley's concession that Christ's "having the same individual nature with the Father, may be the foundation of his being called God's 'proper Son?' " Would it not follow from this, too, that either the title does not designate his deity, or else it must be applied likewise to the Holy Ghost? Dr. Ridgeley sees no such inference from the title God's 'proper Son;' and why should he see it from the title 'God's Son?' Besides, 'proper Son' does not seem to be a stronger title than 'only Son,' or especially 'only begotten Son;' and each of the three appears to be an epithetical definition of the simple title 'the Son,' just as 'the Holy Spirit' is of the simple title, 'the Spirit.' If Christ's being called God's 'proper Son' is founded on "his having the

same individual nature with the Father," surely his being called his 'only Son,' his 'only begotten Son,' his 'well beloved Son,' or even simply his 'Son,' cannot be founded on anything different. If it be, there are two sonships,—one 'proper,' and one not so; the former divine and eternal, and the other mediatorial, and dating from the period of the incarnation. But as no party pretends that there are two, we must conclude that 'proper' or divine Sonship is what the name 'Son,' as applied to Christ, designates. Accordingly, just the same things, in the same connexion, are affirmed of God's 'proper Son,' and of God's 'Son.' 'He that spared not his proper Son, but delivered him up for us all,' &c.; 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,' &c.,—Rom 8:32; Gal. 4:4.

Dr. Ridgeley, when speaking of the second person of Deity, as such, usually calls him 'the Son. 'It is generally determined,' says he, 'that the Son and Holy Ghost have the same self-existent divine nature' as the Father. Again, when stating the doctrine of the Trinity, he says. 'We shall prove that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have distinct personal properties;' 'we shall endeavour to prove that the three persons in the Godhead, especially the Son and the Holy Ghost, are truly divine.' Is not his use of such language as this—his current and almost uniform use of it—an indirect, but conclusive, concession that the name 'the Son,' is a divine, and not a mediatorial title? How could he, or how can any man, speak distinctly of the second person of Deity, except by calling him 'the Son?' This name as directly and currently, in scripture, designates him, as the name, 'the Father.' designates the Father. The two names, besides, are strictly correlative. The first person of Deity is called 'the Father' relatively to the Son. and the second person is called 'the Son' relatively to the Father. To deny that 'the Son' is strictly a divine title, seems in effect to deny that 'the Father' is strictly a divine title. The two are correlative, not only as to their intrinsic import, but as to the manner

in which scripture currently employs them. If a difference be observable in the use of them, it is that the first person of Deity is less uniformly, or with comparatively less frequency, called 'the Father,' than the second person is called 'the Son.'

I shall now glance at Dr. Ridgeley's strictures on some arguments in favour of the doctrine of divine sonship; and shall take occasion to interweave with my remarks some objections to the opposite doctrine.

The first argument on which he animadverts is founded on the passage in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' He thinks he shall disprove this argument, if he show that the 'passage cannot respect the communication of the divine nature or personality to the Son.' But the question at issue, as we stated before, has reference, not to the doctrine of eternal generation, but to the doctrine of eternal filiation,—not to the manner in which Christ is the Son, but to the fact that he is the Son as God. What Dr. Ridgeley should, in consistency with his views, alone have attempted to prove, is, that the words, 'Thou art my Son,' are addressed to Christ, not as a divine person, but strictly and solely as Mediator. He is so far aware of the true state of the question, as to feel induced to show that other parts of the psalm are addressed to him in his mediatorial capacity. But what avails it to his purpose in what sense the context is understood, if the words themselves have reference to his deity? Because the context speaks of Christ as Mediator, is the name 'the Son,' therefore, not a divine title? On this principle of reasoning, there is probably not one instance of the application of a divine title to Christ in the Bible. Wherever even the names 'God,' 'the Word,' and 'Jehovah' are given to him, some statements are made in the immediate context respecting him as Mediator. Let Dr. Ridgeley's own arguments for the deity of Christ from his divine

titles be examined; and they will all be found to be based on passages which more or less immediately describe him as the Saviour. But what would Dr. Ridgeley have thought, had any one inferred hence that the names 'God' and 'Jehovah' are not strictly divine, and, as applied to Christ, designate him only as Mediator? Yet be himself reasons exactly thus with respect to the name 'the Son.' His remarks on that name, as it occurs in the second psalm, might all, without losing a particle of their appropriateness, be transferred to the names 'God' and the 'Word,' as these occur in the first chapter of the gospel according to John. All that chapter, especially the commencing part of it, speaks of Christ distinctly as Mediator; it seems to have the exhibition of him as such for its express or specific design; it professedly sets him before the mind as God-man, as the Word made flesh, as the Creator tabernacling in human nature with the creature; yet it ascribes to him the work of making all things; it describes him as the author of spiritual life, as self-existent, as eternal; and it applies to him the titles, 'God,' 'the Word,' 'the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father,' 'the Word' whose glory was the glory 'as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' If Dr. Ridgeley's strictures on the argument founded on the second psalm, be transferred to an argument of just the same complexion and probably of more force founded on this chapter, they will, to persons who acquiesce in them, prove indeed that the phrase 'the only begotten Son' designates Christ only as Mediator, but they will, at the same time, prove that the names 'God' and 'the Word,' and the ascriptions to him of divine works and divine perfections, designate him in the same way. Dr. Ridgeley's argument proves too much, and therefore proves nothing: it leads to the conclusion, contrary to fact, that names and ascriptions confessedly divine are applicable to Christ only as Mediator; and it hence presumptively proves that 'the Son' is, rather than shows that it is not, a divine title.

Dr. Ridgeley finds that the words, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' are quoted in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; and because, in the context of the quotation, Christ is spoken of as 'appointed heir of all things,' and as 'having, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than the angels,' he infers that the title 'the Son' designates him as Mediator. Now, just the same chapter, in the course of exactly the same argument, quotes two other texts from the Old Testament scriptures,—in one of which Christ is called 'God,' and in the other 'Jehovah.' Are we, then, to conclude that these titles also are only mediatorial? Exactly the reasoning, be it what it may, which applies to the quotation containing the title Son, applies to the quotations containing the titles 'God' and 'Jehovah.' The nature, the design, the contextual position of the three quotations, are precisely the same. What inference can more fairly follow than that 'the Son' is a divine title?

But Dr. Ridgeley finds, further, that, jointly with the quotation from the second psalm, there is a quotation of the passage, 'I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son;' and he thus paraphrases the latter: 'He shall perform that obedience which is due from him as a Son; and I will give unto him those rewards which are due from a Father, who has committed this work to him, with a promise of conferring those revenues of mediatorial glory on him which should ensue on his fulfilling it.' In vindication of the doctrine implied in this paraphrase, he elsewhere contends that dependence, subjection, and obedience are essential elements in the idea of sonship. 'The relation of sonship,' he says, 'always implies inferiority and an obligation to yield obedience.' He adds, indeed, 'I do not apply this, in every respect, to the sonship of Christ; which no similitude taken from mere creatures can sufficiently illustrate.' But, instead of not applying his notion in every respect, he ought not to have applied it in any. The idea of inferiority or moral subjection is just that part of

the similitude—for 'similitude,' Dr. Ridgeley confesses it to be—of sonship 'taken from mere creatures,' which detracts from the divine perfection of what belongs to Christ, and ought, in consequence, to he rejected. Inferiority and subjection, even among men, belong to sonship only in its infantile or immature condition; and at the period of manhood, they give place to independence and equality. Though love and veneration and deference never cease to be filial duty; yet personal accountability and independence of judgment do, and superiority of wisdom and power and resources may, supersede the inferiority and subjection of a state of childhood. Dependence or obligation to obey, in fact, is not a property of sonship, but only an accident. It belongs, not to the condition of a son as such, but to the condition of an imperfect, helpless, and erring being, who arrives by slow degrees at the maturity of his powers, and needs, in the earlier stages of his existence, to be fostered, corrected, and taught by parental wisdom and care. So far as mere sonship is concerned, the grand, if not the only idea, is sameness of nature. A child among men is subject simply because he is dependent; Adam in paradise and the angels of light are subject because they are creatures; and Christ as Mediator is subject to the Father, because he is incarnate in a created nature. Subjection seems, in every case, based on something different from sonship. While the idea of sonship is distinct and clear, whether we look at a child as possessing the same human nature as his parent, or at Adam in paradise as bearing the moral image of God, or at the second person of Deity as having the same subsistence and perfections as the first, the idea becomes confused and incongruous, as applied to any of the three cases, if we associate with it the notion of dependence. Subjection is one relation; sonship is another: the former is based on dependence; the latter is based on sameness of nature. Christ, as subject to the Father, is his 'servant;' as equal to him, is his Son. Speaking of him as Mediator, the Father says, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold;' but 'to the Son he saith,

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; and thou, Jehovah, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth.' As the Son, he sustains a character, and occupies a position, incompatible with that of a servant. 'Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant; but Christ as a Son over his own house. Every house is built by some man; but he who built all things is God.' Moses only occupied the house by appointment and under authority; but Christ built it and possessed it, as the independent, the divine proprietor. He, in consequence, 'is counted worthy of more glory than Moses; in as much as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.' The house is the church; and it is Christ's own,—his own by erection, by creation, by exercise of that divine power and wisdom whereby he 'built all things.' Dr. Ridgeley himself, with justice and piquancy, treats his ownership of the church as an evidence of his deity. Now it is 'as a Son' that he is 'over his own house;' it is as 'the Son' that he is 'God who built all things;' it is as a Son that his character and position are exhibited antithetically to those of a servant. Moses was 'as a servant;' but Christ was 'as a Son.' (Heb. 3:1–6.) Do we need further proof that the notion of subjection—a notion belonging to his incarnate state—has no reference to him as 'the Son?'

Dr. Ridgeley further finds the passage in the second psalm quoted in Paul's address at Antioch in Pisidia, (Acts 13:32, 33.) and applied to our Lord's resurrection; and he infers hence that 'the psalmist speaks of him as having finished his work of redemption,—at the time of his doing which he was raised from the dead, and then, in the fullest sense, he had the heathen for his inheritance.' Here, again, Dr. Ridgeley proves too much,—too much, at least, for his own cause. If, as he infers, David speaks of Christ as rising from the dead, or as 'having finished his work of redemption' when he became the Son, either there must be two mediatorial sonships, one dating from the

resurrection and the other dating from the incarnation, else Christ was not mediatorially the Son at any period previous to his death. How, then, are we to understand the numerous passages, in the course of his public ministry and of his conferences with the Jews and with his disciples, in which he calls himself 'the Son of God?' The words, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' were not, we are told, addressed to him as Mediator, till he had 'finished his work of redemption:' what inference, then, can we draw but that, on all the occasions referred to, he is called 'the Son,' not as Mediator, but as the second person of Deity? The quotation from the second psalm in connexion with the resurrection, is, according to our view of the sonship, consistent and beautiful. Christ, at his coming into the world, was made known to be divine by the miraculous conception; and before he went out of it, he was again demonstrated to be divine by his supernatural resurrection. On account both of the manner of his incarnation, and the manner of his triumphing over death, he was 'declared to be,' what he really was, 'the Son of God,'—the equal of the Father.

The next argument on which Dr. Ridgeley animadverts is based on the account given of Wisdom in the eighth chapter of Proverbs. He admits that by 'Wisdom,' we are to understand Christ,—and Christ as 'the Son;' and he attempts to silence the evidence which the passage affords of eternal sonship, by making it speak the language merely of promise or decree. He, in particular, quotes the clause, 'I was set up from everlasting,' and paraphrases it thus: 'foreordained of God to be the Mediator and head of his elect.' His entire reply is of the same complexion. Now, on his principle of interpretation, all things whatever may be said to have been 'set up from everlasting,' for all were foreordained of God. He virtually represents the Son as saying only what might be said by every mortal, or even, if it could speak, by every shrub and pebble. A Socinian, too, might seize on his principle

of interpretation, and explain away by it all the texts which affirm our Lord's eternity, and find in it ample sanction to his gloss on the declaration: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' But indefensible and mischievous as Dr. Ridgeley's rule of interpretation is as applied to direct assertions of Wisdom's, or the Son's eternity, it becomes absolutely absurd when applied to some contextual statements. The depths, the mountains, the hills, the earth, it is to be remembered, were all 'foreordained,' and foreordained from eternity. Yet Wisdom, or the Son, says, 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; when there were no depths, 'I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water; before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth.' All this, according to Dr. Ridgeley's rule, just means, that Christ was ordained to be Mediator, before the earth and waters and hills were ordained to be created,—that he was ordained in eternity before eternity. Surely the offering of so disastrous an interpretation,—the offering of it, too, as an only argument for harmonizing the passage with his views,—is strong incidental evidence, is virtually a direct confession, that the statements respecting Wisdom assert the eternity of our Lord's sonship.

Another argument which Dr. Ridgeley notices, is founded on Heb. 1:2. 'God hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also be made the worlds, who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,' &c. But so far from impugning the argument, as he thinks he does, he only states in a clear light, though in words of his own, the doctrine which it maintains. 'By the expression, 'the express image of his person,' says he, 'I humbly conceive is meant that, though his divine nature is the same as the Father's, yet his personality is distinct.' Now sameness of nature with the Father and distinctness of

personality, are just filiation or divine sonship; and they are affirmed of Christ both directly as 'the Son,' and indirectly as correlative to 'the Father.' 'The Son,' says the apostle, 'is the express image of his person,'—the express image of the person of 'the Father.' He is so, Dr. Ridgeley admits, not as Mediator, but as possessing sameness of nature with the Father, and distinct personality. These, then, and not his mediatorial properties, are the elements of his sonship.

Dr. Ridgeley next animadverts on an argument founded on the fifth chapter of the gospel according to John. But he quotes only one of about twenty verses on which the argument rests; and quotes it as though it contained the whole evidence appealed to, and without a hint that the pungency of the argument is derived from the entire scope of the chapter. No objection can be made to his comment on that particular verse. His views as to 'the Father's giving the Son to have life in himself,' are on the whole unexceptionable; but, in the connexion in which they stand, they are entirely thrown away: they afford no answer—though, in fact, no other is given—to the argument of his opponents. What we contend for, in appealing to the fifth chapter of John, is that, in a conference with the Jews, Christ asserts his true deity, that he does this by calling God 'his Father,' that the Jews understood him to claim divinity by his tacitly assuming to be 'the Son of God,' and that he confirmed them in their opinion by expressly calling himself the Son, and by claiming for himself, under that name or in that character, such honours as are due to Deity, —'that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.' Dr. Ridgeley, when he comes to treat of our Lord's deity, sees this argument in all its beauty, and feels it in all its force; and he expends paragraphs upon it in showing bow demonstratively it proves Christ to he God. Yet not a sentence which he so conclusively writes there, does not apply to the doctrine of divine sonship. He dwells with just emphasis on the construction which the Jews put

upon our Lord's words, and on his proceeding to sanction and confirm it. Now the words which they construed to mean his assertion of true deity were, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work'—for 'they sought the more to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God;' and the words by which he sanctioned and confirmed their interpretation, claimed for him only the name of 'the Son,' and correlation with the Father —'for,' said he, 'as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.' What can be clearer than that it is as the Son our Lord claimed to be divine, that the Jews understood 'the Son of God' to be a divine title, and that both, by appropriating this name and by asserting his correlation with the Father, he made and confirmed their impression that he claimed to be truly God? If the passage proves his deity—and who can doubt that it does?—it proves it only through the medium of his divine sonship; for it directly asserts that he is divine as the Son, that he is divine correlatively to the Father; and it teaches the doctrine of his deity as a corollary of the doctrine of his divine sonship. Nor is it an objection to say that it affirms some things concerning him which can belong to him only as Mediator. The chief of these is, that he has received from the Father the appointment or office of Judge; and this, so far from being affirmed of him as the Son of God, is expressly ascribed to him in another and mediatorial character. 'The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also,' says the passage, 'because he is the Son of man.' If 'Son of God' were a mediatorial title, the import of this statement would be, 'He who is the Son of God is constituted Judge, because he is the Son of God.' Who can imagine that so unmeaning a statement—'a matter is so, because it is so,'—was made by divine wisdom? Is it not apparent that 'Son of man' is a mediatorial title,—that it is antithetic to the title

'Son of God,'—and that the ascription of it to Christ, in assigning the reason of his being Judge, necessarily implies that, as the Son of God, he is, not the Mediator, but the second person of Deity? He has authority given him to execute judgment, not because he is the Son of God—for as such he is equal with the Father; but because he is the Son of man—for as such he is the Father's messenger and servant.

Dr. Ridgeley, under the form of an objection to his own views, introduces an argument in favour of our Lord's divine sonship, founded on those texts in which the Father is said to have sent his Son into the world. The argument does not, as his statement of it implies, rest on one text; but it is based on many.—in fact, on the current phraseology of the New Testament respecting the Son,—on all the passages which represent him either as having been sent or as having come. The Son is said to have become partaker of flesh and blood, to have come into the world, to have been sent under the law, made of woman, to have come in his Father's name, to have come forth from the Father into the world; and, in all such expressions, be is implied to have had pre-existence as the Son, or to be the Son in his divine nature. Dr. Ridgeley replies, that 'it is not necessary to suppose that he had the character of a Son before he was sent, though he had that of a divine person.' But the question respects not character, but personality. What we ask is, Does the name Son designate Christ's person as Mediator, or his person as God? Dr. Ridgeley's statement is ambiguous: he talks of the character of a Son, as distinguished from the character of a divine person. If by 'character' he mean a property, a quality, or a relation, be abandons his own view of the sonship, and makes it consist, not in our Lord's mediatorial personality, but in mediatorial properties or relationship. If, on the other hand, he mean by 'character' a person, what sense can be attached to the statement that 'it is not necessary to suppose that one sent has personality before he was sent?' He who

was sent is called 'the Son.' What can be a fairer inference than that he was the Son when he was sent, and before he was sent? Dr. Ridgeley himself very justly and pungently draws the inference in support of our Lord's divine personality. 'His being sent into the world by the Father,' says he, 'which is frequently affirmed of him in the New Testament, proves that he is a distinct person from the Father; for a quality, relation, or property, cannot be said to be sent as the Son is.' Yet it is the Son who is sent. What follows but that, as the Son, he had, before being sent, distinct personality,—that, in other words, he is the Son as to his divine nature. To tell us that his being sent as the Son has reference to a character, is to say that 'a quality, relation, or property,' is sent; or if 'character' be understood in the sense of 'person,' it is either to admit the pre-existence, and consequently the divinity of his sonship, or to deny the obviously true principle of Dr. Ridgeley's reasoning respecting personality,—that to be sent presupposes a person.

The texts in question, besides, mention adjuncts of the Son's being sent which seem decisive of the pre-existence of his Sonship. 'God,' we are told, 'sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.' Here was humiliation. Here was the sending of a glorious person in a nature, or with an appearance abasingly different from that in which alone be bad hitherto existed. All the meaning, all the appropriateness, all the force of the passage, are seen only when it is viewed as parallel to the declaration, 'He, being in the form of God, was made in the likeness of men.' Again, we are told, 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.' Here was the manner in which he was sent; here were the adjuncts of his coming. He who was the Son of God was made of a woman: he who was the Lawgiver was made under the law. But, according to Dr. Ridgeley's theory, these were not the adjuncts with which the Son came, but the circumstances which constituted him the Son. If the doctrine of

mediatorial sonship were true, the Son was not sent, but the sending of the second person of Deity made him the Son; or his being made of a woman, made under the law, constituted, not his being sent, but his assumption of sonship.

Dr. Ridgeley seems aware that his ground in opposing this argument is untenable; and he hence tries to show that the doctrine of Christ's mediatorial sonship is reconcilable with his pre-existence as the Son. 'If we suppose,' says he, 'that he had the character of a Son before he was sent into the world, it will not overthrow our argument. He was, by the Father's designation, an eternal Mediator, and, in this respect, God's eternal Son.' He forgets that he had used the argument from his being sent, to prove his divine pre-existence and personality; and he does not see—but who else does not?—that Socinians might now retort upon him and say: 'If we suppose that Christ had the character of God before he was sent into the world, it will not overthrow our doctrine that he is God only as a human Mediator. He was, by the Father's designation, an eternal Mediator and, in this respect, eternally God.' Besides, Dr. Ridgeley's purely figurative idea of pre-existence or eternal sonship, is utterly incompatible with the fact of being literally sent. 'If,' as he justly teaches, 'a quality, relation, or property, cannot be said to be sent,' how can that be said to be sent which does not exist at all, or exists only in purpose or by a figure? On the same principl that he talks of Christ's 'eternal sonship,' he might talk also of the eternal sonship of every ange and every redeemed soul. Angels and saved men were all as truly ordained to be sons of God respectively by creation and regeneration, as Christ was ordained to be Mediator. May it, therefore, be said, on the ground of the execution of the divine purposes respecting them, that God sent them, into the world,—sent them in the same sense in which he sent his Son? Yet monstrous and revolting as this conclusion is, it fairly follows from Dr. Ridgeley's premises. His

attempt to show that mediatorial sonship is compatible with the fact of the Son having been literally sent, only affords additional, though indirect evidence, that Christ is the Son as to his divine nature.

I shall here, from among a number which might be adduced, mention two arguments for our Lord's divine sonship, which Dr. Ridgeley has omitted to notice. One of these is founded on the words: 'Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended? who hath gathered the winds in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?' (Prov. 30:4.) Whoever doubts that these words describe Deity, and are not a general allusion to any imaginary god or power of the heathens whom they vainly supposed to have achieved divine works, may compare them with parallel texts in Job, Psalms, and Isaiah (Job 38:4, &c.: Ps. 104:3, &c.; Isa. 40:12, &c.); and he will there rind phraseology, the same either in terms or in import, applied in the same way as here, to 'Jehovah,'—to 'Jehovah, God.' What then, but the doctrine of divine sonship is taught or implied in the second clause of the question, 'What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?'

The other argument which I shall mention is based on Rom. 1:3, 4. 'Concerning his Son Jesus Christ, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' Here there seems evidently a twofold antithesis: 'made of the seed of David,' is antithetic to 'declared to be the Son of God;' and, 'according to the flesh,' is antithetic to 'according to the. Spirit of holiness.' As 'the seed of David,' our Lord was 'made' (γενομενου); but as 'the Son of God,' he was 'declared,'—'declared by a miracle,'—(ὀρισθεντος εν δυναμει) 'miraculously declared by the resurrection

from the dead.' Again, as 'the seed of David,' he was 'according to the flesh' (κατα σαρκα); but as 'the Son of God.' he was 'according to the Spirit of holiness,'—according to the divine nature (κατα πνευμα ἁγιωσυνης). If the doctrine of mediatorial sonship were true, there would be no propriety, no correctness, in speaking of 'the seed of David,' of being 'made,' of being 'according to the flesh,' antithetically to 'the Son of God;' for, according to that doctrine, all the ideas expressed In these phrases are elements in the notion of the sonship, and cannot be antithetic. But how consistent, how expressive, is the passage, when we view the sonship as divine! Christ, according to his human nature, was the seed of David, and according to his divine nature was the Son of God: he was 'made' or 'became' the former in his incarnation, and was 'declared' or demonstrated to be the latter by his miraculous discomtiture of death.

We now pass to a brief notice of Dr. Ridgeley's arguments in favour of his doctrine. Later writers who advocate it must feel surprise that he does not quote Luke 1:35. in its defence: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.' But though this text has of late been appealed to as the very pillar of the doctrine of mediatorial sonship, Dr. Ridgeley has perspicacity to see that, when viewed in that light, it is claimed more by the Socinians than the orthodox. He justly remarks, that 'a miraculous production is not a sufficient foundation to support the character of the Son of God;' and he might have added, that even if it were, it would render Christ the Son, not of the Father, but-of the Holy Ghost. 'The glory of Christ's sonship,' he concludes, 'is infinitely greater than what arises from the miraculous conception.' He sees too—as who may not?—that the word translated 'called,' means, not 'designated' or 'denominated,' but 'declared,' 'made known,' 'acknowledged;' and he reads the latter part of the

verse thus: 'That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called,' as he really is, 'the Son of God.' Why, then, we ask, did he not adopt the doctrine of divine sonship? No inference can appear to follow more fairly from premises, than this doctrine does from his remarks and reasoning. Yet he evades it; and, in its stead, adopts the conclusion that Christ is the Son of God by the union of the divine and the human natures. But what was the formation of that union? Was it not the incarnation,—the miraculous conception,—the very event which the passage in question records? But if the formation of the union, or the union in its stupendous and supernatural commencement, was 'not a sufficient foundation to support the character of the sonship of God,' how could the union itself, or the union as perpetuated, be 'a sufficient foundation?' The text in Luke, even in the light of Dr. Ridgeley's own exposition of it, appears to be strictly parallel to that at which I last glanced. Christ, as to his human nature, was the son of Mary; but, as to his divine nature he was the Son of God. His being 'made of a woman' was evidence that he was truly man; but his human nature being miraculously conceived by the Holy Ghost, has evidence that he pre-existed and is truly God. Because he was born of the Virgin, he should be acknowledged as the Son of man, and because he had miraculous evidence of incarnation, he should he acknowledged as the Son of God. The complexion of his advent to our world, just like that of his rising from the dead, miraculously declared him to be divine. The display or demonstration, in either case, of his sonship, was the display or demonstration of his deity.

Dr. Ridgeley's arguments in favour of the doctrine of mediatorial sonship—though he seems to menace us with them by the hundred, and to talk as if one existed in every text of the New Testament which speaks of Christ as the Son—are of only two classes, or, more properly, are just two in number, each being based on a class of texts.

His first argument rests on the numerous passages in which our Lord is called, 'the Christ, the Son of God.' The instances which he quotes, and separately comments on, are so closely akin OI rather identical in nature, that two—the first and second which he adduces—develop all the argument from the whole. 'Peter's confession,' says he, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' speaks of our Lord as Christ, or the Mediator, that is, as the person who was invested in the office, and came to perform the work of the Mediator; and, as such, it calls him 'the Son of the living God.' Now the name, 'the Christ,' according to Dr. Ridgeley's own showing and agreeably to general consent, means just 'the Mediator.' Yet, this, too, is what, according to his argument, the title, 'the Son of the living God,' means. He, hence, represents Peter as uttering this extraordinary tautology: 'Thou art the Mediator, the Mediator;' or, 'Thou art the Messiah, the Messiah.' But let the title, 'the Son of God,' be understood as designating our Lord's deity, and the confession is consistent and expressive: 'Thou art the Mediator, the true God'—'Thou art the Redeemer of men, the Creator of the ends of the earth.' The question of the High Priest, and our Lord's answer to it, are exactly parallel to Peter's confession. 'So,' says Dr. Ridgeley, when the High Priest asked our Saviour, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?' his question means, 'Art thou the Messiah, as thou art supposed to be by thy followers?' Here, according to Dr. Ridgeley, is the same tautology as before: 'Art thou the Christ, the Christ?' or, 'Art thou the Messiah, the Messiah?' In this instance, however, he is not satisfied with one tautology; but proceeds to elicit another. 'Our Saviour,' says he, 'replied to him,' 'Thou hast said,' that is, 'It is as thou hast said;' and then he describes himself in another character, by winch he is often represented, namely, as Mediator, and speaks of the highest degree of his mediatorial glory to which he shall be advanced at his second coming: 'Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power.' Now, might not Dr.

Ridgeley have seen that as the character in which our Lord proceeds to speak of himself is that of 'the Son of man,' and that as this is 'another character' from that in which the High Priest had spoken of him,—'another character' from that of 'the Son of God,'—both cannot he identified with the character of Mediator? Might he not have inferred also, that the title, 'the Son of man,' being, according to his own showing, designative of our Lord as Mediator, the title, 'the Son of God,' must be designative of him as a person of the Godhead? Besides, the High Priest would not have charged him with blasphemy, for calling himself the Messiah. The Jews, from the greatest to the least of them, gave a ready, a credulous hearing to almost any one who claimed to be the Christ; and whenever they charged our Lord with blasphemy, they viewed him, and viewed him rightly, as claiming to be divine. But the High Priest and all the multitude which stood before him, when Jesus avowed himself to be the Son of God, exclaimed. 'He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses?' 'Here,' says Dr. Ridgeley, when treating of our Lord's deity and conclusively proving that great doctrine from this passage. 'Here our Lord was asked. Whether be were the Christ, the Son of God? that is the Messiah, whom the Jews expected, who governed his Church of old, and whom they acknowledged to be a divine person or the Son of God; and here he asserts himself to be the Son of God, and to have a right to the glory of a divine person.' (See Sect on. 'Proofs of Christ's Deity from his own statements.') How sound is this statement—how conclusive the inference which it embodies—but how incompatible with the doctrine of mediatorial sonship! II Christ asserted his deity at all—and the High Priest, the multitude of Jewish spectators, and Dr. Ridgeley himself, all understood him to assert it—he assented it only by avowing himself to be the Son of God. He was divine, he had a distinct character from that of Mediator, he bad pre-existence. he had supreme glory, he urged a claim which the High Priest unbelievingly and wickedly

pronounced blasphemous, he asserted himself to be equal with the Father, simply by calling himself 'the Son.' The remarks we have now made apply in substance to all the texts, noticed or not noticed by Dr. Ridgeley, in which the titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' jointly occur.

Dr. Ridgeley's second or remaining argument in favour of the doctrine of mediatorial sonship, is based on the class of texts which speak of Christ as Mediator, and at the same time call him the Son. We do not need to notice any of the particular examples which he selects for illustration. The entire principle of his argument is wrong and indefensible, and is again and again, both overtly and practically, refuted by himself. Almost every line of his very correct statement of the personal work of the Son, in his section on 'the Economy of Persons in the Godhead,' might be quoted in refutation. Nearly all his reasonings to prove our Lord's deity also set it at defiance. If, in fact, 'the Son of God' were not a divine title because some passages in which it occurs speak of Christ as Mediator, almost every application to him of a divine title in the New Testament, and almost every ascription to him of divine perfections, divine works, or divine worship, would, for the same reason, be annulled or silenced. Christ as Mediator, is properly designated either by a divine title, or by a title descriptive of his humanity: for, as Mediator, he is both God and man. All we can infer as to the quality of a title when applied to him in that character, must be learned from the context, from internal evidence, or from other passages in which it occurs; and, according to the evidence thence elicited, it may strictly designate our Lord as God, or describe him as the Messiah, or refer to his human nature or incarnate stale. To infer that a title is mediatorial which occurs in connexion with statements of mediatorial works or office, is to set at defiance the strong, manifold, conclusive evidence that 'the Word,' 'God,' 'Jehovah,' as applied to Christ, are divine titles. Son of God is proved by other scriptures, just as these titles are, to designate our

Lord's deity; and when found, as they are, in texts which speak of him as Mediator, it must, like them, be understood in its legitimate or ordinary sense. In the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, to which we had already occasion to refer, we have a fair example: Christ is there spoken of as Mediator, and he is designated 'the Son.' 'God,' and 'Jehovah.'

I shall close my remarks on our Lord's sonship with a brief historical statement,—designed not as an argument, but only as an illustration, or as incidental corroborative testimony. Of the ten extant creeds of the period preceding the fourth century, one speaks relatively of the Son, mentioning 'Jesus Christ,' and calling God 'his Father;' another reads 'the Son;' two read 'his Son,' two read 'the Son of God;' one reads 'his Son, the Word. Son of man and Son of God;' another reads 'Jesus Christ, the Lord, truly human and truly divine;' and another reads, 'the only begotten Son, the living and irresistible Word, the only Son of the only Father, God of God.' The original harmonies of the ten creeds seem all to have read, 'his only begotten Son;' and all the Greek copies of the Apostles' Creed, or those used in the oriental churches, retain this reading to the present day.

The Jews, the apostles, and all the early Christians, appear to have understood this phrase, or and language analogous to it, to assert our Lord's true deity. To confess Jesus to be 'the Son of God,' was to acknowledge his supreme power and authority, and his perfect equality with the Father; just as to confess him to be 'the Christ,' was to acknowledge his being of the seed of David, and the Saviour of the world. When, on one occasion, he said to the Jews, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' they 'sought to kill him,' assigning as the reason of their malice, that 'he said God was his Father, making himself equal with God;' and when, on a subsequent occasion, they actually took up stones to stone him for calling himself the Son of

God, they remarked, in answer to a remonstrance from him, 'For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.' All the early Christians and primitive churches appear to have understood, in the same way, that 'the Son,' and especially 'the only Son,' and 'the only begotten Son,' are strictly appellations of Deity. Novatus, the founder of the evangelical sect of the Novatians, and the author of a work on the doctrine of the Trinity which was highly appreciated during centuries after he wrote, says. 'As our Saviour's being the Son of man declares his humanity, so his being the Son of God is an undeniable proof of his divinity;' again, 'He is not only a man because the Son of man, but he is also God because the Son of God.' Cyril of Jerusalem, who wrote about the year 370. who, indeed, had so far Platonized as to speculate on the modus of the sonship, and find adopted the notion of generation, but who, nevertheless, is a witness as to belief in the fact of divine sonship—says. 'When thou hearest Christ called a Son, do not think him to be an adopted Son, but a Son by nature, an only begotten Son; for he is called the only begotten, because there is none like him as to either the dignity of his deity, or his generation from the Father.' Athanasius, who wrote a little before Cyril, and in circumstances similar to his, says, 'We believe in one only begotten Word, born of the Father, without beginning of time, from all eternity, being not a division from the impassible nature, or an emission, but a perfect Son.' Several other of the early Christian authors write exactly the same sentiments; and though, like Cyril and Athanasius, they unwarrantably venture to speak, in an expository way of the scriptural epithet 'begotten,' they are not to be viewed as having on less secure ground maintained the fact of divine sonship, because they unadvisedly speculated as to its manner. Even the Arians, after discarding other evidences of our Lord's divine dignity, admitted the names 'Son' and 'only begotten Son' to prove his being 'like God.' These names were a grand defence, on the part of the

orthodox, against their heresy. The use and exposition and admitted force of the names, not only prevented Arianism from degenerating into such a system as modern Socinianism, but obliged it to rise higher and higher in definitions of the Son's dignity, till it finally merged in orthodoxy, or was abandoned by its followers.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 N. The Spirit of Adoption.—The rule which Dr. Ridgeley proposes to be observed in translating phrases which mention the Spirit, is sound and important; hut does not seem to apply to the principal instance which he adduces for illustration. 'The Spirit itself,' αυτο το πνευμα, in Rom. 8:16, may be translated. 'This very Spirit,' 'the same Spirit,' or 'that Spirit;' and clearly refers to 'the Spirit of adoption,' πνευμα υίοθεσιας, mentioned in the preceding verse. Now, 'the Spirit of adoption,' or rather 'the Spirit of sonship,' is antithetic to 'the spirit of bondage,' or 'the spirit of servitude, πνευμα δουλειας. The believers to whom Paul wrote had 'not received the spirit of servitude again lo fear.'—to crouch and be in terror like slaves; hut they had 'received the Spirit of sonship. whereby they cried, Abba, Father,'—rejoicing and obeying like children. The 'spirit' from which they had been delivered was 'the old man,' 'the flesh,' 'the carnal mind,' the unregenerated, earthly, corrupt natural character; and the 'Spirit' by which they had become animated was 'the new man,' the spiritual mind, 'the new creature,' the holy, heavenly, devotional, filial character of the renovated soul. 'This Spirit'—which distinguished them as sons, and embodied the dispositions and hopes and joys of children—'cried, Abba, Father;' and bore witness with their spirit, τῳ πνευματι ἠμων, with their own mind, with their intellectual consciousness, 'that they were the children of God.'

The 'Spirit of sonship' is unquestionably produced and sustained by the Holy Spirit; but is not the Holy Spirit himself. The phrase is just one of the frequent and expressive metonymies of the New

Testament, by which the cause is put for the effect.—the agent for his work,—the Holy Spirit for the graces he bestows and the dispositions he creates. The metonomy occurs in a strong form in Gal. 4:6: 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of God's Son, because he testifies of him in his word and by his operations, and because he subdues souls to his authority, and maintains in them obedience to his faith; but, in the passage in question, he seems clearly to be spoken of metonymically for the effects he produces, or the hopes and affections which he originates and sustains. It by the Spirit of God's Son we understand the Holy Spirit personally, we have the assertion that he, not the new man which he creates, not the element of Spirit sonship which he sustains, cries, 'Abba, Father.' But as the nature of the case, and the parallel text in Romans, prove that the spiritual child is what cries 'Abba, Father,' we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is spoken of, not personally, but as represented by his work in the believing soul.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 O. Substitution of 'Lord' for 'Jehovah.'—There seems good reason why 'Jehovah' in the Old Testament is translated 'Lord' in the New. The language of the inspired writers of the New Testament was Hellenistic Greek. It was such Greek as the Jews understood and spoke,—the Greek of the Septuagint; and this language did not contain the word Jehovah, but substituted for it the word Κυριος. Besides, even classical Greek contained neither a word, nor proper elements for forming one, which might have strictly represented the word 'Jehovah.' The substitution of this name by Κυριος is not different, in principle or effect, from the substitution of אלהים by Θεος. The latter name in Hebrew has its peculiar and expressive meaning as truly as the name יהרה; indeed, additional to its distinguishing radical significancy, it possesses a shade of meaning

of no small importance connected with its plural form. Yet this name is uniformly translated Θεος, for the simple reason that, among exiting vocables of the Greek language, or vocables which might have been framed from its elements, that word most nearly expressed the requisite idea. Apparently for just the same reason, יהרה is translated Κυριος. In three instances, indeed, (Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8.) that name is actually used in the New Testament,—used according to its peculiar and distinguishing significancy,—but used in the form of a periphrasis, probably the only form in which the Greek language admitted of its being expressed. But while 'he who is, and who was, and who is to come, is a suitable description, it cannot, properly be used as an appellation; and hence does not, in general, take the place occupied by the single word, 'Lord.'—ED.]

[NOTE: 2 P. The Angel Jehovah.—Dr. Ridgeley, instead of discussing the texts respecting 'the Angel of the Lord' in answer to an objection, might have advantageously employed them as the basis of positive and strong arguments. Not only do they afford no colour to the allegation that the name 'Jehovah' is applied to a created angel, but they furnish direct and manifold evidence of our Lord's true deity. The words מלאד יהוח, viewed apart from collocation or context, are capable of being translated either 'the angel of Jehovah,' or 'the Angel Jehovah.' מלאך is a masculine, singular noun, not subject to change when joined to a pronominal suffix or to a governing noun. Hence when it and יהרה occur together, the context alone must determine whether they are not nouns in apposition,—appellatives, the one official and the other essential, of the same person. Now, the person to whom they are applied is uniformly spoken of in terms which are utterly inapplicable to a creature. No created angel is ever introduced to our notice in such a distinguishing and glorious manner as he. Works are frequently ascribed to him, the performance of which implies omnipotence. His name, as in the

narrative of his wrestling with Jacob, of his appearance to Manoah. and his manifestation to Moses, is used interchangeably with the name אלהים; and in the last of these instances, as well as in two others, (Judges 6:11–16; 2:1–5.) is used interchangeably also with the name 'Jehovah.' On these grounds, we cannot but infer that he is not a created angel,—that he is truly a divine person,—that the nouns יהרה and מלאך, which designate him, are placed in apposition, the one denoting him in his deity, and the other denoting him in his office.

While 'the Angel Jehovah' is mentioned identically with 'God' or 'Jehovah,' he is also mentioned distinctly.—a fact which harmonizes with the doctrine of unity in the divine essence and distinction in divine persons. In the story of Balaam and Barak, in the course of which 'the Angel Jehovah' is repeatedly mentioned, it is said: 'God's anger was kindled because he went, and the Angel Jehovah stood in the way;' and again, 'Jehovah opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the Angel Jehovah standing in the way.'

That 'the Angel Jehovah' was the second person of Deity, who should in the fulness of time become incarnate as Mediator between God and man, appears from comparing Malachi 3:1, on the one hand, with Luke 7:27, and, on the other, with Judges 2:1: 'Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Angel of the covenant whom ye delight in.' This passage our Lord quoted at the commencement of his public ministry; applying the former part of it expressly to John the Baptist, and the latter part tacitly, but certainly, to himself. 'This,' said he, speaking of John, This is he of whom it is written, I send my messenger before thy face; he shall prepare thy way before thee.' If John the Baptist was the messenger who prepared the way, our Lord, by necessary

consequence, was 'the Angel of the covenant who should suddenly come to his temple.' Now, that the Angel of the covenant was the Angel Jehovah, appears from the text to which we referred in the book of Judges: 'The Angel Jehovah came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.' Thus, 'the Angel Jehovah' is manifestly 'the Angel of the covenant,' and 'the Angel of the covenant' is our Lord Jesus Christ.

The fact that 'the Angel Jehovah' is our blessed Lord being now established, a vast volume of evidence is unfolded of his true deity. The name יהרה מלאך is itself a divine name.—as strictly so as the simple name 'Jehovah.' The nouns of which it is composed, being placed in apposition, have the force and significancy of independent nominatives, יהרה. when joined with מלאך, is, in consequence, as unrestricted in its import as if it stood alone. Every passage, therefore, in which the name 'the Angel Jehovah' occurs, is an instance of the application to our Lord of the supreme and incommunicable name of Deity. All the passages, also, in which that name is used interchangeably with 'God' or 'Jehovah,' are instances of the twofold application to him of the divine name. If we look, too, at the passage quoted from the book of Judges, we find 'the Angel Jehovah' saying that it was he who led the Israelites up out of Egypt, who made the covenant with them which constituted them a peculiar people, and who sware to their fathers that he would give them the land of promise. We must hence infer that when the names 'God' and 'Jehovah' occur in connexion with the very numerous statements of these events, they are directly applicable to 'the Angel Jehovah.' our Lord and Saviour.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 Q. Proof of Christ's Deity from Rom. 9:5.—Dr. Ridgeley misses the point of the argument. From the manner in which he states it, he wears the appearance of taking for granted the thing to be proved. The proof that the clause, 'who is over all, God blessed for ever,' refers to Christ, consists, not in the human and the divine nature being 'mentioned together,' but in the clause which designates the former, κατα σαρκα, being antithetic. The same phrase occurs in Rom. 8:1, 4, 5, and, in each of the verses, is opposed to κατα πνευμα. It occurs also in Rom. 1:4, and is there opposed to κατα πνευμα ἁγιωσυνης. In these, and other passages, it is manifestly antithetic; nor can it be otherwise understood in Rom 9:5. Had the apostle intended to say merely that Christ was descended from the fathers, he could not, without gross tautology, have added, 'concerning the flesh.' If, as the Socinians allege, Christ was a mere man, he could be spoken of at all, or spoken of especially, as descended from the fathers, only κατα σαρκα. Hence, to have added this phrase was, on the Socinian hypothesis, or according to the Socinian interpretation of the passage, an unmeaning accumulation of words. The phrase, to have any import or propriety, must antithetically refer to some quality or idea to which 'the flesh,' or human nature, is opposed. This quality can be found only in what immediately follows, 'who is over all. God blessed for ever;' and it is pointed out, or determined, by the relative ὸ, which looks back to ὸ Χριστος as its antecedent.

Dr. Ridgeley thinks his stricture on the Socinian emendation only 'a probable argument.' But his statement, that, 'whenever the words are so used in the New Testament, that they may be translated, 'Blessed tie God,' they are disposed in a different form or order from that in which they occur here,' is abundantly defensible. Besides, to render the words Θεος ευλογητος εις τους αιωνας, 'Blessed be God for ever,' converts them into a doxology, in utter defiance of contextual coherence or connexion. If too, the words are a doxology,—if they are

to be construed apart from what precedes them,—θεος could not have appeared, as it does, without the article. Understanding the passage as our translators did, θεος and Χριστος are designations of the same person; and ὁ, having been used before Χριστος, did not need to be repeated before θεος. But, in order that the concluding clause may have connexion and meaning within itself, the appearance of ὁ before θεος is indispensable. What then, can we inter from the absence of the article, or from the antith tie power of κατα σαρκα, but that, in the terms of our translation, 'Christ is over all, God blessed for ever?'—ED.]

[NOTE 2 R. The Doctrine of the Greek Article.—Dr. Ridgeley here states, in limine, a doctrine respecting the Greek Article, which is of great importance, and which, since his time, has drawn much attention from the learned, and been established on an inexpugnable basis. The doctrine, as stated by Dr. Ridgeley, is essentially correct; and, as now investigated and proved, it affords, not 'a probable argument,' but a series of strong irrefutable arguments in favour of our Lord's true deity. Mr. Granville Sharp was the first writer who brought the doctrine fairly before the public view; and he was followed, first by Dr. Wordsworth, and next by Dr. Middleton, bishop of Calcutta, the latter of whom, in a considerable volume on the subject, has presented the doctrine in all its force and beauty, and fortified it by innumerable appeals to authority. The doctrine is this: Whenever two or more personal nouns, either substantives or adjectives, of the same gender, number, and case, are joined by και, and preceded by an article, not repeated before the second or subsequent nouns, they denote only one person. A corollary of the doctrine is, that, when two personal nouns are joined by και. and denote different persons, while qualities are implied which might exist in one person, either they must both want the Article, or both have it. With a very few exceptions, all Greek, whether that of the

classic writers, or that of the early Christian authors, is constructed in accordance with this doctrine. The exceptions, too, are only apparent, occurring merely in instances of qualities so incompatible, or names so manifestly distinct, that they could not possibly be understood to belong to the same person.

The arguments which the doctrine I have stated elicits for our Lord's true deity, are various and of high importance. The following are the chief:—The text quoted by Dr. Ridgeley is proved by it to bear, as a matter of necessity, the translation which he proposes: 'Looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, the great God and our Saviour.' Another passage (2 Pet. 2:1.) reads in our version: 'Through the righteousness of God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.' This ought to be: 'Through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.' A third passage (2 Thess. 1:12.) reads: 'According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.' This ought to be: 'According to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.' A fourth passage (1 Tim. 5:21.) reads: 'I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. This ought to be: 'I charge thee before God, even the Lord Jesus Christ.' A fifth passage (Eph. 5:5.) reads: 'In the kingdom of Christ and of God.' This ought to be: 'In the kingdom of Christ, even God.'—ED.]

[NOTE 2 S. Genuineness of 1 John 5:7.—When a Trinitarian shows tenacity in maintaining the genuineness of 1 John 5:7, he wears an appearance of having an empty or ill-furnished armoury for the defence of his faith. The doctrine of the Trinity stands on a basis of evidence so strong and broad, and is bulwarked by arguments so numerous and inexpugnable, that there needs be no tilting with the opponents of it as to the genuineness of this much-disputed text. The evidence for the interpolation of 1 John 5:7, too, is, to say the least of it, such as should inspire great caution and no small diffidence.

Biblical literature was in a low state in Dr. Ridgeley's days, compared to that to which it has since arisen; and it afforded him faint light for the investigation, respecting this text, on which he entered. Yet, faint as it was, he has some appearance of not having duly availed himself of it, or of having misconceived the evidence which it revealed. He certainly says more respecting the genuineness of 1 John 5:7, than facts, even as they were known in his day, will well warrant. 'It must be allowed,' he says, 'that there is a considerable number of manuscripts in which the text is inserted.' All the manuscripts yet discovered, which contain the first epistle of John, are one hundred and twelve in number. Only three of these contain the verse in question; one of which is a manuscript of the seventeenth century, another a copy from the printed text of the Complutensian polyglot, and the third, the 'Codex Dubliniensis,' a manuscript which no writer has asserted to be of higher antiquity than the eleventh century, and which most critics date so low as the fifteenth or the sixteenth. Against the evidence—if evidence it may be called—of these three manuscripts, is arrayed the evidence of one hundred and nine, including all the manuscripts of the highest antiquity and greatest value.

Again, Dr. Ridgeley says, 'It is less to be wondered at that the text is left out in some ancient versions.' Now it is left out in all the ancient versions, except the Vulgate or Latin. All the manuscripts even of this version have it not; and those which have it, vary greatly in the manner in which they read it.

Further, Dr. Ridgeley says, 'it is not quoted, indeed, by the fathers who wrote in the fourth century, namely, Athanasius, Cyril, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Augustine, and some others.' Now fifty fathers, or upwards, who wrote on the divinity of Christ, on the Trinity, or on topics intimately connected with the text, do not quote

it. All the Greek fathers omit it. Yet many of them quote both what precedes and what follows it; and do so in evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity. Is it to be imagined that, if the verse had been before them, if they had known of its existence, they would have quoted the words respecting the three earthly witnesses in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, and, at the same time, have taken no notice of the words respecting the three heavenly witnesses?

Dr. Ridgeley's principal arguments seem to be two. In one, he proposes difficulties respecting the loss of ancient manuscripts, and the ascertaining of the comparative antiquity of extant ones; and arrives at the conclusion that 'the genuineness or spuriousness of the text is not to be determined only or principally by inspection of ancient manuscripts.' Here he occupies untenable and dangerous ground. Were his argument sound, it would vindicate almost any interpolation, and unsettle all the splendid evidences of a pure text which have been accumulated by the valuable labours of Wetstein, Griesbach, and Kennicott. His other chief argument is based on the supposed quotation of the text by Cyprian. But even if all doubt were removed as to Cyprian's words being a quotation of it, nothing more would be accomplished than to afford proof, or rather illustration. that the text was found, so early as the third century, in some copies, at least in one, of the Latin version. The Latin, as I have stated, is the only one of the ancient versions which has the text. That version was the authority from which Cyprian quoted,—if he quoted at all. Hence, even if his voice he allowed all the importance which Dr. Ridgeley attaches to it, it is answered by twenty Latin fathers who wrote on subjects connected with the doctrine of the Trinity, but did not quote the text.—by all the Greek fathers,—by all the oriental ancient versions,—and by all ancient manuscripts of the Greek text now known to exist.

With such lacts before him as I have hinted at, a judicious writer will be slow to assert the genuineness of 1 John 5:7. Every apology is to be made for Dr. Ridgeley, on account of the state of Biblical literature at the period when he wrote. Any writer now, however, cannot well plead excuse; and if he assert the genuineness of the text in question, and seem tenacious of it in connexion with the doctrine of the Trinity, he may not only prejudice that all-important doctrine in the estimation of an Anti-trinitarian, but give unjust occasion to the enemies of revelation to question the general purity of the Sacred Text. Just those principles and reasonings which afford us firm assurance of possessing every where else the pure text of the divine word, seem to demand that the genuineness of 1 John 5:7. should not be asserted. But Anti-trinitarians have obtained no triumph, no concession, no advantage, when we cease to adduce it. We meet them still on the same ground, and with all the same triumphant materials of refutation, as the advocates of orthodoxy in the early centuries, and during the stormy but futile rage of the anti-Nicene controversy. The doctrine of the Trinity is interwoven with the entire scriptures, and expressly exhibited in passages too numerous to be appealed to in any one debate—ED.]

[NOTE 2 T. 'The Eternal Spirit' through whom Christ 'offered himself.'—The truth asserted in the passage in which the phrase 'the Eternal Spirit' occurs, is the infinite sufficiency of Christ's atonement. The blood of Christ, the apostle states, is able to 'purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God'—it is able to do this, he says, because Christ was 'without spot,' because he offered himself 'to God,' and because he offered himself 'through the Eternal Spirit.' Looking simply at the design of the passage, at its contextual connection, and at the nature of the truth it teaches, one would readily suppose that, by 'the Eternal Spirit,' is to be understood our Lord's deity.

In the economy of redemption, the work of atonement, in all its parts, belongs peculiarly to the Son. But what part or property of it is more prominent or characteristic, than its possessing intrinsic sufficiency,—infinite moral worth? Our Lord's holiness, too, both as priest and as sacrafice, was strictly his own. 'Such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,' Heb. 7:26. 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot,' 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. The divine dignity of our Lord, his being truly God while he was truly man, was exactly that which rendered his sacrifice sufficient, and his obedience magnifying to the divine law. 'Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Acts 20:28. 'God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sin-offering condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit,' Rom. 8:3, 4.

The work of the Holy Ghost, in the economy of redemption, is to 'testify of Christ,' to 'take of his and show them' to men, and, in a process of influence on the understanding and the heart, to apply the results of atonement and intercession. By him the sacred writers were inspired, the prophetic and apostolic miracles were wrought, and the hearts of enemies to the gospel are subdued; because in these works, as well as in others which he performs, Christ as the Mediator is exhibited, and the design of redemption is practically accomplished. Our Lord is the Christ or the Messiah—the administrator of the dispensation of grace, the Priest and the King in Zion—as anointed with the Holy Spirit. He is anointed with the oil of gladness, above all others who ever had a heavenly unction: 'the Father giveth not the Spirit by measure to him.' His anointing, however, has reference to his administration,—to his wielding a

sceptre, and ruling over a kingdom,—to his 'sitting a priest upon his throne.' As regards redemption itself, we see him as 'the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;' and we hear him saying, 'Mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury, it upheld me.' It is as regards the application of redemption—the unfolding of the evidences of its truth, the communication of a knowledge of it to the understanding, the removing of dislike or indifference to it from the heart, and the bestowing of its rich and imperishable blessings on the soul, that we see the immediate working, and contemplate the personal glory of the ever-blessed Spirit.

The phrase, 'the Eternal Spirit,' is similar to the phrase 'the Spirit of holiness;' and the latter, as we showed in the Note on Christ's sonship, is used, in Rom. 1:4, to denote our Lord's deity. In two other passages which appear to speak strictly of the Saviour, 'the Spirit' seems to be mentioned antithetically to 'the flesh.' In both, 'the flesh' clearly designates his human nature; so, that, by the law of antithesis, 'the Spirit' necessarily designates his divine nature. 'Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,' 1 Tim. 3:16. 'Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to Heath in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,' 1 Pet. 3:18. At the same time, while speaking of the personal acts of either the Son, the Spirit, or the Father, in the economy of redemption, we ought closely to bear in mind that God is one, and that the glory of Godhead is undivided.

THE DECREES OF GOD

QUESTION XII. What are the decrees of God?

ANSWER. God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will; whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time; especially concerning angels and men.

QUESTION XIII. What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men?

ANSWER. God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory, and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof; and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth, or withholdeth favour, as he pleaseth) hath passed by, and foreordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice.

General View of the Doctrine of the Divine Decrees

HAVING considered the perfections of the divine nature, and the personal glories of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the next thing to be insisted on is, what God has purposed to do from eternity, or does, or will do, in pursuance of his purposes. The former we call his decrees; the latter, the execution of them. The object of his decree is whatever comes to pass. This is the most large and comprehensive sense of his purpose. But as his determinations, in a particular manner, respect

angels and men, or the intelligent part of the creation, and more especially the eternal happiness of some, or the display of his righteous judgments against others, they are taken in a more limited sense, and are called, as relating to the former, Election, and as relating to the latter, Reprobation. The decrees of God thus viewed are the subject of these two Answers. Before we proceed to insist on this sublime and difficult subject, it may not be inexpedient for us to premise some things concerning it in general.

1. It is well known that there is no doctrine, contained in scripture, which is more contested than this. It is by some not only denied but treated with the utmost dislike or detestation. Either we must wholly forbear to mention it in public discourses or writings, or we are liable to the hard fate of being censured as if we are maintaining a doctrine which is not only indefensible, but injurious to mankind, and subversive of all religion; while they who censure us take for granted the truth of what they affirm, and will not do the justice to the argument to consider what may be advanced in its defence.

2. If there be any who give just occasion to these prejudices, by the methods which they have used in explaining the doctrine, as well as by the weakness of their arguments in defending it, or by laying themselves open to those popular objections which are usually brought against it, we cannot but conclude that they are highly to blame. We are hence far from approving of any unguarded expressions, which are to be met with in some writings, whereby a stumbling-block is laid in the way of those who are disposed to make men offenders for a word, rather than to judge impartially of the main drift of their discourse. It is to be owned, that such expressions have done disservice to the cause; which might have been better defended.

3. If the prejudices against this doctrine are ill grounded, and the objections only founded on the popular cry by which it is endeavoured to be run down, and condemned with reproach and censure,—and if persons know not, nor desire to know, what may be said in defence of the doctrine, or how their objections may be answered, their disgust and opposition are both unreasonable and uncharitable, and imply a capricious resolution not to be undeceived, and consequently render the persons thus prejudiced, highly culpable in the sight of God,—especially if there be any ground to conclude that the divine glory is maintained in the doctrine.

4. Let it be farther considered, that the doctrine is not new, or such as was altogether unheard of in the world before; nor has it been only defended by the more ignorant or licentious part of mankind, or by those who have been bold and presumptuous in affirming that for truth which they had not duly weighed, or been convinced of, from the strongest evidence. Whether it be as ancient as scripture, and, indeed, founded upon it, we shall leave others to judge, when we have considered what may be said from it in its defence.

5. It was generally asserted, and publicly owned, in most of the confessions of Faith of the Reformed churches in the last age, and, in particular, in one of the Articles of the Church of England. And there is no apparent ambiguity in the words; however some have, by way of comment, endeavoured, of late, to strain the sense of them, and to put such a meaning on them as is very different from the writings of those who compiled them. We may add, that, however much the contrary doctrines are maintained at this day, it was maintained in their public discourses and writings, by far the greatest number of divines in the last century. We do not insist on this, however, as a proof of its truth, as though it needed to be supported by numbers of advocates, or were founded on their support. Nor do we suppose,

that, when it has been most strenuously, and almost universally defended, there were not, at the same time, others who opposed it. I mention the fact of its general reception only that I may, if possible, remove those prejudices which are inconsistent with persons judging impartially of it.

Since we are considering the prejudices against this doctrine, we think it necessary to add, that we shall endeavour to vindicate it from the reproach which is generally cast on it, by those who suppose that it cannot be defended without asserting God to be the Author of sin, or supposing him to be severe, cruel, and unjust to his creatures, as some, by unjust consequences deduced from it, imagine us to maintain. We are far from asserting, as will hereafter appear, that God, from all eternity, purposed to damn a great part of the world, as the result of his mere sovereign will, without the foresight of sin, which would render them liable to condemnation. Moreover, we shall endeavour to make it appear, in opposition to the calumnies of some, that the decree of God does not destroy, or take away, the liberty of man's will, with respect to things within its own sphere; or that, considered in itself, it does not lay a natural necessity on man to rush into damnation, as though the destruction of sinners were only to be resolved into the divine purpose, and not their own wickedness. In considering this we shall maintain, that the decree of God does not lay any force on the will of man,—that it does not preclude the means of grace, as ordained by him, for the salvation of them that do or shall believe unto life everlasting,—and that it does not obstruct the preaching of the gospel, or the proclaiming of the glad tidings of salvation, to those who sit under the Christian ministry as an ordinance for their faith.—Many, again, are prejudiced against this doctrine, on account of the popular outcry, that it is of very pernicious tendency,—either, on the one hand, leading men to presumption, by giving them occasion to conclude, that if they are

elected they may be saved, though they live as they please, or, on the other hand, leading them to despair, by suggesting that if there be such a decree as that of reprobation, they must necessarily be included in it,—and that, in consequence, it is a doctrine which, instead of promoting holiness of life, is inconsistent with it. Now, if we cannot maintain it without giving just ground for such exceptions, we shall not only think our labour lost, but shall, as much as they do, condemn it, as pernicious and unscriptural, as, if it cannot be defended from such exceptions, it must of necessity be. I hope, however, that we shall be able not only to defend it from every charge of pernicious tendency, but also to make it appear that it is consistent with practical godliness, and, at the same time, a very great motive and inducement to it. If this shall be proved, the greatest part of the censorious prejudices which are entertained against it will be removed, and persons will be better able to judge whether truth lies on that side of the question which we shall endeavour to defend, or the contrary.

I could not but premise these things in our entrance on this subject, for I am sensible that such reproaches as those we have mentioned, are brought by many, without duly weighing whether they are well grounded or not. The doctrine is often opposed in such a way of reasoning, that the premises, as well as the conclusions drawn from them, are rather their own than ours. Or if some ideas which they urge against it may be found in the writings, or taken from the unguarded expressions, of some who have defended this doctrine, they have appeared in such a dress, that even they who are supposed to have advanced them, would have disowned and rejected them. If persons, who are in another way of thinking, resolve not to lay aside these misrepresentations, it plainly appears that they are not disposed to be open to conviction, and, in that case, all attempts to

defend this doctrine will be to no purpose. The preventing of such a result has rendered these prefatory cautions needful.

We shall only add, to what has been said, some general rules, by which we desire that the truth, either of this or the opposite doctrine, may be judged of.

1. If we do not confirm what we assert, by proofs taken from scripture, let it not be received; but if we do, whatever may be said of our method of managing the controversy, the greatest deference ought to be paid to the sacred oracles. It is very common for persons to answer the arguments taken from one scripture, by producing other scriptures which seem to assert the contrary; as if they were desirous to shift sides in the dispute, and put us upon solving the difficulties which they suppose to be contained in the texts they quote. Now though this practice of theirs demands our attention, yet a more direct answer must be given before the doctrine is overthrown. Whether our explanation of those scriptures on which our faith in it is founded, be just, we shall leave others to judge; and also whether the sense we give of other scriptures which are brought as objections against it, be not equally probable with that of those who bring them. This is all that need be insisted on in such cases.

2. Let that doctrine be received, and the contrary rejected, on which side of the question soever it lies, which is most agreeable to the divine perfections, and which explains the texts brought in defence of it, most consistently with them. This is a fair proposal, and such as ought not only to be applied to this particular doctrine, but to the whole of religion; for all religion is founded on scripture, which so far from overthrowing the divine glory, has the advancement of it for its great end.

3. Let that doctrine be rejected, as inconsistent with itself, and not worthy to be believed or embraced, whether it be ours or the contrary, which shall detract from the harmony of the divine perfections, or pretend to set up, or plead for one, and, at the same time, militate against the glory of another. I desire nothing more than that our whole method of reasoning on this subject may be tried by these rules, and be deemed true or false, agreeably to what they contain.

In considering the doctrine of the Decrees of God, as stated in the two Answers which we are explaining, we shall proceed according to the following method. First, we shall show what we are to understand, by God's foreordaining whatever comes to pass, according to the counsel of his own will; and here we shall compare the decree with the execution of it, and observe how one exactly answers to the other, and is to be a rule for our judging concerning it. Secondly, we shall prove the truth of that proposition, 'that God hath foreordained whatever shall come to pass, either in time, or to eternity.' Thirdly, we shall particularly consider intelligent creatures, angels and men, both good and bad, with respect to their present or future state, as the objects of God's eternal decree or purpose; and so shall proceed to speak concerning the decree of election and reprobation, as stated in the latter of these Answers. Fourthly, we shall lay down some propositions concerning each class of decrees, tending to explain and prove them, more especially as to what respects the election and reprobation of men. Fifthly, we shall consider the properties of the decrees, and how the divine perfections are displayed in them, and endeavour to make it appear, in various instances, that the account we shall give of them is agreeable to the divine perfections as well as founded on scripture. Sixthly, we shall inquire whether the contrary doctrine, defended by those who deny election and reprobation, be not derogatory to, and

subversive of, the divine perfections, or, at least, inconsistent with the harmony of them, or whether it does not, in many respects, make God altogether such a one as ourselves. Seventhly, we shall endeavour to prove that their reasoning from scripture, who maintain the contrary doctrine, is not sufficiently conclusive; that the sense they give of the texts generally brought to support it, does not so well agree with the divine perfections as it ought to do; and that these texts may he explained in a different way, more consistent with the divine character. Eighthly, we shall endeavour to answer the most material objections which are usually brought against the doctrine that we are maintaining. And, Lastly, we shall show how this doctrine is practically to be improved by us, to the glory of God, and our spiritual good and advantage.

The Meaning of Predestination

We shall, first, inquire what we are to understand by God's foreordaining whatever comes to pass, according to the counsel of his own will.

By God's foreordaining whatever comes to pass, we do not understand merely his foreknowledge of all things which are or shall be done in time, and to eternity. This indeed is included in, and inseparably connected with, his eternal purpose; for no one can purpose to do an act without having foreknowledge of that act. Yet more than this is certainly contained in the divine purpose. God's predetermining, or foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass, includes not only an act of the divine understanding, but an act of his sovereign will. It is not only his knowing what shall come to pass, but his determining by his own agency, or efficiency, what he will produce in time, or to eternity. Accordingly, some call the decrees of God his eternal providence, and the execution of them his actual

providence. By the former, he determines what he will do; by the latter, he brings his determinations to pass, or effects what he before designed to do. It follows, that God's foreordaining whatsoever shall come to pass, is vastly different from his bringing things to pass. The one is an internal act of his will; the other, an external act of his almighty power. He foreordained that events should come to pass; and, till then, they are considered as future. This determination, however, necessarily secures the event; unless we suppose it possible for his eternal purpose to be defeated; and to suppose this, as will farther appear under some following particulars, is not accordant with the divine perfections. On the other hand, when we consider him as bringing all things to pass, or as producing them by his power, what was before future becomes present. With respect to the former, he decrees what shall be; and, with respect to the latter, his decree takes effect, and is executed accordingly.

They who treat of this matter, generally consider things either as possible or as future. Things are said to be possible, with respect to the power of God; as every thing that he can do is possible to be done, though some things, which he could have done, he will never do. For instance, he could have made more worlds, had he pleased; or have produced more men upon earth, or more species of creatures; or have given a greater degree of perfection to creatures than he has done, or will do; for it is certain, that he never acted to the utmost of his power. Accordingly, he could have done many things which he will never do; and those things are said to be possible, but not future. Moreover, things future are rendered so by the will of God, or by his having foreordained or determined to produce them. This is what we call the decree of God; which respects the event, or determines whatever shall come to pass.

We are now to consider what we are to understand by God's foreordaining all things, according to the counsel of his will. This is a mode of speaking used in scripture, 'Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' We are not hereby to understand that the decrees of God are the result of deliberation, or his debating matters within himself, as reasoning in his own mind about the expediency or inexpediency of things, or calling in the advice of others, as creatures are said to do, when acting with counsel. He must not be supposed to determine things in such a way; for that would argue an imperfection in the divine mind. 'With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?'b But God's foreordaining all things according to the counsel of his will, implies that his decrees are infinitely wise. What is done with counsel is said, according to human modes of speaking, to be done advisedly, in opposition to its being done rashly, or with precipitation. Now, all the works of God are done with wisdom; and hence, all his purposes and determinations to do what is done in time are infinitely wise. This, according to our way of speaking, is called the counsel of his will. Thus it is said, 'He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.'

We are now to consider the object of God's decree. This, as has been before observed, is every thing that has come, or shall come to pass; and it may be considered in different respects. There are some things which he has determined to effect. Such are the objects of his power, or all things which have a natural or moral goodness in them, and which are becoming an infinitely holy God to produce. These include every thing but sin. This God does not produce, it not being the object of power. Yet it must be supposed to be committed by his permission; and therefore it is the consequence of his decree to

permit, though not, as other things, of his decree to effect. It is one thing to suffer sin to be committed in the world, and another thing to be the author of it. But this subject we shall have occasion to enlarge on, under a following particular.

The Truth of Predestination

We shall now proceed to prove the truth of what is laid down in this answer, namely, that God hath foreordained whatever comes to pass. This will evidently appear, if we consider the four following propositions in their due connection.

1. Nothing comes to pass by chance, with respect to God; but every thing takes place by the direction of his providence. This we are bound to assert against the Deists, who speak of God as though he were not the Governor of the world. Our proposition cannot be denied by any who think, with any degree of modesty, concerning the divine perfections, or pay a due deference to them; for God may as well be denied to be the Creator as the Governor of the world.

2. It follows that nothing is done without the divine influence, or permission. The former, as was before observed, respects things which are good, and are the effects of his power; the latter respects sin. That nothing comes to pass without the divine influence, or permission, is evident; for if any thing came to pass, which is the object of power, without the divine influence, then the creature would be said to exist, or act, independently of the power of God. If so, it would follow, that the creature would exist or act necessarily; but necessary existence is a perfection appropriate to God. As to sin being committed by divine permission, it is evident, that if it might be committed without the divine permission, it could not be restrained by God. And to suppose that he could not hinder the commission of sin, is to suppose that sin might proceed to the

greatest height, without any possible check or control. This would argue a great defect in the divine government of the world; and it is also contrary to daily experience, as well as to scripture. Certainly he who sets bounds to the sea, and says to its proud waves, 'Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther,' must be supposed to set bounds to the corrupt passions of wicked men. Accordingly, the psalmist says, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.' Yet this does not argue his approbation of sin, or that he is the author of it; for it is one thing to suffer, or not to hinder, and another thing to be the author of any thing. Hence, it is said, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;'e that is, 'I did not restrain thee from doing them, as I could have done.' Again, it is said that, 'in times past, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.'

3. God never acts, or suffers any thing to be done, but he knows beforehand what he will do or suffer. This an intelligent creature, acting as such, is said to do. It must not, therefore, be denied of Him who is omniscient and infinitely wise. He who knows all things which others will do, cannot but know, before it is acted, what he himself will do, or what others will do, by the interposition of his providence, or what he will suffer to be done.

4. Whatever God does, and knows beforehand that he will do, he must be supposed to have before determined to do. To deny this would argue him to be defective in wisdom. No wise man acts precipitantly, or without judgment; much less must the wise God be supposed to do so, concerning whom it is said, that 'all his ways are judgment.'

It appears, therefore, even to a demonstration, that God before determined, or foreordained, whatever comes to pass. This was the

thing to be proved. And as he never began to determine, as he never began to exist, or as he never was without resolution what he would do, it is evident, that he foreordained, from eternity, whatever should come to pass, either in time, or to eternity.

Farther, if God did not foreordain whatsoever comes to pass, he did not determine to create all things before he gave being to them; and then it could not be said, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' There are, indeed, many admirable discoveries of wisdom, as well as power, in the effects produced. But to suppose that all these were produced without forethought, or that there was no eternal purpose relating to them, would be such a reflection on the glory of this perfection, as is inconsistent with the idea of a God. Moreover, every intelligent being designs some end by his works, and the highest and most excellent end must be designed by a God of infinite wisdom; and if, in subserviency to such an end, he does all things for his own glory, it must be allowed that they are the result of an eternal purpose. All this, I am persuaded, will not be denied by those on the other side of the question, who defend their own cause with any measure of judgment.

Again, to deny that God foreordained whatever comes to pass, is in effect to deny a providence, or, at least, that God governs the world in such a way that what he does was preconcerted. In stating this, we expect to meet with no opposition from any but Deists, or those who deny a God. And if it be taken for granted that there is a providence, or that God is the Governor of the world, we cannot but conclude that all the displays of his glory in that character are the result of his eternal purpose. Accordingly, it is said that 'he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.' The meaning of this is not merely—though that is an important truth

—that he acts without control, in as much as his power is infinite, but that all he does is pursuant to his will. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise. The divine power and will are so inseparably connected, that he cannot be said to produce anything but by the word of his power; and when he willeth that any thing should come to pass, his will is not, as ours is, inefficacious, for want of power to effect what we would have done. Hence, for God to will the present existence of things, is to effect it. This seems to be the reason of that mode of speaking which was used when he produced all things at first: he said, 'Let them exist in that form, or perfection, which he had before designed to give them;' and immediately the effect followed.k

Hitherto, I presume, our argument will not be much contested. The main thing in the controversy is what relates to the divine determination respecting intelligent creatures; which will be considered in a following Section. What I have hitherto attempted to prove, is the general proposition, that whatever God brings to pass, or is the effect of power, is the result of his determinate purpose. In what I have said I have, I think, carefully distinguished between God's will to effect, and his will to permit. That distinction, however, will be farther explained when, under the head of Election, we speak of the decrees of God, with a particular application to angels and men.

The Design and Nature of the Divine Decrees

Having endeavoured to prove that God hath foreordained whatever comes to pass, we shall lay down the following propositions relating to his end and design in all his purposes, together with the nature of things, as coming to pass pursuant to them, and the method in which we are to conceive of the decree, when compared with its execution.

1. God cannot design any thing, in his eternal purpose, as the highest end, but his own glory. This is here assigned as the end of his decrees. As the glory of God is the principal motive, or reason, inducing him to produce whatever comes to pass; so it must be considered as the end of his purpose relating to it. As the divine glory is the most excellent of all things, he cannot, as an infinitely wise God, design any thing short of it, as the great motive or inducement for him to act. Whatever lower ends are designed by him, are all resolved into this as the principal. But while God designs his own glory as the highest end, he, at the same time, has purposed not only that this should be brought about by means conducive to it, but that there should be a subserviency of one thing to another. These points, as well as the highest end, his own glory, are the objects of his decree. He determines, for example, that the life and health of man shall be maintained by the use of proper means and medicine, or that grace shall be wrought instrumentally by those means which he has ordained in order to it. Thus his purpose respects the end and means, together with the connection that there is between them.

2. According to the natural order of things, the divine purpose is antecedent to its execution. It seems very absurd to distinguish the decree of God, as some do, into antecedent and consequent, one going before the use of means, the other following. Of this we shall say more hereafter. It is certain, that every intelligent being first determines to act, and then executes his determinations; so that nothing can be more absurd than to say, that a person determines to do a thing which is already done. We conclude, therefore, that God first decreed what shall come to pass, and then brings it to pass. Accordingly he first determined to create the world, and then created it. He first determined to bestow the means of grace on men, and to render them effectual to the salvation of all who shall be saved; and then he acts accordingly. So, with respect to his judicial actings, he

first determined, by a permissive decree, not to prevent the commission of sin, though infinitely opposed to his holiness, and then, knowing the consequence of this permissive decree, or that men, through the mutability or corruption of their nature, would rebel against him, he determined to punish sin after it should be committed. Thus the decree of God is, in all respects, antecedent to the execution of it; or his eternal providence, as his decrees are sometimes called, is antecedent to, and the ground and reason of, his actual providence.

3. Though the purpose of God precedes its execution, yet the execution of it is first known by us. It is by this that we are to judge of his decree or purpose; which is altogether secret, with respect to us, till he reveals it. We first observe the discoveries of any matter, as contained in his word, or made visible in his actual providence; and thence we infer his eternal purpose relating to it. Every thing which is first in the order of nature, is not first with respect to the order of our knowing it. Thus the cause is before the effect; but the effect is often known before the cause. The sun is, in the order of nature, before the enlightening of the world by it; but we first see the light, and then we know there is a sun, which is the fountain of it. Or, to take another and closer illustration, a legislator determines to make a law; his determination is antecedent to the making, and the making to the promulgation of it; and, by the promulgation, his subjects come to the knowledge of it, and act in conformity to it. According to our method of judging concerning it, we must first know that there is a law; and thence we conclude that there was, in him who gave it, a purpose relating to it. Thus we conclude that, though the decree of God be the ground and reason of the execution of it, we know that there was such a decree by its execution, or, at least, by some way designed to discover it to us.

These things being duly considered, may obviate an objection which is brought against the doctrine we are maintaining. It is merely a misrepresentation, and considers us as asserting, 'that our conduct of life, and the judgment we are to pass concerning ourselves relating to our hope of future blessedness, are to be principally, if not altogether, regulated by God's secret purpose or decree; so that we are first to consider him as determining the event, that is, as having chosen or rejected us, and hence to encourage ourselves to attend upon the means of grace, or to take occasion to neglect them; it being a preposterous thing for a man who considers himself as reprobated, to attend on any of those means which are ordained for salvation.' What has been already said is sufficient to take away the force of this objection. It will be particularly considered also, when we come to answer several objections against the doctrine of election. All I shall say at present is, that as our conduct and hope are to be governed by the appearances of things, and not by God's secret purpose relating to the event, we are to act as those who have not, and cannot have, any knowledge of what is decreed, till it is evinced by execution, or, at least, by the bestowal of those graces which are wrought in us. These are the objects of God's purpose, as well as our future blessedness; and our right to the latter is to be judged of by the former.

This leads us to consider the properties of the decrees of God, as mentioned in the former of the answers we are now considering. It is there said, 'they are wise, free, and holy.' This is very evident from the wisdom, sovereignty, and holiness, which appear in the execution of them; for whatever perfections are demonstrated in the dispensations of providence or grace, these God designed to glorify in his eternal purpose. If his works in time are wise, free, sovereign, and holy, his decree with respect to them must be said to be so likewise. These things we shall have occasion to treat more

particularly under a following head, when we consider the properties of election, and particularly that it is wise, sovereign, and holy. I shall at present only say, that whatever perfections belong to the nature of God, are demonstrated by his works. He cannot act unbecoming himself; for to suppose that he can, would give occasion to the world to deny him to be infinitely perfect, that is, to be God. If we pass a judgment on creatures by what they do, and determine him to be a wise man, who acts wisely, or a holy man, who acts holily, or a free and sovereign agent, who acts without constraint, certainly the same principle holds in our speaking of the divine Majesty. Hence, as whatever he does has the marks of infinite wisdom, holiness, and sovereignty, impressed upon it, it is evident that these properties or perfections belong to all his purposes. If, as the psalmist observes, all 'his works' are performed 'in wisdom,' we have reason, as the apostle does, to admire that wisdom as appearing from them to be contained in all his purposes relating to them: 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'m If he is 'righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works,' and therein demonstrates a divine sovereignty, as acting without any obligation or constraint laid upon him to bestow the favours he confers on mankind, we must certainly conclude that his eternal purpose, which is executed in these works and gifts, is free and sovereign.

The meaning of Election

Intelligent creatures, such as angels and men, with respect to their present or future state, are the objects of God's eternal decree, or purpose, generally called 'predestination.' This, as it relates to the happiness of some, and the misery of others, is distinguished into election or reprobation. It is a very awful subject, and ought never to be thought of, or mentioned, but with the utmost caution and

reverence, lest we speak those things that are not right concerning God, and thereby dishonour him, or give just occasion to any to deny or reproach this doctrine, as though it were not founded on scripture.

Hitherto we have considered the purpose of God, as including all things future as its objects. We are now to speak of it, as it relates, in particular, to angels and men. When we confine the objects of God's purpose to those things which have no dependence on the free will of angels or men, we do not meet with much opposition from those who in other respects support the contrary scheme of doctrine. Most of them, who are masters of their own argument and consider what may be allowed without weakening their cause, do not deny that God foreordained whatever comes to pass, and that he did this from all eternity, if we except what respects the actions of free agents. They will grant, for example, that God, from all eternity, determined to create the world, and then to govern it, and to give laws to men, as the rule of government, and a free will or power to yield obedience. But when we consider men's free actions as the objects of a divine decree, and the final state of men as being determined by it, we are met by the greatest opposition. We hence must endeavour to maintain our ground in the following part of this argument.

The decree of God, respecting intelligent creatures, is to be considered as consisting of two branches, Election and Reprobation. The former is stated in these words: 'God, out of his mere love for the praise of his glorious grace, hath elected some to glory in Christ, and also to the means thereof.' Reprobation is thus stated: 'According to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will, he hath passed by, and foreordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be, for their sin, inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice.' Both these doctrines are to be considered; but in the present section we shall inquire only respecting the doctrine of election.

To elect, or choose, according to the common use or acceptation of the word, signifies the taking a small number out of a greater, or a part out of the whole. This is applied either to things or to persons. It is applied to things; as when a person has a great many things to choose out of, he sets aside some of them for his own use, and rejects the others, as refuse, which he will have nothing to do with. It is applied to persons; as when a king chooses, out of his subjects, some whom he will advance to great honours; or when a master chooses, out of a number of servants offered to him, one or more, whom he will employ in his service. The act, from the nature of the case, implies, that all are not chosen, but only a part; and that there is a discrimination, or a difference put between one and another. But we are more particularly to consider the meaning of the word 'election,' as we find it in scripture; and there it is used in several senses.

To elect, or choose, according to the mere acceptation of the word, does not intimate the particular thing which a person is chosen to. That is to be understood by what is added to determine the sense of the election. Sometimes we read of persons being chosen to partake of some privileges, short of salvation; at other times, of their being chosen to salvation. Sometimes election is to be understood as signifying their being chosen to things of a lower nature; at other times, their being chosen to perform those duties, and exercise those graces, which accompany salvation. We may, however, very easily understand the sense of it by the context. Again, it is sometimes taken for the execution of God's purpose, or for his actual providence making choice of persons to fulfil his pleasure, in their various capacities. At other times, as we are in this argument to understand it, it is taken for his fixing his love upon his people, and purposing to bring them to glory,—making choice of some out of the rest of mankind as the monuments of his discriminating grace. We have instances of all these senses of the word in scripture.

1. It is sometimes taken for God's actual separation of persons for some peculiar instances of service; which is a branch of his providential dispensation in time. Thus we sometimes read, in scripture, of persons being chosen, or set apart, by God to an office, and that either civil or sacred. On occasion of Saul's being made king, by God's special appointment, Samuel says, 'See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen?' So it is said elsewhere, 'He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfold; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.'p It also signifies his actual appointment of some persons to perform some sacred office. Thus it is said, concerning the Levites, that 'the Lord had chosen them to carry the ark, and to minister unto him.' And our Saviour says to his disciples, 'Have not I chosen you,' namely, to be my disciples, and as such to be employed in preaching the gospel, 'and one of you is a devil?'r

2. It is sometimes taken for God's providential designation of a people, to be made partakers of the external privileges of the covenant of grace belonging to them as a church; which, as thus designated, is the peculiar object of the divine regard. Thus the people of Israel are said to have been chosen, or separated, from the world, to enjoy the external blessings of the covenant of grace. Moses says to them, 'Because the Lord loved your fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them;' and 'Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.'t In many other places in the Old Testament, the word 'election' is taken in this sense; though, as we shall endeavour to show in a following section, something more than this seems to be included in some particular scriptures in the prophetic writings, in which the Jews are described as God's 'chosen people.'

3. It also signifies God's bestowing special grace on some who are highly favoured by him above others, calling them, or setting them apart for himself, to have communion with him, to bear a testimony to him, and to be employed in eminent service, for his name and glory in the world. It seems to be thus understood in 1 Cor. 1:26, 27, where the apostle speaks of their 'calling.' This imports some special privileges which they were made partakers of, as the objects of divine power and grace, to whom Christ was 'made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.' It is, as appears by the foregoing and following verses, the powerful, internal, effectual call, and not merely the external call, of the gospel. And they whose calling he speaks of, are said to be chosen. 'You see your calling, how that not many wise men, &c. are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world,' &c. So that to be chosen, and to be effectually called, seem, in this passage, to import the same thing.

4. Sometimes also it is taken for some peculiar excellency which one Christian has above another. That hospitable or public-spirited person, for example, to whom the apostle John directs his second epistle, is called by him, 'The elect lady.' An excellent person, in the same way, is sometimes styled a choice person.

But, though the word 'election' is taken, in scripture, in these various senses, it is not confined to any or all of them. We shall endeavour to make it appear, that it is often taken, in scripture, in the sense in which it is understood in this answer,—that it is taken for God's having foreordained particular persons, as monuments of his special love, to be made partakers of grace here, and glory hereafter,—or as the Answer expresses it, for being 'chosen to eternal life, and the means thereof.' In endeavouring to prove this, we shall consider the objects of election, namely, angels and men; that it is only a part of mankind who are chosen to salvation, namely, that remnant which

shall be eventually saved; that these are chosen to the means of salvation, as well as the end; and how their election is said to be in Christ.

The objects of election are angels and men. A few words may be said concerning the election of angels; as it is particularly mentioned in this answer. We have not, indeed, much delivered concerning this matter in scripture; though the apostle calls those who remain in their state of holiness and happiness, in which they were created, 'elect angels.' But, had we no mention of their election in scripture, their being confirmed in their present state of blessedness, must, from the reasoning which we have already stated, be supposed to be the result of a divine purpose, or the execution of a decree relating to it. There is a difference, indeed, between their election, and that of men. The latter are chosen unto salvation; while the angels are not subjects capable of it, in as much as they were never in a lost, undone state. Men, again, are said to be chosen in Christ, but the angels are not.

We shall proceed, however, to that which more immediately concerns us, to consider men as the objects of election. Their election is variously expressed in scripture. Sometimes it is called their being 'appointed to obtain salvation,' or being 'ordained to eternal life,' or their 'names being written in the book of life.' It is also called, 'the purpose of God, according to election,' or his having 'loved them before the foundation of the world,' or his having 'predestinated them unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will.' That the scriptures speak of persons as elect, and that their election is always represented as a great instance of divine favour and goodness, is not denied. The main thing in question is, whether this relates to the purpose of God, or to his providence; whether it respects particular persons, or the church of God, in

general, as distinguished from the world; and, if it be supposed to relate to particular persons, how these are considered in God's purpose, or what is the order and reason of his determination to save them.

That election sometimes respects the disposing providence of God, in time, has been already considered; and some particular instances of it, noticed in scripture, have been referred to. But when they on the other side of the question maintain, that this is the only or principal sense in which election is spoken of in scripture, we must take leave to differ from them. There is a late writer who sometimes misrepresents, and, at other times, opposes this doctrine, with more assurance and insult than the strength of his reasoning will well allow. His performance on this subject and on others which have some affinity with it, is concluded, by many of his admirers, to be unanswerable. The sense which he has, in that work, given of several scriptures—as well as in his 'Paraphrase on the New Testament,' in which he studiously endeavours to explain every text in conformity to his own scheme—has tended to prejudice many in favour of his views. We shall, therefore, sometimes take occasion to consider what he advances against the doctrine which we are maintaining. As to election in particular, he supposes, "1. That the election, mentioned in scripture, is not of particular persons, but only that of churches and nations, or their being chosen to the enjoyment of the means of grace, rather than a certainty of their being saved by those means; that it does not contain any absolute assurance of their salvation, or of any such grace as shall infallibly, and without any possibility of frustration, procure their salvation. 2. That the election to salvation, mentioned in scripture, is only conditional upon our perseverance in a life of holiness."a He attempts to prove, also that "election, in the Old Testament, belongs not to righteous and obedient persons only, but the whole nation of the Jews, good and bad; and that, in the New

Testament, it is applied to those who embrace the Christian faith, without any regard had to their eternal happiness."

These things ought to be particularly considered. We shall endeavour to prove that though 'election' often, in the Old Testament, respects the church of the Jews, as enjoying the external means of grace, yet it does not sufficiently appear that it is never to be taken in any other sense,—especially when there are some of those privileges which accompany salvation mentioned in the context, and applied to some of those who are described as elected,—or when there are some promises made to them, which respect more than the external means of grace. If there were but one scripture which is to be taken in this sense, it would be a sufficient answer to the assertion, that the Old Testament never intends by the word election any privilege but such as is external, and has no immediate reference to salvation. Here I might refer to some places in the evangelical prophecy of Isaiah, which are not foreign to our purpose. It is said, for example, 'Thou Israel art my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen; and I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.' That this respects more than the continuance of their political and religious state, as enjoying the external means of grace, seems to be implied in those promises which are made to them, in the words immediately following, which not only speak of their deliverance from captivity, after they had continued some time in it, but of their being made partakers of God's special love, which had an immediate reference to their salvation. Thus it is said, 'Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' And elsewhere God, speaking to the Jews, says, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins;'c and, 'Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without

end.' There are also many other promises which seem to import much more than the external privileges of the covenant of grace. These many very excellent Christians have applied to themselves, supposing them to refer to those blessings which have a more immediate connexion with salvation. It would detract very much from the spirituality and usefulness of such scriptures, to say that they have no relation to us, on account of our having nothing to do with the Jewish nation, to whom the promises contained in them were made.

It may be objected, that these promises are directed to the church of the Jews, as a chosen people; and that to suppose that there were a number elected out of them to eternal salvation, is to extend the sense of the word beyond the design of the context, to destroy the determinate sense of it, and to suppose an election out of an election. But since the word 'election' denotes persons being chosen to enjoy the external means of grace, and to attain salvation by and under them, it may, without any impropriety of expression, be used in these different senses in the same text. Israel may be described as a chosen people in the former sense; and yet there might be a number elected out of them, who were chosen to eternal life, to whom the promise of salvation more especially belonged, and who are distinguished from the general body of the Jewish nation, called, in the other sense, 'God's elect.' It is said, for example, 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord; the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies,' &c. Now, as Israel were an elect people, chosen out of the world to enjoy the external privileges conferred upon them as a church, and as they misimproved these, and, in consequence, were carried captive into Babylon, there was a remnant chosen out of them to be made partakers of the blessings which accompany salvation, such as are here promised. This remnant are not considered as a church

governed by laws distinct from those which Israel was governed by, and therefore not as a church selected out of that church; but as a number of people among them whom God had kept faithful, and whom he had chosen to enjoy better privileges than those which belonged to them as a professing people; or as a number elected to be made partakers of special grace, from among those who had been made partakers of common grace, and who had miserably abused it, and incurred due punishment.

Our Saviour, speaking concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army, and a great time of distress which should ensue, tells his disciples, that 'those days should be shortened for the elect's sake.' Here 'the elect' are those who were chosen to eternal life, and accordingly should be converted to the Christian faith, not from among the heathen, but out of the Jewish nation. It is to the Jews that he more particularly directs his discourse, forewarning them of this desolating judgment. And he advises them to pray that their 'flight be not on the Sabbath-day;'g intimating that that nation deemed it unlawful to defend themselves from the assaults of an enemy on the Sabbath-day, even though their immediate death should be the consequence. His advice was suited to the temper of the Jews, and to none else. No people in the world, except them, entertained this superstitious opinion concerning the prohibition of self-defence on the Sabbath-day. Our Saviour, therefore, speaks of them in particular, and not of the Christians who were amongst them. On this account, it seems probable that, by 'the elect,' is meant that small number of the Jews for whose sake those days of distress and tribulation were to be shortened. There was, therefore, an elect people, whom God had a peculiar regard to, who should afterwards be converted to Christianity,—a number elected to eternal life from among that people who were elected to the external privileges of the covenant of grace. This further appears from what our Saviour says

concerning 'false Christs, and false prophets, that should show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.'i It cannot be supposed respecting those, who are called 'false Christs,' that they would attempt to pervert the Christians, by pretending to be the Messiah. That would have been impracticable, in as much as the Christians did not expect any other to come in that character. The Jews, on the contrary, did still expect a Messiah; and many of them were, in consequence, perverted to their own ruin. But it is intimated here, that the elect people, who were among them, should be kept from being deceived by them; in as much as they were chosen to obtain salvation, and therefore should believe in Christ by the gospel.

There is another scripture, which seems to give countenance to our opinion. It is that in which the apostle shows, that 'God had not cast away his people,' namely, the Jews; that is, he had not rejected the whole nation, but had made a reserve of some, who were the objects of his special love, and chosen to salvation. These are called, 'A remnant according to the election of grace.'l This seems still more plain from what follows, 'What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for,' that is, righteousness and life, which, as is stated in the preceding verse, they 'sought after, as it were, by the works of the law,' and so acted inconsistently with the attaining of it by grace, 'but the election,' that is, the elect among that people, 'have obtained it,' for they sought after it another way, 'and the rest were blinded,' that is, the other part of the Jewish nation who were not interested in the privilege of election, were left to the blindness of their own minds, and came to ruin.

Let me add one scripture more, that in which the apostle, speaking concerning the nation of the Jews, distinguishes between the natural and the spiritual seed of Abraham, and says, 'All are not Israel that

are of Israel.' This is as if he had said, 'There was a remnant according to the election of grace, who were chosen to eternal life from among that people who were, in other respects, chosen to be made partakers of the external privileges which belonged to them as God's peculiar people.'

The sum of the argument I have stated is, that though there are some scriptures which speak of the church of the Jews, as separated from the world by the peculiar hand of divine providence, and favoured with the external means of grace, yet there are others in which they are said to be chosen to partake of privileges of a higher nature, even those which accompany salvation; and that therefore 'election,' in the Old Testament, sometimes signifies God's purpose relating to the salvation of his people.

We shall proceed to consider how election is taken in the New Testament. Those whom we oppose allege that it is there used only to signify God's bringing persons to be members of the Christian church, as being instructed in Christian doctrines by the apostles. The principal ground of this opinion is, that sometimes whole churches are said to be elected. The apostle, for example, speaks of the church at Babylon, as 'elected together with' those to whom he directs his epistle;p and it is supposed that nothing is intended, but that they were both of them Christian churches. If this be the sense of every scripture in the New Testament which treats of election, we must not pretend that the doctrine we are maintaining is founded on it. We think we have reason to conclude, however, that when we meet with the word in the New Testament, it is to be understood, in most places, for God's eternal purpose relating to the salvation of his people. I will not pretend to prove an universal negative, namely, that it is never taken otherwise; but shall refer to some scriptures, in

which it is plainly understood in the sense I have stated, and shall endeavour to defend this sense.

The first scripture that we shall refer to, is Eph. 1:4, 'He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' In the following verse he speaks of their being 'predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.' Now, that this respects not the external dispensation of God's providence, in constituting them a Christian church, or giving them the knowledge of those doctrines on which the church was founded, but their being chosen to salvation, and to grace as the means of salvation, according to God's eternal purpose, will very evidently appear from the context. They who are chosen, are called 'faithful in Christ Jesus. This language implies much more than merely to be in him by external profession. They are farther described, as 'blessed with all spiritual blessings, in Christ,' or blessed with all those blessings which respect heavenly things, grace which they had in possession, and glory, which they had in expectation. They are still farther described, as having 'obtained redemption through the blood of Christ, and forgiveness of sins.' And all this is said to be done, 'according to the riches of his grace,' and 'the good pleasure of his will, who worketh all things after the counsel thereof.' Certainly all this must contain much more than the external dispensation of providence, relating to the privilege which they enjoyed as a church of Christ.

Again, in 1 Thess. 1:4, the apostle says concerning those to whom he writes, that he knew 'their election of God.' That this is to be understood of their election to eternal life, is very evident. Indeed, he explains it in this sense, when he says, 'God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our

gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The gospel is considered as the means of their attaining that salvation to which they are said to be chosen; so that their election contains more than their professed subjection to it, as a church of Christ. Besides, the apostle gives marks and evidences which plainly discover that it is their election to salvation which he intends. He speaks of their 'work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ,' and of 'the gospel's coming not in word only, but in power.'s Here he does not mean the power which was exerted in working miracles, for that would be no evidence of their being a church, or of their adhering to the doctrines which the miracles confirmed thereby, since every one who saw miracles wrought did not believe. What he means is, that, by the powerful internal influence of the Holy Ghost, they were persuaded to become followers of the apostles and the Lord, and were ensamples to others, and public-spirited, in endeavouring to propagate the gospel in the world. Certainly this argues that they were effectually called by the grace of God; and so proves that they were chosen to be made partakers of this grace, and of that salvation which is the consequence of it.

There is another scripture, in which it is very plain that the apostle speaks of election to eternal life; in as much as it affirms several privileges connected with election which the Christian church, as such, cannot lay claim to. The passage is Rom. 8:33, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.' Now if justification, or freedom from condemnation, accompanied with their being effectually called here, and ending in their being glorified hereafter, be the result of their election, certainly more is included than the external privileges of the covenant of grace, which all who adhere to the Christian faith are possessed of. It is, therefore, an election to salvation which the apostle here intends.

It is objected, that it is more than probable, when we find, as we sometimes do, whole churches styled elect in the New Testament, that some among them were hypocrites. Those, in particular, to whom the apostle Peter writes, who were converted from Judaism to Christianity, whom he calls 'elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,' seem to have had some in communion with them, concerning whom it might be said, that they had only a name to live, but yet were dead. He advises them, 'to lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envies, and evil-speaking, and, as new born babes, to receive the word, if so be they had tasted that the Lord is gracious.' This language makes it more than probable, that there were some among them who had not, in reality, experienced the grace of God. Again, when he says that there should be 'false teachers among them,' whose practice should be as vile as their doctrine, and that 'many' amongst them 'should follow their pernicious ways,'x his words seem to argue that the whole church he writes to were not chosen to salvation. It is hence inferred that their election signifies only their being chosen to enjoy the privileges which they possessed as a professing society of Christians.—It is certain, however, that there was a very considerable number among them who were not only Christians in name, but were very eminent for the exercise of those graces which evinced their election to eternal life. Peter says particularly concerning them, 'Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.' This account of them agrees very well with their being 'elect, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.'z The only thing which seems to affect our argument is, that this character did not belong to every individual. But, supposing this should be allowed, might not the church be here described as chosen to salvation, in as much as the far greater number of them were so? Nothing is more common, in scripture,

than for a whole body of men to be denominated from the greater part of them, whether their character be good or bad. Thus when the greater part of the Jewish church had revolted from God, and were guilty of the most notorious crimes, they are described as though their apostacy had been universal: 'They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders.' Yet it is certain, that there were some who had not apostatized. Some were slandered and reproached for the sake of God; and, though their number was very small, they were not included in the number of those who walked with slanders. Again, God says by the prophet Ezekiel, 'I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.'b Yet, at that time, in which the people were most degenerate, there were found some who 'sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of them.' On the other hand, when the greater number of them kept their integrity, and walked before God in holiness of life, the whole church is thus characterized, 'I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness; Israel was holiness to the Lord.'d Yet it is certain, that, at that time, there were a great many who rebelled, murmured, and revolted from God, and were plagued for their iniquities. But because the greater number of them were upright and sincere, the character of being so is given in general terms, as if there had been no exception. The prophet looked back also to some age of the church, in which a great number of them were faithful; and he speaks of the people in general, at that time, as such, and accordingly calls them, 'The faithful city.' The prophet Jeremiah, in the same manner, calls them, 'The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold.'f Yet there never was a time when there were none among them who rebelled against God. May not, then, the same principle be assumed concerning the first gospel-churches that were planted by the apostles? Accordingly, when those are styled 'elect' to whom the

apostle Peter writes, as well as the church at Babylon, why may not the word be supposed to signify, that the greater part of them were really sanctified, and therefore chosen to sanctification? It follows that their character, as elect, does not signify their being chosen merely to be made partakers of the external privileges of the gospel. We might consider also that it is very agreeable to our common mode of speaking, to denominate a city, or a kingdom, from the greater number. Whether we call them a rich, or a wise, or a valiant people, we never suppose that there are no exceptions to the character. Why, then, may we not conclude, that the apostle Peter, when he describes the church to whom he wrote as elected, intends their election to salvation?

We have thus endeavoured to prove, that election is not always taken, in the Old Testament, for the external privileges which the Jewish nation had as a church; nor, in the New Testament, for those which belong to the churches, or to persons who professed the Christian faith. Probably the learned author, before-mentioned, was apprehensive that his observation, as to this view of it, would not hold universally true. He has therefore another provisionary objection against the doctrine of particular election of persons to eternal life, and says, as Arminius and his contemporaries before did, that all those scriptures which speak of this doctrine, refer to nothing more than God's conditional purpose, that if a person believes, he shall be saved. It is necessary for us to consider what may be said in answer to this; but as we shall have occasion to speak on this subject when we consider the properties of election, under a following Head, we choose rather to reserve it to that place, than be obliged to repeat what might be said concerning it.

Opinions as to the Objects of Election

Having thus premised something concerning election in general, and the sense in which it is to be understood in scripture, we shall briefly mention a matter in dispute, among divines, relating to the objects of election, as they are considered in God's eternal purpose. We shall take notice of some different opinions relating to this question, without making use of those scholastic modes of speaking which render the subject much more difficult than otherwise it would be; and we shall avoid and guard against those extremes which have had a tendency only to prejudice persons against the doctrine in general.

The object of election is variously considered by divines, who treat of the subject. There are some who, though they agree in the most material things in their defence of the doctrine, are divided in their sentiments about some nice metaphysical speculations, relating to the manner in which man is to be considered, as the object of predestination. Some, who are generally styled Supralapsarians, seem to explain the matter thus:—God, from all eternity, designed to glorify his divine perfections, in some objects out of himself; which he could not then be said to have done, in as much as they did not exist. The perfections which he designed to glorify, were, more especially, his sovereignty and absolute dominion, as having a right to do what he will with the work of his hands; and also his goodness, whereby he would render himself the object of their delight. As a means conducive to this end, he designed to create man an intelligent creature, in whom he might be glorified; and since a creature, as such, could not be the object of the display of his mercy or justice, he farther designed to permit man to fall into a state of sin and misery, that so, when fallen, he might recover some out of that state, and leave others to perish in it. The former class are said to be loved, the other hated. And when some extend the absoluteness of God's purpose, not only to election, but to reprobation, and do not take care to guard their modes of speaking, as they ought to do, but

conclude reprobation, at least predamnation, to be not an act of justice, but rather of sovereignty, they lay themselves open to exception, and give occasion to those who oppose the doctrine of election, to conclude, that they represent God as delighting in the misery of his creatures, and with that view giving being to them. It is true, several, who have followed this way of thinking, have endeavoured to extricate themselves out of this difficulty, and denied this, and other consequences of the like nature, which many have thought to be necessary deductions from their scheme. Whether they have done this effectually, or not, may be judged of by those who are conversant with their writings. I cannot but profess that I set a very high value on them in other respects; yet I am not bound to approve some nice speculations, contained in their method of treating this subject, which render their views exceptionable. In particular, I cannot approve of any thing advanced by them, which seems to represent God as purposing to create man, and then to suffer him to fall, as a means by which he designed to demonstrate the glory of his vindictive justice. This notion has given occasion to many to entertain rooted prejudices against the doctrine of predestination, as though that doctrine necessarily involved in it the supposition, that God made man to damn him.

There are others generally styled Sublapsarians, who suppose, that God considered men as made and fallen, and then designed to glorify his grace in the recovery of those who were chosen by him to eternal life,—his justice in those whom he designed to condemn, as a punishment for their sins, which he purposed not to hinder, and foreknew that they would commit,—and his sovereignty, in selecting some persons rather than others as the objects of his grace, while he might have left the whole world in that state of misery into which he foresaw they would plunge themselves. That which is principally objected, by those who are in the other way of thinking, against this

scheme, is, that the Sublapsarians suppose that God's creating men, and permitting them to fall, was not the object of his eternal purpose. This opinion, however, the Sublapsarians universally deny, and they distinguish between God's purpose to create and suffer men to fall, and his purpose considered as a means to advance his sovereignty, grace, and justice. In this the principal difference between the two parties consists. We shall enter no farther into their controversy, except to add, that whatever may be considered, in God's eternal purpose, as a means to bring about other ends, it seems evident, from the nature of the thing, that God cannot be said to choose men to salvation without considering them as fallen; for as no one is a subject capable of salvation, but he who has fallen into a state of sin and misery, so when God purposed to save such, they could not be considered as to be created, or as created and not fallen, but as sinners.

There are others who deny particular election of persons to eternal life, and explain those scriptures, which speak of it, in a very different way. These suppose that God designed, from all eternity, to create man, and foreknew that he would fall,—that, pursuant to his eternal foreknowledge, he designed to give him sufficient means for his recovery, which, by the use of his free-will, he might improve, or not, to the best purposes,—and that, foreknowing who would improve, and who would reject, the means of grace which he purposed to bestow, he determined, as the consequence of their improving or rejecting them, to save some, and condemn others. This method of explaining God's eternal purpose is exceptionable in two respects, as will appear in the course of our prosecuting this subject. First, they suppose that the salvation of men depends on their own conduct, or the right use of their free-will; and they, in consequence, do not give to God the glory which is due for that powerful, efficacious grace which enables them to improve the

means of grace, and brings them into a state of salvation. Secondly, they suppose that nothing absolute is contained in the decree of God, but his foreknowledge, which is rather an act of his understanding than his will. Hence, their system seems to militate against his sovereignty and grace, and, to make his decrees depend on some conditions, founded in the free-will of man, which, according to them, are not the object of a peremptory decree.

Proofs that Election respects only a part of mankind

Having thus considered intelligent creatures, and more particularly men, as the objects of predestination, we proceed to the farther proof and explanation of the doctrine of election. To attain our object, we shall insist on the following propositions: first, that it is only a part of mankind who were chosen to salvation; secondly, that they who were chosen to it, as the end, were also chosen to sanctification, as the means; and thirdly, that they were chosen in Christ. These propositions are contained in that part of the Answer we are considering in which it is said, that 'God has chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof.'

Our first proposition, then, is, that some were chosen to salvation,—not the whole race of mankind, but only those who shall be eventually saved. That the whole world is not the object of election, appears from the known acceptation of the word, both in scripture, and in our common modes of speaking. To choose, as was formerly observed, is to take, prefer, or esteem one thing before another, or to separate a part from the whole, for our own proper use, so that what remains is treated with neglect and disregard. It is not a proper way of speaking to say that the whole is chosen. Hence, if all mankind had been foreordained to eternal life, which God might have done if

he had pleased, this determination would not have been called a purpose according to election.

There are other arguments, however, more conclusive than what rests upon merely the known sense of the word. These we shall proceed to consider; and, in treating them, we shall make use of the same method of reasoning which we observed, in proving that God foreordained whatever comes to pass, particularly applying it to the eternal state of believers. The decree of God, as we before observed, is to be judged of by the execution of it, in time. In like manner, those whom God, in his actual providence and grace, prepares for, and brings to glory, he also before designed for it. Were I to treat only of those particular points in controversy which exist between us and the Pelagians, I would first consider the method which God takes in saving his people, and prove that salvation is of grace, or that it is the effect of the power of God, and not to be ascribed to the free-will of man, as separate from the divine influence; and then I would proceed to speak concerning the decree of God relating to his salvation, which might then, without much difficulty, be proved. But being obliged to pursue a method in which things are laid down in their respective connexion, we must sometimes, to avoid the repetition, defer to a following head, the more particular proof of some doctrines, on which our arguments depend. Hence, as the execution of God's decree, and his power and grace manifested in it, will be insisted on in some following Answers, we shall, at present, take these points for granted, or shall speak but very briefly concerning them.

1. That only a part of mankind are chosen to be made partakers of grace and glory, appears from the fact that these invaluable privileges are conferred upon, or applied to, no more than a part of mankind. If all shall not be saved, all were not chosen to salvation;

for we are not to suppose that God's purpose relating to salvation can be frustrated, or not take effect. If there be a manifest display of discriminating grace in the execution of God's decree relating to salvation, there is, doubtless, a discrimination in his purpose; and that is what we call election. Accordingly, there are some scriptures which represent those who are saved as a remnant. Thus, when the apostle is speaking of God's casting away the greater part of the Jewish nation, he says of some of them, that, 'at this present time also, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace;' that is, there are some among them who are brought to embrace the faith of the gospel, and to be made partakers of the privileges which accompany salvation. These are called a remnant. And it is said, 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea,' it is no more than 'a remnant' of them that 'shall be saved.'l He doubtless speaks in this and other scriptures, concerning the eternal salvation of those who are described as a remnant, according to the election of grace. Here it will be necessary for us to consider, that this 'remnant' signifies only a small part of the Jewish church, selected, by divine grace, out of that nation, of which the greater number were rejected by God; and that the salvation here spoken of, is to be taken not for any temporal deliverance, but for that salvation which the believing Jews should be made partakers of in the gospel-day, when the rejection of the others had its full accomplishment. That this may appear, we shall compare this scripture not only with the context, but with the passage in Hosea, whence it is taken. As to what respects the context, the apostle, in verse 2, expresses his 'great heaviness, and continual sorrow of heart,' for the rejection of that nation in general, which they had brought upon themselves. Yet, in verse 6, he encourages himself with this thought, that 'the word of God,' that is, the promise made to Abraham relating to his spiritual seed, who were given to expect greater blessings than those which were contained in the external dispensation of the covenant of grace,

'should not take none effect;' for though the whole nation of the Jews, who were of Israel, that is, Abraham's natural seed, did not attain those privileges, yet a part of them, who are here called Israel, and elsewhere a remnant, chosen out of that nation, should be made partakers of them. The former are, in verse 8, called, 'the children of the flesh;' the latter are called by way of eminence, 'the children of the promise.' They arc also styled 'The vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, to whom he designed to make known the riches of his glory, namely, those whom he had called; not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.' These are they whom he intends by that 'remnant' which were chosen out of each of them; for so the word properly signifies.n This sense is farther confirmed, by the quotation out of the prophecy of Hosea, compared with another out of the prophecy of Isaiah.p Both quotations speak of only a remnant that shall be saved, when the righteous judgments of God were poured forth on the Jewish nation in general. The prophet Hosea adds another promise relating to them, which the apostle takes notice of, namely, that 'in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.' This promise plainly respects the remnant; for he had before prophesied concerning the nation in general, 'Ye are not,' that is, ye shall not be my people, 'and I will not be your God.' Here, therefore, is a great salvation foretold, which they, among the Jews, should be made partakers of, who were foreordained to eternal life, when the rest were rejected.

It is objected that the prophet seems to speak of a temporal salvation; in as much as it is said, in the words immediately following, 'Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel, be gathered together, and shall appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land,' namely of Babylon, 'for great shall be the day of Jezreel.' From these words, it is inferred that the

remnant of whom the prophet speaks, who should be called the sons of the living God, are such only as should return out of captivity, not an elected portion, or those of the Jews who believed to eternal life; because, when this prediction was fulfilled, they were to 'appoint themselves one head,' or governor, namely, Zerubbabel or some other, who should be at the head of affairs, and help forward their flourishing state, in or after their return from captivity. It seems very evident, however, that part of this prophecy respects the happiness of Israel, at the time when 'they should seek the Lord their God, and David their King, and should fear the Lord and his goodness, in the latter days.' Why then may not this verse, in chap. 1, in which it is said that 'they shall be called the sons of the living God,' also have its accomplishment in the gospel-day, when they should adhere to Christ, who is called, 'David their King?' The only difficulty which affects this sense of the text is, its being said, that they shall return to their own land, under the conduct of 'a head,' or governor, whom they should 'appoint over them,'—language which seems to favour the opinion maintained in the objection. But the sense of the words would be more plain, if, instead of, 'Then the children of Judah,' &c., we render the text, 'And the children of Judah,' &c. a rendering which is observed in most translations, and is most agreeable to the sense of the Hebrew word. According to our translation, the passage seems to intimate, that the prophet is speaking of something mentioned in the foregoing verse; and as the one verse respects their return from the captivity, the other also must be supposed to do so. If, however, we put 'and' instead of 'then,' the meaning of the verses together is, that there were two blessings promised. The one blessing was, that a part of the Jewish nation should be made partakers of the saving blessings of the covenant of grace; and this was to have its accomplishment when they were brought to believe in Christ by the gospel, or when this remnant, taken from among them, should be saved. The other blessing was promised to the whole nation; and was

to be conferred upon them when they returned from the Babylonish captivity. If it be objected to this sense of the text, that their return from captivity is mentioned after the promise of their being called 'the sons of the living God,' and cannot be supposed to relate to a providence that should happen before it, I need only reply, that it is very usual, in scripture, for the Holy Ghost, when speaking concerning the privileges which the church should be made partakers of, not to mention them in the same order in which they were to be accomplished. Why, then, may we not suppose, that this rule may be applied to this text? Accordingly the sense is this: The prophet had been speaking, in the tenth verse, of that great salvation which this remnant of the Jews, converted to Christianity, should be made partakers of in the gospel-day; then he intimates an objection, as if it had been said, 'How can this be, when the Jews are to be carried into captivity, and there broken, scattered, and, as it were, ruined?' and he adds in answer to this, that the Jews should not be destroyed in the captivity, but should be delivered, and return to their own land, and should remain a people, till this remnant was gathered out of them, who were to be made partakers of the spiritual privileges under the gospel-dispensation.

Having thus endeavoured to prove, that the remnant spoken of in Rom. 9 are such as should be made partakers of eternal salvation, we may now apply what has been said to our present argument. If that salvation, which this remnant was to be made partakers of, be the effect of divine power, agreeably to what the apostle says in the context, 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;' and, if it be the gift of divine grace, agreeably to what he says elsewhere, 'By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;'t it follows that God designed beforehand to give them these blessings; and if he designed them for only this remnant, then it is not all, but a part of

mankind, namely, those who shall be eventually saved, who were chosen to salvation.

2. The doctrine of election may be further proved, from God's having foreknown whom he will sanctify and save. It will be allowed that God knows all things, and, consequently, that he knows all things which are future, and so not only what persons he has saved, but whom he will save. We need not prove that God foreknew all things; for that is not denied by those who are on the other side of the question, or, at least, is denied by very few of them. Indeed, if this were not an undoubted truth, we could not depend on those predictions which respect things that shall come to pass. These predictions refer not only to such events as are the effects of necessary causes, or to things produced according to the common course or laws of nature, but to those which are contingent, or which are the result of the free-will of man. Such things have been foretold, and consequently were foreknown by God. Now, if it be allowed that he foreknew whatever men would be and do, let me add, that his foreknowledge is not an act of the divine mind, merely taking a foreview of events, or observing what others will be or do, without determining that his actual providence should interest itself in them. Hence, if he foreknew the salvation of those who shall be eventually saved, he foreknew what he would do for them, as a means conducive to their salvation; and, if so, then he determined beforehand that he would bring them to glory. But his determination respects only a part of mankind, who were chosen by him to eternal life.

In this sense we are to understand those scriptures which set forth God's eternal purpose to save his people, as an act of foreknowledge. Thus, in Rom. 11:2, it is said, 'God hath not cast away his people, whom he foreknew;' that is, he has not cast them all away, but has reserved to himself 'a remnant, according to the election of grace.'

That he either had or soon designed to cast away the greater number of the Jewish nation, seems very plain from several passages in this chapter. In verses 17, 19, for example, he speaks of 'some of the branches being broken off,' and, in verse 22, he speaks of God's 'severity,' by which we are to understand his vindictive justice in this dispensation. Yet we are not to suppose, says the apostle, that God has cast them all away. Accordingly, he mentions himself as an instance of the contrary; as though he had said, 'I am called, and sanctified, and chosen, though I am an Israelite.' Moreover, God's not casting away this remnant of the Israelites, being the result of his foreknowledge, does not respect merely his knowing what they should be or do, whom he had chosen to eternal life; but is represented as a discriminating act of favour. As to his merely knowing what men should be and do, they who are rejected by him are as much the objects of his knowledge as any others; for the omniscience of God is not the result of his will, but is a perfection founded in his nature, and therefore not are trary but necessary.

Again, the apostle Peter speaks of some who were 'elected, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto obedience,' &c. This does not mean that they were chosen, because of any obedience performed by them, which God foreknew; for their election is considered as the result of his foreknowledge, not as the cause of it. The word foreknowledge is yet farther explained in another place, where the apostle says, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.'y He had before been speaking of the faith of some, who professed the gospel, being overthrown. Nevertheless, says he, that 'foundation' of hope which God has laid in the gospel, is not hereby shaken, but 'stands sure;' the faithful shall not be overthrown, for 'the Lord knoweth them that are his;' that is, he knows who are the objects of his love, who shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Hence, God's foreknowledge, considered as a

distinguishing privilege, is not to be understood, merely of his knowing how men will behave themselves, and so taking his measures thence, as though he first knew what they would do, and then resolved to bestow his grace; but it is to be understood of his knowing whom he has set apart for himself or designed to save, with respect to whom his providence will influence their conduct, and prevent their apostacy.

God's knowledge is sometimes taken in scripture for his approving, or loving, those who are its objects. Thus he says to Moses, 'Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.' Here one expression explains the other; and so the knowledge spoken of is a knowledge of approbation. Again, when our Saviour says to some, 'I will profess unto you I never knew you,'a it is not to be supposed that he did not know how they would behave themselves, or what they would do against his name and interest in the world. But the words, 'I never knew you,' mean, 'I never approved of you;' and accordingly it is added, 'Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' Further, when it is said concerning knowledge, as applied to man, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God,' no one supposes that a speculative knowledge of divine truths will give any one ground to conclude his right to eternal life. Hence, to know God, is to love him, to delight in him. In the same sense the apostle speaks of God's knowing man, when he says, 'If any man love God, the same is known of him,'c that is, beloved by him. Now if God's knowing his people signifies his loving them, his foreknowing them must signify his determining to do them good, and to bestow grace and glory upon them; which is the same thing as to choose them to eternal life. He foreknew what he designed to confer upon them; for he 'prepared a kingdom for them from the foundation of the world.' And this is the same thing as his having, from the beginning, chosen them to salvation.

It is objected that, as all actions, performed by intelligent creatures, as such, suppose knowledge, so their determinations are the result of foreknowledge, for the will follows the dictates of the understanding; that, therefore, we must suppose God's foreknowledge to be antecedent to, and the ground and reason of his determinations; and that the apostle seems to intimate this, when he says, 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,' that is, he had a perfect knowledge of their future conduct, and therefore determined to save them. Now, I do not deny that, according to the nature of things, we first consider God as knowing, and then as willing. But this does not hold good with respect to his knowing things future; for we are not to suppose that he first knows that a thing shall come to pass, and then wills that it shall. It is true, he first knows what he will do, and then does it; but to speak of a knowledge in God, as conversant about the future state or actions of his people, without considering them as connected with his power and providence as the immediate cause, I cannot think consistent with the divine perfections. As for the scripture, 'Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate,' we are not to suppose that God foreknew that they whom the apostle speaks of would be conformed to the image of his Son, and then, as the result of his knowledge, determined that they should. Their being conformed to Christ's image, consists in their exercising those graces which are agreeable to the temper and disposition of his children, or brethren, as they are here called; and this conformity to his image, is certainly the result of their being called. But their calling, as well as justification and glorification, is the consequence of their being foreknown. Hence, God's foreknowledge must here be taken in the same sense as in the scriptures just quoted,—for his having loved them before the foundation of the world, or chosen them to enjoy those privileges which are here mentioned. [See note 2 U, page 321.]

3. That there is a number chosen out of the world to eternal life, appears further from the means which God has ordained for gathering a people out of it, to be made partakers of the blessings which he has reserved for them in heaven. This is what we generally call the means of grace; and from the nature of it we may learn that there is a chosen people, whose advantage is designed by it.

There always has been a number of persons, whom God, by his distinguishing providence, has separated from the world, who have enjoyed the ordinances, or means of grace, and to whom the promises of eternal life have been made. We do not say that these are all chosen to eternal life; but it appears, from the design of providence in giving, them the means of salvation, that there have been some among them, who were ordained to eternal life. If God gives the means of grace to the church, it is an evident token that some are designed to have grace bestowed upon them, and consequently to be brought to glory.

Again, they who have been favoured with the means of grace, have had some peculiar marks of the divine regard to them. Thus we read, in the early ages of the world, of the distinction between those who had the special presence of God among them, and others who were deprived of it. Cain, for example, is said to have 'gone out from the presence of the Lord,' as one who, together with his posterity, was deprived of the means of grace. We read also of God's covenant, in which the Most High promised to be a God to some, while others were excluded. Thus he was called 'the God of Shem.'g and afterwards, 'of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' whose descendants were in consequence given to expect the ordinances, and means of grace, and many instances of that special grace which a part of them should be made partakers of. Now, would he have made this provision, for a peculiar people, in so discriminating a way, if there had not been a

remnant among them, according to the election of grace, whom he designed to manifest himself to here, and to bring to glory hereafter? No, he would have neglected or overlooked them, as he did the world. Both they and their seed, however, had the promises of the covenant of grace made to them; and this fact argues, that there was a remnant among them, whom God designed to bring into a state of grace and salvation, and who, in consequence, are said to be the objects of divine love.

This leads us to consider the meaning of that text, which is generally insisted on, as a very plain proof of this doctrine, 'The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand; not of works, but of him that calleth: it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' Here is an express mention of the purpose of God, according to election; and Jacob, pursuant to it, is said to be the object of divine love. For understanding this, let us consider the sense which is given of the passage, by those on the other side of the question; how far that sense may be allowed; what there is in the words to prove our doctrine; and wherein our sense of them differs from theirs.

They who deny particular election, suppose that Jacob and Esau are not here considered in a personal capacity, but that the apostle speaks of their respective descendants. They suppose also that he refers to two divine predictions; in one of which, God told Rebekah, before her two sons were born, that 'two nations were in her womb,' and that 'the elder,' that is the posterity of Esau, 'should serve the younger,' namely that of Jacob; and, in the other of which, God says, 'I loved Jacob, and hated Esau, and laid his mountains waste.'l We are hence told that if, in both the scriptures referred to by the apostle, nothing else is intended but the difference which should be

put between them, as to the external dispensations of providence, or that Jacob's family, in future ages, should be in a more flourishing state than that of Esau, we must not suppose that the apostle designed to represent them as chosen to or excluded from eternal life. This seems a very plausible sense of the text. Yet the apostle's words may very well be so reconciled with the two scriptures cited to enervate the force of the argument taken from them, as that it shall not follow that there is no reference made to the doctrine of eternal election. We will not deny that when it is said, 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated,' their respective descendants were intended in this prediction. But it does not follow that Jacob and Esau, personally considered, were not also included. Whoever reads their history, in the book of Genesis, will find evidently, in the one, the marks and characters of a person chosen to eternal life; but will discover in the other no account of any regard which he expressed to God or religion,—no evidence that he was not rejected.—Again, so far as respects the posterity of Jacob, and Esau, we are not to suppose that God's having loved the one, and rejected the other, implies nothing else but that Jacob's posterity had a better country allotted for them, or that they exceeded Esau's in those secular advantages or honours which were conferred upon them. This seems to be the principal sense which they, on the other side of the question, give of the apostle's words; for they compare them with those of the prophet Malachi, who, speaking concerning Esau's being hated, explains it as relating to 'his land being laid waste for the dragons of the wilderness.' This had been foretold by some other prophets; and had its accomplishment soon after the Jews were carried captive into Babylon, from which time they ceased to be a nation. But, though this be the particular instance of hatred which the prophet Malachi refers to, yet more is meant by the word, as used by the apostle Paul. The prophet particularly designs to obviate an objection, which the Jews are represented as making against the divine dispensations

towards them; as though they had not such an appearance of being the objects of love, as he supposes them to have had. He hence brings them in as speaking to this effect: 'How canst thou say, that God has loved us, who have continued seventy years captives in Babylon, and who, since our return thence, have been exposed to many adverse dispensations of providence?' The prophet's reply is this: That notwithstanding their captivity and adversities, they still remained a nation, and, in this respect, were more the objects of the divine regard than the posterity of Esau; for the latter, who are represented as hated, never returned to their former state, or whatever attempts they made to recover it were all to no purpose. This the prophet alleges as a sufficient answer to the Jews' objection, in the same sense in which they understood the words 'love' and 'hatred.' But doubtless, more was meant in the prediction uttered before Jacob and Esau were born, and in the apostle's application of it in the text in question. If nothing were intended but outward prosperity, or their vying with each other in worldly grandeur, Esau's prosperity might be concluded to have been preferable to Jacob's. When they are reckoned by their genealogies,n many of the former are described as dukes and kings, who made a considerable figure in the world. And when Jacob's posterity were few in number, and bondmen in the land of Egypt, and when the Israelites were carried captive into Babylon, the Edomites are represented, by the prophet, as looking on and rejoicing in their destruction, they themselves being at that time, to all appearance, secure, and enjoying their former liberty.—Nor could the love and hatred spoken of signify nothing else than that the descendants of Jacob should be planted in a more fruitful soil. There is little difference put between them, in this respect, in the patriarchal benediction pronounced by their father; who tells Jacob, that 'God would give him the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine;' and says to Esau, 'Thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above.'

Hence, when the one is described, in the prediction, as loved, and the other as hated, we are not to suppose that outward prosperity on the one hand, or adversity on the other, are principally intended; for that might be said of both of them by turns. I infer, therefore, that God's loving or hating, as applied to the posterity of Jacob or Esau, principally respects his determining to give or deny the external blessings of the covenant of grace, or the means of grace, and therewith many special tokens of his favour. In Jacob's line the church was established, out of which, as has been before observed, there was a remnant chosen and brought to eternal life. How far this may be said of Esau's, is hard to determine.

But it will be objected, that, as is more than probable, Job and his friends were of Esau's posterity, and yet were far from being rejected of God. We reply, that a few single instances are not sufficient to overthrow the sense we have given of this divine oracle; for, as is very agreeable to the sense of many scriptures, the rejection of Esau's posterity may take its denomination from the greater number, without including every individual. Moreover, Job and his friends, as we have sufficient ground to conclude, lived before the seed of Jacob were increased, and advanced to be a distinct nation, as after their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. They lived also before that idolatry, which first overspread the land of Chaldea in Abraham's time, had universally extended itself over the country of Idumea, where Esau's family was situated. Now, though the prediction respecting Esau did not take place in a very considerable degree, in the first descendants from him, it does not follow that it has no reference to their rejection, as to what concerned the spiritual privileges of that people afterwards. Indeed, idolatry seems to have had some footing in the country where Job lived, even in his time. This gave him occasion to exculpate himself from the charge of it, when he signifies that 'he had not beheld the sun when it shineth, or

the moon walking in brightness, and his heart had not been secretly enticed, or his mouth kissed his hand.' Here he alludes to some modes of worship, practised by idolaters in his day, who gave divine honour to the sun and moon. And, soon after his time, before Israel had taken possession of Canaan, there seems to have been an universal defection of the Edomites from the true religion. Had this not been the case, Moses doubtless might, without any difficulty, have got leave to pass through their country, in his way to the land of Canaan,—especially as there was no reason to fear that his people would do any thing against them in a hostile manner. Yet he requested this leave in a most friendly and obliging manner, but to no purpose.q The unfriendly treatment, therefore, which the Israelites met with from them, proceeded from the same spring with that of the Amalekites, and other bordering nations; it arose from the circumstance that all had revolted from the God and religion of their father Abraham. Hence, the prediction in question seems to have been fulfilled, before the promise respecting Jacob's posterity, in any considerable degree, began to be accomplished.

Having briefly considered this objection, we return to the argument, —namely, that God's loving or hating, in this scripture, as it has a relation to the distinct nations which descended from Jacob and Esau, includes his determining to give or deny the external privileges of the covenant of grace, which we generally call the ordinances or means of grace. These were the spiritual and more distinguishing instances of divine favour, which Jacob was given to expect, when he obtained the blessing. As to the double portion, or greater part, of the paternal estate which descended with the blessing, together with the honour which those who enjoyed it possessed of having dominion over their brethren, or a right, as it is probable they had, to act as civil magistrates in their respective families, these were all small things, compared with those spiritual privileges in which God's love

to Jacob and his posterity was principally expressed. It was the bestowal of these privileges which is so often signified by God's being 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' In other respects, Esau was blessed, as well as Jacob. The apostle, speaking concerning that part of Isaac's prediction which respected the temporal advantage of their posterity, says, that 'he blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come.' Yet Esau was rejected, as to what concerns the spiritual part of the blessing. This was the birth-right which he is said to have despised;s and hence he is styled by the apostle, 'a profane person.' If it had been only a temporal privilege which he contemned, his despising it might have been a sin, but it could not have been properly said to be an instance of profaneness, for that has respect only to things sacred. It evidently appears, therefore, that the blessings which Esau despised, and which God had before designed to confer on Jacob and his seed, as a peculiar instance of his love, were of a spiritual nature.

It will be farther objected, however, that men's enjoying the external privileges of the covenant of grace, has no immediate reference to their salvation, or their election to it. But as salvation is not to be attained except by and under the means of grace, we must conclude, that whenever God bestows and continues them to a church or nation, he has a further end in view, namely, the calling some by his grace, to partake of those privileges which accompany salvation. If there were no such blessings to be conferred on the world, there would be no means of grace, and consequently no external dispensation of the covenant of grace; for it is absurd to suppose that anything can be called a means, where all are excluded from the end which it refers to. The sum of this argument, then, is, that God had a peculiar love to the posterity of Jacob, and, accordingly, designed to give them those privileges which were denied to others, namely, the means of grace, which he would not have done, had he not intended

to make them effectual to the salvation of some of them. His purpose to this effect, is what is called election. And though this does not apply to all the seed of Jacob, for 'all,' as the apostle says elsewhere, 'are not Israel who are of Israel;' yet, as there was a remnant of them to whom it was applied, these are that happy seed who are represented, by the apostle, as the objects of God's compassion, or as 'vessels unto honour, in whom he designed to make known the riches of his glory,' having, in this respect, 'afore prepared them unto glory.'

Having thus considered that God has chosen a part of mankind to salvation, we may, without being charged with a vain curiosity, since the scripture goes before us in this matter, inquire whether this privilege belongs to the greater or the smaller part of mankind. If we judge of the purpose of God, by the execution of it, it must be observed that hitherto the number of those who have been made partakers of the special privileges of the gospel, has been comparatively small. If we look back to the ages before our Saviour's incarnation, what a very inconsiderable proportion did Israel bear to the rest of the world, who were left in darkness and ignorance! Even after those ages, our Saviour observes that 'many were called,' in his time, 'but few were chosen;' and he advises to 'enter in at the strait gate,'y by which he means the way to eternal life, concerning which he says that 'there are,' comparatively, 'few who find it.' And when the gospel had a greater spread, and wonderful success attended the preaching of it by the apostles, and many nations embraced the Christian faith, in the most flourishing ages of the church, the number of professing Christians, and much more of those who were converted and effectually called, was comparatively small. Whether at that happy period for which we hope and pray, and which scripture gives us warrant to expect, when there shall be a greater spread of the gospel, and a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit to render it successful, whether there shall then be a greater number of

true believers, and whether the fewness of those who have hitherto been chosen and sanctified, shall not be compensated, by the greatness of the multitudes who shall live in that happy age of the church, is not for us to be over curious to inquire. Yet we may ascertain from scripture, that, in the great day, when all the elect shall be gathered together, their number shall be exceeding great; if what the apostle says refers to this matter, as some suppose he does, when he speaks of 'a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.' But these things are no farther to be searched into, than as we may take occasion from them to inquire whether we are of the elected number. If we are, we ought to bless God for his discriminating grace, which he has magnified in our salvation.

Proofs that Election has reference to Sanctification

We now proceed to show that they who are chosen to salvation are also chosen to sanctification, as the means of it. As the end and means are not to be separated in the execution of God's decree, so they are not to be separated in our conception of the decree itself. Since God brings none to glory, but in a way of holiness, the same he determined to do from all eternity,—that is, to make his people holy as well as happy, or first to give them faith and repentance, and then the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.

There are many scriptures in which the purpose of God, as relating to this, is plainly stated. Thus it is said, 'He hath chosen us that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' Elsewhere the apostle tells others, that 'God had, from the beginning, chosen them unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the

truth.'b The apostle James says, 'God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.' Elsewhere the apostle Paul speaks of persons being 'predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,' which he explains to mean their being 'called, justified, and glorified.'d It is also said, respecting those who were converted under the apostle Paul's ministry, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed;' and of course they were ordained to believe, as well as to obtain eternal life.

The argument, which seems very plainly contained in these and similar scriptures, is, that God's eternal purpose respects the grace which his people are made partakers of here, as well as the glory which they expect hereafter. That these are inseparably connected, cannot reasonably be denied by those who are not willing to admit the doctrine of election. But if the inseparable connection between faith and salvation be allowed, as having respect to the execution of God's purpose, it will be no difficult matter to prove that this was determined by him, or that his purpose respects faith, as well as salvation. Hence the main thing in this controversy is, whether this grace which accompanies salvation is wrought by the power of God, or depends on the free-will of man. That which induces our opponents to deny that God has chosen persons to faith, is the supposition, that that which is the result of man's free-will, cannot be the object of God's unchangeable purpose. They accordingly assert, that the grace which accompanies salvation depends on man's free-will; and hence infer that God has not chosen men to it. This is the hinge on which the whole controversy turns. If the doctrine of special efficacious grace be maintained, all the prejudices against that of election would soon be removed. But the consideration of this we must refer to its proper place, as we shall have occasion to insist on it when discussing some other answers. What may be farther considered under a following head concerning the absoluteness of

election, as one of the properties that belong to it, will also add some strength to the present argument. All that we shall do at present is, to defend our sense of the scriptures now referred to,—to prove that election respects sanctification, as well as salvation.

The first of these proves that holiness is the end of election, or that it is the thing to which persons are chosen. This appears from the grammatical construction of the words. It is not said, 'he has chosen us, considered as holy, and without blame,' but 'he has chosen us that we should be holy.' Now that which is plainly intended, as the result of election, cannot be the cause and reason of it.

As to what the apostle says, 'God hath, from the beginning, chosen you unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth,' this plainly intimates, that sanctification is the end of election. The principal answer which some give, which appears to be an evasion, is, that the apostle does not speak of eternal election, because God is said to have done this 'from the beginning,' that is, as one explains the words, from the beginning of the apostle's preaching to them. But if we can prove that there is such a thing as a purpose to save, it will be no difficult matter to prove the eternity of the divine purpose. Nor is this disagreeable 'to the sense in which the words, 'from the beginning,' are elsewhere used.

As for that scripture in which it is said, 'God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom,' the words, 'that they may be,'m which are inserted by the apostle in the scripture but now mentioned, may, without any strain on the sense, be supplied; and so the meaning is, 'God hath chosen them, that they might be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.' If it will not be allowed, that these words ought to be supplied, the sense is the same as though they were. The passage is as if it had been said, 'God has chosen the

poor of this world, who are described as rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom.' We distinguish, in the same manner, between election being founded upon faith, and faith being a character by which the elect are described. If faith be a character by which they are described, then he who enabled them to believe, purposed to give them this grace,—that is, he chose them to faith, as well as to be heirs of the kingdom.

As for the text, 'He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son,' the words, 'to be,' are supplied by our translators, as I apprehend they ought, for the reason but now mentioned, taken from the parallel scripture, in Eph. 1:4. But, to evade the force of the argument, to prove that we are predestinated to grace, as well as to glory, they who deny this doctrine, give a very different turn to the sense of this text; and regard the apostle as meaning only that the persons whom he speaks of were predestinated to an afflicted state in this life, a state of persecution, in which they are said to be conformed to the image of Christ. But though it is true that believers are said to be made partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and, by consequence, are predestinated to become so; yet this does not appear to be the sense of the text in question, and does not well agree with the context. The apostle had been describing those whom he speaks of, as loving God, and as called according to his purpose; and he then considers them as predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. This, then, must be meant of their being made partakers of those graces in which their conformity to Christ consists, as well as in sufferings. Accordingly, he considers them, in the following verse, as 'called, justified, and glorified.' And all this is the result of their being predestinated.

As to that scripture, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed,' the faith of the persons spoken of is considered as the

result of their being ordained to eternal life; in other Words, they are represented as predestinated to the means, as well as to the end. But it will be objected, that this is not agreeable to the sense of the Greek word here used.q The objection is founded partly on the fact that it is not said they were foreordained to eternal life, but ordained,—a phrase the genuine sense of which, it is alleged, is, that they were 'disposed to eternal life,' and consequently to faith, as the means of it. Some understand this phrase in a different sense, and suppose that it imports a being disposed, by the providence of God, or set in order, or prepared, for eternal life. Others, agreeably to the exposition which Socinus, and some of his followers, give of the text, understand the words, as signifying their having an internal disposition, or being well inclined, as having an earnest desire after eternal life, for which reason they believed, or were fitted and prepared for eternal life, by the temper of their minds, and accordingly they believed. With this opinion a late learned writer agrees. To these objections we reply, that if the word which we render 'ordained,' be justly translated, the thing which they were ordained to being something that was future, it is, in effect, the same, as though it were said, they were foreordained to it, as Beza observes.s—Again, suppose the word ought rather to be translated, 'they were disposed unto eternal life,' it seems to contain a metaphor, taken from a general's disposing, or ordering, his soldiers to their respective posts, or employments, to which he appoints them. The passage is then as if it had been said, 'As many as God had, in his providence, or antecedent purpose, intended for salvation, believed; in as much as faith is the means and way to attain it.' This amounts to the same thing as our translation.—As to the other sense proposed, namely, their being internally disposed for eternal life, it seems very discordant with the import of the Greek word. Those texts which are generally brought to justify it, appear to be very much strained and forced to serve the purpose. Indeed, even if the word

would bear such a sense, the doctrine, that there are some internal dispositions in men, antecedent to the grace of God, whereby they are fitted and prepared for it, does not well agree with the sense of those scriptures which set forth man's natural opposition to the grace of God, before he is regenerated and converted, and his enmity against him; or with others which assert the absolute necessity of the previous work of the Spirit, to prepare for as well as excite the acts of faith.

It is farther objected, that the passage cannot respect their being ordained or chosen to eternal life who believed; in as much as none who plead for the doctrine of election suppose that all who are elected in one place, believe at the same time. Had it been said, that all who believed at that time, were ordained to eternal life, the words, it is alleged, would be agreeable to what is maintained by those who defend the doctrine of election; but to say, that all who are elected to eternal life, in any particular city, are persuaded to believe at the same time, is what the advocates of that doctrine will not allow. Besides, say the objectors, it is not usual for God to discover to, or by, the inspired writers, that, in any particular place, there are no more elected than those who are, at any one time, converted. Indeed, it is contrary, they add, to the method of God's providence to bring in all his elect at one time; so that we cannot suppose that the matter in question was revealed to the inspired writer. They, hence, conclude that, not eternal election, but something else, must be intended, namely, that all those who were prepared for eternal life, or who were disposed to pursue it, believed. To this objection we reply that, when the apostle says, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed,' we are not led into the hidden mystery of the divine will, so as to be able to judge whether more than they who then believed, in that place, were ordained to it. The meaning is merely that there were many who believed, and that all of them were ordained to

eternal life. Hence, the passage is as if it had been said, 'God has a people in this place, whom he has ordained to eternal life, who were to be converted, some at one time, others at another. Some of them were converted at this time, namely a part of those who were ordained to eternal life, if more were ordained to it.' The objection supposes, that the word which we render 'as many as,' imports the whole number of the elect in that place. We think, however, that the meaning is, that there were many who believed, and that these were only such as were ordained to eternal life. But there might be many more so ordained, who then did not believe, but hereafter should. This remained a secret, which the inspired writer was not led into, nor we by him.

There is another objection, which the learned author whose paraphrase on the New Testament, and discourse on election, I am sometimes obliged to refer to, in considering the objections which are made against this doctrine, proposes with a great deal of warmth; and if no reply can be given to it, it will be no wonder to find many prejudiced against it. His words are these: "If the reason why these men believed be only this, that they were men ordained to eternal life, the reason why the rest believed not, can be this only, that they were not ordained by God to eternal life; and if so, what necessity could there, be, that the word of God should be first preached to them, as we read, ver. 46? Was it only that their damnation might be the greater? This seems to charge the Lover of souls, whose tender mercies are over all his works, with the greatest cruelty; seeing it makes him determine, from all eternity, not only that so many souls, as capable of salvation as any other, shall perish everlastingly; but also to determine, that the dispensations of his providence shall be such towards them, as necessarily tends to the aggravation of their condemnation. And what could even their most malicious and enraged enemy do more? What is it the very devil aims at, by all his

temptations, but this very end, namely, the aggravation of our future punishment? And therefore to assert that God had determined that his word should be spoken to these Jews, for this very end, is to make God as instrumental to their ruin, as the very devil, and seemeth wholly irreconcilable with his declarations, that he would have all men to be saved, and would not that any man should perish." We must either quit the doctrine we are maintaining, provided it be the same as this author represents it to be, or we must be charged, by all mankind, with such horrid blasphemy, as is shocking to any one who reads it, as charging the Lover of souls with the greatest cruelty, and with acting in such a way as their greatest enemy is said to do,—determining, that the dispensations of his providence should tend to aggravate their condemnation, and that the gospel should be preached for this end, and no other. But let the blasphemy rest on this author's misrepresentation. Far be it from us to advance any such doctrine. In answer to him, we remark that the immediate reason why men believe to eternal life, is that God exerts the exceeding greatness of his power, whereby he works faith; and the reason of his exerting this power, is that he determined to do it, for the exerting of it is the execution of his purpose. But it does not follow, that the only reason why others do not believe is, that they were not ordained to eternal life. Their not having been ordained to eternal life, it is true, or God's not having purposed to save them, is the reason why he does not exert that power which is necessary to work faith; and unbelief will certainly be the consequence, unless man could believe without the divine energy. Yet the immediate spring or cause of unbelief is the corruption and perverseness of human nature; which is chargeable on none but man himself. We must certainly distinguish between unbelief being the consequence of God not working faith, and its being the effect of this. By its being the consequence of it is understood, that corrupt nature takes occasion, from the absence of preventing grace, to exert itself. Is

God's denying the revengeful person, or the murderer, that grace which would prevent his executing his bloody designs, the cause of his crimes? Or his denying to others the necessary supply of their present exigencies, the cause of their making use of unlawful means, by plundering others, to subsist themselves? No more is his denying special grace, which he was not obliged to give to any, the cause of men's unbelief and impenitency. These are to be assigned only to that wicked propensity of nature, which inclines us to sin, and not to the divine efficiency. And how far soever they may be the result of God's determining to deny his grace, they are not to be reckoned the effect of his determination.—Again, the design of the word's being preached, is not, as the vile misrepresentation I am considering suggests, to aggravate the damnation of those who shall not believe. The design is that men may be led by the gospel to know their duty, and that the sovereignty of God, and the holiness of his law, which requires faith and repentance, as well as man's obedience, may be made known to the world. I do not deny, that unbelief, and the condemnation consequent upon it, are aggravated by the giving of the gospel. That they are so, appears from many scriptures; as when our Saviour upbraids Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other places where he ministered, with their unbelief, and represents their condemnation as greater than that of others who were destitute of gospel privileges. It is a malicious insinuation, however, to say that we conclude that the gospel was given for this end. We must distinguish between the aggravation of condemnation being the result, or the remote consequence, of giving the gospel, and its being the effect of it, in those who reject the gospel. Much more must we make this distinction as to the design of God in giving it.—Further, God's denying that grace which would have enabled men to believe, is not to be charged as an instance of cruelty, any more than his denying it to fallen angels. It is rather a display of his justice. He was not obliged to give grace to any of the apostate race of man. Shall his

denying the grace of faith be reckoned an instance of cruelty, when we consider the forfeiture which was formerly made of it, and man's propensity to sin, which is chargeable only on himself?—Nor is God's purpose to deny the grace of faith to those whom he has not ordained to eternal life, inconsistent with that scripture, 'He will have all men to be saved.' This text, as will be farther observed elsewhere,a respects either God's determining that salvation should be applied to all sorts of men, or his declaring, by his revealed will, that it is the duty of all men to believe and to acknowledge the truth, as made known to them in the gospel.

The Elect are Chosen in Christ

They who are elected to salvation, are chosen in Christ. It is expressly said, 'He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world.' We are not to suppose that the apostle intends hereby, that we are chosen for the sake of Christ, as though any of his mediatorial acts were the ground and reason of our being chosen. Election is an act of sovereign grace, or is resolved into the good pleasure of the will of God, and is not to be accounted a purchased blessing. When we speak of the work of the Mediator, with relation to it, it is to be considered as a means ordained by God, to bring his elect to salvation, rather than the foundation of their election. This proposition necessarily follows the former; for if they who are chosen to the end, are chosen to the means, Christ's mediatorial acts being the highest and first means of salvation, God's eternal purpose respects these, as subservient to salvation.

There are some very considerable divines who distinguish between our being chosen in Christ as a Head, and our being chosen in him as a Redeemer. They conclude, that there are two distinct relations in which the elect are said to stand to Christ, both of which are mentioned by the apostle, when he says, 'Christ is the Head of the church, and the Saviour of the body,'d and also when he says, 'He is the Head of the body the church, and hath made peace through the blood of his cross.' They add, that the elect are considered as his members, without any regard had to their fallen state; and that the blessings involved in this are such as render their condition more honourable and glorious, than it would have been had they been considered only as creatures, without any relation to him as their Head. This Headship of Christ they extend not only to men, but to the holy angels, whom they suppose to be chosen, in this respect, in Christ, as well as men; and they say that it is owing to this that they have the grace of confirmation conferred upon them. It follows, also,

that Christ would have been the Head of the election of grace, though man had not fallen, and that our fallen state rendered that other relation of Christ to his elect necessary. Hence, as chosen to salvation, they are chosen in him as a Redeemer, designed to bring about this great work for them, and, for this end, set up 'from everlasting.'f

This distinction of Christ's double relation to the elect, is, doubtless, designed by those who adopt it to advance his glory. Yet it remains a matter of doubt with me, whether Christ's Headship over his church be not a branch of his mediatorial glory; and if so, it will be very difficult to prove that a Mediator respects any other than man, and him more particularly considered as fallen. Accordingly, God designed by the work of mediation, not to advance him to a higher condition than what was merely the result of his being a creature, but to deliver him from that state of sin and misery into which he foresaw that he would plunge himself. Hence, in considering the order of God's eternal purpose relating to the salvation of his people, we must suppose that he first designed to glorify all his perfections in their redemption and salvation. In order to this he foreordained, or appointed, Christ to be their great Mediator, in whom he would be glorified, and by whom this work was to be brought about. He appointed him to be their Head, Surety, and Redeemer, first to purchase salvation for them, and then to make them meet for it, in the same order in which it is brought about by him in the execution of his purpose. Thus, as the glory of God, in the salvation of the elect, was the end, Christ's redemption was the means more immediately conducive to it. Accordingly, Christ is said to be foreordained to perform those offices which he executes as Mediator. And as, when he was manifested in the flesh, he did all things for his people which were necessary to bring them to glory, he is, in God's purpose, considered as the great Mediator, by whom he designed this work

should be brought about. Hence, when he is set forth in the gospel as a propitiation for sin, the apostle seems to speak of his being such, as the result of God's purpose. His words are, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.'h The Greek word translated 'set forth,' properly signifies, as is observed in the marginal reference, 'foreordained.' Accordingly, we must consider him as from all eternity, in God's purpose, appointed to be the federal Head of those who are said to be chosen in him, and to have all the concerns of the divine glory relating to their salvation committed to his management. [See note 2 V, p. 322.]

The Eternity, Wisdom, Secrecy, Absoluteness, and Unchangeableness of the Purpose of Election

We shall now consider the properties of election, and how the divine perfections are displayed in it, agreeably to what is said concerning it in scripture.

1. As election is taken for the purpose of God, relating to the sanctification or salvation of men, as distinguished from the execution of that purpose, it is eternal. This is evident. God being eternal, his purposes must be concluded to be of equal duration with his existence. We cannot suppose that an infinitely wise and sovereign Being existed from all eternity, without any forethought or resolution what to do. To suppose this would be to represent him to have been undetermined, or unresolved, when he first gave being to all things. Nor is it to be supposed that there are any new determinations in the divine will. To suppose this would argue him to be imperfect. New determinations would be an instance of mutability in him, as much as it would be for him to alter his purpose. But to suppose either of these, does not accord with the idea of an infinitely perfect Being. Moreover, if God's purpose, with

respect to the salvation of men, were not eternal, it must be considered as a new after-thought arising in the divine mind, which, as to its first rise, is but, as it were, of yesterday; and he would then have something in him that is finite. If it be contrary to his omniscience to have new ideas of things, it is equally contrary to the sovereignty of his will to have new determinations. We conclude, therefore, that all his purposes were eternal.

2. God's purpose relating to election is infinitely wise and holy. This appears from the footsteps of infinite wisdom and holiness, which are visible in the execution of it, in bringing men to grace and glory. Nothing is more conspicuous than the glory of these perfections in the work of redemption, and in the application of it. The salvation of man is brought about in such a way, that the glory of all the divine perfections is secured; and the means made use of, as conducive to it, are the most proper which could have been used. It is, hence, a work of infinite wisdom. And as God discovers in it the infinite opposition of his nature to sin, and thereby advances the glory of his holiness, it follows that these perfections of the divine nature had their respective concern, if we may so express it, in the purpose relating to it Whatever glory is demonstrated in the execution of his purpose, was certainly included in the purpose itself.

3. The purpose of God relating to the final state of man, is secret, or cannot be known till he is pleased to discover it. Nothing is more obvious than this. Even the purposes or resolutions of creatures are secret till they are made known by them. Thus the apostle says, 'What man knoweth the things of a man,' that is, what he designs to do, 'save the spirit of a man which is in him?' And he infers, in the following words, 'so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' Elsewhere he says, 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?' For this reason, God's

purpose is called, 'the mystery of his will.'m That it is secret follows also from its being eternal. It was hid in God from before the foundation of the world; and consequently would for ever have been so, had he not, by his works or word, made some discoveries of it to those whom he brought into being. It could not have been known that God had purposed to save any, had he not revealed this in the gospel. Much less have any particular persons ground to conclude themselves to be elected, without first observing those intimations which God has given, whereby they may arrive at the knowledge of their being so. This consideration ought to be duly weighed by those who deny and are prejudiced against the doctrine of election; yet they generally overlook it in the opposition which they offer. They will not consider the distinction we make between God's having chosen a person to eternal life, and a person's having a right to conclude that he is thus chosen. On the other hand, they take it for granted, that if there be such a thing as election, we must necessarily determine ourselves to be the objects of it, and ought to regulate our future conduct accordingly. It is from this assumption they conclude, that the doctrine of election leads men to presumption, or gives them occasion to say that they may live as they list. Our belief, however, is, that it is an instance of presumption in any one to determine that he is elected, unless there be some discovery made to him that he is; and that this discovery cannot take its rise from God, unless it be accompanied with that holiness which is, from the nature of the thing, inconsistent with our being led to licentiousness. Here we may take occasion to state, that God does not make known his secret purpose relating to this matter to any by inspiration; especially since that extraordinary dispensation of providence has ceased. Indeed, it never was his ordinary way to discover it in this manner to those, who, in other instances, were favoured with the gift of inspiration. The means by which we come to the knowledge of our being elected, is God's giving certain marks or evidences of grace, or showing us the

effects of the divine power, in calling and sanctifying us. By these means we have a warrant to conclude that we were chosen to eternal life; and if we make at right improvement of them, and see, by an appeal to the holiness of our lives, that our judgment concerning our state is rightly founded, we are in no danger of abusing this great and important doctrine, to the dishonour of God, or our own destruction.

This leads us to consider a distinction, which we are often obliged to make use of, when we speak concerning the will of God. The distinction is between his secret and his revealed will. By this we account for the sense of many scriptures; and we take occasion from it to answer several objections which are brought against the doctrine of election. I am sensible that there is nothing advanced in defence of the doctrine which they who are in the other way of thinking are more prejudiced against, than this distinction. They suppose it to contain a reproachful idea of the divine Majesty. Many popular prejudices also against the doctrine we are defending are founded on it. We are represented as saying that God has a secret meaning, different from what he reveals; or that we are not to judge of his intentions by those discoveries which he makes of them. This, we are told, would be the highest reproach to charge any creature with, and contrary to that sincerity which God cannot be destitute of, and it consequently exhibits him as the object of detestation; so that no one who conceives of an holy God in such a way as he ought to do, can entertain a thought, that a secret as distinguished from a revealed will is, in even the least degree, to be ascribed to him. This is the common misrepresentation which is made of this distinction. Whether it arises from the distinction not being sufficiently explained by some, or from a fixed resolution to decry the doctrine of election and render it odious, as it must certainly be if supported by a distinction understood in so vile a sense, I will not determine. That we may remove this prejudice, however, by considering how the

distinction is to be understood in a sense more agreeable to the divine perfections, we shall proceed to explain it.

We remark, then, that the will of God is sometimes taken, in scripture, for that which he has, from all eternity, determined, which is unchangeable, and shall certainly come to pass, and which it is impossible for any creature to disannul, resist, or render ineffectual. This is such a branch of divine sovereignty, that to deny it, would be, in effect, to deny him to be God. It is this which the apostle intends, when he represents the malicious and obstinate sinner as replying against God, and defending himself in his bold crimes, by saying, 'Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?' and when the apostle, in reply, asserts the sovereignty of God, that he is not accountable to any for what he does, nor to be controlled by them. This also is what is intended, where it is said that 'God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,'o and where God says, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' This will of God is the rule of his own acting. And as it determines the event of things, it is impossible for him to act contrary to it; for it is discordant with his perfections to signify to his creatures that he determines to do one thing, while he will do another. In this sense, we are far from asserting that there is a revealed will of God, which contradicts his secret.

The will of God is often taken in scripture, also, for what he has prescribed to us as a rule of duty, or as a rule of our judging concerning the apparent event of things. The will of God, considered as a rule of duty, is a well-known and proper sense of his revealed will. Thus our Saviour teaches us to pray, 'Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' Here, he principally intends God's revealed will; and his words mean, 'Enable us to yield obedience to thy law, in our measure, as thou art perfectly obeyed in heaven.' He elsewhere

says, 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.' These words can be meant of no other than his revealed will, or of his law in which it is contained; because no one can act contrary to God's determination in that sense of his will, which we formerly mentioned. A doing his will, in that sense, therefore, would not have been laid down as a distinguishing character of those whom Christ preferred above all who were related to him in the bonds of nature. The apostle understands the will of God in the sense of his revealed will, when he says, 'Thou knowest his will.'r Here he speaks to the Jews, who were instructed out of the law, in which the will of God is contained. Elsewhere he speaks of his will, as what is to be obeyed; and describes his faithful servants' as persons who 'do the will of God,' namely, what he has commanded, 'from the heart.' There are many other scriptures thus to be understood; and this we call his revealed will, as it is the rule of duty and obedience.

The revealed will of God may also be considered as a rule which he has given us, whereby we are to judge of the apparent event of things. I make this a branch of God's revealed will, in as much as sometimes he condescends to discover future events to his creatures, which otherwise they could never have known. Yet there is a difference as to the manner of their judging of the events, corresponding to the intimations which he has given them. When, for example, God has told us expressly, that this or that particular thing shall come to pass, we are infallibly sure concerning the event, and need no other rule to judge of it, but by considering it as revealed. Thus when he has said that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, and that Christ shall come to judgment, and receive his redeemed and sanctified ones to heaven to behold his glory, we are infallibly assured of these events, because they are expressly revealed. And when we speak of the secret and revealed will of God, as applicable to things of this

nature, we intend nothing but what all will allow, that that which would have been for ever a secret, had it not been discovered, is now revealed, and therefore ceases to be so. In that sense, the revealed will of God, in all respects, agrees with his secret; for we suppose that God expressly revealed the event. But there are instances, in which the event of things is not expressly revealed; as when God has discovered to us only what is the rule of our duty. But as it is natural for man, when any duty is commanded, to pass some judgment concerning the event, and as we suppose the event not expressly revealed, it follows that the judgment which we pass concerning it, is only what appears to us, or what, according to our rule of judging, seems to be the probable event of things. In this case, we are not infallibly assured concerning it; and when we pass a judgment relating to it, we may conclude that some consequences may attend our present duty, which, perhaps, will never come to pass. If a general of an army gives a command to his soldiers to march towards the enemy, they will readily conclude that he designs, by his command, that they should enter on some action; and had he expressly told them this, either he must change his purpose, or the event must certainly happen. But as he has not discovered his purpose to them, all the judgment which they can at present form concerning it, is only such as is founded on the appearance of things; and the event might probably afterwards show, without any impeachment of his veracity or conduct, that his only design was to try whether his soldiers would obey the word of command. If, in the same way, a king should order a number of malefactors to the place of execution, without discovering his actual intention, the apparent event is their immediate death; but, if pursuant to his secret purpose, he resolved there to give a pardon to them, it cannot be supposed that he changed his purpose. The event makes it appear, that his purpose was not then known. Whatever the apparent event might be,

his real design was to humble them for their crimes, and afterwards to pardon them.

It is only in such instances as these that we apply the distinction between secret and revealed will to the doctrine which we are maintaining. It must, therefore, be a very great stretch of malicious insinuation for any one to suppose, that by this distinction we charge God with insincerity in those declarations of his revealed will, by which we pass a probable judgment concerning the event of things. We shall illustrate the distinction by particular instances. God commanded Abraham to offer up his son Isaac; yet it is certain, unless we suppose that he altered his purpose, that he intended, not that he should lay his hand upon him, but, when Isaac was upon the altar, to forbid him to do it. Here was a great and a difficult duty, which Abraham was to perform pursuant to God's revealed will, which was the rule of his obedience. Had Abraham known that God designed to hold his hand, and prevent him from striking the fatal blow, it would have been no trial of his faith; for it would have been no difficult matter for him to do every thing else which his obedience involved. The holy patriarch knew well that God could prevent him from doing it; but that he would do so he had no ground to conclude, because he had no divine intimation concerning it. What appeared to him to be the event was the loss of his son; and he reconciled this with the truth of the promise before given him, that 'in Isaac his seed should be called,' by supposing, as the apostle observes, that God, at some time or other, 'would raise him from the dead.'u Hence, what Abraham, judging, not by an express revelation, but by the voice of providence, concluded, was that Isaac must be slain by his hand. Yet this was contrary to the real event, as is evident from the account given in scripture. And as the real event was agreeable to the divine determination, as all events are, it follows, that there is a difference between the will of God determining the event of things which shall

certainly come to pass accordingly, and the revelation of his will relating to what is the creature's present duty. The latter may appear to them, when judging only by the command, which is the rule of duty, and some circumstances which attend it, to be contrary to what will afterwards appear to have been the real design of God. God's real design was to try Abraham's faith, and to prevent him from slaying his son, when he had given a proof of his readiness to obey him. But this was at first a secret to Abraham; and the apparent design was, that he should slay him.—There is, hence, a foundation for the distinction, as we have explained it, between the secret and the revealed will of God. The former belongs not to us; nor are we to take our measures from it, as being unknown. And when the latter appears contrary to it, we must distinguish between two things which are contrary in the same and different respects, or between the judgment which we pass concerning events which are apparent to us, and, at most, are only probable and conjectural, and those events, which, though they are infallibly certain, yet are not revealed, nor can be known till they come to pass. In this sense, when they seem to oppose each other, we understand the distinction between God's secret and his revealed will. This it was necessary for us thus to explain, as we shall frequently have occasion to mention and apply the distinction, when we account for the difference that there seems to be, between the purpose of God relating to the event of things, and our present views of it. We shall then understand and account for the difficulties contained in several scriptures relating to this subject. These I would have mentioned in this place, for the farther illustration of the distinction, had it been necessary. But what I have said is sufficient to explain and vindicate the distinction from the prejudices entertained against it, by those who are disposed to misrepresent what is said in defence of the doctrine of election.

From what has been said, concerning God's secret and revealed will, we may infer that it is a great boldness, and an unwarrantable instance of presumption, for any one to enter into or judge of God's secret purpose, so as peremptorily to determine, beyond the present appearance of things, that this or that shall certainly come to pass. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever.' No one, therefore, ought to determine that he is elected to salvation, before the work of grace is wrought, and some way or other made visible to him; or, on the other hand, to determine that he is rejected or reprobated, when he has no other ground to go upon, but uncertain conjecture, which would be a means to drive him to despair. That some are elected, and others rejected, is no secret, because God has revealed the fact in his word; so that we may assert it as a proposition, undoubtedly true, provided we do not apply it to particular persons. This doctrine, therefore, has not that pernicious tendency which many pretend that it has.—Again, the first act of saving faith does not consist in our believing that we are elected; neither is it the duty of unregenerate persons, as such, to apply this privilege to themselves, any more than to conclude themselves rejected. Our business is, so long as the purpose of God remains a secret to us, to attend on the means of grace, hoping and waiting for the display of divine power, in our effectual calling, and afterwards for the Spirit's testimony or seal to be set to it, whereby he discovers his own work. When this is done, our personal election may, in some measure, be reckoned a branch of his revealed will, and will afford us matter of thanksgiving and praise to him, and a foundation of peace and comfort in our own souls. But this may be farther insisted on, when we come to consider the improvement we ought to make of this doctrine of election.

4. The purpose of God relating to election, is free and sovereign, or absolute and unconditional. That which would be a reflection on the divine perfections, if applied to God's method of working, is by no means to be said concerning his purpose to work, or, which is the same, his decree of election. Hence, if there are no obligations laid on him by his creatures to display or perform any of his works of grace, so that these are all free and sovereign, it follows that the foresight of anything which shall be done by them, in time, could not be the motive or reason of his purpose or decree to save them, or of his choosing them to salvation.

This may be farther argued, from the independence of the divine nature. If his nature and perfections are independent, his will must be so. But, more particularly, the displays of God's grace in time, are, in scripture, expressly resolved into his sovereign pleasure. 'He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' And there are many other scriptures, which might be referred to, where all merit or motives taken from the creature, which might be supposed to induce him to bestow spiritual and saving blessings, are entirely excluded, and the whole is resolved into the glory of his own name, and, in particular, of those perfections which he designed to illustrate. This is applied even to the common blessings of providence: 'Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.'z And it is also applied to sparing mercy, or the exercise of God's patience, 'For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.' It is applied likewise to pardoning mercy, 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.'b And when he is represented as doing great things for his people, he puts them in mind of their own vileness and unworthiness, that the freeness and sovereignty of his grace to them might be more

conspicuous. Thus, when he tells them how he delivered Israel out of Egypt, he puts them in mind of their idolatry in that land; so that there could be no motive relative to their behaviour towards him which induced him to deliver them: 'But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt; then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them, in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.'

If the grace of God, and consequently his purpose relating to it, were not absolute, free, and sovereign, all the glory of it could not be attributed to him, nor would boasting be excluded. As the creature might be said to be a worker together with God, so he would lay claim to a share, if not to the greatest part, of the honour which will redound to him from it. But this is directly contrary to the divine perfections, and to the great design of the gospel. Let it farther be considered that a conditional purpose to bestow a benefit, cannot take effect till the condition be performed, and that, accordingly, it is said to depend on it. This is obvious from the known idea affixed to the word 'condition,' or from the common signification of it. It follows, therefore, that the performance of the condition is the proximate or immediate cause of a conditional purpose taking effect. Hence, if, by our performing the condition of God's purpose to save us, that purpose be rendered effectual, or if, by our not performing the condition, the purpose be ineffectual, we are indebted more to our own conduct than to the divine purpose, and so the glory will be due to ourselves. This would not only cast the highest dishonour on the divine perfections; but it is contrary to the design of the gospel, which is to stain the pride of all flesh, and take away all occasions of

glorying from the creature. The prophet Isaiah, foretelling the glory of the gospel-state, considers its tendency to humble the pride of man, when he says, 'The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.' The apostle Paul, describing the nature of faith, considers its tendency to be to 'exclude boasting.'e And our Saviour, speaking concerning the discriminating grace of God as it appears in election, either in his purpose relating to or in the execution of it, says, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;' that is, 'You have done nothing that has laid any obligation on me to choose you; but that act of faith, whereby you are inclined to prefer me to all others, is the consequence and result of my discriminating grace.'

We shall now proceed to consider those arguments, which are generally made use of by persons in the other way of thinking, to support the conditionality of God's purpose, as well as that of his works of grace, in opposition to what has been said concerning their freeness and sovereignty. They generally appeal to those scriptures which are expressed in a conditional form. The apostle, for example, speaks of such a 'confession of Christ with the mouth' as is attended with 'believing in the heart, that God raised him from the dead, and calling on the name of the Lord.' Our Saviour says, that 'whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life;'h and that 'he that believeth shall be saved;' and elsewhere, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'k Many other scriptures of a similar nature are adduced, whence they argue, that since the dispensations of God's providence, the gifts of his grace, and the execution of his purpose, are all conditional, the purpose itself must be so. Were it conceded that election is conditional, whether it respects the purpose or providence of God, we should meet with no opposition from those who are on the other side of the question. But as such a purpose to

save as is not absolute, peremptory, or independent on the will of man, has, as we have already shown, many absurd consequences attending it, which are derogatory to the glory of the divine sovereignty, so the doctrine of such a purpose cannot be the sense of those scriptures, now mentioned, and others of a similar nature which are laid down in a conditional form. No sense of scripture can be true or just that has the least tendency to militate against any of the divine perfections. There hence may, without any strain or violence offered to the sense of words, be another sense put upon these and all similar scriptures whereby they may be explained agreeably to the analogy of faith.

All such scriptures are to be understood as importing the necessary connection of things, so that one shall not be brought about without the other. Accordingly, repentance, faith, and all other graces, are no otherwise considered in them, than as inseparably connected with salvation. The truth of this remark depends upon one of those propositions which were formerly laid down, namely, that God, having chosen to the end, has also chosen to the means. We are far from denying that faith and repentance are necessary to salvation. God never gives one without the other; and consequently, they are inseparably connected in his eternal purpose relating to them. If nothing else were intended by a conditional purpose than this, we would not offer anything against it. But to understand the phrase in this sense, would certainly be to use words without their known or proper ideas; for the word 'condition,' as applicable to other things, is never to be understood in this sense. There is a necessary connection between God's creating the world, and his upholding it, or between his creating an intelligent creature, and his giving laws to him; but none ever supposed one of these to be properly a condition of the other. So a king's determining to pardon a malefactor, is inseparably connected with his pardoning him; and his pardon given

forth is inseparably connected with the malefactor's obtaining a right to his forfeited life; but it is not proper to say, that one of these things is a condition of the other. A person's seeing, is, in the same way, inseparably connected with the opening of his eyes; and his speaking, with the motion of his lips; but we do not say, when he determines to do either of them, that the one is a condition of the other. A condition, properly speaking, is not only connected with the privilege which follows the performance of it; but it must be performed by a subject, acting independently of him who made the conditional overture or promise. If it be said, that a duty which we are enabled to perform by God, who promised the blessing connected with it, is properly a condition, we will not contend about the propriety or impropriety of the word. But the word 'condition,' is understood by many, when applied to divine things, in the same sense as in matters, of a lower nature; and so is used to signify the dependence of the blessings promised, or of the efficacy of the divine purpose relating to them, upon our performance of the condition; and the performance of it, whereby we come to have a right and title to eternal life, is supposed to be in our own power. Now it is principally as thus understood, that we oppose the use of the word 'condition,' when we assert the absoluteness of God's purpose.

Again, whatever ideas there may be of the nature of a condition, in those scriptures which are brought to support the doctrine we are opposing, nothing more is intended by them than that what is connected with salvation is a condition of our claim to it, or of our expectation of it. In this sense, we will not deny that faith and repentance are conditions of salvation; for it would be an unwarrantable instance of presumption, for impenitent and unbelieving sinners to pretend that they have a right to salvation, or to expect the end without the means, these being inseparably connected in God's purpose, as well as in all his dispensations of

grace. Taking this, then, as a general rule for our understanding all those scriptures, which are usually brought to prove that God's purposes are sometimes conditional, we shall illustrate it, by applying it to three or four of these scriptures, which are often quoted. These we shall endeavour to explain, consistently with the doctrine we are maintaining.

One is in Gen. 19:22, where the angel bade Lot 'escape to Zoar,' telling him, that 'he could not do anything till he came thither.' If we suppose this to have been a created angel, as most divines do, he must be considered as fulfilling the purpose of God, or as acting pursuant to his commission. It is therefore the same to our present argument, as though God had told Lot, that he could do nothing till he was gone from that place. He had plainly given him to understand, that he should be preserved from the flames of Sodom, and that, in order to this, he must flee for his life; and he adds, that 'he could do nothing,' that is, he could not destroy Sodom consistently with the divine purpose to save him, till he should have escaped out of the place. God designed to preserve him alive, not as he did the three Hebrew captives, by saving him in the fire, but by his escaping from it. His escape was as much foreordained as his preservation, or was designed as a means conducive to it. The meaning of the text, therefore, is, not that God's purpose, relating to Sodom's destruction, was founded on Lot's escape, as an uncertain and dubious condition depending on Lot's will, abstracted from the divine determination; but that he designed the two things to be connected together, and that the one should be antecedent to the other. Both of them as well as their respective connection, were the object of God's absolute and peremptory determination.

There is another scripture, sometimes brought to the same purpose, where the angel says to Jacob, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh,' and

Jacob replies, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' But this does not imply, that God's determinations were dependent on Jacob's endeavour to detain the angel, or on his willingness to let him depart. We must consider Jacob as an humble, yet importunate suppliant,—as one who was 'weeping and making supplication.'m 'Let me go,' says God, appearing in the form of an angel, and speaking after the manner of men, that he might give occasion to Jacob to express a more ardent desire of his presence and blessing, as well as to signify how unworthy he was of it. But he does not say this as though he was undetermined beforehand what to do; for as the grace which Jacob exercised, as well as the blessing which he received, was God's gift, and both were connected in the execution of his purpose, we must conclude that the purpose itself was free, sovereign, and unconditional.

There is another scripture, in which God condescends to use a similar mode of speaking; it is that in which he says to Moses, concerning Israel, 'This is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.' We are not to suppose, however, that the whole event was to turn upon Moses' prayer, as though God's purposing to save his people were dependent on it, or that that grace which inclined Moses to be importunate with God, did not take its rise from him. Moses, indeed, when he began to plead with God, knew not whether his prayer would be prevalent or not; and he addresses himself, with an uncommon decree of importunity, for sparing mercy. And when God says, 'Let me alone,' it signifies that his people were unworthy that any one should plead their cause, and that if God should mark iniquity, Moses' intercession would be altogether in vain, and so he might as well let him alone, in that respect, as ask for mercy. God does not, indeed, at first tell him what he designed to do, that he might aggravate their crime; but afterwards he answers his

prayer in Israel's favour, and signifies that he would work, not for their sakes, but for his own name's sake. He, hence, takes occasion to set forth, on the one hand, the people's desert of punishment, and, on the other, the freeness of his own grace.

There is but one scripture more that I shall mention, among many that might have been brought; and that is what is said concerning our Saviour, in Matt. 13:58, that 'he could not do many mighty works,' at that time, in his own country, 'because of their unbelief.' Here the evangelist speaks either of their not having a faith of miracles, which was sometimes required in those for whom they were wrought, or of the unaccountable stupidity of that people, who were not convinced by the many which he had already wrought before them. Christ resolves, therefore, to put a stop to his hand, and not, for the present, to work so many miracles amongst them, as otherwise might have been expected. If we suppose that their want of faith prevented his working them, it is not to be considered as an unforeseen event. As he had determined not to confer faith upon them, or not to continue to work miracles amongst them, if those which he had already wrought were disregarded and despised by their unbelief, we must conclude that he had beforehand a perfect knowledge of what occurred, and that his determinations were not dependent on uncertain conditions. He had resolved that he would act in such a way as was most for his own glory, and that there should be an inseparable connection between that faith which was their duty, and his continuing to exert divine power, as an ordinance adapted to excite it.

5. God's purpose concerning election is unchangeable. This is the result of his being infinitely perfect. Mutability is an imperfection which belongs only to creatures. It would be an instance of imperfection, if there were the least change in God's understanding,

so as to know more or less than he did from all eternity. The same must be said with respect to his will, which cannot admit of any new determinations. There are, indeed, many changes in the external dispensations of his providence, which are the result of his will, as well as the effects of his power; yet there is not the least appearance of mutability in his purpose. We have before considered, in speaking concerning the immutability of the divine nature, that whatever may be a reason obliging men to alter their purposes, cannot, in the least, so operate that God should be obliged to alter his. No unforeseen occurrence can render it expedient for him to change his mind; nor can any superior power oblige him to do it; nor can any defect of power to bring about what he had designed, exist to occasion him to alter his purpose. To object that the obstinacy of man's will may do it, is to suppose that his will is exempted from the governing influence of divine providence, and that, as a contrary force offering resistance, it is superior to the divine will. But this cannot be supposed, without detracting from the glory of the divine perfections. It would be a very unworthy thought for any one to conclude that God is one day of one mind, and another day forced to be of the contrary. How far this is a necessary consequence from that scheme of doctrine which we are opposing, let any one judge. It will be very hard to clear it of this consequence; yet this they are obliged to do, else all the absurdities which they fasten on the doctrine of election, which are far from being unanswerable, will not be sufficient to justify their prejudices against it.

They who are on the other side of the question, are sensible that they have one difficulty to conflict with, namely, the inconsistency of God's infallible knowledge of future events, with a mutability of will relating to them; or how the independency of the divine foreknowledge is consistent with the dependence and mutability of his will. To remove this difficulty, some have ventured to deny the

divine prescience; but that is to split against one rock, while endeavouring to avoid another. Others make a distinction concerning the objects of the divine prescience, and consider them, either as they are necessary or as they are contingent. They suppose that God has a certain foreknowledge of the former; but that his knowledge of the latter, from the nature of the things known, is uncertain, and that, therefore, the determination of his will is not unalterable. But this is to set bounds to the foreknowledge of God, with respect to its object, and, indeed, to exclude the free actions of the creature from being the objects of it. It is a limiting and lessening of this perfection, directly contrary to the idea of omniscience. We must insist, therefore, on their proving this to be consistent with the infinite perfection of God, which they will find it very difficult to do. To suppose, on the other hand, that any thing is the object of God's certain foreknowledge, about which his will is in no way conversant, or about which it is conversant only in such a way as to be subject to change according to the mutability of things, is altogether as indefensible, and equally subversive of the independency, wisdom, and sovereignty of the divine will.

The most material objection against the unchangeableness of the divine will, is taken from some scriptures which seem to represent God as repenting, and therein, as is supposed, changing his purpose. He is sometimes for example, said to repent that he had bestowed some blessings upon men, when he perceives how they have been abused by them; and he, accordingly, purposes to bring evil on them. Thus we read, 'It repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created.' At other times, he is said to repent of the evil which he designed to bring upon them, and to alter his purpose in their favour. Thus it is said, 'The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and

there is none shut up, or left.'q Again, 'Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.' Further, 'Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.'s Again, 'If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.' We have also a very remarkable instance in God's sparing Nineveh, on their repentance, after he had threatened, by the prophet Jonah, that 'within forty days they should be destroyed.' Now, we grant that there are many scriptures in which repentance is ascribed to God, which, if we consider nothing else but the grammatical sense of the words, seem to favour the objection. But we are bound to conclude, that such a sense of repentance as that on which the objection is founded, is inconsistent with the divine perfections; and that therefore the scriptures referred to cannot imply a change in God's purpose. Indeed, there are other scriptures which assert what is directly contrary. It is said, for example, 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?'u And elsewhere, it is said, 'The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent.' Now, we must have recourse to some methods to reconcile this seeming contradiction; and must consider the respective sense of each class of texts. In some scriptures, God is said to repent; in others, it is said that he cannot repent. That these may not appear inconsistent with one another, nor either of them infer any imperfection in God, let it be considered that God is sometimes represented, in scripture, in condescension to our common mode of speaking, as though he had human passions, just as, in others, he is described as though he had a body or bodily parts. Such expressions are always to be taken in a metaphorical sense, without the least supposition that he is subject to any such imperfections. Particularly,

we must not conclude, that repentance is ever ascribed to God in the same sense as it is to men, that is, as implying a change in his purpose, occasioned by any unforeseen occurrence. This is the sense in which it is understood in the objection. But such a repentance is a passion peculiarly belonging to the creature. That it is so is just what is taught in these words, 'God is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent.' Accordingly, he is said to repent, not by changing his purpose, but by changing his work. Thus when it is said, that 'he repented that he had made man,' nothing is meant but that he determined to destroy him, as he did afterwards by the flood. This was no new determination, arising from any thing in the creature, which God did not foresee. He knew beforehand that all flesh would corrupt their way; and therefore his determination to punish them for it, was not a new resolve of the divine will, after the sin was committed. God determined things in their respective order; —first he determined to permit sin, and then, knowing what would be the consequence, namely, that they would rebel against him, he determined to punish it, or to destroy the old world,—which is, in effect, the same as though he had repented that he made it. He cannot be said to repent, as we do, by wishing that he had not done that which he is said to repent of; but he repents by denying us the advantage which we might have otherwise expected from what he has done. In this sense we are to understand all those scriptures which speak of God, as repenting of the good that he had bestowed on man. Nor, on the other hand, does his being said to repent of the evil which he threatened to bring on men, as in the case of Nineveh, argue any change in his purpose. He determined that Nineveh should be destroyed, provided they did not repent; and it was not uncertain to him whether they would repent or not; for, as appears by the event, he determined to give them repentance, and so not to inflict the judgment threatened. Hence, when Jonah was sent to make a public proclamation to the people, that in forty days they should be

destroyed, it is plain that they understood the threatening to mean, that they had no ground to expect any thing else but destruction, unless they repented. They accordingly did repent, and so were spared; without having any reason to conclude that God changed his purpose relating to them. If it be objected, that this interpretation is nothing less than to establish a conditional purpose in God, and so overthrows the argument which we are maintaining, we reply that a distinction is to be made between a conditional purpose in God's secret will, and a conditional proposition which was to be the subject of the prophet's ministry. The prophet, it is plain, was not told, when he received his commission to go to Nineveh, that God would give them repentance, but only that, without repentance, they should be destroyed. Yet as appears by the event, God had determined that they should repent, and therefore that they should not be destroyed. Hence, we must not suppose that, when God sent him, he was undetermined, in his own purpose, whether to destroy them or not, or that there was any thing conditional in the divine mind which rendered the event uncertain to God; though there was a condition contained in the prophet's message, namely, that the Ninevites had no ground to expect deliverance without repentance. This condition the Ninevites very well understood; and hence they repented, in hope of obtaining mercy, which they supposed would be connected with their repentance. It is evident, that Jonah himself suspected that this might be the event, though God had not told him that it would be so; for he says, 'I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.'

6. The purpose of God, in choosing men to eternal life, renders their salvation necessary, so that nothing shall defeat or disannul it. What God says concerning Israel's deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, may be applied to all his other determinations, and particularly to what relates to the eternal salvation of his people: 'My

counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure; yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.' The purposes of God are distinguished from his bringing them to pass. It is one thing to design to bring his people to glory, and another thing to bring them to it. It is not to be supposed that the decree of God has, in itself, a proper efficiency to produce the thing decreed;a for then there would be no difference between an eternal decree, and an eternal production of things. But the apostle plainly distinguishes between man's being predestinated to glory, and his being brought to it, when he says, 'Those whom he predestinated, them he also glorified.' The purpose of God is, indeed, the internal moving cause, or the first ground and reason of the salvation of those who are elected to it; but his power is the more immediate cause of it. So that his purpose is the reason of his exerting this power; and both concurring to the salvation of men, render it certain and necessary. Hence, some distinguish between the determining and the powerful will of God. The latter of these is sometimes called, 'the word of his power,' and renders the former effectual. This it must certainly do, otherwise God would be said to will the existence of things that shall never have a being. In this respect the purpose of God renders things necessary, which are in themselves contingent or arbitrary, and which would otherwise never come to pass.c [See Note 2 W, page 323.] This fact is a great encouragement to those who are enabled to make their calling and election sure. Their perseverance in grace, notwithstanding all the opposition that they meet with, is the necessary consequence of their election to eternal life.

Doctrine of Reprobation

We formerly distinguished predestination into election and reprobation; and having considered the former of these, we now proceed to speak concerning the doctrine of reprobation. This

doctrine is obnoxious to those on the other side of the question, almost to a proverb. If any doctrine is considered as shocking, and to be answered no otherwise than by testifying their abhorrence of it, it is compared to that of reprobation. Yet, if it were not a consequence from the doctrine of election to eternal life, it would not be so much opposed by them. How far some unguarded expressions, or exceptionable methods of explanation may have given occasion for their prejudice, it is not to our present purpose to inquire. We shall take occasion, however, to explain it in such a way, as that a fair and unprejudiced disputant will not see just reason to object to it, or at least to reproach it as though it were a doctrine subversive of the divine glory, and to be defended by none but those who seem to have a design to raise prejudices in the minds of men against religion in general.

Here we shall consider the meaning of the word, as it is contained in or deduced from scripture. The same word which is there used to signify the execution of this decree, may be applied to express the decree itself. We read of God's rejecting or disregarding men, as a punishment of their rebellion against him; and these are compared by the prophet Jeremiah to 'reprobate silver, because the Lord hath rejected them,' or, as in the margin, 'the refuse of silver.' In the New Testament, the same worde is translated sometimes 'reprobates,' at other times 'disapproved' or 'rejected.' Now when this disapprobation or rejection, respects not only their actions as contrary to the holy nature of God, but their persons as punished for their iniquities, and when their punishment is considered as what respects their eternal state as the objects of vindictive justice, the purpose of God relating to it, is what we call 'reprobation.'

But, to consider more particularly the sense of the word, it seems, in scripture, to contain two ideas. The first idea is, God's determining to

leave a part of the world in that state of sin and misery which he, from all eternity, foreknew that they would bring themselves into, or his decreeing not to save them. And since all will allow that a part of mankind shall not be saved, it cannot reasonably be denied that this was determined by him beforehand. This is what divines generally call 'preterition.' The other idea in the word 'reprobation,' which is also contained in scripture, or deducible from it, respects the purpose of God to punish those for their iniquities whom he will not save. Not to be saved, is the same as to be 'punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.' God's purpose relating to this, is expressed, in scripture, by his 'appointing them to wrath,' for those sins which he foresaw they would commit. This is what some call 'predamnation.' The word is based on a passage in Jude.h The apostle describes some who had 'crept into the church unawares,' as 'ungodly men,' that is, notoriously so, who 'turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever;' and concerning these he says, 'they were before, of old, ordained to this condemnation.' Here God is represented as punishing sinners, in proportion to their crimes; and his doing so is considered as the result of that eternal purpose, which was founded on his foresight of their contracting that guilt whereby they would render themselves liable to punishment.

If the doctrine of reprobation be thus explained, it will appear agreeable, not only to scripture, but to the divine perfections, and therefore too great a truth to be treated with that abhorrence which many without explaining, distinguishing, or fairly entering into the merits of the cause, express against it. It is a very easy matter to render any doctrine odious, by misrepresentation, as they, on the other side of the question, have done this of reprobation. We shall briefly consider how they misrepresent it; and shall take leave to

explain it in such a manner that it will appear not only worthy to be defended, as redounding to the glory of God, but a plain and evident truth, founded on scripture. If it were to be considered no otherwise than as it is often represented by them, we should dislike it as much as they do. They pretend that we suppose God to be severe and cruel to his creatures, delighting himself in, and triumphing over them, in their misery; that he decreed, from all eternity, to damn the greatest part of mankind, without any consideration of their sin, or as the result of his arbitrary will or dominion, he having a right to dispose of his creatures according to his pleasure; that as a means to attain this end, as though it were in itself desirable, he leaves them to themselves, blinds their minds, hardens their hearts, and offers those occasions of and inducements to sin which are as stumblingblocks in their way; that he determined that his providence should be so conversant about the will of man, as that it should be under a natural necessity, or kind of compulsion, to what is evil, without considering the corruption and depravity of nature, as a vicious habit which they had contracted, and that all this is done in pursuance of the decree of reprobation. It is very probable that many who give this account of the doctrine, have no other foundation for it, than the popular outcry of those who are not apprized of the methods which are generally taken to explain and defend it. Or they suppose that it cannot be defended, without being exposed to those exceptions which are contained in the account they give of it. We shall take no farther notice of their misrepresentation; but shall proceed to explain and defend it another way.

1. As to the former branch of the doctrine of reprobation, namely, preterition, or God's passing by or rejecting those whom he hath not chosen to salvation, let it be premised, that God, in his eternal purpose, considered all mankind as fallen. Man's fallen state must be supposed to have been foreknown by him, otherwise he could not be

said to be omniscient. The result of his foreknowledge of it is his determining to leave a part of them in their fallen state, in which he might have left the whole to perish, without being liable to the charge of injustice. That is what we call his rejecting them; and, accordingly, it is opposed to his having chosen the rest to eternal life. These terms of opposition are plainly contained in scripture. Thus it is said, 'The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.' They were not blinded by God's leading them into mistakes, or giving them false ideas of things; but they were left to the blindness of their minds, which was the result of their apostacy from God. Again, our Saviour says, 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'k 'Thou hast hid,' that is, thou hast not revealed them,—and that either objectively, as respecting those who are destitute of the light of the gospel, or subjectively, as he did not effectually or savingly enlighten them with the light of life, by 'revealing Christ in them,' as the apostle calls it. Our Lord's words are as if he had said, 'Thou hast determined not to give to some the means of grace, nor to others the saving efficacy thereof,—such as they are partakers of who are chosen to salvation.' Accordingly, he is said to have 'suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;'m that is, not to have restrained or prevented the breakings forth of corruption, as he might have done. He is said also to have 'winked at,' that is, as the word may be rendered, 'overlooked,' the greatest part of the world, which is no other than his rejecting them, or passing them by. In this sense we are to understand that difficult mode of speaking used by the apostle, 'Whom he will he hardeneth.'o By this nothing else is intended but his purposing to leave many to the hardness of their own hearts. God forbid that any one should think that there is a positive act affirmed in these words, as though God infused hardness into the hearts of any. The meaning is only this, that he determined to deny heart-softening grace to that part of mankind whom he had not foreordained to eternal life. That there

was a purpose relating to them, is evident; because whatever God does, in the methods of his providence, is the result of an eternal purpose. This no one, who observes the dispensations of God's providence, and allows, as every one must do, that all he does was preconcerted by him, can justly deny.

But that which must be farther inquired into, as to this matter, is, whether God's determining to pass by a part of mankind be an act of sovereignty, or of justice. And this also may be judged of, by the external dispensations of his providence. So far as there is sovereignty, or justice, visible in them, we are to conclude that his purpose was the result of one or the other of these perfections. In some respects it is an act of sovereignty. For example, when God gives one nation the gospel, or the means of grace, and denies it to another, it is not because he sees any thing in one part of the world more than in another which obliges him to give it, but, as was observed in the scripture but now mentioned, 'because it seemed good in his sight.' Moreover, his giving special grace, whereby some are effectually called and sanctified, and his denying it to others, is an act of sovereign pleasure. On the other hand, God is said sometimes, in the external dispensations of his providence, to leave men to themselves,—to give them up, in a judicial way, to their own hearts' lust. This supposes not only their commission of sin, but their being obstinate, and resolutely determined to continue in it. Thus God saith concerning his people, 'Israel would none of me; so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels.'q The psalmist says, 'Add iniquity to their iniquity.' These words I would consider rather as a prediction than as a prayer,—or as an expression of the church's acquiescence in God's righteous judgments, which they had ground to conclude he would inflict on an impenitent incorrigible people. These are expressed by 'adding iniquity to iniquity;' not as though he designed to infuse any habit of

sin into them, for that is inconsistent with the holiness of his nature, but because he would reject and leave them to themselves, in a judicial way, as a punishment inflicted on them for their iniquities, the consequence of which would be their own adding iniquity to iniquity. Thus, in different respects, the purpose of God, in passing by a part of mankind, may be considered, either as the result of his sovereign pleasure, or as an act of justice. [See Note 2 X, page 324]

2. We shall now proceed to consider the other branch of reprobation, which some call 'predamnation,' or, to use the scripture-expression before referred to, God's foreordaining those who shall not be saved, to that condemnation which they shall fall under, as exposing themselves to it by their own wickedness. This is nothing else but his determining, from all eternity, to punish those, as a judge, who should, by their own crimes, deserve it, and thereby to vindicate the holiness of his nature and law. Here let it be observed, that when this doctrine is reproached or misrepresented, it is described as an act of divine sovereignty. But that it is so, we are as ready to deny and oppose as they are. According to the description we have given of it, it can be no other than an act of justice. If to condemn or punish be an act of justice, then the decree relating to this act must be equally so; for the one is to be judged of by the other. If God cannot punish creatures as such, but as criminals and rebels, he must be supposed to have considered them as such, when, in his eternal purpose, he determined to punish them. None can style this an act of cruelty or severity in God, but those who reckon the punishing of sin to be so, and are disposed to charge the Judge of all with not doing right, or with offering an injury to his creatures, when he pours forth the vials of his wrath on those who, by their bold and wilful crimes, render themselves obnoxious to punishment. Here let it be considered, that God, in his actual providence, is not the author of sin, though he suffer it to be committed in the world. And, since his permitting or

not hindering it cannot be said to be the cause of its being committed, there being no cause of this but the will of man, it follows that God's punishing sin is not to be resolved into his permission of it, as the cause, but into the rebellion of man's will, as refusing to be subject to the divine law. In this light it was that God considered men, when, in his eternal purpose, he determined to condemn those whose desert of punishment was foreseen by him from eternity. And is this a doctrine to be so much decried?

I cannot but wonder that the learned author, whom I before have referred to as opposing this doctrine, should accord with the common and popular way of misrepresenting it; unless, indeed, he designed, by this way of opposing it, to render it detested. Speaking concerning those mentioned in Jude 4, 'who were before, of old, ordained to this condemnation,' he says, "This cannot be meant of any divine ordination, or appointment of them, to eternal condemnation, because it cannot be thought, without horror, that God doth thus ordain men to perdition, before they had a being." If he had expressed his horror and resentment against God's ordaining men to perdition, as creatures, it had been just; but to express detestation against God's ordaining men to perdition, who are described as these are, is to expose this doctrine without reason. His casting this censure upon it, is still more strange, from his acknowledging, in his farther explication of this text, "that God ordaineth none to punishment but sinners, and ungodly men, as these persons here are styled; and that these were men of whom it was before written, or prophesied, that they should be condemned for their wickedness." There is not much difference between saying, that the condemnation of sinners for their wickedness 'was before written or prophesied,' and saying, that God foreordained them to eternal punishment.

I am sensible that many are led into mistake on this subject, by supposing that we give a very injurious and perverse sense of the text in Romans, in which the doctrine of reprobation is taught: 'What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.' Some suppose that we understand this text as though these vessels of wrath were, from all eternity, prepared for destruction by God, and that his eternal purpose is his fitting them for it, or his intending to bring about that end, namely his destroying them. But if any have expressed themselves in a way equivalent to this, let them be accountable for their own sense of the text. I may say, however, that even some of those who follow the supralapsarian method of explaining the doctrine of predestination, have not understood it in this sense.u The sense which I would give of it is, that those whom the apostle speaks of as 'vessels of wrath,' are persons whom God had rejected, and whom, from the foresight of the sins which they would commit, he had, as the apostle elsewhere expresses it, 'appointed to wrath.' But they were appointed to wrath not as creatures, but as sinners. They are described as fitted to destruction, not by God's act, but their own, and that is the reason of their being foreordained to ity

There is another scripture, generally cited by those who treat on this subject, which we are to use the utmost caution in explaining, lest we give just occasion to those who oppose the doctrine to express their abhorrence of it, as inconsistent with the divine perfections. The scripture to which I refer is Rom. 11:7–10. There the apostle says concerning those who were not elected, whom he calls 'the rest of the Jewish nation,' that 'they were blinded,' and that 'God had given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;' and he speaks of 'their table being made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence to them;'

and adds, 'let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always.' The sense which they who misrepresent the doctrine of reprobation suppose we put upon this scripture, is, that they who are reprobated, have, as a consequence of their being so, occasions of sin laid in their way, some things designed to blind their minds, to cast a mist before their eyes, and to lead them out of the way, and other things which prove a snare to them, a trap, and occasion of sin,—and all this with a design to bring about that condemnation which God had ordained for them in the decree of reprobation. This sense of the text never was or could be given, by any one who has a due regard to the divine perfections. And shall the doctrine be judged of by this misrepresentation, when it is very hard to find any, how unguarded soever they are in their modes of speaking, who interpret the text in the sense alleged? We shall state what is probably the meaning of this scripture; with which the doctrine we have laid down is very consistent. The passage is not to be understood as though God were the author of those sins which the persons described are charged with. Their blindness or stupidity, which is called 'a spirit of slumber,' as it is connected with the idea of their being rejected of God, and his determining not to give them the contrary graces, is considered as the consequence, not as the effect, of his determination,—and that not the immediate, but the remote consequence; in the same sense as stealing is the consequence of poverty, in those who have a vicious inclination to commit theft. When a person who has contracted those habits of sin which tend to turn men aside from God, is destitute of preventing and restraining grace, the consequence is, that his corruptions will break forth with greater violence. But God is not obliged to give this grace to an apostate, fallen creature, much less to one who has misimproved the means of grace; by a due attention to which, a multitude of sins might have been prevented. Hence, nothing is intended but this, that they are left to themselves, and permitted to stumble and fall, and to

commit those abominations which, if they had not been thus judicially left, would have been prevented; and that, as a consequence, they run into many sins which they might have avoided. Though we suppose, as will be farther considered in its proper place, that it is not in a man's own power, as destitute of the grace of God, to bring himself into a regenerated or converted state, yet we do not deny that men might, in the right use of the gifts of nature, avoid many sins which they who are said to be blinded and hardened, especially where they are not prevented by the grace of God, run into, to the increase of their guilt and misery. But God may, without any impeachment of his providence, deny his grace to those whom he has not chosen to eternal life. He might, had he pleased, have denied it to the whole world; and much more to those who have not improved the common grace which they received, but have, through the wickedness of their nature, proceeded from one degree of sin to another.

There is another scripture, which some suppose we understand in such a sense as also gives occasion of prejudice to many against the doctrine we are maintaining: 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.' The meaning of this is, that God suffered those to be deluded who in the following verse are represented as 'not receiving the love of the truth.' The meaning is not that God was the author of these delusions, or deceived them by a false representation of things to them, or by exciting or inclining them to adhere to the suggestions of those who lie in wait to deceive; but the meaning is, that as he did not design to give them grace under the means of grace, or to enable them to receive the truth in the love of it, which he was not obliged to do to any, much less to those who rebelled against the light which had been already given them, they became, through

the blindness of their own minds, an easy prey to those who endeavoured to ensnare or delude them. The decree of God respects only his denying preventing grace to those who, through the corruption of their own nature, took occasion to run greater lengths in their apostacy from and rebellion against God. As to the phrase 'God shall send them strong delusions,' it respects only his will to permit delusion and not his design to delude them.

There is another scripture to the same purpose: 'So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels.' The meaning of this is, that God left them to themselves; and then lust, or the corrupt habits of sin which they had acquired, conceived, and, as the apostle James says, 'brought forth sin,' of greater acts of sin, which exposed them to a greater degree of condemnation. All this is to be resolved into God's permissive will or purpose to leave man, in his fallen state, to himself. This he might do, without giving occasion to any to say, on the one hand, that he is the author of sin, or, on the other, that he deals injuriously with the sinful creature.

We may add our Saviour's words concerning the Jews: 'Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.' The sense which they who misrepresent our doctrine suppose we put upon these words, and which they conclude to be the only one consistent with the argument we are maintaining, is, that the unbelief which the Jews are charged with, was principally, if not altogether, resolved into God's eternal purpose, to blind their eyes, and harden their hearts,—that is, by some positive act, as a cause producing this effect, that they should not be converted and saved, that so his decree to condemn them might take effect. It is no wonder to find persons prejudiced against our doctrine, when set in

such a light. But as this is very remote from the explanation we have given of it, so our Saviour's design, in the text in question, is to give an account why those miracles, which he wrought before the Jews, were ineffectual for their conviction. The more immediate cause which he assigns was the blindness of their minds, and the hardness of their hearts: they had shut their eyes against the light, and, through the corruption of their nature, had hardened their own hearts. As to what God is said to have done, in a judicial way, that he 'hath hardened their hearts,' it imports nothing else but his leaving them to the hardness of their own hearts, or denying them heart-softening grace, which would have been an effectual remedy against it. And may not God deny his grace to sinners, without being charged as the author of sin, or without the blame of it being devolved on him, and not on themselves? And, as this judicial act of providence cannot but be the result of an eternal purpose, is there any thing in his decree, which reflects on his perfections, any more than there is in the execution of it?

There is still another scripture on this subject: 'The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.' Our opponents infer, that the doctrine of reprobation, which they suppose to be founded on a perverse sense of this text, includes a divine purpose to make man to condemn him. They conclude that we understand it in that sense; and they proceed a little farther, and pretend that we infer from it, that God made men wicked, or that he made them wicked for his glory, as if he had need of sinful man for that end. I should never have thought that so vile a consequence could be drawn from this doctrine, if the learned writer before mentioned had not told the world that we infer this from it.e To give countenance to his suggestion, he quotes a passage out of Dr. Twiss; whose words are: "That all, besides the elect, God hath ordained to bring them forth into the world in their corrupt mass, and to permit

them to themselves, to go on in their own ways, and so finally to persevere in sin; and, lastly, to damn them for their sin, for the manifestation of the glory of his justice on them." I am not ashamed to own my very great esteem of this excellently learned and pious writer, who was as considerable for that part of learning which his works discover him to have been conversant in, as most in his day. Yet, I cannot think myself obliged, in every respect, to explain this doctrine as he does. Dr. Whitby, too, knew very well, that if such an inference as that we have been speaking of, were to be deduced from the writings of any who maintain the doctrine of reprobation, it must be from one who follows the supralapsarian way of explaining it. The passage quoted by him, likewise,—which it may be, was a little unguarded,—seems to bid as fair for it as any other he could have found out. Yet, any one who reads the passage without prejudice, especially if he compare it with its context, would not suppose that any thing is intended which gives the least ground to conclude that God made men wicked for the manifestation of his justice. The most obnoxious part of the quotation is, 'that God ordained to bring forth into the world the non-elect, in their corrupt mass;' the meaning of which is, that persons who are every day born into the world, are the seed of corrupt and fallen man, and so have the habits of sin propagated with their nature,—a doctrine which many other divines have endeavoured to maintain. What my sentiments are concerning it, I choose to insist on rather under a following Answer; when we shall be led to speak of the doctrine of original sin, and of that corruption of nature which is the consequence of it. Passing this by, there is nothing in what remains of the quotation but what is very defensible, and far from making God the author of sin. All Dr. Twiss says concerning the providence of God relating to this matter, is, that he permits or leaves men to themselves; and he supposes them finally to persevere in sin, without which they cannot be liable to condemnation, or the display which will be made in it of the justice

of God. If the author who brings the quotation had duly considered the words immediately before, he might have seen reason to save himself the trouble of making his reflection upon it; for Dr. Twiss, though a supralapsarian, says, "He reckons that controversy, relating to the order of God's decrees, to be merely apex logicus," as he calls it, 'a logical nicety;' and he adds, that "his opinion about it is well known, namely, that God doth not ordain any man to damnation, before the consideration of sin." A few lines after, he says, "God of his mere pleasure created all, but of his mere pleasure he damneth none. But every one that is damned, is damned for his sin, and that wilfully committed, and contumaciously continued in by them that come to ripe years." Now if nothing more than this is intended by the doctrine of reprobation, it ought not to be misrepresented as it is, with a design to cast an odium upon it. But to return to the scripture under consideration—when God is said to have 'made the wicked for the day of evil,' the meaning is not that man's condemnation was the end designed by God in creating him. There are some other ideas which intervene between God's purpose to create and his purpose to condemn him. Man must be considered, not merely as a creature, but as a sinner. Now, as God did not create man that he might sin, he could not be said to create him that he might condemn him. Accordingly, the sense which some give of this text, is, that God 'made all things for himself,' that is, for his own glory. But as some will be ready to object, that God will have no glory from the wicked, who oppose his name and interest in the world, the answer is, that though he shall have no glory from them as a Saviour, he will, notwithstanding, be glorified in them as a Judge. His judicial act, though it be deferred for a time, while his long-suffering waits upon them, shall fall heavily on them in the day of evil. But this is very remote from the supposition, that God made man to condemn him. There is also a sense given of the text by some who are on the other side of the question, which seems equally probable, or agreeable to

the mind of the Holy Ghost, and is not in the least subversive of the doctrine we are maintaining; it is, that "the Lord disposeth all things throughout the world, to serve such ends as he thinks fit to design, which they cannot refuse to comply withal; for if any men be so wicked as to oppose his will, he will not lose their service, but, when he brings a public calamity upon a country, employ them to be the executioners of his wrath. Of this there was a remarkable instance in the destruction of Jerusalem, by the Roman soldiers, whom our Saviour used to punish his crucifiers; not that they undertook that war out of any design or desire to do our blessed Saviour right, but out of an ambition to enslave the world. Yet God made use of them for another design, as public executioners, by whom he punished the ungodly." So the Assyrian is said, to be 'the rod of God's anger,'h and to be 'sent against the people of Israel, to lead them captive,' and therein 'to tread them down, like the mire in the streets.' As to what concerns the purpose of God, on which these judicial proceedings depend, this is to be judged of by its execution; for the one is evidently to be inferred from the other. And this is the sense in which, as we have repeatedly stated, we understand the doctrine of reprobation.

Absurd Consequences of denying the Doctrine of Election

We have thus endeavoured to prove the doctrine of election and reprobation; and have defended it from the reproaches and misrepresentations cast upon it, by considering it, not only as agreeable to the divine perfections, but as founded on scripture. We shall now proceed to inquire, whether the contrary doctrine, as defended by some, be not derogatory to the divine perfections, and therefore do not contain greater absurdities; or, if expressions of detestation were a sufficient argument to set it aside, whether we have not as much reason to testify our dislike against it, as our

opponents have against the doctrine we are maintaining. Our doctrine is charged with representing God as severe and cruel to his creatures, because, as is alleged, it is inconsistent with his goodness to suppose that he leaves any to themselves in their fallen state so as not to give them the means of grace, when he knew that, being destitute of it, they could not believe, and so, pursuant to his eternal purpose, would fall short of salvation. But can God's leaving men to themselves be said to be inconsistent with his goodness, any more than his other displays of vindictive justice? If our opponents suppose that it is, we might easily retort the argument upon them. They will not assert that the whole race of fallen man shall be saved; and, if so, must we not suppose that God certainly foreknew this, otherwise where is his infinite understanding? and if he knew that this would be the consequence of their being born, and living in the world, where is his goodness in bringing them into it? It may be said, that they had a free-will to choose what is good, and so had a power to attain salvation; so that their not attaining it, is owing wholly to themselves. But suppose this, without entering at present on the subject of free-will, were taken for granted, it must be farther inquired, whether our opponents will allow that God foreknew that men would abuse this freedom of will, or power to make themselves holy or happy; and, if so, could he not have prevented this? Did he make a will which he could not govern or restrain? Could he not have prevented the sin which he knew they would commit? And if he could, why did he not do it, and thereby prevent their ruin, which he knew would be the consequence? If men are disposed to find fault with the divine dispensation, it is no difficult matter to invent some methods of reasoning to cast reflections on it. Indeed, the objection in question is not so much against God's foreordaining what comes to pass, as it is a spurning at his judicial hand, and a finding fault with the equity of his proceedings, when he takes vengeance on sinners for their iniquities, or a charging of severity on God because

all mankind are not the objects of his goodness, and, consequently, not elected to eternal life.

But, passing this, we shall proceed to consider how, in several instances, the methods used to oppose the doctrine which we are maintaining, are attended with many absurd consequences, derogatory to the divine perfections, and illustrative of the unreasonableness of our opponents.

1. A denial of the doctrine of election represents God as undetermined or unresolved what to do. This is the plain sense of their asserting that he has not foreordained whatever comes to pass. But to suppose him destitute of any determination, is directly contrary to his wisdom and sovereignty; and would argue that there are some excellencies and perfections belonging to intelligent creatures, which are to be denied to him who is a God of infinite perfection. Our opponents, however, may, on the other hand, suppose that every thing which comes to pass is determined by him, and that, notwithstanding his determinations, as they respect the actions of intelligent creatures, are not certain and peremptory, but such as may be disannulled or rendered ineffectual, the divine measures being taken from the uncertain determinations of man's will. But this is, in effect, to say that they are not determined by God. An uncertain determination, or a conditional purpose, cannot properly be called a determination. Thus for God to determine that he who believes shall be saved, without resolving to give that faith which is necessary to salvation, is, in effect, not to determine that any shall be saved. For, as our opponents suppose, that it is left to man's free-will to believe or not, and as they generally explain liberty as implying that a person might, had he pleased, have done the contrary to that which he is said to do freely, it follows, that all mankind might not have believed and repented, and consequently that they might

have missed salvation; and then the purpose of God relating to their being saved, is the same as though he had been undetermined on the subject. If, on the contrary, they suppose that, to prevent this disappointment, God overrules the free actions of men, in order to the accomplishment of his own purpose, they give up their own cause, and allow us all that we contend for. This, however, they are not disposed to do; so that we cannot see how the independency of the divine will can be defended by them, consistently with their method of opposing our doctrine. If it be supposed, as an expedient against this absurd consequence of their views, that God foreknew what his creatures would do, that his determinations were the result of his foreknowledge, and consequently that the event is as certain as the divine foreknowledge, all of them will not concur in the supposition, Many are sensible that it is as hard to prove that God foreknew what must certainly come to pass, without inferring the inevitable necessity of things, as it is to assert that he willed or determined them, so as to render them eventually necessary. If they suppose that God foreknew what his creatures would do, and, particularly, that they would convert themselves, and improve the liberty of their will so as to render themselves objects fit for divine grace, without supposing that he determined to exert that power and grace which was necessary to their doing so, this is to exclude his providence from having a hand in the government of the world, or to assert that his determinations respect rather what others will do, than what he will enable them to do. Now this also appears to be inconsistent with the divine perfections.

2. There are some things, in their method of reasoning, which seem to infer a mutability in God's purpose; and this is the same thing as to suppose, that he had no purpose at all relating to the event of things. In opposing the doctrine of election, they refer to such scriptures as that in which it is said that 'God will have all men to be

saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;' and they suppose the act of the divine will here spoken of to apply to every individual, even to those who shall not be saved, or come to the knowledge of the truth. They in like manner understand our Saviour's words, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,'l as implying, that God purposed to save them, but was obliged afterwards, by the perverseness of their actions, to change his purpose. Now what is this, but to assert him to be dependent and mutable?

3. They who suppose that salvation is not to be resolved into the power and will of God, must ascribe it to the will of man, and say that by this we determine ourselves to perform those duties which render us the objects of divine mercy. On this principle, the apostle's statement, 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that showeth mercy,' would hardly be intelligible, or a defensible proposition. And when it is said, 'We love him, because he first loved us,'n the proposition ought to be inverted; and it should rather be said, 'He loved us, because we first loved him.' And that humbling question, which the apostle proposes, 'Who maketh thee to differ?' should be answered, as one proudly did, 'I make myself to differ.'

4. The doctrine of discriminating grace cannot well be maintained, without asserting a discrimination in God's purpose relating to it, which is what we call election. If this be denied, there would not be so great a foundation for admiration or thankfulness, as there is,—or for any to say, as one of Christ's disciples did, speaking the sense of all the rest, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' Nor is there so great an inducement to humility, as what will arise from the firm belief, that, when no eye

pitied the poor, helpless, and miserable sinner, he was singled out of a ruined and undone world, among that remnant whom God first designed for glory, and then brought to it.

Arguments for the opposite Doctrine to that of Election examined

We shall now consider those methods of reasoning, by which the doctrine contrary to that of election is defended, and inquire into the sense of those scriptures which are generally appealed to in its support, and shall endeavour to make it appear, that they may be explained in a different way, and one more consistent with the divine perfections. It is plain, that the main design of those who oppose the doctrine of election, is to advance the goodness of God. And as all mankind cannot be said to be equally partakers of the effects of this goodness, in as much as all shall not be saved, they suppose that God has put all mankind into a salvable state,—that as the gospel-overture is universal, so God's purpose to save includes all to whom it is made,—that the event, and consequently the efficacy of the divine purpose relating to it, depends on the will of man,—and that, in order that there may be no obstruction which may hinder this design from taking effect, God has given man a power to yield obedience to his law, which, though it be not altogether so perfect as it was at first, but is somewhat weakened by the fall, yet is sufficient to answer the end and design of the gospel, that is, to bring him to salvation, if he will,—so that, though there be not an universal salvation, there is a determination in God to save all upon this condition. How far this doctrine is inconsistent with the divine perfections, has been already considered. But we are farther to inquire, whether there be any foundation for it in scripture, and what is the sense of some texts which are often brought in its defence.

One text referred to is those words of the apostle, 'Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.' Another scripture, to the same purpose is, 'The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.'r Several others also are quoted, whence they argue the universality of the divine purpose relating to the salvation of mankind, or that none are rejected or excluded from it by any act of God's will, and consequently that the doctrine of election and reprobation is to be exploded. Now, that the sense of these scriptures cannot be, that God designed that all men should be eventually saved or come to the knowledge of the truth, so that none of them should perish, is evident from many other scriptures which, as will doubtless be allowed by all, speak of the destruction of ungodly men. The two scriptures cannot have such a meaning as that God purposed or determined what shall never come to pass; for this, as was formerly observed, is inconsistent with the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty. But they are to be understood with those limitations which the word 'all,' which refers to the persons mentioned as designed to be saved, is subject to in other scriptures. This will be more particularly considered when, under a following answer, we treat of universal and particular redemption.—We need only observe at present, for setting these scriptures in a true light, that the word 'all' is often taken for all sorts of men or things. Thus it is said, that 'of every thing that creepeth upon the earth, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark,'t that is, all the species of living creatures, not every individual. So, in the vision which Peter saw of the sheet let down from heaven, it is said, 'there were all manner of four-footed beasts,'x &c. Again, it is said concerning our Saviour, that 'he went about, healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people;' and elsewhere God promises that 'he will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh,'z that is, upon persons of all ages and conditions, young and old. There are many instances of a similar

nature in scripture, which justify this sense of the word 'all.' From the context it seems plain, that the word is to be thus understood in the former of the scriptures now in question. While the apostle says, 'God will have all men to be saved,' he exhorts that 'prayer and supplication should be made for all men,' that is, for men of all characters and conditions in the world, and, in particular, 'for kings, and all that are in authority.' He resolves a matter in dispute among them, whether those kings who were tyrants and oppressors ought to be prayed for, when he tells them that all sorts of men are to be prayed for; and the reason which he assigns for his exhortation is, that 'God will have all men,' that is, all sorts of men, 'to be saved.' Moreover, they whom God will save, are said to be such as 'shall come,' that is, as he will bring, 'to the knowledge of the truth.' Now, it is certain that God never designed that every individual should come to the knowledge of the truth; for, if he did, his purpose is not fulfilled, or his providence runs counter to it, since all individuals of mankind have not the gospel. Hence, as God did not purpose that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, the words, 'Who will have all men to be saved,' are not to be understood in any other sense, than as signifying all sorts of men. Nor can it well be proved, whatever may be attempted in the way of proof, that the words following, which speak of Christ being 'a Mediator between God and men,' mean that he performs this office for every individual man, even for those that shall not be saved; for then, as will be further considered in its proper place, the mediatorial office would be executed in vain for a great part of them. We must conclude, therefore, that, in the former of the scriptures under consideration, nothing else is intended, but that God determined to give saving grace to all sorts of men.—As for the latter, in which the apostle Peter says that 'God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,' the word 'all' is expressly limited in the context, as referring to those only who are elect and faithful. Hence

he says, including himself among them, that 'the Lord is long-suffering to usward.' Now, if we observe the character which, in the beginning of both his epistles, he gives of the church to which he writes,b it is as great as is given of any in scripture. They are also distinguished from those profane 'scoffers, who walked after their own lusts,' and from other ungodly men, whose perdition he speaks of, as what would befall them in the dissolution of the world by fire in the day of judgment. They are not only described as 'elect unto obedience,' and as having obtained 'like precious faith' with the apostles; but they were such as God would 'keep, through faith, unto salvation.' The apostle might well, therefore, say concerning them, that God determined that none of them should perish, without, in saying so, advancing anything inconsistent with the doctrine we are maintaining. It is objected, however, that the apostle speaks of God, as willing that 'all should come to repentance;' that therefore the persons of whom he speaks are distinguished from that part of the church who had 'obtained like precious faith,' and were included among those whom he, in both epistles, describes as not in a state of salvation; that the word 'all' in this text is, in consequence, not subject to the limitation before-mentioned, but must mean all the world; and that, therefore, the meaning of what he states is, that God is not willing that any of mankind should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the design, according to the apostle's account, of God's deferring the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, and so exercising long-suffering towards the world in general, is not that he should bring them all to repentance; for to suppose the apostle as stating this, would be to represent him as stating a thing which he knew should never come to pass. The end of God's patience toward the world in general is, that all whom he designed to bring to repentance, or who were chosen to it, as well as to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, should be brought to it.

There are other arguments which our opponents bring in defence of their sense of the doctrine of election,—that the divine purpose is not peremptory, determinate, or unchangeable, and such as infers the salvation of those who are its objects. These arguments are founded on those scriptures which, as they apprehend, ascribe a kind of disappointment to God. One scripture is that in which God says concerning his vineyard, that is, the church of the Jews, 'Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?' Another text is our Saviour's words, that 'he sought fruit on the fig-tree,'d meaning the church of the Jews in his day, 'but found none.' A third is that in which our Lord says, concerning Jerusalem, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.' From these scriptures they conclude, that God's purpose, or design of grace, may be defeated. These and many other scriptures, not unlike them, they say, are inconsistent with the doctrine, that the purpose of election ascertains the event, that is, the salvation of those who are chosen to eternal life. Let us particularly consider the sense of the texts.—As to the first of them, in which God says, by the prophet, 'What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?' he condescends to speak of himself after the manner of men, as he often does in scripture, and is said to look for what might reasonably have been expected, as the consequence of all the means of grace, which he had vouchsafed to them. The reasonableness of the thing is called his looking for it; as if he had said, 'It might have been expected, from the nature of the thing, that they who had been laid under such obligations, should express some gratitude for them, and so have brought forth some fruit to the glory of God.' Those words which seem to attribute disappointment to him, 'I looked,' &c. signify nothing else but the ingratitude of the

people, that they did not walk agreeably to the obligations they were under. We are not to understand that God was really disappointed; for to suppose this would militate against his omniscience. He knew, before he laid these obligations on them, what their behaviour would be. Had he had eyes of flesh, or seen as man seeth, their behaviour would have tended to disappoint him; but there is no disappointment in the divine mind, though the sin reproved in the people be the same as though it had had a tendency to defeat the divine purpose, or disappoint his expectation.—As for that scripture in which it is said, that Christ 'sought fruit on the fig-tree, but found none,' it is to be explained in the same way. 'He sought fruit,' that is, fruit might reasonably have been expected; 'but he found none,' that is, they did not act agreeably to the means of grace they enjoyed. Neither this, nor the other scripture, does in the least argue, that the purpose of God was not concerned about the event, or that he did not know what it would be. As his providential dispensation gives us ground to conclude, that he determined to leave the parties to themselves; so he knew beforehand that his doing so would, through the corruption of their nature, issue in their unfruitfulness. If he did not foreknow this, he is not omniscient. Hence, neither of these scriptures has the least tendency to overthrow the doctrine of the certainty and peremptoriness of the divine purpose.—As to what our Saviour says concerning his willingness to have gathered Jerusalem, 'as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not,' it may be taken, without the least absurdity, as referring to the end and design of his ministry among them; and it is as if he had said, 'Your nation shall be broken, and you scattered, as a punishment inflicted on you for your iniquities; and this destruction would have been prevented, had you believed in me.' Hence, all that can be inferred is, that Christ's ministry and doctrine were attended with such convincing evidence, being confirmed by so many undoubted miracles, that their unbelief was not only charged on

them as a crime, but was the occasion of their ruin, or, as is said in the following words, of their 'house being left unto them desolate.' This ruin might have been prevented, by their making a right improvement of that common grace which they had. For though it is not in man's power, without the special influences of divine grace, to believe to the saving of the soul; yet I know no one who denies that it is in his power to do more good, and avoid more evil, than he does, or so far to attend to the preaching of the gospel, as not to oppose it with such malice and envy as the Jews did. Now, had the Jews paid such a deference to Christ's ministry as they were capable of rendering, they would not have been exposed to those judgments which afterwards befell them. It is one thing to say, that men, by improving common grace, can attain salvation; and another thing to conclude, that they might thereby have escaped temporal judgments. Hence, if it be inquired, what was God's intention in giving them the gospel? the answer is very plain: It was not that by means of it he might bring them all into a state of salvation, for then it would have taken effect; but it was, as appears by the event, to bring those who should be saved among them to that salvation, and to let others know, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, that God had a right to their obedience, and therefore, that the message which the Redeemer brought to them, ought to have met with a better reception from them than it did. If it be farther inquired, Whether, provided they had believed, their ruin would have been prevented? we reply, that the affirmative is an undoubted consequence from our Saviour's words. Yet it does not follow, that it was a matter of uncertainty with God, whether they should believe or not. It is one thing to say, that he would not have punished them, unless they rejected our Saviour; and another thing to suppose that he could not well determine whether they would reject him or not. The purpose of God must be considered as agreeing with the event of things, and the design of Christ's ministry as being what it really was;

yet he might, notwithstanding, take occasion to charge the Jews' destruction upon their own obstinacy.—There are many other scriptures which our opponents bring for the same purpose as those we have now considered. These I shall pass over; because the sense they give of them differs not much from that in which they understand the others, and their reasoning from them, in opposition to our doctrine, is the same, and may receive the same answer.

I cannot but observe, however, that while, from some scriptures, they attribute disappointment to God, they represent him, from others, as wishing, but in vain, that events had happened otherwise, and as being grieved with disappointment. So they understand these words, 'O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries;' and these, 'If,' or O that 'thou hadst known, even thou at least, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.'g Now, the sense of these and similar scriptures is no more than this, not that God can be said to wish for a thing which cannot be attained, but that the thing which the persons spoken of refused to perform, was in itself most desirable, or a matter to be wished for. When our Saviour laments over Jerusalem, as apprehending their destruction to be near, whether his words are to be considered as a wish that it had been otherwise, or as an intimation that if they had known the things of their peace their destruction would not have ensued, they are to be understood only as a representation of the deplorableness of the Jews' condition, which, with a tenderness of human compassion, he could not speak of without tears. Yet we are not to suppose that this mode of expression is applicable to the divine will. Hence, when the misery of the Jews is thus set forth, we are not to strain the sense of words taken from human modes of speaking, so far as to suppose that the judicial acts of God, in punishing a sinful people, are not the

execution of a corresponding purpose. Again, when the Spirit is said to be 'grieved' or 'resisted,'i nothing else is intended, but that men act in such a way, as that, had the Spirit of God been subject to human passions, their conduct would have been matter of grief to him. But far be it from us to suppose that the divine nature is liable to grief, or that any disappointment which has a tendency to excite this passion in men, can attend God's purposes. And when the Holy Spirit is said to be resisted, it is not meant that his will, or design, can be rendered ineffectual, but it implies only that men oppose what the Spirit communicated by the prophets, or in his word. This a person may do; and yet it may be truly said, that 'the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.'

Objections to the Doctrine of Election examined

We shall proceed to consider several objections which are made against the doctrine we have endeavoured to maintain, and what reply may be given to them. Some have been occasionally mentioned under several foregoing heads; but there are others which require a distinct reply.

1. One objection is, that the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation was altogether unknown by the Fathers in the three first centuries, and that it was first brought into the Christian world by Augustin; before whose time, the only account we have of it, is, that God, foreknowing who would live piously, or believe and persevere to the end, accordingly predestinated them to eternal life, or determined to pass them by, and so is said to have rejected them. This objection, were it literally true, cannot have any tendency to overthrow this doctrine, in the opinion of those who, on the one hand, depend not on the credit of Augustin as defending it, nor, on the other, are staggered by the opposition made to it by some of the

Fathers who lived before his time. We might, therefore, have passed it by, without making any reply to it. Yet as it contains a kind of insult or boast which will have its weight with some, it may be expected that a few things should be said in answer to it. Now, we will not deny that the Fathers before the Pelagian heresy was broached, expressed themselves, in many parts of their writings, in so lax and unguarded a manner, concerning the doctrines of predestination, free-will, and grace, that, had they lived after those doctrines began to be publicly contested, one would have thought that they had verged too much towards Pelagius' side. But, as these doctrines were not matter of controversy in those ages, it is no wonder to find them less cautious in their modes of expressing themselves, than they might otherwise have been. It is a just observation, which onem makes on this subject, that they had to do with the Manichees, and with some of the heathen, who supposed that men sinned by a fatal necessity of nature. There was, in those days, no wicked action committed in the world but some were ready to excuse it, from the impotency of human nature, or its propensity to sin, which rendered the wicked action, as they supposed, unavoidable. Others, on the same ground, took occasion even to charge God with being the author of sin. Now it is very probable, that the Fathers in those ages were afraid of giving countenance to this vile opinion, and therefore were less on their guard, in some respects, than they would have been, had they stood opposed to Pelagius or his followers. Indeed, Augustin himself, before he took occasion to inquire more diligently into the Pelagian controversy, used the same method of expressing his sentiments about the power of nature or the grace of God, as some others of the Fathers had done, and concluded that faith was in our power, as well as a duty incumbent on us. But he afterwards, as the result of more mature deliberation, retracted such modes of speaking. Yet though he expressed himself in a different way from the Fathers before him, he

often takes occasion, from some passages which he purposely refers to in their writings, to vindicate them, as holding the same faith, though not always using the same phrases. After he had thus defended Cyprian and Ambrose, he puts a very charitable construction on their unguarded way of expressing themselves, and says that it arose from their not having any occasion to engage in that controversy which was on foot in his day.o The same might be said of Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Chrysostom, and several others; whom some modern writers defend from the charge of favouring the Pelagian scheme, by referring to some places in their writings in which, either directly or by tantamount expressions, they acknowledge that the salvation of men is owing to the grace of God, whereby all occasions of glorying are taken away from the creature. The learned Vossius, though he acknowledges that the Fathers, before Augustin, expressed themselves in such a way as is represented in the objection, yet vindicates them from the charge of verging towards the Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian heresy; for he concludes, that when they speak of God's predestinating men to eternal life, on the foresight of good works, they intend only those good works which God would enable them to perform. This suggestion of his clears many of the expressions which they use, from the imputation cast upon them.q But if all these endeavours to show that the Fathers who lived before Augustin were not opposers of our doctrine, appear to be to no purpose, our faith in the truth of it will not be weakened. We suppose it to be founded on direct statements of scripture, and on several inferences plainly deduced from it; and therefore it does not need the suffrage of human testimony for its support. But if it be said, that such testimony is a very desirable thing, as doubtless it is, we might consider our doctrine as obtaining very much in and after Augustin's time, being examined and defended by very considerable numbers of men, who have transmitted it down to posterity, throughout the various ages of the

church. Yet, as a judicious divine well observes, by whomsoever it is defended or opposed, we lay no great stress on human authority. We shall therefore proceed to consider some other objections, which it will be more necessary for us to give a particular answer to.

2. To the doctrine that God's purpose ascertains all events, it is objected, that he has not so determined the bounds of the life of man, but that it may be lengthened or shortened by the intervention of second causes. This objection is nothing else but the applying of one branch of the controversy relating to the decrees of God, to a particular instance. It was very warmly debated in the Netherlands, towards the beginning of the last century. It is of a popular form, and is adapted principally to give prejudice to those who are disposed to pass over or set aside some necessary distinctions which, if duly considered, would not only shorten the debate, but set the matter in a clearer light. We shall endeavour to state these distinctions, but shall first consider their method of reasoning on the subject, and the sense they give of some scriptures which, as they suppose, give countenance to the objection.

They argue that, if the term of life be immoveably fixed by God, it is a vain thing for any one to use those means which are necessary to preserve it,—that the skill of the physician, as well as the virtue of medicine, is altogether needless,—that the good advice which is often given to persons, to take heed that they do not shorten their lives by intemperance, will be to no purpose, for they may readily reply that they shall live their appointed time do what they will,—and what is still more absurd, that if a person attempt to lay violent hands upon himself, his attempt will be to no purpose, if God has determined that he shall live longer, and if he has determined that he shall die, the man is guilty of no crime, for he only fulfils the divine purpose. They add that our doctrine renders all our supplications to God to

preserve our lives, or to restore us from sickness, when we are in danger of death, needless; and that our conduct in making such supplications is a practical denial of the argument we maintain; for what is it, they say, but to suppose that the bounds of life are not unalterably fixed? As to the countenance which they suppose scripture gives to their objection, they refer us to those places in which the life of man is said to be lengthened or shortened. Thus there are promises of 'long life' given to the righteous, who love God, and keep his commandments.' Solomon says expressly, 'The fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened;'u and elsewhere he speaks of the wicked dying before the time.' The psalmist also says, that 'bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.'y They refer also to that scripture in which Martha tells our Saviour, that 'if he had been with her brother Lazarus,' before his death, 'he had not died.' Either, say they, this contradicts the argument we are maintaining, or Martha was mistaken; and had she been so, our Saviour would have reproved her for asserting what was false. They add, moreover, that when the old world were destroyed in the deluge, and so died before their time, they might have prolonged their lives, had they repented in that space of time in which Noah as 'a preacher of righteousness,' gave them warning of the desolating judgment, and in which 'Christ, by his Spirit' in him, 'preached to them,' doubtless, as the apostle says,a with a design to bring them to repentance, and save them from destruction. And when Abraham pleaded with God in behalf of Sodom, God tells him, that 'if he found but ten righteous persons in the city, he would spare it for their sake.' But this, the objectors say, is inconsistent with his determination that they should all die by an untimely death, if the bounds of their lives had been fixed. Lastly, they refer to that scripture, in which God first told Hezekiah, that 'he should die, and not live,' and afterwards, that he would 'add to his days fifteen years.'c

To prepare our way for a reply to this objection, let us consider that the side of the question which we are maintaining, is equally supported by express texts of scripture. Thus it is said, 'His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.' Nothing can be more express than this. Here the inspired writer speaks of a decree of God which respects all mankind, without exception, and sets forth his absolute sovereignty, and the irreversibleness of his purpose. The apostle Paul also, in reasoning with the Athenians concerning the decree and providence of God, in whom we live, move, and have our being, says, that 'he hath determined the times before appointed, and fixed the bounds of their habitation.'e As God has placed men upon the earth, by his decree and providence, so he has determined not only the place where they should live, but the time of their continuance in the world. This was no new doctrine; for the heathen had been instructed in it by they own philosophers. Hence the apostle speaks their opinion, especially that of the Stoics, about this matter. When he mentions the times as determined, his words are to be understood, not of the seasons of the year, which God has fixed to return in their certain courses, but of the seasons appointed for every work, or for every occurrence of life, and, among the rest, for life itself, and for serving our generation. Accordingly, Solomon expressly says, 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose: a time to be born, and a time to die.'g Several other scriptures might be brought to the same purpose, particularly those in which God has foretold the death of particular persons. Moreover, if the providence of God is conversant about all the actions of men, and 'the hairs of their head are all numbered,'i so that the smallest changes in life do not come by chance, but are subject to the divine control, certainly the time of life must be subjected to his providence. Hence, he is styled, 'Our life, and the length of our days;' and he must certainly be considered as the sovereign Arbiter of life. This doctrine

none who own a providence, can with any shadow of reason gainsay; for it is agreeable not only to several scriptures, but to the very nature and perfections of God.

We return now to the arguments laid down against it, and the scriptures cited to give countenance to them. It is certain, that two contradictory propositions cannot be both true, in the same sense; and that the scriptures, which are exactly harmonious, as well as infallibly true, nowhere contradict themselves. Now let it be observed, that the bounds of life are twofold,—either such as men might have lived to, according to the common course of nature, if nothing had intervened to ruin the constitution, or no disease or violent death had broken the thread of life before,—or that period during which God has ordained that men shall live, whether it be longer or shorter. The former respects the lengthening or shortening of life, by the influence of second causes. In this sense, we do not suppose that the term of life is immoveably fixed, but believe that in some it is longer, and in others shorter. It is certain, that, by intemperance, or other methods, men may shorten their days, or, by laying violent hands on themselves, not live the time that otherwise they would have done. But if we consider the overruling or disposing providence of God as conversant about this matter, there is nothing which happens without its concurrence. Persons who shorten their days by intemperance, do so by the permissive providence of God. Though he is not the author of their intemperance, yet he permits it, or determines not to hinder it. Hence, though he has fixed the bounds of life, which can neither be lengthened or shortened, yet, knowing what men will do, in a natural way, to shorten them, he determines that their conduct shall put an end to their lives. And when we read, in scripture, of God's 'delivering' him who dies a violent death, 'into his hands' who inflicts it, God is not the author of the sin of the murderer. Yet providence is not wholly to be exempted

from that action, so far as it is not sinful, but purely natural or the effect of power. And when such an occurrence is said to shorten the life of man, there is nothing inharmonious with God's having fixed the duration of it in his own purpose. We must consider also that his decree and providence respect the means, as well as the end, which are always inseparably connected, and equally subject to him.

We proceed to give a more particular answer to the arguments stated in the objection.—When it is said, that God's fixing the bounds of life renders all means for the preservation of it unnecessary, a false supposition is made, namely, that God does not ordain the means as well as the end. If God has determined that persons shall live, he has determined to give them the supports of life, and to prevent every thing that might tend to destroy it. If, on the other hand, he takes them away by a disease, he has ordained the disease as a means conducive to the end. If health is to be supported, or recovered, by means, and thereby life preserved, God has ordained that these means shall be used, as well as the end attained. As to persons shortening their lives by intemperance, the sin has a natural tendency to shorten life; so that, though God is not the author of the sin, he certainly knows beforehand what methods the sinner will take to hasten his end, and leaves him to himself. Though the sin is not from God, the punishment, which is the consequence of it, may truly be said to be from him, and therefore was determined by him. When the objectors farther say, that they who destroy their health, or lay violent hands on themselves, cannot be said to sin in so doing, because, provided God has determined this fatal event, they do that which tends to fulfil the divine will,—when they say this, they oppose our doctrine, without taking our words in the same sense in which it is maintained. It is well known, that the will of God is sometimes taken for his prescribed rule, which is the matter of our duty; and in this sense, we readily allow, that he who fulfils it cannot be said to

sin. But the will of God is sometimes taken for his purpose to permit sin, or to give the sinner up to his own heart's lusts, to do that which he hates and is resolved to punish. In this sense, the sinner is said to do that which God would not have suffered him to do, had he willed the contrary. But it is a very groundless insinuation, to suppose that for this reason he is exempted from the guilt of sin.

Again, to say that God's fixing the bounds of life, is inconsistent with our praying that our lives may be prolonged, or that we may be delivered from sickness or death, when we are apprehensive that we are drawing nigh to it, is no just consequence. We do not pray that God would alter his purpose, when we desire any blessing of him; but suppose that his purpose is hid from us, and expect not to know it any otherwise than by the event. A person who prays to be delivered from sickness or death, is not to address the divine Majesty as one who presumptuously, and without ground, supposes that God has decreed that he shall immediately die, but as one who hopes, or who has no ground to disbelieve that he will make it appear, by answering his prayer, that he has determined to spare his life. The secret purpose of God relating to the event of things, as it is secret, is to be no more a rule of duty, than if there had been no purpose. Yet it does not follow that the event is not determined by him.

As to those scriptures which seem to give countenance to the objection we are considering, they may, without the least absurdity, be understood consistently with other scriptures already quoted, which prove that God has fixed or determined the bounds of life.—As to those promises which God has made of a long life 'to those that love him, and keep his commandments,' the meaning of them is, that he will certainly bestow this blessing, either in kind or value, on those whose conversation is such as is described. This none can deny, who rightly understand the meaning of that scripture,

'Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is,' as well as of 'that which is to come.' But, so far as it affects the argument we are maintaining, we must consider that that efficacious grace whereby we are enabled to love God and keep his commandments, is as much his gift, and consequently the result of his purpose, as the blessing connected with it. Hence, if he has determined that we shall enjoy a long and happy life in this world, and to enable us to live a holy life,—if the end and the means are connected together, and both the objects of God's purpose, it cannot justly be inferred that the event, relating to the lengthening or shortening of our lives, is not determined by him.—As to those scriptures which speak of the wicked 'dying before their time,' or 'not living half their days,' they are to be understood agreeably to the distinction formerly mentioned, between men's dying sooner than they would have done according to the course of nature, or according to the concurrence of second causes, and their dying sooner than God had before determined. In the former sense it is literally true, that many do not live out half their days. But may not the sovereign Disposer of all things inflict a sudden and immediate death as the punishment of sin, without giving us reason to conclude that the event was not preconcerted, if we may so express it, or determined beforehand?—As to that other scripture, in which Martha tells our Saviour that if he had been with Lazarus when sick, 'he had not died,' she does not suppose that Christ's being there would have frustrated the divine purpose; for then he would, doubtless, have reproved her for what she said. In fact, he did not come to visit him, because he knew that God had purposed that he should die, and be afterwards raised from the dead. This case, therefore, does not argue that God has not fixed the bounds or term of life.—Again, as to the destruction of the world in the flood, and that of Sodom by fire from heaven, we do not deny that they might have prolonged their lives had they repented. But, in that case, their repentance would have been as much determined by

God, as their deliverance from the untimely death which befell them. —The last scripture mentioned, in which God, by the prophet Isaiah, tells Hezekiah that 'he should die, and not live,' notwithstanding which, fifteen years were added to his life, is very frequently insisted on by those who deny the unalterable decree of God relating to life and death, and is esteemed by them an unanswerable argument in support of their opinion. But, when God said, 'Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live,' he gave Hezekiah to understand that his disease was what we call mortal, that is, such as no skill of the physician or natural virtue of medicine could cure, and that therefore he must expect to die, unless God recovered him by a miracle. Hezekiah, doubtless, took the warning in this sense, otherwise it would have been a preposterous thing for him to have prayed for life; for he would then have offered an affront to God, by desiring him to change his purpose. But God designed by the warning to incite him to importunate prayer for life. Hence, when he says, 'I will add to thy days fifteen years,' the meaning is, 'Though thou mightest before have expected death, my design in giving thee that intimation was, that thou shouldst pray for life, which might be given thee by a miracle; and now I will work a miracle, and fulfil what I before purposed in adding to thy life fifteen years.'

3. It is farther objected against the doctrine of election and reprobation, and particularly against the immutability of God's purpose, that it tends to establish a fatal necessity of things, and overthrow that known distinction that there is between things, as necessary or contingent. The doctrine, it is alleged, implies that nothing in the whole series of causes and effects can happen otherwise than it does, and that God himself is confined to such a method of acting, that it is impossible for him to do the contrary. This, it is said, is nothing else but the Stoical doctrine of fate, applied to and defended by some scriptures; though it is contrary to others,

which speak of the uncertainty of future events. Thus God speaks of the Jews turning from their iniquities, and of his bestowing pardoning mercy upon them in consequence, as an uncertain event: 'It may be that the house of Judah will bear all the evil, which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.' So when, immediately before the captivity, God commanded the prophet Ezekiel to personate one who was removing his stuff or household goods, in order to signify to the Jews that the nation in general should soon remove to other habitations, when carried captive into Babylon, he says, 'It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.'o And the prophet Zephaniah exhorts the people 'to seek righteousness and meekness;' and, as the consequence thereof, says, 'It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.' The apostle also speaks of the uncertainty of the divine dispensations of grace, when he advises Timothy, 'in meekness, to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.'q This language, it is alleged, is directly contrary to the unalterable necessity of events, depending upon the divine purpose, according to the doctrine of election.

As to the former part of this objection, in which the doctrine is pretended to have taken its rise from, and to be agreeable to, that of the Stoics concerning fate and destiny, it will not be much to our purpose to inquire what was the opinion of that sect of philosophers concerning it. Indeed, it will be difficult to fix on such a view of that doctrine as will be agreed to by all. Some are of opinion, that many of the Stoics intended nothing else than that God's purposes are immutable, and that the dispensations of his providence are a necessary execution of them. It is understood also that when they speak of him as bound by the laws of fate, they mean, that he cannot act contrary to what himself has determined. Had the Stoical

doctrine been universally explained in this sense, it would not have done our opponents much service, to compare it with the doctrine of election; for it would only have proved the agreeableness of the doctrine of the immutability of God's purpose, relating to all events, to the light of nature, as some of the heathen were thereby instructed in it. But as this does not appear to be the sense of all the Stoics about the doctrine of fate, and as some of them understood it in the same sense as is represented in the objection, we cannot but oppose it, and assert the doctrine of election to be very remote from it. In answer to this part of the objection, we need only explain what we mean, when we maintain the necessity of events, as founded on the will of God. We are far from asserting that there is a necessary connection between second causes and their respective effects; for, as regards these, some effects are produced arbitrarily, by the will of intelligent creatures. When we call any thing a necessary cause, producing effects according to its own nature, we suppose that it is agreeable to the order or course of nature, which was fixed by God. All that we pretend to prove, is the dependence of things on the divine will, and the necessity of God's purposes taking effect. We say that what is arbitrary or contingent, or what might be or not be, as depending on or relating to second causes, is eventually necessary, as it is an accomplishment of the divine purpose. Hence, we always distinguish between things being contingent with respect to us, and their being so with respect to God. Accordingly, though the words, 'it may be,' or 'peradventure,' may be applied to the apparent event of things, they can never be applied to the fulfilling of the divine will.

As to the scripture's speaking concerning the uncertainty of future events, in those texts mentioned in the objection, these, and all others in which such a mode of speaking is used, may be explained, by distinguishing between what might reasonably have been expected to be the event of things, supposing men had not been given

up to the blindness of their minds and the hardness of their hearts, to act below the dictates of reason, without consulting their own safety and happiness or expressing their gratitude to God, and what would be the real event of things, which God was not pleased to reveal, and which therefore was unknown to them. Thus, when the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel represented the repentance and reformation of Israel, as an uncertain event, and spoke of their forgiveness and their deliverance from captivity, connected with it, in these dubious terms, 'It may be they will consider and return, every man from his evil way,' their words imply that the event was what might have been reasonably expected by men, though it was no matter of uncertainty to the heart-searching God, who knoweth the end from the beginning, and perfectly foresees what will be the event of things, which, in various respects, are under the direction of his providence. Though it could hardly be thought by men, that such an admonition should be treated with such contempt, yet God knew how they would behave themselves. There was no peradventure with respect to his judgment of it. He knew that they would not repent; otherwise he would have inclined their wills, and effectually have persuaded them to exercise this grace, and thereby have prevented his expectation or determination from being disappointed or frustrated. It may, perhaps, be objected, that, according to this sense of the text, the prophet's message to the people would have been to no purpose, and his ministry among them exercised in vain; or that it was contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God to make this overture to them, when he knew it would not be complied with. But the great God is not bound to decline asserting his right to man's obedience, or requiring that which is a just debt to him, though he know that they will not comply with his demand. Indeed, this objection cannot be maintained without supposing, that, when the gospel is preached to man, the glory of the divine wisdom and goodness cannot be secured, unless we conclude either that God doth

not know whether man will embrace it or not, which is contrary to his omniscience, or that he determines that all to whom the gospel is preached, shall embrace it, which is contrary to matter of fact. But there may be a medium between these, which vindicates the divine perfections: God may order that the gospel should be preached, and thereby assert his sovereignty, and unalienable right to their obedience. Accordingly, there may be a small remnant among them, in whom God designs that his message shall take effect. And will any one say, that because the goodness of God was not demonstrated to all, no glory was brought to that perfection? If it be farther said, that supposing there were some who turned from their evil ways, the captivity, which was threatened, was not thereby prevented, and therefore the promise relating to their deliverance was not accomplished; we reply, that as God did not give them ground to expect this blessing, unless repentance should be more universal than it really was, so he had various ways to testify his regard to those who should receive advantage by his message, for whose sake it was principally intended.

As for that scripture in which God advises his people to 'seek righteousness and meekness,' and in which, as the consequence of this, he says, 'It may be ye may be hid in the day of the Lord's fierce anger;' the meaning is, that they who were enabled to exercise these graces, should either have some instances of temporal deliverance vouchsafed to them, or, if not, that they should have no reason to complain that the exercise of the graces was altogether in vain.

As for that scripture in which the apostle bids Timothy exhort those that oppose the gospel, 'if, peradventure, God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;' the meaning is, that it was uncertain to Timothy whether God would give this grace or not; and therefore he must preach the gospel, whatever should be the

event thereof. Yet, it was no matter of uncertainty, with respect to God; who must be supposed to know what grace he designs to bestow. The event of things may be dubious to us, and yet be certain with respect to him.

4. Another objection against the doctrine of election and reprobation, is, that it is altogether inconsistent with the preaching of the gospel. If God, it is said, has determined the final state of man, so that his purpose cannot be altered, it is a preposterous thing, not to say illusory, for grace to be offered to the chief of sinners. This must certainly argue, that it is possible to be attained by them. And since the overture is universal, we must conclude that God has put all mankind into a salvable state, and consequently not excluded any from salvation by his peremptory and unchangeable decree. To what purpose, it is asked, are the promises of the gospel held forth to all that sit under the sound of it, if it be impossible for them to attain the blessings promised in it? Or what regard could men be supposed to have to the promises, if they were not a declaration of God's purpose? On the other hand, it is added, the threatenings denounced would be as little regarded, as an expedient to deter men from sinning, if, according to this doctrine of election, their state were unalterably fixed by God.

That we may proceed with clearness in answering this objection, we shall first show what we mean by preaching the gospel. The gospel is nothing else but a declaration of God's revealed will and of our duty in obedience to it; and this gospel is to be made known,—particularly what relates to the salvation of men, and the way which God has ordained in order to their attaining it. Now when this salvation is said to be offered in the gospel, we intend nothing else, but that a declaration is made to sinners, that there are many invaluable privileges which Christ has purchased for all those whom God has

purposed to save, and which he will in his own time and way apply to them. And as we cannot describe them by name, and no unregenerated person has ground to conclude that he is of that number, there is a farther declaration to be made, that God has inseparably connected this salvation to which he has chosen them, with faith and repentance and the exercise of all other graces. And as these are God's gift, and to be prayed for, and expected, in a diligent attendance on all his ordinances, so they are to be considered as the marks and evidences of men's being chosen to salvation. Without these evidences, it is certainly a vain and presumptuous thing for any one to pretend that he has a right to salvation, as the object of God's eternal election.—Again, no one who preaches the gospel, has any warrant from God to tell any individual that, whether he repents and believes or not, he shall be saved, or to direct his discourse to him as one who is chosen to salvation; much less to give the impenitent sinner occasion to conclude, that, though he obstinately and finally remain in a state of rebellion against God, he may still hope to be saved, because there is a number of mankind chosen to salvation. This is not to declare God's revealed will, but that which is directly contrary to it, and therefore not to preach the gospel. Hence, all who sit under the sound of the gospel, ought to look upon it as a declaration of God's design to save a part of mankind under its preaching, and among them the chief of sinners, which they have sufficient ground to conclude themselves to be. A door of hope is so far opened, that they have no reason to conclude that they are rejected, any more than that they are elected. While they wait on God's instituted means of grace, they have at least this encouragement, that, peradventure, they may be of the number of God's elect. And when they find in themselves that faith which is the evidence of their being so, and are enabled to make their calling and thereby their election sure, they may then determine their interest in, and lay claim to this privilege. As for the promises and threatenings,

these are to be considered by unregenerated persons, without determining their right to the one, or falling under the other, as elected or rejected. That is a point which is still supposed to be a secret. They are, therefore, to regard the promise, as a declaration of God's purpose relating to the connection that there is between faith and salvation, and as an inducement to perform the one, in expectation of the other. As for the threatenings, though they determine the present state of impenitent sinners to be such that they are undone and miserable, they are not to be extended to those events which are hid in the purpose of God, so as to give any one ground to conclude that he is finally excluded from salvation; for final exclusion is inseparably connected only with final impenitency and unbelief.

5. It is farther objected, that the doctrine of election and reprobation is, in many instances, subversive of practical religion. It is alleged to be inconsistent with the duty of prayer. For if God, it is said, has determined to save a person, he has no need to ask a blessing which is already granted; and if he has determined to reject him, his prayer will be in vain. It is farther supposed to lead to presumption on the one hand, or to despair on the other,—election to presumption, reprobation to despair. It is alleged, also, to lead to licentiousness, or to be inconsistent with our using endeavours that we may be saved. For to what purpose, it is asked, do persons strive to enter in at the strait gate, when all their endeavours will be ineffectual, if they are not elected? or to what purpose do they use any endeavours to escape the wrath of God due to sin, if they are appointed to wrath, and so must necessarily perish?

This objection is, beyond measure, shocking. It is no wonder that a doctrine which is supposed to have such consequences attending it, is treated with the utmost degree of detestation. But as the greatest

part of the objections against it are mere misrepresentations, it is no difficult matter to reply to them, to the conviction of those who are disposed to judge impartially of the matter in controversy. We shall proceed to reply to the several branches of this objection.

As to what concerns the duty of prayer, when we are engaged in it, we are not to suppose that we are to deal with God in such a way as when we have to do with men whom we suppose to be undetermined, and who may be moved by entreaties to alter their present resolutions, and to give us what we ask. To suppose this would be to conceive of God as altogether such a one as ourselves. Nor are we to conclude, that he has not determined to grant the thing for which we pray to him; for that would be presumptuously to enter into his secret purpose, he having nowhere told us that we shall be denied the blessings we want. On the contrary, as an encouragement to prayer, he has told us that there is forgiveness with him, and mercy for the chief of sinners; and, besides this, he has given us farther ground to hope for a gracious answer to prayer, where he gives a heart to seek him. We are hence to behave ourselves, in this duty, as those who pretend not to know God's secret purpose, but rather who desire to wait for some gracious intimation, or token for good, that he will hear and answer our prayer. His secret purpose, therefore, is no more inconsistent with this duty, than if, with those who deny the doctrine we are maintaining, we should conclude that, as relates to the answering of prayer, there is no previous determination with God.

As to our doctrine leading to presumption or despair, there is no ground to conclude that it has a tendency to either. It cannot lead to presumption, in as much as election is not discovered to any one till he believes. An unconverted person has no ground to presume and conclude that all is well with him, because he is elected; for that is

boldly to determine a thing that he knows nothing of. The objection, with respect to such, supposes that to be known which remains a secret. On the other hand, men have no ground to despair, on a supposition that they are finally rejected. It is one thing to be in a state of unregeneracy, and another thing to be the object of the decree of reprobation. The latter no one can or ought to determine concerning himself, so long as he is in this world; especially if we consider him as enjoying the means of grace, and as having thereby a door of hope open to him. God has pleased to declare, in the gospel, that he will receive sinners who repent and believe in him, how unworthy soever they are. Hence, such are not to conclude that their state is desperate, though it be exceedingly dangerous, but are to wait for the efficacy of the means of grace, and for those blessings which accompany salvation. As to those that are in a converted state, our doctrine is far from having a tendency to lead them either to presumption or to despair. On the contrary, it leads them to thankfulness to God, for his discriminating grace; and when persons experience this, they are not only encouraged to hope for farther blessings, but to perform those duties whereby they may express their gratitude. Presumption, however, is the only thing which it is pretended election leads them to. But this cannot be the natural consequence or tendency of it. If they presume that they shall be saved, this is not to be reckoned a crime in them. That presumption which is supposed in the objection to be a crime, consists in a person's expecting a blessing without reason; but this is contrary to the supposition that he is a believer. It would be a strange method of reasoning, to infer that he who has ground to conclude that he has a right to eternal life, from those marks and evidences of grace which he finds in himself, is guilty of a sinful presumption when he is induced to lay claim to it. The sense of the objection, therefore, must be this, that a believer, having been once enabled to conclude himself elected, may take occasion, supposing that his work is done and his

end answered, to return to his former wicked life, and yet still presume that he shall be saved. Now, his doing so would be a certain indication that he had no ground to conclude that he was in a saved state, but was mistaken when he thought he had. The doctrine of election cannot lead a believer, as such, to presumption. The objection which supposes that it does, is founded on one of two mistakes, either that every one who is elected to salvation knows his interest in this privilege, as though it were immediately revealed to him, without his inferring it from any marks and evidences of grace which he finds in himself, or that it is impossible for any one who thinks that he believes, and thence concludes that he is elected, to appear afterwards to have been mistaken in the judgment which he then passed upon himself. But each of these contains a misrepresentation of the consequences of the doctrine of election. Nor is there any regard had to that necessary distinction which there is, between a person's being chosen to eternal life, and his being able to determine himself to be interested in this privilege. The objection is contrary also to what we have already considered, that whenever God chooses to the end, he chooses to the means, which are inseparably connected with it. This is the only rule whereby we are warranted, when applying it to ourselves, to conclude that we shall be saved.

Farther, it cannot, in the least, be proved that the doctrine of election has any tendency to lead persons to licentiousness, or is inconsistent with our using the utmost endeavours to attain salvation. If it be said, that many vile persons take occasion from it, to give the reins to their corruption, their doing so is not the natural or necessary consequence of the doctrine. There is no truth but may be abused. The apostle Paul did not think the doctrine of the grace of God, which he so strenuously maintained, was less true or glorious, because some drew this vile consequence from it, 'Let us continue in

sin, that grace may abound.' As for those means which God has ordained to bring about the salvation of his people, we are obliged to attend upon them, though we know not beforehand what will certainly be the event. And if, through the blessing of God accompanying them, we are effectually called and sanctified, and thereby enabled to know our election, this will, agreeably to the experience of all true believers, have a tendency to promote holiness.

6. It is farther objected, and that more especially against the doctrine of reprobation, that it argues God to be the author of sin, and particularly in such instances as these,—the first entrance of sin into the world, God's imputing the sin of our first parents to all their posterity, and afterwards suffering it to make such a progress as it has done ever since, and, most of all, when it is supposed that this is not only the result of the divine purpose, but that it also respects the blinding of men's minds, and the hardening of their hearts, and so rendering their final impenitency and perdition unavoidable.

As to what concerns the first entrance of sin into the world, it cannot reasonably be denied, that the purpose of God was concerned about it, before it was committed, in the same sense as his actual providence was afterwards, namely, in permitting, though not effecting it. Yet this was not the cause of the committing of it. A bare permission has no positive efficiency in order to commission. The not hindering or restraining a wicked action, does not render him the author of it. It is true, God knew how man would behave himself, particularly that he would misimprove and forfeit that original righteousness in which he was created, and that, by this means, he would contract that guilt which was the consequence, and thereby render himself liable to his just displeasure. To deny this, would be to deny that he from eternity foreknew that which he knew in time. And so far as the actual providence of God was conversant about

what was natural in the entrance of sin, so far his purpose determined that it should be; but neither does this argue him to be the author of sin. This, however, will be farther considered, when we speak concerning the actual providence of God under a following Answer.

As to that part of the objection which respects the imputing of the sin of our first parents to all their posterity, it is more frequently than any other brought against this doctrine. The doctrine is generally represented in the most indefensible terms, without making any abatements as to the degree of punishment that was due to sin. Accordingly our opponents think that we can hardly have the front to affirm, that our arguments in defence of it are agreeable to the divine perfections, as we pretend those others are which have been brought in its defence. But I hope we shall, in its proper place, to which we shall refer it, be able to maintain the doctrine of original sin in consistency with the divine perfections, as well as with scripture. All that I shall say at present is, that if the doctrine of original sin be so explained as that it does not render God the author of sin, his purpose relating to it, which must be supposed in all respects to correspond with it, does not argue him to be the author of it.

As to the progress of sin in the world, and the proneness of all mankind to rebel against God, this, as was formerly observed concerning sin in general, is the object of his permissive, but not his effective will. There is, indeed, this difference between God's suffering sin to enter the world at first, and his suffering the continuance or increase of it, that at first he dealt with man as an innocent creature, and only left him to the mutability of his own will, having before given him a power to retain his integrity. But the fallen creature is become weak, and unable to do anything that is good in all its circumstances; and afterwards is more and more inclined to

sin, by contracting vicious habits and persisting in them. Now, though God's leaving man to himself at first, when there was no forfeiture made of his preventing grace, must be reckoned an act of mere sovereignty, his leaving sinners to themselves may be reckoned an act of justice, as a punishment of sin before committed. Neither of these, however, argues him to be the author of sin; nor does the purpose of God relating to them give the least occasion for such an inference.—Again, we must distinguish between the occasion and the cause of sin. God's providential dispensations, though unexceptionably holy and righteous, are often the occasion of sin. Thus his afflictive hand sometimes occasions the corruptions of men to break forth, in repining at and quarrelling with his providence; and his giving outward blessings to one which he withholds from another, gives occasion to some to complain of the injustice of his dealings with them; and the strictness and holiness of his law, gives occasion to corrupt nature to discover itself in the blackest colours. The apostle plainly evinces this truth, when he says, 'Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.' Indeed, there is nothing in the whole compass of providence, or in the methods of the divine government therein, but may be, and often is, an occasion of sin in wicked men. But certainly it is not the cause of sin. The clemency of a prince may occasion a rebellion among his subjects, but it is the vile ingratitude and wickedness of their nature which is the spring and cause of the rebellion. So the providence of God, and consequently his purpose, which is executed thereby, may be the occasion of sin, and yet the charge that God is hereby argued to be the author of sin, is altogether groundless.

As to what is farther objected relating to the purpose of God to blind the minds and harden the hearts of men, and to lead to that final impenitency which is the consequence, God forbid that we should

assert that this is a positive act in him. So far, however, as the doctrine implies nothing but his determining to deny that grace which would have had the contrary effect, or his providence relating to that denial, it does not give any countenance to the objection, or weaken the force of the arguments which we have already laid down, and which are very consistent with it.

7. There is another objection, which is generally laid down in so moving a way, that, whether the argument be just or not, the style is adapted to affect the minds of men with prejudice against the doctrine we are maintaining. The objection is, that our doctrine is inconsistent with God's judicial proceedings against the wicked in the day of judgment, and that it will afford the sinner a plea, in which he may speak to this effect: 'Lord, I sinned by a fatal necessity. It was impossible for me to avoid that which thou art now offended with me for; it was what thou didst decree should come to pass. I have been told that thy decrees are unalterable, and that it is as possible to change the course of nature, or to remove the mountains which thou hast fixed with thy hand, as to alter thy purpose. Wilt thou condemn one who sinned and fell pursuant to thy will? Dost thou will that men should sin and perish, and then lay the blame at their door, as though they were culpable for doing what thou hast determined should be done?'

This objection supposes that the decree of God lays a necessary constraint on the will of man, and forces it to sin. If the objectors could make it appear that it does this, no reply could be made. But this is so to represent the argument we are maintaining, that no one who has just ideas of our doctrine would ever understand it; and it is directly contrary to the method of explaining it which we have pursued. We have already proved, in our answer to the third objection, that sin is not necessary in that sense in which the

objectors suppose it to be, or that, though the decree of God renders events necessary, yet it does not take away the efficiency of second causes, and that therefore the purpose of God relating to any event, is not to be pleaded as an excuse for sin, or as a ground of exemption from punishment. We read of the Jews, that 'with wicked hands they crucified' our Saviour. Now, while the crime was their own, the event is expressly said to have been done by, or in pursuance of, 'the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.' He foreknew what they would do, and purposed not to prevent it; yet he did not force their will to commit it. Elsewhere God says concerning Israel, 'Thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea from that time thine ear was not opened;' and then he adds, 'I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously.'z Israel might have pleaded that God knew beforehand how they would behave themselves, and so have thrown the blame on him for not preventing the foreseen event, but suffering them to go on in their destructive way, with as much reason as the sinner is supposed, in the objection, to plead in the day of judgment that the doctrine we are maintaining exculpates him from his guilt.

Again, the immutability of the divine purpose, whatever has been said concerning it, does not give the least countenance to any one's charging his sin on God. We have, in answer to the last objection, proved, that it does not render him the author of sin. Hence, man's destruction must lie at his own door. It is one thing to say, that it is in the sinner's power to save himself, and another thing to say, that the sin he commits is not wilful, and therefore that guilt is not contracted. Hence, no matter of excuse, according to the import of the objection, is afforded to the sinner.

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of Election

We are now to consider some things which may be inferred from the doctrine we have been insisting on; and how it is to be practically improved by us, to the glory of God, and our spiritual advantage.

From the methods taken to oppose and decry it, by misrepresentations containing little less than blasphemy, we infer, that in whatever degree unjust consequences deduced from a doctrine may be an hinderance to its obtaining in the world, they will not render it less true or defensible, and ought not to prejudice the minds of men against the sacred writings or religion in general. Several scriptures are produced in defence of this doctrine, and others in opposition to it; and the utmost caution has not been used to reconcile the sense given of these with the natural ideas which we have of the divine perfections. Many also in defending one side of the question, have made use of unguarded expressions, or called that a scripture-doctrine which is remote from being so; and others in opposition to them, have, with too much assurance, charged their opponents with consequences which are neither avowed by them, nor justly deduced from their method of reasoning. The unthinking and irreligious part of mankind have hence taken occasion, with the Deists, to set themselves against revealed religion, or to give way to scepticism, as though there were nothing certain or defensible in religion; and take occasion to make it the subject of satire and ridicule. But passing this by, though it is a matter very much to be lamented, we shall consider this doctrine as rendered less exception able, or more justly represented. Accordingly, we may infer from it, that as it is agreeable to the divine perfections, so it has the greatest tendency to promote practical godliness. For,

1. God's having foreordained whatever comes to pass, should lead us to an humble submission to his will, in all the dispensations of his providence. When we consider that nothing, in this respect, comes by

chance, the reflection should have a tendency to quiet our minds, and silence all our murmuring and uneasy thoughts, whatever afflictions we are exposed to. We are too apt to complain sometimes of second causes, as though all our miseries took their rise from these; and, at other times, to afflict ourselves beyond measure, as apprehending that those proper means have not been used which might have prevented them. So Martha tells our Saviour, 'If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' We ought rather to consider, however, that all befalls us in pursuance of God's purpose. Had he designed to have prevented our affliction, he would have directed to other means conducive to that end, or would have imparted to those which were used their desired success. We use the means, as not knowing what is the secret purpose of God with respect to the event; but when that purpose is made known to us, it should teach us to acquiesce in, and be entirely resigned to, the divine will.

2. When we cannot see the reason or understand the meaning of the dispensations of divine providence, and are not able to pass any judgment concerning future events, whether relating to ourselves or others, and when all things look with a very dismal aspect, as to what concerns the interest and church of God in the world, we must be content to wait till he is pleased to discover them to us. Often, as our Saviour said to one of his disciples, what he does, 'we know not now, but shall know hereafter.' It is no wonder that we are at a loss as to God's purposes, since secret things belong to him. Hence, all that we are to do, in such a case as has been supposed, is to rest satisfied that all things shall, in the end, appear to have a tendency to advance his own perfections, and bring about the salvation of his people.

3. Since the purpose of God respects the means as well as the end, we ought to use proper means by which we may hope to obtain grace

and glory. The doctrine of election does not lead us to sloth and indifference in religion; for that is to suppose that the end and means are separated in God's purpose. And when, through his blessing attending them, the ordinances or means of grace are made effectual for the working of faith and all other graces, the connexion of these, in God's purpose, with glory, ought to encourage our hope relating to the end of faith, even the salvation of our souls.

4. Let us take heed that we do not peremptorily, without ground, conclude ourselves elected to eternal life on the one hand, or rejected on the other. To determine that we are chosen to salvation, before we are effectually called, is presumptuously to enter into God's secret counsels, which we cannot, at present, have a certain and determinate knowledge of; and to lay this as a foundation, as to what concerns the conduct of our lives, is often of very pernicious tendency. If, as the result of this conclusion, we take encouragement to go on in sin, we shall cut the sinews of all religion, and expose ourselves to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart, and a greater degree of impenitency and unbelief, as the consequence of bold presumption and affront to the divine Majesty. Nor, on the other hand, are we to conclude that we are not elected. For though we may be in suspense about the event of things, and not know whether we are elected or rejected, our suspense is not inconsistent with our using endeavours to attain a good hope, through grace. To determine that we are not elected, is to conclude against ourselves, that all endeavours will be to no purpose; and this we have no ground to do, since it is one thing to conclude that we are in a state of unregeneracy, and another thing to determine that we are not elected. The consequence of our concluding that we are in an unconverted state, ought to be our praying, waiting, and hoping for the efficacy of divine grace, which extends itself to the chief of sinners as a relief against despair, though such can have no ground

to say that they are elected. The safest way, and that which is most conducive to the ends of religion, is to be firmly persuaded, that though the final state of man be certainly determined by God, yet the divine purpose is to be no rule for an unregenerated person to take his measures from, any more than if the event were a matter of uncertainty, and in all respects undetermined.

5. Let us, according to the apostle's advice, 'Give diligence to make our calling and election sure.' It is certainly a very great privilege for us, not merely to know that some were chosen to eternal life, but to be able to conclude that we are of that happy number. In order to this, we must not expect to have an extraordinary revelation, or to find ourselves described by name in scripture. The rule by which we are to judge of this matter, is our inquiring whether we have those marks or evidences of being elected which scripture exhibits. Hence, we are, by a diligent and impartial self-examination, to endeavour to know whether we are called or enabled to perform the obedience of faith, which God is said to elect his people to; whether we are holy and without blame before him in love; whether we have the temper and disposition of the children of God, as evidence of our being chosen to the adoption of children; and whether, as such, we are conformed to the image of Christ.

6. If we have ground to conclude that we are chosen to eternal life, we ought to improve this to the glory of God, and our own spiritual advantage. It ought to put us upon admiring and adoring the riches of discriminating grace; and it also imposes upon his people the highest obligation to walk humbly with God, as well as thankfully. It is owing to his grace not only that they are chosen to eternal life, but that they are enabled to discern their interest in this privilege.

[NOTE 2 U. The Foreknowledge of God.—If we view the divine foreknowledge in the light simply of prescience or prevision, it ought not to be distinguished, as to its own nature, from the divine knowledge. What intrinsic difference—what difference as respects the Deity himself—can there be between knowing and foreknowing? There is none. The difference has reference only to the creature—to those distinctions of time which apply only to what is created—or to our analytical method of comprehending any matter relating to Deity by its practical manifestation. Whatever God knows now, he knew from eternity. There is no change, no succession of ideas, no capability of enlargement or modification, in his knowledge. When predicated of him in eternity, and when predicated of him now, it is strictly the same. We think of the divine omniscience surveying things as present, and call it knowledge; we think of that omniscience surveying the same things as future, and call it foreknowledge. The distinction, so far as there is one, exists solely in our own minds, in our method of comprehension; and has no reference to the omniscience itself, which, view it as we will and name it as we may, is, in all respects, one.

But scripture very often uses the word knowledge, as applied to God, in a widely different sense from that of omniscience,—in a sense implying agency, love, approbation. What God approves, he is, in this sense, said to know; and what he disapproves, he is, in the same sense, said not to know. Multitudes of texts might be quoted which speak of his knowledge of approbation, and which cannot be construed to speak simply of his omniscience; but the few which Dr. Ridgeley mentions, are sufficient as a specimen. Now, as there is perfect identity between God's knowledge of intelligence, and his foreknowledge of intelligence; so there seems perfect identity between his knowledge of approbation, and his foreknowledge of approbation. Whatever he approves now, he approved from eternity;

whatever he recognises with complacency in the course of time, he recognised with complacency before the foundation of the world. All things, which are the objects of his approving knowledge now, were the objects of his eternal approving foreknowledge.

Now knowledge, in the sense of approbation, has reference to all God's own works,—to all things which arise from his own immediate agency. He contemplates these, when they are done, and pronounces them 'very good;' and he contemplated them when yet future, and pronounced them to be what he had resolved to make them, and what they actually became. All his own works are marked by infinite wisdom, holiness, and beneficence; and all are necessarily known to him with the knowledge of approbation or complacency. But to approve, supposes an object to be approved; and an object to be approved, as regards the Creator of all things, supposes something to be created, something to be performed, or a purpose to create or perform it. All objects of approbation, all things truly good, all creatures, all manifestations of excellence, are from God himself. The possible existence, the actual production, of all depended wholly on the divine will. God alone is 'the Creator of the ends of the earth;' he is the source of all being, all excellence, all existence and properties which are objects of his divine approbation. What he knows, therefore, in the way of approval or complacency, is necessarily the result of his own purpose,—'the good pleasure of his own will.' Approbation or complacency supposes objects of excellence; objects of excellence suppose divine agency; and divine agency supposes a will or determination in Deity to act. God's knowledge of approbation thus rests, in the order of the fulfilment of events, upon his will or purpose as the source producer, or giver of all good.

But what, when viewed in the light of God's unchangeableness and eternity, is his knowledge of approbation? Is it different in its nature

or in the basis on which it rests, from the same knowledge when viewed as contemplating objects in the course of time? Surely not. There is no distinction of past and present in the approbation, any more than in the intelligence, of the divine mind. His foreknowledge, in the sense of approbation, as truly as in the sense of intelligence, is the same thing as his knowledge. We may easily see, then, the force and beauty of those texts which speak of the foreknowledge of God. Peter describes believers as 'elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.' They were elect, not as contemplated in the light of persons possessing worth or performing obedience of their own, but as contemplated in the light of objects of God's sovereign love,—objects of the impartation from himself of all the excellence which they possess,—objects which his own purpose had resolved to bless with his influences and complacency. Paul says, 'God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.' They were God's people in fulfilment of his purpose to make them such; his people, whom, in virtue of his determination to create them anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, he regarded with an everlasting love. The same apostle says, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Calling and justifying, in the order of occurrence, precede practical Christianity, personal holiness, the actual living character of spiritual children, or 'conformity to the image of God's Son.' Predestination to the last therefore, cannot rest on prescience or prevision of calling and justification. But whom God foreknew—whom he regarded as 'his own workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which he before ordained that they should walk in them'—whom he contemplated with everlasting love as objects destined to receive from him the saving influences of his grace and beautifying

impartations of excellence—them he predestinated to personal holiness, calling, justification, and glory.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 V. Election in Christ.—Dr. Ridgeley says, 'We are not to suppose that the apostle intends by our being "chosen in Christ," that we are chosen for the sake of Christ, as though any of his mediatorial acts were the ground or reason of our being chosen.' What he means, as may be inferred from his illustration, is, that the work of Christ did not 'purchase' election, or that the love and grace of God which election displays are free and sovereign. Now it is assuredly true that election, or the divine love which it manifests, was unpurchased and unpurchaseable,—that the grace of God is free, sovereign, unconditional. But the execution of the purpose of election, no less truly than the purpose itself, is unpurchased and free. 'Election,' says Dr. Ridgeley, 'is an act of sovereign grace.' But so is justification,—so is the work of the Divine Spirit in the heart,—so is the entire execution of the purpose of sovereign love. No blessing was purchased: every blessing flows from the free love, the absolute mercy and grace of God. What Christ purchased was the church. He redeemed, not blessings, but persons: he bought, not pardon and peace and glory, but the souls and bodies of his people. So far as freeness or absoluteness is concerned, the actual bestowal of a blessing, and the divine purpose to bestow it, are the same in character. We judge—as Dr. Ridgeley frequently and with justice remarks—we judge of the purpose of God by its execution; and we call the purpose of election unconditional of any merit in man, just because we find the execution of it unconditional of any merit in man. But its intrinsic sovereignty—its being altogether unconditional as respects man—is a totally different matter from its having no reference to the work of Christ. What our Lord's redemptional work accomplished, was not the purchase of the divine love or the purchase of salvation, but the magnifying of the divine law and the

making of it honourable,—the rendering of it a right and holy act on the part of God to pardon the guilty,—the substitutionary enduring of the curse of the law, and the consequent purchase of the souls of men from the captivity of guilt and sin. Justification is based upon the atonement, not because the atonement purchased it, or purchased the grace displayed in it, but because it vindicated and manifested the moral glory of the divine justice and holiness in giving pardon to the sinner. Christ is made of God unto us justification, not because his redemptional work 'moved God to mercy'—for the divine mercy is absolute—but because 'he became the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth.' Now, where is the difference between the purpose of election and the execution of the purpose? They are alike distinguished, on the one hand, by freeness, unpurchasedness, absoluteness; and have they not, on the other, a corresponding sameness of connexion with the work of the Redeemer?

Election, view it as we may, is election to salvation; and salvation implies a Saviour. It is vain to institute metaphysical distinctions respecting 'the order of thought,' or 'the order of nature;' and to debate what, in the scheme of redemption, is to be considered as an end, and what as a means, and whether the end or the means hold prior place in the divine purpose. The only 'order' of which the nature of the case or the statements of scripture admit a conception, or which can tend to aid our comprehension, is the order of occurrence—the order in which the purpose is developed and executed. In reference to the plan of mercy, we speak of the divine purposes in the plural number, only to aid our conceptions of the numerous objects to which one undivided purpose of the divine mind referred. A luminous, and, in general, remarkably correct writer, who maintains the same view as Dr. Ridgeley, justly says: 'In the divine mind there is no succession of thoughts;' and he implies that the

purpose respecting the scheme of redemption, though multiform in its development or execution, was intrinsically one. (See Lectures on Theology, by the late Rev. John Dick, D D. Lect. xxxv.) Why, then, should election and the work of Christ, or the purpose relating to salvation, and the purpose relating to the Saviour, be viewed apart? Scripture appears to connect the one with the other so closely, so identically, that, to separate them on its warrant, would seem as hopeless as to separate the work of Christ from the execution of election.—Believers were 'chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having been predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his grace, wherein he hath made them accepted in the Beloved,' Eph. 1:4, 6. 'They are elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,' 1 Pet. 1:2. They were 'predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren,' Rom. 8:29. They are 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them,' Eph. 2:10. Any person fond of making arbitrary distinctions, might, on the authority of these texts, assert just the opposite of Dr. Ridgeley's view; and say that, instead of the work of Christ presupposing election, election presupposes the work of Christ. Union to the Saviour, sprinkling of atoning blood, justification, adoption, obedience, good works, sanctification, conformity to the image of Christ, are the results on which the purpose of election expatiates; and all of them imply, or, as a framer of distinctions might assert, they all presuppose, the appointment, offices, and work of the Redeemer. It is enough, however, that we view the purpose respecting salvation, and the purpose respecting the Saviour, as one and inseparable. Just as the Saviour and salvation are regarded in the execution of the purpose, so let them be

regarded in the purpose itself. Then, freed from the confusion of an unwarrantable or a useless distinction, and contemplating election in Christ with a reference to its practical influence on the heart, believers will say with the apostle Paul, 'God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,' 2 Tim. 1:9.

Dr. Ridgeley does not sanction the distinction, which he mentions as made by many writers, between Christ as the Head of the elect, and Christ as their Redeemer. He had good reason to doubt its soundness; yet, in rejecting it, he virtually abandons his doctrine as to the connexion between the purpose of election and the work of Christ. There must be some sense in which believers were 'chosen in Christ,'—some sense in which they are saved 'according to God's own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began.' Persons who deny that they were 'chosen in Christ' as the Redeemer or Mediator, are obliged to assert that they were chosen in him as their federal head. Yet, as Dr. Ridgeley hints, there is good reason to believe that Christ is, in any sense, Head only and strictly as Mediator. All the passages, with one exception, which speak of him as the Head, assert him to sustain that character in relation to his redeemed church, and in immediate connexion with his redemptional work. The one exception is the passage which says, 'Ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power' (Col. 2:10.); and this—which, at first sight, might seem to assert no connexion with Mediatorship, and even to sanction the theory of those who talk of Christ's influences as Head being more extensive than his influences as Mediator—is fully explained by a strictly parallel passage, which not only identifies the Headship over all principality and power with Christ's Mediatorial relation to the church, but even represents it as arising out of the completion of his

redemptional work on earth: 'The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," Eph. 1:19–23.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 W. The Necessity of the Divine Purpose.—What Dr. Ridgeley says respecting the purpose of God being necessary, so far as it has truth or meaning, is just a repetition of what he had said, in a previous section, respecting the unchangeableness of the divine purpose. As to 'the purpose of God rendering things necessary which are in themselves contingent and arbitrary,' the statement is utterly unwarrantable, and assumes a fiction or impossibility. There is no contingency as regards God, no contingency 'in things themselves,' no possibility of objects coming into existence apart from the divine will and power. That objects are in any sense things, that they can exist at all, that they possess even the contingency or possibility of existing, and not merely that they shall necessarily exist, depends solely on the will of God. Contingency or arbitrariness has reference only to the limited knowledge and dependent will of man.

Dr. Ridgeley's distinction between the determining and the powerful will of God, if not unmeaning, is at least unnecessary and bewildering. By God's will as to a future event, we mean his purpose; and by his power in effecting the event, we mean the execution of his purpose. But to call the former the determining will of God, and the latter his powerful will, only parades an apparent learnedness of

phrase, and produces confusion or obscureness in the conceptions of a plain mind.

Dr. Ridgeley's corresponding distinction between 'the purpose of God as the internal moving cause of salvation,' and 'the power of God as the immediate cause of it,' is still more objectionable. Either the distinction, like a thousand others borrowed from the schoolmen, is sheer jargon; or, if it have a meaning, it is unaccordant with the view everywhere given in scripture of the moral basis of salvation. Indeed, to speak of causes in the plural number, when the one agency of Deity is designated, or to represent various divine attributes as so many various causes, when one result of divine acting is accounted for, is utterly inconsistent with correct notions either of Deity, of divine agency, or of causation. Salvation ought, without any distribution of causes, to be ascribed simply to God; or if viewed as the result of any special mode of divine acting or manifestation, it must be ascribed to God's love, his free mercy, his beneficent grace, the good pleasure of his own will and goodness.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 X. Divine Sovereignty and Equity.—'The purpose of God, in passing by a part of mankind.' must not, as Dr. Ridgeley teaches, 'be considered either as the result of his sovereign pleasure, or as an act of justice,' but must be viewed as based purely and entirely on divine equity. When God wills to save man, to bestow blessings on the creature, to bring salvation to the guilty, he acts altogether unconditionally, or according to his own good pleasure; but when he wills to withhold any boon of his favour, or to inflict any privation, any suffering, any punishment, he acts strictly with regard to the sufferer's desert. Toward those who are blessed by him, his dispensations are all pervaded by sovereignty; and toward those who are abandoned or afflicted, his dispensations are all pervaded by equity. 'Behold,' says the apostle, 'the goodness and the severity of

God.' χρηστοτητα κκι αποτομιαν Θεου, the essential or sovereign beneficence of God, and 'cutting off' by him, or his withholding of blessings and inflicting of punishment; 'on them which fell severity, but toward thee,' who standest, 'goodness,' Rom. 11:22.

God's 'denying the means of grace,' or 'denying any blessing,' is hardly a suitable phrase. Persons from whom blessings are withheld neither ask nor desire them: they, in fact, despise them, or regard them with dislike or repugnance, or cherish inclinations and practise superstitions of a contrary and antagonistic element. Blessings are not denied; they are only not bestowed, because unmerited, undesired, and disliked. The withholding of them in all cases from guilty and depraved man would have been simply equitable,—not an act of sovereignty, but an act of man's deserving; and the withholding of them from a part of mankind, is not changed in character by the sovereign bestowal of them on another part. That God gives blessings to some men, is just because 'it seems good in his sight;' but that he withholds them from others, is because the parties have forfeited them by their sins, and incurred his righteous displeasure. Equity alone has to do with the will or dispensation of privation or punishment; and sovereignty has to do simply with the positive bestowment of unmerited good.—ED.]

THE WORK OF CREATION

QUESTION XIV. How doth God execute his decrees?

ANSWER. God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will.

QUESTION XV. What is the work of creation?

ANSWER. The work of creation is that, wherein God did, in the beginning, by the word of his power, make, of nothing, the world, and all things therein, for himself, within the space of six days, and all very good.

HAVING considered God's eternal purpose, as respecting whatever shall come to pass, which is generally called an internal or immanent act of the divine will, we are now to consider those works which are produced by him in pursuance of it. It is inconsistent with the idea of an infinitely perfect Being, to suppose that any of his decrees shall not take effect. 'Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' 'His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.'e This is a necessary consequence from the immutability of his will, as well as from the end which he has designed to attain, namely, the advancement of his own glory. If he should not execute his decrees, he would lose that revenue of glory which he designed to bring to himself. But this it cannot be supposed that he would do. Accordingly we are to consider his power as exerted, in order to the accomplishment of his purpose. This is said to have been done in the first production of all things, which is called the work of creation, or

in his upholding and governing all things, which is his providence. Both these are to be particularly considered.

We shall first speak concerning the work of creation; and inquire what we are to understand by creation, and consider it as a work peculiar to God. Secondly, We shall show that this work was not performed from eternity, but in the beginning of time. Thirdly, We shall inquire how God is said to create all things by the word of his power. Fourthly, We shall consider the end for which he made them, namely, for himself, or for his own glory. Fifthly, We shall consider the time in which he made them. Lastly, We shall inquire into the quality or condition of creation, as all things are said to have been made very good.

The Meaning of the word 'Creation'

It is the application of the word 'creation' to the things made, or some circumstances attending this action, that determine the sense of it. The Hebrew and Greek words by which it is expressed, are sometimes used to signify the natural production of things. Thus it is said, 'The people that shall be created,' speaking of the generation to come, 'shall praise the Lord.'g Elsewhere, God says, 'I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created,' that is, where thou wast born, in the land of thy nativity. Sometimes the word is used to signify the dispensations of providence, which, though they are the wonderful effects of divine power, yet are taken in a sense different from the first production of all things. Thus it is said, 'I form the light, and create darkness;'i metaphorical expressions which are explained in the following words, 'I make peace, and create evil.' On the other hand, God's creating is sometimes expressed by his 'making all things.' The word 'make,' in its common acceptation, is taken for the natural production of things; though, in this instance, it is used for

the production of things which are supernatural. Thus it is said, 'All things were made by him;' and again, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.'l It is thus by the application of these words to the things produced, that we are more especially to judge of the sense of them. Accordingly, when God is said to create or make the heavens and earth, or to bring things into being which before did not exist, this is the most proper sense of the word 'creation.' In this sense we understand it, in the head we are entering upon. It is the production of all things out of nothing by his almighty word. This is generally called immediate creation; and was the first display of divine power, a work with which time began. So we are to understand these words, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;' that is, that first matter out of which all things were formed, which has been neither increased nor diminished ever since, nor can be, whatever alterations there may be made in things, without supposing, which we have no ground to do, that there may be an act of the divine will to annihilate any part of it.

Again, creation is sometimes taken for God's bringing things into that form in which they are. This is generally called a mediate creation, as in the account we have of it in the first chapter of Genesis. There God is said, out of that matter which he created at first, to create the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all living creatures which move therein, after their respective kinds. This no finite wisdom or power could have done. The work was supernatural, and so differs from the natural production of things by creatures. They can produce nothing, but out of other things which have in themselves a tendency, according to the fixed laws of nature, to be made that which is designed to be produced out of them. When a plant or a tree is produced out of a seed, or when the form or shape of things is altered by the skill of men, there is a tendency in the

things themselves, in a natural way, to answer the end designed by those who made them. In this respect men are said to make, but not create those things. Creation, therefore, is a work peculiar to God, from which all creatures are excluded. Accordingly, it is a glory which God often appropriates to himself in scripture. Thus he is called, by way of eminence, 'The Creator of the ends of the earth.' And he says concerning himself, with an unparalleled magnificence of expression, 'I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched cut the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.'o He is said, also, to have done this exclusively of all others. Thus he says, 'I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' Indeed, it cannot be otherwise, since creation is a work of infinite power. It is hence too great for any finite being, who can act no otherwise but in proportion to the circumscribed limits of its own power, and who, at best but a natural agent, cannot produce anything supernatural. We may infer, therefore, that no creature was an instrument made use of by God in the production of all things, or that infinite power could not be exerted by a finite medium. But this has been already considered under a foregoing answer.

Creation not Eternal

We are now to consider, that the work of creation was not performed from eternity, but in the beginning of time. This we assert against some of the heathen philosophers, who have, in their writings, defended the eternity of the world.r They were induced to do so by the low conceptions which they had of the power of God, supposing that because all creatures or natural agents must have some materials to work upon, and that, with respect to them, nothing can be made out of nothing, the same principles must be viewed as applicable to God. This absurd opinion has been imbibed by some

who have pretended to the Christian name. It was maintained by Hermogenes about the middle of the second century, and, with a great deal of spirit and argument, opposed by Tertullian. Among other things, that Father observes, that philosophy, in some respects, had paved the way to heresy. Probably the apostle Paul was apprehensive that philosophy would have this tendency, or that they who were bred up in the schools of the philosophers would—as it is plain they often did, especially on the subject of creation—adapt their notions in divinity to those which they had learned in the schools; and therefore he says, 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.'t They who have defended the heathen notion repecting creation, have been divided in their sentiments about it. Some suppose, in general, that matter was eternal, but not brought into that form in which it now is, till God, by his almighty power, produced a change in it, and so altered the form of things. Others suppose that the world was in a form not much unlike to what it now is from eternity, and that there were eternal successive ages and generations of men, and a constant alteration of things,—some parts of the world at one time destroyed by deluges or fire or earthquakes, and other parts at another time; and so that there was a kind of succession of generation and corruption,—former worlds lost and buried in ruins, all the monuments of their antiquity perishing with them, and new ones arising in their stead. This they assert as a blind to their ungrounded opinion, and as an answer to the reasonable demand which might be made. If the world was eternal, how comes it to pass that we know nothing of what was done in it in those ages which, went before that which we reckon the beginning of time?

As to the schoolmen, though none of them have directly adopted this notion, which is so notoriously contrary to scripture, yet some have

very much confounded and puzzled the minds of men with their metaphysical subtilties on the subject of creation. Some have pretended to maintain that, though God did not actually create anything before that beginning of time which is mentioned in scripture, yet that he might, had he pleased, have produced things from eternity, because he had from eternity infinite power and a sovereign will. This power, they say, might have been deduced into act, and so there might have been an eternal production of things; for to suppose that infinite power cannot exert itself, is contrary to the idea of its being infinite. To suppose, also, that God was infinitely good from eternity, implies that he might have communicated being to creatures from eternity, in which his goodness would have exerted itself. They farther argue, that it is certain that God might have created the world sooner than he did; so that, instead of its having continued in being the number of years which it has done, it might have existed any other unlimited number of years, or since, by an act of his will, it has existed so many thousand years as it appears from scripture to have done, it might, had he pleased, have existed any other number of years, though we suppose it never so large, and consequently that it might have existed from eternity. But what is this, but to darken truth by words without knowledge, or to measure the perfections of God by the line or standard of finite things? It is to conceive of the eternity of God, as though it were successive. Hence, though we do not deny that God could have created the world any number of years which a finite mind can describe sooner than he did; yet this would not be to create it from eternity, since that exceeds all bounds. We do not deny that the divine power might have been deduced into act, or created the world before he did; yet to say that he could create it from eternity, is contrary to the nature of things,— it is to suppose, that an infinite duration might be communicated to a finite being, or that God might make a creature equal, in duration, with himself. This notion involves the greatest absurdity; and the

impossibility of the thing does not, in the least, argue any defect of power in him.

We may hence infer the vanity and bold presumption of measuring the power of God by the line of the creature, and the great advantage which we receive from divine revelation, which sets this matter in a clear light, and from which it appears that nothing existed before time but God. This is agreeable to the highest reason, and the divine perfections. But to suppose that a creature existed from eternity, implies a contradiction. To be a creature, is to be produced by the power of a Creator, who is God; and this is inconsistent with the supposition of its existing from eternity, a supposition which represents it as having a being before it was brought into being. Moreover, since to exist from eternity is to have an infinite or unlimited duration, it follows that if the first matter, out of which all things were formed, was infinite in its duration, it must have all other perfections; particularly, it must be self-existent, and have in it nothing that is finite, for infinite and finite perfections are inconsistent with each other; and, if so, then it must not consist of any parts, or be divisible, as all material things are. Besides, if the world was eternal, it could not be measured by successive duration; in as much as there is no term or point, whence this succession may be computed, for that is inconsistent with eternity. And if its duration was once unmeasured, or not computed by succession, how came it afterwards to be successive, as the duration of all material beings is? Again, to suppose matter to be co-eternal with God, is to suppose it to be equal with him; for whatever has one divine perfection, must have all. This theory, therefore, is contrary to those natural ideas which we have of the divine perfections, and contains such absurdities as have not the least colour of reason to support them. But it more evidently appears from scripture, that the world was made in the beginning of time, and therefore did not exist from

eternity. We read there, that 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;' and again, 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.'y Now, since we are not to confound time and eternity together, or to say that that which was created in the beginning was without beginning, that is, from eternity, it is evident, that no creature was eternal.

Having thus considered the impossibility of the existence of finite things from eternity, we may take occasion to vindicate the account we have in scripture, concerning the world's having been created between five and six thousand years since, from the objections of those who suppose that the antiquity of it exceeds the scripture-account by many ages. Those who follow the LXX translation of the Old Testament, in their chronological account of time, suppose the world to be between fourteen and fifteen hundred years older than we have ground to conclude it is, according to the account we have in the Hebrew text. This we cannot but think to be a mistake; and many of the Fathers, through their unacquaintedness with the Hebrew language, have fallen into it; for, excepting Jerome and Origen, they hardly used any but the LXX translation.

This, however, we shall pass over, and proceed to consider the account which some give of the antiquity of the world. This they represent as a great deal more remote than what appears from scripture; and the accounts of it are found principally in the writings of those who were altogether unacquainted with the divine word. Thus the Egyptians, according to the report of some ancient historians, pretended that they had chronicles of the reigns of their kings for many thousands of years longer than we have ground to conclude the world has stood. The Chaldeans exceed them in the accounts they give of some things contained in their history; and the

Chinese pretend to exceed the Chaldeans by many thousand years. But these accounts are fabulous and ungrounded.c They are confuted and exposed by many of the heathen themselves, as ridiculous and absurd boasts, rather than authentic accounts; and no one, who has the least degree of modesty, can oppose them to the account we have in scripture of the time that the world has continued, which is no more than between five or six thousand years.

That the world cannot be of greater antiquity than this, may be proved from the account which we have, in scripture and other writings, of the origin of nations, and the inventors of things. It is not reasonable to suppose, that men lived in the world many thousand years, without the knowledge of those things which were necessary for the improvement of their minds, and of other things which were conducive to the good of human society, as well as subservient to the conveniencies of life; but this they must have done, if they lived before these things were known in the world. As to the origin of nations, which spread themselves over the earth after the universal deluge, we have an account of it in Gen. 10. We have there, in particular, an account of the first rise of the Assyrian monarchy; which was erected by Nimrod, who is supposed to be the same whom other writers call Belus. This monarchy was continued, either under the name of the Assyrian, or under that of the Babylonian, till Cyrus' time; and no writers pretend that there was any before it. According to the scripture-account of it, it was erected above seventeen hundred years after the creation of the world. Now if the world had been so old as some pretend, or had exceeded the scripture-account of its age and duration, we should certainly have had some authentic relation of the civil affairs of kingdoms and nations, in those foregoing ages. Here, however, history is altogether silent; for we suppose that the account which the Egyptians give of their dynasties, and the reigns of their gods and kings, in those foregoing ages, are, as

was before observed, ungrounded and fabulous. As to the inventors of things which are necessary in human life, we have some hints in scripture. We have there an account of the first who made any considerable improvement in the art of husbandry and the management of cattle; and of the first instructor of every artificer in brass and iron, by whose art those tools were framed which are necessary for the making of things that are useful in life; and also of the first inventor of music, who is called, 'The father of all such as handle the harp and organ.' All these lived in that space of time which intervened between the creation and the deluge. After this, we read, in the history of Noah, of the first plantation of vineyards, and the farther improvement of these by making wine,e which the world seems to have known nothing of before. It is more than probable also, that the art of navigation was not known, till Noah, by divine direction, framed the ark. This gave the first hint to this useful invention; which was not, for many ages, so much improved as it is in our day. The mariner's needle, and the variation of the compass, or the method of sailing by observation of the heavenly bodies, seem to have been altogether unknown by those mariners in whose ship the apostle Paul sailed; for want of which they exposed themselves to suffer shipwreck, hoping thereby to save their lives. As to those inventions which are necessary for the improvement of knowledge, it does not appear that writing was known till Moses' time; and after this, the use of letters was brought into Greece by Cadmus. It is hence no wonder that when historians unacquainted with scripture history give some dark hints of things done before this, they are at a loss, and pretend not to give an account of things done before the deluge.g Shall we suppose, that there were so many ages as some pretend in which men lived, while they who say so give no account of things done in those ages, to be transmitted to posterity? There hence can be no ground to conclude, that the world has stood longer than the scripture-account states. We pass by the invention of the art

of printing, which has not been known in the world above three hundred years, and the many improvements which have been made in philosophy, mathematics, medicine, anatomy, chemistry, and mechanics, in the last age; and can we suppose that so many thousand ages have passed without any of these improvements? We may look, too, at the origin of idolatry among those who worshipped men, whom they called gods, that is, such persons as had been useful while they lived, or had been of great note or power in the world, or who were the first inventors of things. This being known, and the time in which they lived mentioned by some writers among the heathen as much later than the first age of the world, is a farther evidence that the earth has not stood so many years as some pretend.

It may be objected, that there has been a kind of circulation or revolution of things, with respect to men's knowing and afterwards losing, and then regaining the knowledge of some of those arts which we suppose to have been first discovered in later ages, so that they might have been known in the world many ages before. But this is to assert, without pretending to give any proof. Nothing can be inferred from a mere possibility of things, and no one who has the least degree of judgment will acquiesce in such an inference. The memory of some things, too, could never have been universally erased from the minds of men, by any devastations which might be supposed to have been made in the world. We conclude, therefore, that nothing can be reasonably objected against the account we have in scripture, of the creation of the world at first, and of its having continued that number of years, and no longer, which we believe it to have done; our belief being founded on those sacred writings which contain the only authentic records of it, and which possess sufficient authority to put to silence all those fabulous conjectures, or vain and groundless boasts, which pretend to contradict it.

Creation effected by the Word of God's Power

God is said to have created all things by the word of his power. Thus the psalmist says, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.' Some, indeed, understand this, and several other scriptures in which God is said to create all things by his word, as implying that God the Father made all things by the Son, his personal Word. This indeed is a great truth; it is expressly ascribed in such terms as these, 'All things were made by him;'k and, as was considered under a foregoing Answer, it directly proves the divinity of Christ. Here, however, we speak of creation, as it is an effect of that power which is a perfection of the divine nature. This being called 'the word of his power,' signifies that God produced all things by an act of his power and sovereign will; so that how difficult soever the work was in itself, as infinitely superior to finite power, yet it was performed by God without any manner of difficulty. The work was as easy to him as a thought, or an act of will, is to any creature. Accordingly it is said, 'He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.'m As nothing could resist his will, or hinder his purpose from taking effect, so all things were equally possible to him. In this respect, creation differs from the natural production of things. Though things of natural production are the effects of power, yet nothing is produced by a powerful word, or, as it were, commanded into being, but that which is the effect of almighty power, as the creation of all things is said to be.

Creation made for the Divine Glory

The end for which God made all things, was his own glory. It is said, 'He made all things for himself;' that is, that he might demonstrate his eternal power and Godhead, and all those divine perfections which shine forth in this illustrious work, and so might receive a

revenue of glory as the result. Not that he was under any natural necessity to do this, or would have been less happy and glorious in himself, than he was from all eternity, if he had not given being to any thing. We are far from supposing that there is any addition made hereby to his essential glory. This appears from the independence of his divine perfections. As they are not derived from the creature, so they cannot receive any additional improvement from him. The lustre of the sun is not increased by its being beheld by our eyes; nor does it sustain any real diminution, when its brightness is obscured by the interposition of any thing which hides it from us. God made the world, not that his power or wisdom might be improved by it, but that he might be admired and adored, or that his relative glory might be advanced by us, which would be the highest advantage to us. This was the great end for which he made all things. Accordingly, the whole scope and design of scripture puts us upon giving him the glory due to his name; and incites to this by all the displays of his glory in his works.

It is, hence, a very unbecoming way of speaking, and tends very much to detract from the divine perfections, to say as a judicious writer represents some as objecting, "that God is not so selfish, and desirous of glory, as to make the world, and all creatures therein, only for his own honour, and to be praised by men." Another writerp speaks his own sense of this matter, in words no less shocking. He says, indeed, "that God cannot really suffer any diminution of his own by our dislike, or is advanced in honour by our approbation of his dispensations;" which, as it respects his essential glory, is an undoubted truth. Yet he speaks, in other respects, of the glory of God,—by which it is plain, he means that which is generally called his relative or manifestative glory,—in a very unbecoming manner. He says, "God, being infinitely perfect, must be infinitely happy within himself, and so can design no self-end without himself; therefore

what other end can he be supposed to aim at in these things, but our good? It is therefore a vain imagination, that the great design of any of God's actions, his glorious works and dispensations, should be thus to be admired, or applauded, by his worthless creatures, that he may gain esteem, or a good word, from such vile creatures as we are. We take too much upon us, if we imagine that the all-wise God can be concerned whether such blind creatures as we are approve or disapprove of his proceedings; and we think too meanly of, and detract from his great Majesty, if we conceive that he can be delighted with our applause, or aim at reputation from us in his glorious design, that therefore such as we should think well of him, or have due apprehensions of those attributes, by the acknowledgment of which we are said to glorify him." This is completely to divest him of all that glory which he designed from his works. But far be it from us to approve of any such modes of speaking. Though God did not make anything with a design to render himself more glorious than he was from all eternity, yet he made all things that his creatures might behold and improve the displays of his divine perfections, and so render himself the object of desire and delight, that religious worship might be excited, and that we might ascribe to him the glory which is due to his name.

We might observe also, that God created all things by his power, that he might take occasion to set forth the glory of all his other perfections, in his works of providence and grace, and particularly in the work of our redemption, all which suppose the creature brought into being. Hence his first work made way for all others, which are or shall be performed by him in time, or throughout the ages of eternity.

The Work of the Six days of Creation

We are now to consider the space of time, in which God created all things, namely, in six days. This could not have been determined by the light of nature, and therefore must be concluded to be a doctrine of pure revelation; as also the account we have, in Gen. 1, of the order in which things were brought to perfection, or the work of each day. [See note 2 Y, p. 337.] Here we cannot but take notice of the opinion of some who suppose that the world was created in an instant. They think, that this is more agreeable to the idea of creation, and more plainly distinguishes it from the natural production of things, which are brought to perfection by degrees, and not in a moment, as they suppose this work was. This opinion has been advanced by some ancient writers. And as it seems directly to contradict that account which is given by Moses, they suppose that the distribution of the work of creation into six days, is designed only to lead us into the knowledge of the distinct parts of the work, whereby they may be better conceived of, as though they had been made in the order described one after another. But this is to make the scripture speak what men please to have it, without any regard to the genuine sense and import of its words. Had it been asserted only that the first matter out of which all things were formed, was created in an instant, the assertion would correspond not only with the proper notion of the work of creation, but with the literal sense of the text; for the world is said to have been created 'in the beginning,' that is, in the first point of time. Or if it had been said only that God could have brought all things to perfection in an instant, we would not have denied it. But to assert that he did so, we cannot but think an ill-grounded sense of a plain part of scripture. That which induces persons to maintain this opinion is, that they think it redounds to the glory of God, and seems most agreeable to a supernatural production of things, and to those expressions by which the work of creation is represented. In the scripture formerly quoted, for example, it is said, 'God spake, and it was done;' and that, say they, which is produced

by a word's speaking, is performed in an instant. They suppose, that their notion is agreeable to the account which we have of that change which shall pass on the bodies of those who shall be found alive at the last day, which shall take place 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye;' and to some other miracles and supernatural productions, which have been instantaneous. But all this is not sufficient to support their opinion: which cannot be defended otherwise than by supposing that the express words of scripture must be understood in an allegorical sense.

There is, therefore, another account given of this matter, by some divines of very considerable worth and judgment, which, as they apprehend, concedes as much as needs be demanded in favour of the instantaneous production of things, as most agreeable to the idea of creation, and yet does not militate against the sense of the account given in Gen. 1, and that is, that the distinct parts of the creation were each produced in a moment. They say that, in the work of the first day, for example, the first matter of all things was produced in one moment; and afterwards in the same day, light was produced, in another moment, agreeably to those words, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' and, in another moment, the light was divided from the darkness; and so the work of the first day was finished. In the same manner, they say that, in the other days, in which the works were various, there were distinct acts of the divine will, or words of command given concerning the production of things, which, accordingly, were immediately produced; that there was, in several instances, belonging to the same day's work, an interval between the production of one thing and another; that, particularly, in the sixth day, there was first a word of command given by which beasts and creeping things were formed, and then another word given by which man was created; and that there was an approbation of the former part of this day's work when God said, 'that it was good,' before the

general approbation at the end of the day was given, when 'God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.'t Now there is nothing in this opinion—the main reason and foundation of which has been already stated—which can be much disliked. Nor is it very material whether it be defended or opposed. I think they speak with the greatest prudence, as well as temper, who reckon this among the number of those questions, which are generally called problematical, that is, such as may be either affirmed or denied, without any great danger of departing from the faith. Indeed, I cannot see that the reasons assigned, which induce persons to adhere to either side of the question with so much warmth as to be impatient of contradiction, are sufficiently conclusive. The main objection brought against their opinion who plead for an instantaneous production of things in each day, is, that for God to bring the work of each day to perfection in a moment, and afterwards not to begin the work of the next day till the respective day began, infers God's resting each day from his work; while he is not said to rest till the whole creation was brought to perfection. But I cannot see this to be a just consequence, or sufficient to overthrow the opinion. God's resting from his work when the whole was finished, means principally his not producing any new species of creatures, and not merely his ceasing to produce what he had made. Such a rest as the latter might as well be affirmed of his finishing the work of each day on the supposition that he took up the whole space of a day in performing it, as on the supposition that he finished it in a moment.

On the other hand, it is objected against the common opinion relating to God's bringing the work of each day to perfection by degrees, so as to take up the space of a day in doing it, that it is not agreeable to the idea of creation. This, however, is no just way of reasoning, nor sufficient to overthrow the opinion. We generally

conclude, that God's upholding providence, which some call, as it were, a continued creation, is no less an instance of divine and supernatural power than his producing them at first. This is not performed in an instant; yet it is said to be done, 'by the word of his power.' Besides, there are some parts of the creation, which, from the nature of the thing, could hardly be produced in an instant; particularly those works which were performed by motion, which cannot be instantaneous, as the dividing of the light from the darkness, and the gathering of the waters into one place, that the dry land should appear. And if such a work took up more than a moment, why may it not be supposed to have taken up the space of a day? On the whole, therefore, we may conclude, that though it is certain that spirits, such as angels or the souls of our first parents, could not be otherwise created than in an instant, in as much as they are immaterial, and so do not consist of parts successively formed; yet none ought to determine, with too great peremptoriness, that other works, performed in the six days, must each have been performed in an instant, or that otherwise the work of making them could not properly be called a creation. The commonly received opinion seems as probable as any which has hitherto been advanced; for it is equally if not more agreeable to the express words of scripture.

Here we shall give a brief account of the work of the six days, as it is contained in the first chapter of Genesis. In the first day, the first matter out of which all things were produced, was created out of nothing. [See Note 2 Z, page 340.] This is described as being 'without form,' that is, not in that form which God designed to bring it into; for, in other respects, matter cannot be without all manner of form, or those dimensions which are essential to it. And as matter was created without form, so it was without motion. Hence, as God is the Creator of all things, so he is the first Mover. I am far from thinking,

however, that all which God did, in the creation of things, was to put every thing in motion; or that his doing this brought all the parts of the creation into their respective form. As an artificer may be said to frame a machine, which, by its motion, will, without his giving himself any farther trouble, produce other things which he designed to make by the help of it, so some suppose that, by those laws of motion which God impressed upon matter at first, one part of the creation brought another into the various forms which they afterwards attained. The first thing which was produced, and which was a farther part of the six days' work, was light. Concerning this, many have advanced their own ill-grounded conjectures. There are some writers among the Papists who have supposed, that it was a quality without a subject;z which is an obscure and indefensible way of speaking. Others have thought that by light we are to understand the angels. But to adopt this interpretation is to strain the sense of words too far, by having recourse to a metaphor; and it is inconsistent with what immediately follows, that 'God divided the light from the darkness.' It seems most probable that nothing is intended by the light but those lucid bodies which, on the fourth day, were collected into the sun and fixed stars. Let me add, that it is more than probable that God, on the first day, created the highest heaven, which is sometimes called his throne, together with the angels, its glorious inhabitants. Moses, in his history of the creation, it is true, is silent as to this matter; unless it may be inferred from these words, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' But, as was formerly observed, something else seems principally to be intended by the words. Yet we have sufficient ground, from what is said elsewhere, to conclude, that they were created in the beginning of time, and consequently on the first day. 'When God laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' Here the angels are represented as celebrating and adoring those divine perfections which were glorified

in the beginning of the work of creation. We may infer, therefore, that they were, at that time, brought into being.

On the second day, God divided that part of the world which is above, from that which is below, by an extended space. This is styled the firmament; it is also called heaven, though distinguished from the highest heaven, or the heaven of heavens. By this the waters which are above, are separated from those which are below, that is, the clouds from the sea and other waters which are in the bowels of the earth. Some conjecture from this fact, and especially from the words of the psalmist, 'Praise him, ye waters, that are above the heavens,' that there is a vast collection of super-celestial waters, which have no communication with those that are contained in the clouds. This, however, seems to be an ungrounded opinion, not agreeing well with those principles of natural philosophy which are received in the present age, though maintained by some of the ancient Fathers. They found it principally on the sense in which they understand this text; and they do not give a tolerable account of the design of providence in collecting and fixing waters above the heavens.c Nothing, then, seems to be intended in that text, but the waters which are contained in the clouds; as it is said, 'He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds.' Indeed, the Hebrew words seem not to be justly translated;e for they ought to be rendered, 'Ye waters that are from above in the firmament,' not 'above the heavens,' but above the earth, or at a considerable distance from it, in the firmament, as the clouds are.

On the third day, the sea and rivers were divided from the earth, and the dry land appeared; and the earth brought forth herbs, grass, trees, and plants, with which it is so richly stored, and which, in a natural way, it has produced ever since.

On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars, were made, to enlighten, and, by their influence, as it were, to enliven the world, and so render that a beautiful place which, without them, would have been a dismal and uncomfortable dungeon. Hereby also the four seasons of the year were placed in their respective courses, and their due measures set to them. Accordingly, it is said, these heavenly bodies were appointed 'for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years.' Some have inquired, whether any countenance is hereby given to judicial astrology, or whether the heavenly bodies have any influence on the conduct of human life. The affirmative of this some ancient and modern writers have defended, not without advancing many absurdities, derogatory to the glory of providence, as well as contrary to the nature of second causes and their respective effects. When the moral actions of intelligent creatures are said to be pointed at or directed by the stars, the assertion is contrary to the laws of human nature, or the nature of man as a free agent. Whatever be the sense of these words of scripture, it is certain they give no countenance to the presumptuous and ungrounded practice of astrology. This we shall take occasion to oppose, under a following Answer, when we consider judicial astrology as forbidden in the first commandment. All we shall add at present, is, that when the heavenly bodies are said to be appointed 'for times and seasons,' &c. nothing is intended, but that they distinguish the times and seasons of the year; or that, perhaps, in a natural way, they have some present and immediate influence on the bodies of men, and some other creatures below them.

There is another question which generally occurs when persons treat of this subject, namely, whether there are not distinct worlds of men, or other creatures, who inhabit some of those celestial bodies, which by late observations, are supposed to be fitted to receive them. This has been maintained by Keplar, Bishop Wilkins, and other ingenious

writers. That which has principally led them to assert it, is, that some of the heavenly bodies are, as is almost universally allowed, not only larger than this earth, but seem to consist of matter not much unlike to it, and hence, are no less fit to be the abodes of distinct worlds of intelligent creatures. They add, in defence of their argument, that it cannot reasonably be supposed that there should be such a vast collection of matter created with no other design than to add to the small degree of light which the planets, the moon excepted, afford to this lower world. As for any other advantage that they are of to it, farther than as they are objects to set forth the wisdom and power of God, we cannot determine it. They hence conclude that they were formed in order to be inhabited. Some carry their conjectures beyond this, and suppose that, as all the fixed stars are bodies which shine, as the sun does, with their own unborrowed light, and are vastly larger, there is some other use designed by them than that which this world receives from them, namely, to give light to some worlds of creatures which are altogether unknown to us. According to this supposition, there are not only more worlds than ours, but multitudes of them, in proportion to the number of the stars, which are inhabited either by men, or some other species of intelligent creatures; and this theory tends exceedingly, in the opinion of those who entertain it, to advance the power, wisdom, and goodness of the great Creator. The only thing that I shall say concerning it is, that as, on the one hand, the common method of opposition to it is not, in all respects, sufficient to overthrow the argument in general, especially when men pretend not to determine what kinds of intelligent creatures inhabit these worlds, and when they are not too peremptory in their assertions about this matter; so, on the other hand, when the advocates of the theory defend it with such a warmth as if it were a necessary and important article of faith, and not only assert the possibility, or at least the probability of the truth of it, but speak with as much assurance of it as though it were founded in

scripture, and when they conclude that the heavenly bodies are inhabited by men, and pretend not only to describe the form of some of these worlds, but to give such an account of the inhabitants of them as if they had learned it from one who came down from them, they expose the theory which they defend to contempt, and render it justly exceptionable. But if men do not exceed those due bounds of modesty which should always attend such disquisitions, and distinguish things which are only probable from those which are demonstratively certain, and reckon their theory no other than an ingenious speculation, which may be affirmed or denied in common with some other astronomical or philosophical problems, without considering it as affecting any article of natural or revealed religion, I would not oppose the theory in general, how much soever I would do its particular explanation. When it is brought in, as a matter of debate, to theological schools, and disputed with as much warmth as if it were next to a heresy to deny it, I cannot but express as much dislike to it as any have done who adopt the commonly received opinion.

On the fifth day, creatures endowed with sense, as well as life and motion, were produced, some out of the waters, and some out of the earth mixed with the waters, namely, the fish that were designed to live in the waters, and the winged fowl which were to fly above them.

On the sixth day, all sorts of beasts and creeping things, with which the earth is plentifully furnished, were produced out of it. As there are two words used to set forth the different species of living creatures, as contradistinguished from creeping things, namely, the cattle and the beasts of the earth, it is generally supposed that the terms imply the different sorts of beasts, the tame and the wild; though wild beasts were not, at first, so injurious to mankind as they are now. In the latter part of the day, when this lower world was

brought to perfection, and furnished with every thing necessary for his entertainment, man, for whose sake it was made, was created out of the dust of the ground. This, however, will be more particularly considered in a following Answer.

God having thus produced all things in the order and method stated in scripture, fixed or established the course or laws of nature, whereby the various species of living creatures might be propagated, throughout all succeeding ages, without the interposition of his supernatural power in a continued creation of them. After this, he rested from his work, when he had brought all things to perfection.

Having thus considered the creation, as a work of six days, it may farther be inquired, Whether it can be determined, with any degree of probability, in what time or season of the year all things were created? Some are of opinion, that it was in the spring; because, at that time, the face of the earth is renewed every year, and all things begin to grow and flourish.m Some of the Fathers have assigned as another reason for this opinion, that the Son of God, the second Adam, suffered and rose from the dead, whereby the world was, as it were, renewed, at the same time of the year. But this argument is of no weight. The most probable opinion is, that the world was created at that season of the year, which generally brings all things to perfection, when the fruits of the earth are fully ripe, and the harvest ready to be gathered in. This is about autumn; the earth being then stored with plenty of all things for the support of man and beast. It is not, indeed, very material, whether this point can be determined or not. Yet the opinion I have stated seems to be the more probable that the beginning of the civil year was fixed at that time. Accordingly, 'the feast of ingathering,' which was at this season of the year, is said to be 'in the end of the year.' Now as one year ended, so the other began, at this time; and thus the reckoning continued, till, by a

special providence, the beginning of the year was altered, in commemoration of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. From that time, there was a known distinction among the Jews, between the beginning of the civil and that of the ecclesiastical year. The former was the same as it had been from the beginning of the world, and answers to our month September. It is more than probable, therefore, that the world was created at that season of the year.

The Quality of Creation

We now proceed to consider the quality or condition in which God created all things. They were, at first, pronounced by him 'very good.' It is certain, nothing imperfect can come out of the hand of God; and the goodness of things is their perfection. Every thing which was made, was made exactly agreeable to the idea or platform of it which was laid in the divine mind. All things were good, that is perfect, in their kind; and therefore there was not the least blemish in the work. Every thing was beautiful, as it was the effect of infinite wisdom, as well as almighty power. Whatever blemishes there are now in the creation, which are the consequence of the curse that sin has brought upon it, were not in it at first. To suppose that they were would be a reflection on the Author of creation. There is another matter also, in which the goodness of those things consisted,—they were adapted to show forth the glory of God in an objective way, whereby intelligent creatures might, as in a glass, behold the infinite perfections of the divine nature which shine forth in them.

If any inquire, whether God could have made things more perfect than he did? We may easily reply, that he never acted to the utmost of his power. The perfections of creatures were limited by his will. Yet if any persons pretend to find any flaw or defect of wisdom in the creation of all things, what they allege is no other than a proud and

ignorant cavil, which men, through the corruption of their nature, are disposed to make against the great Creator of all things. They regard not the subserviency of things to answer the most valuable ends, and to advance his glory, who 'in wisdom has made them all.'

In the sense we have stated, the inferior parts of the creation were good. But, if we consider the intelligent part of creation, angels and men, they were good in a higher sense. As there was no moral blemish in the creation, nor propensity or inclination to sin, so these were endowed with a kind of goodness whereby they were fitted to glorify God, in a way agreeable to their superior natures, and to behold and improve those displays of the divine perfections which were visible in all his other works. This leads us to consider what is said concerning them, as the most excellent part of the creation.

[NOTE 2 Y. The Six Days of Creation.—Since Dr. Ridgeley wrote, an opinion has sprung up, and is now extensively propagated, that the six days mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis were epochs, or extended periods. On the supposition that the days were of a literal character, the computation of Archbishop Usher fixes the date of creation four thousand and four years before the Christian era. According to the discoveries and calculations of many modern geologists, however, the age of the world appears to reach far beyond that date. Not a few philosophers, or persons imbued with infidelity, have identified the literal exposition of the six days with the Mosaic narrative itself, and, with great viciousness of reasoning, have constructed, on the discrepancy between the Usherian and the geological computation, an argument against the credibility of the inspired record. There are two ways in which their sophistry is met: either the inferences from geological phenomena are denied; or the literal interpretation of the six days is shown to be inaccurate. If, say those who adopt the former method,—if we saw one of Adam's

bones, we should, according to the reasoning of modern geologists, conclude that it existed originally in a soft fibrous state, and afterwards gradually became cartilage, and finally hardened into its present compact condition; or if we saw one of the trees which first existed, we should, according to the same reasoning, conclude that, on account of its resembling in every respect any tree of its species which has since been produced, it sprang originally from a seed, and vegetated during many years before arriving at maturity; yet we know that the bone of Adam, and we may infer that the original tree of each species, was created, or fixed in its mature condition in an instant. Hence, say they, though the substances termed secondary and tertiary formations, or substances in the earth's structure which are supposed to have been gradually and slowly formed, may as clearly result, in the ordinary course of things, from the operation of the laws of chemistry, as bones and trees result from the processes of ossification and lignification, we may as firmly regard them to have been originally the work of a moment, as the bones of Adam or the parent stock of any species of tree. This reasoning deprives the infidel of his geological data, or shows that they are utterly inapplicable to the purposes of his argument. The other method to which I referred of confronting him, admits the geological data, but demonstrates their perfect accordance with the Mosaic narrative. They who adopt it say that the work of creating the materials of the world, or of making them out of nothing, was 'in the beginning,' or before the 'six days' commenced; and that the work of fashioning them into their eventual or matured form, was properly a work of divine providence, or, as some have expressed it, of continued creation, and extended through six epochs, and accorded in its phenomena with all the real discoveries and sober deductions of geology. The pivot on which the whole of this opinion, and of the arguments connected with it, turns, is the import of the word translated 'day,' in the first chapter of Genesis. We hence think it a

matter of importance to show that the word has, or may have, there the sense of an extended period; and, by showing this, we effectually silence all deductions and vauntings of infidels as to the supposed age of the world.

The phrase, 'The evening and the morning were a day,' occurs six times, and in an uniform manner. That it is to be understood in a sense peculiar to the connexion in which it stands, and not in the sense of a literal day, and a literal evening and morning, appears from those passages in the narrative which speak of the creation of light, and of bodies to divide the night from the day. The evening and the morning, it is said, 'were a day.' Now, though a day can, philosophically speaking, be distinguished apart from the fact of an alternation of light and darkness; yet, not even philosophically, indeed in no sense whatever, can any idea be formed of evening and morning apart from that fact. Evening, or night, understand it as we may, implies the fact of darkness; and morning, or day, as distinguished from night, implies the fact of light. Now, light did not beam upon our world till the period of the first day, or first evening and morning was in progress. 'And God said. Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.' If it be said that the mere pouring of light upon our world constituted the period of the event 'morning,' and the period preceding it 'evening,' we shall still find difficulty in understanding the morning and evening so constituted in a literal sense, or otherwise than in the sense of an epoch. But what shall be said as to the 'setting of lights in the firmament to divide the day from the night?' Was not this the creation of the means by which literal morning and evening, or diurnal alternation of darkness and light, is produced? Yet this was the work of the fourth 'day.' And God

said. Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night. And God made two great lights; the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.' Now—apart from the exposition of the passage, as to its meaning the actual or the relative creation of the heavenly bodies, the bringing of them into existence, or, as seems to be the fact, and, at the same time, consistent with the sense of the Hebrew words, the bringing of them into use, as regards our world, and the particular purposes specified—is it not apparent that, understand it as we may, it employs the words 'day' and 'night' in the sense in which they are popularly used,—in the sense which a literal interpretation would impose on the words in the narrative, 'the evening and the morning,'—in a sense, therefore, altogether different from that of the word 'day,' in the phrase, 'the evening and the morning were a day?' Three of such 'days' as this phrase designates had transpired before the epoch of diurnal alternation between light and darkness, or division into 'day and night,' or literal 'evening and morning,' began. What inference can we draw hence, but that 'the day' of 'the evening or morning,' 'the day,' into six of which the period of the narrative is distributed, was not a literal day, but an epoch, or extended period?

The words which we translate, 'the evening and the morning were the first day, may more literally be rendered, 'there was evening and there was morning, one day.' Josephus says concerning them (Antiquities, Book I. chap. 1 sect. 1.): 'This was indeed the first day; but Moses said it was one day. The reason of this I am able to give even now; but, having promised to give such reasons for all things in a separate treatise, I shall put off the exposition of it till then.' He

clearly regarded the phrase, 'one day,' יום אחד, as bearing, in the connexion in which it here occurs, a peculiar and distinguishing sense; for he could not have talked of assigning a reason for it, as of something difficult, or, at least, as of something which was not obvious to every reader, or which required special mention, had he understood the phrase to designate a literal day. The numeral אחד, it is certain, has, in various parts of scripture, the signification or force of 'special' or 'peculiar,'—designating the object which it qualifies to be distinguished, in peculiarity of character, from all others of its kind. One or two instances will serve sufficiently for illustration. 'My dove, my undefiled is one; she is the one of her mother; she is the choice (one) of her that bare her,' Cant. 6:9. 'Then I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and behold, there stood before the river one ram, which had horns; and the horns were high; but the one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last,' Dan. 8:3. 'Thus saith the Lord, An evil, an one evil, is come.' Who can doubt that, in these passages, the qualifying word 'one' has emphatically the sense of 'peculiar' or 'special?' Or who could find fault if, in the light of them, the words of Moses, instead of 'the evening and the morning were the first day,' should be translated, 'the evening and the morning were a peculiar day,'—a day distinct in its character from what the word 'day' usually denominates?

That the word יום is frequently, and, indeed, somewhat currently, used in scripture, to denote a period of considerable, and even of indefinite length, is a matter easy of proof. In the very first instance in which it occurs after the history of the creation, it signifies the entire period of the 'six days.' 'These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord made the earth and the heavens,' Gen. 2:4. In Bildad's description of the calamitous life of a wicked man, it denotes the whole of the active or characteristic portion of a man's lifetime: 'They

that come after him shall be astonied at his day,' Job 18:20. In the song of the Jewish captives, it appears to denote the seventy years of the captivity, or the entire period of calamity over Jerusalem: 'Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof,' Psal. 137:7. In the divine denunciation, through Isaiah, of the Israelites' contempt of God's law, it signifies indefinitely all future time: 'Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the future day, ליום אחרון, for ever and ever; that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord,' Isa. 30:8, 9. In the very numerous passages, in the prophets and elsewhere, in which the phrases 'that day,' 'the day of the Lord,' 'the latter day,' occur in connexion with intimations of the first advent and the mediatorial reign of the Messiah, it usually signifies either the period of prosperity and triumph in the church, or the whole period of the Christian dispensation. But why multiply instances? or why adduce parallel ones from the scriptures of the New Testament? Any person who makes careful inquiry, can hardly fail to be satisfied that epoch, an extended period of unique character, or even a period of indefinite duration, is a frequent scriptural sense of the word 'day.' There is, hence, no difficulty, no departure from the usual rules of exposition, in understanding the word in that sense as it occurs in the history of the creation.

I am aware of only two objections which require any notice. One of these is, that the word 'day,' in the Mosaic narrative, is distinctly defined by 'the evening and the morning,' and determined by them to be the literal solar day. But if the word 'day' itself be used in an epochal sense, the words 'evening' and 'morning' must necessarily be understood in a sense to correspond. Both are frequently employed in scripture, with merely a figurative allusion to the commencement of light or the approach of darkness, to designate considerable

periods; or they are used, with the same allusion as any epochal 'day' with which they correspond, to denote the commencement and the close of such a day. In Job's description of man's mortality, the phrase, 'from morning to evening,' denotes the whole period of a man's lifetime,—'the morning' denoting, by implication, the commencement of life, and 'the evening' its close. 'How much less' doth God put trust 'in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening; they perish for ever, without any regarding it,' Job 4:19, 20. A similar phrase in the prophecies of Daniel appears to be so employed that 'the evening and the morning' denote respectively the commencement and the close of an epochal day, or period of years: 'And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true wherefore, shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days,' Dan. 8:26. In a passage in Ecclesiastes, the words appear, as in the passage in Job, to denote respectively the commencement and the close of the active period of a man's life: 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good,' Eccles. 11:6. In one of the many passages in which 'that day' designates the period of the Christian dispensation, the word 'evening' is so used as to illustrate how the epochal sense of it and that of the word 'day' correspond: 'It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light,' Zech. 14:7. Instances, too, might be quoted of 'evening' or 'morning' being used by itself in the same epochal sense as the word 'day.' We shall quote only two: 'And the coast shall be for the remnant of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening, for the Lord their God shall visit them,' Zeph. 2:7. 'The morning is come unto thee, O thou

that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near,' Ezek. 7:7. Is it not apparent, then, that the sense of the words 'evening' and 'morning' follows the sense of the word 'day;' that when the latter is epochal, so is the former; and that, when 'evening' and 'morning' are, in the epochal sense, correlative with day, the one denotes the commencement, and the other the termination of a period of unique character? What, therefore, could more appropriately denote the commencement and the close of each epochal day of the world's formation—the commencing period of darkness or disorder, as to what was done, and the concluding period of light and maturity, in which it was all 'very good'—than to call them 'the evening and the morning of the day?'

But it is further objected, that 'the seventh day,' in connection with its being the basis of the Sabbatic institution, must have been a literal day; and that, therefore, 'the six days' were also literal or solar days. Now, that the seventh day was the basis of the Sabbatic institution, is clear; but its being so appears to prove, not that the days were literal, but that they were epochal. The Sabbatic institution, it is to be remembered, is simply the institution of sacred rest from labour,—of cessation from secular work and engagement in devotional. Among the Jews, not only every seventh day, but every ecclesiastical seventh month, every seventh year, every cycle of seven times seven years, in fact, every festival, whether of short or long continuance, at near or at remote intervals, was a Sabbath. 'This shall be a statute for ever unto you, that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all; it shall he a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever,' Lev. 16:29, 31. 'I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which, if a man do, he shall even live in them: moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them,' Ezek.

20:11, 12. 'Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a Sabbath unto the Lord. Six years shalt thou sow thy field, and six years shalt thou prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord; thou shall neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. And thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then thou shalt cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; and ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof,' Lev. 25:2–4, 8–10. Now, all the Sabbatic institutions of epochs and cycles of years, to which these and similar passages refer, were founded on the original period of rest from the work of creation, as truly as the Sabbatic institution of the seventh calendar day. The principle of all was a fixed period, whether day, season, year, or remote interval of holy rest, preceded by a longer period of employment in secular labour; and this principle, so general as to apply alike to a seventh day, to an annual period of consecutive days, to a seventh year, and to every year following 'a week of Sabbaths,' seems to be the only one applicable to the blessing of the paradisaic seventh day, as preceded by the six days of creation. The connexion is essentially one of epochs,—an epoch of secular work succeeded by an epoch of sacred rest. Hence even the heavenly state—where the ransomed have 'ceased from their labours, and their works do follow them,' and which is more than once described by allusion to paradise —is called σαββατισμος, the keeping of a Sabbath, Heb. 4:2. Theological writers who understand the original or paradisaic 'seventh day' as a literal day of twenty-four hours, have, in some instances, felt so hard pressed by the inconveniences of their opinion, as to adopt the very questionable conclusion, that our first

parents were tempted and fell on the very next day, or within some thirty-six hours of their creation. But if the original seventh day be understood as epochal—as the period of the world's holy rest, and of its exhibition of all its properties and all its inhabitants as 'very good,' consequent on six preceding epochs of active progressive movement toward maturity—it is seen to be at once the period, whether long or short, of the paradisaic condition, the basis of all the varieties of Sabbatic institutions which were afterwards established, and a fit emblem of the rest of the redeemed in heaven from the labours and scenes of the present life. How graphic, too, on this interpretation, is the Mosaic account of the original seventh day: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended the work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which he had made.' Doubtless, as the fourth commandment instructs us, God blessed and hallowed the literal Sabbath, and did so with special allusion to the basis on which the Sabbatic institution rested: but, in the first instance, he 'blessed and sanctified' the whole paradisaic epoch,—he displayed throughout it his moral glory, his special love, his peculiar favour to man,—he made it all a period of delight and excellence and manifestation of heavenly bliss,—he emphatically 'blessed and sanctified' it as the epoch of the world's sacred rest, and of its being all 'very good.' No violence, then, appears to be done to the connection of the original 'seventh day' with the weekly Sabbath, while due regard is had to its connexion with all seasons of holy rest, with the Sabbatic year, with the cycle of a week of Sabbaths, and with 'the Sabbath-keeping,' the σαββατισμος of the redeemed in heaven, if it be understood to mean the period of the world's beauty and excellence,—the period of the paradisaic state. Arriving at this conclusion, we see, in the character of 'the seventh day,' a direct argument that 'the six days' preceding it were not literal solar days, but epochs or extended periods.—ED.]

[NOTE 2 Z. The Time of Creating out of Nothing.—There is, in the definition of the work of creation, contained in the second of the Answers which Dr. Ridgeley is here discussing, an error which he does not formally notice, and only partially rectifies. The answer says, 'The work of creation is that wherein God did, in the beginning, by the word of his power, make, of nothing, the world and all things therein, for himself, within the space of six days, and all very good.' The Hebrew word translated 'create,' ברא, does not necessarily or always mean, 'to make out of nothing. We learn, however, from a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it has that meaning in the first verse of the Bible: 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear,' Heb. 11:3. Now, the work which consisted in making the heavens and the earth out of nothing, took place, not 'within the space of six days,' but 'in the beginning,' before the peculiar work of even the first day began. Nor were 'all things' made out of nothing, but only 'the heavens and the earth' at that period. Our Bible gives information regarding only our own world; and so far as it refers to other parts of the universe, it mentions them, not in their intrinsic character, but simply in their relation to our earth. When it is stated, as part of the work of the fourth day, that 'God made two great lights; the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night: he made the stars also,' we are not to understand the words as meaning more than that the heavenly bodies were then made subservient to the purposes which the context specifies, or that they then, through a change in the character of our atmosphere, became fully visible from our world, and poured upon its surface their clear, full rays of light. The word translated 'made,' is not the same as that translated 'create;' but one which is often used to signify 'constituted,' 'appointed,' 'adapted to a particular use.' We see its peculiar force in the phrases, 'God made Joseph a father to Pharaoh,' 'made him lord of Egypt,' 'made the

Jordan a border between the tribes,' 'made David the head of the heathen,' and in many others of similar construction. Our Bible, therefore, does not fix the date of the creation of the heavenly bodies; it fixes the date, or rather epoch, of only their being appointed or adapted to serve their appropriate purposes to our world; and it fixes the date of even the creation of our 'earth and heavens,' or of the solid and the aerial parts of our world, only in the general way of placing it prior to the commencement of the six epochs of progression toward maturity.'

But the peculiar work of the six epochs, though not a work of creating out of nothing, but a work of acting on materials which creative power had already brought into being, was truly stupendous and strictly divine. The processes of chemical and electric agency, of vegetation, of organization, and of general physical reproduction, all display the wisdom and power of Deity. Viewed as constantly occurring, they are usually called God's works of providence; and viewed in their origin or primeval exhibition, they are popularly termed his work of creation. Exactly the phenomena which appear 'in the preserving and governing of God's creatures,' constituted the sublime wonders, the stupendous manifestations of divine energy, by which the world arose out of chaos into order and beauty. Suppose the refraction and reflection of the rays of light, the mutual influence of heat, air, earth, and water, the reproduction of inert matter in the germinating vegetable and the moving animal, and the organizing of bodies, and infusing into them the principle of life,—suppose these and other agencies of providence to be suspended; and you exhibit just the converse of what occurred when God progressively converted the chaotic mass into an inhabited and peopled world. All the energies, and influences, and physical phenomena of 'the space of six days,' continue to be constantly displayed; and as truly, in the shining of every day-beam, in the rising of every vapour, in the

growth of every leaf, and in the generation of every insect, as in the events which happened when 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,' they furnish convincing proofs of the Supreme Agent's 'power and Godhead,' and solemn enforcements of his claim to be obeyed and worshipped.

'The making of all things out of nothing,' affords, however, the highest display of the Creator's glory; and is with propriety regarded as properly and alone his work of creation. This work, when correctly viewed, is far more multiform and stupendous, than when erroneously identified with the physical events of 'the space of six days.' Before these days began, God made all the materials of our world; and ever since they ended, he has continued to make millions of glorious objects. 'In the beginning,' before the first day of the six had set in, 'God created the heaven and the earth:' he then made out of nothing, the mass of matter, 'without form and void,' which became the substance of all physical objects,—of the dry land, the sea, the air, the vegetables, the creeping reptile, the winged fowl, and even the body of man. He next made out of nothing the soul of Adam. As regards the origin of the earth and its inhabitants, there were two acts of creation,—one in the beginning, when God made all matter; and one, on the sixth day, when he made the souls of our first parents. Now, let mind and matter be compared, the moral greatness of the former with the inert littleness of the latter, and the eternal durability of the one with the constant changeableness and coming dissolution of the other, and who will say that of the two acts of creation, that of the human soul was not the greater and the more noble? Did not God more wonderfully display his power and Godhead, when he made a moral and immortal mind, than when he made an inert and perishable planet? Yet how many millions of times since has he repeated the more glorious creation! How often does he every day make out of nothing a mind, a life, a soul which bulks more

far in the magnitude of duration, and the magnitude of value, than a thousand of earthly globes!—ED.]

THE CREATION, NATURE, CHARACTER, AND EMPLOYMENT OF ANGELS

QUESTION XVI. How did God create angels?

ANSWER. God created all the angels, spirits, immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, to execute his commandments, and to praise his name, yet subject to change.

THERE are two species of intelligent creatures, namely, angels and men. The former are more excellent. In this Answer, we are led to speak concerning their nature, and the glorious works which they are engaged in. But let it be premised, that the doctrine concerning them is one which we could have known little or nothing of by the light of nature. We might, indeed, have thence learned, that God has created some spiritual substances, such as the souls of men; and we might have argued from his power, that he could create other spirits, of different natures and powers, and that some of them might be without bodies, as the angels are. Yet we could not, without divine revelation, have certainly determined that there is such a distinct order of creatures. For they do not appear to us, or visibly converse with us; and whatever impressions may, at any time, be made on our spirits, by good or bad angels, in a way of suggestion, these could not have been evidently distinguished from the working of our own fancy or imagination, were we not assisted in our conceptions concerning them by what we find stated in scripture. Accordingly, it is thence that the doctrine which we are entering upon is principally to be derived. We shall consider it, as the subject of this Answer, under seven Heads.

I. There is something supposed, namely, that there are such creatures as angels. This appears, from the account we have of them, in the beginning of the creation of all things. 'The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' These words can be no other than a metaphorical description of them. They are called 'the morning stars,' as they exceed other creatures as much in glory, as the stars do the lower parts of the creation. It would be a very absurd method of expounding scripture to take the words in a literal sense; not only because the stars in the firmament do not appear to have been then created, but principally because 'the morning stars' spoken of are represented as engaged in a work peculiar to intelligent creatures. They are also called 'the sons of God,' as they were produced by him, and created in his image; yet men, who are sometimes so called, were not then created. They are likewise called elsewhere 'spirits;'q to distinguish them from material beings, and 'a flame of fire,' to denote their agility and fervency in executing the divine commands. It is plain that the psalmist, in the passage referred to, intends the angels. His words are not to be translated, as some do, 'who maketh the winds his angels, and the flame of fire his ministers,' as denoting his making use of those creatures who act without design, to fulfil his pleasure; because the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, expressly applies the passage to the angels, and renders it in the same sense as in our translation. They are elsewhere styled, 'thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers,'s to denote their being advanced to the highest dignity, and employed in the most honourable services. And that it is not men whom the apostle, in using these words, speaks of, is evident; because he distinguishes the intelligent parts of the creation into visible and invisible. The visible he speaks of in the following words, in which Christ is said to be 'the Head of the body, the church.' Hence, in mentioning 'thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers,' he speaks of invisible creatures advanced to these honours; and

consequently he means the angels.—That there are holy angels, appears, moreover, from the fact that there are fallen angels, who are called, in scripture, devils. This is so evident, that it needs no proof. The many sins committed by their instigation, and the distress and misery which mankind is subject to by their means, give occasion to their being called 'The rulers of the darkness of this world.'u And, because of their malicious opposition to the interest of Christ, they are called 'spiritual wickedness in high places.' Now it appears, from the apostle Jude's account of them, that they once were holy. Indeed, they could not be otherwise, because they are creatures, and nothing impure can proceed out of the hand of God. While they were holy, they had their residence in heaven. This they lost, and are said 'not to have kept their first estate, but left their own habitation,' being thrust out of it, as a punishment due to their rebellion, and to be 'reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.' Now it is plain, from scripture, that it is only a part of the angels who left their first estate. The rest are called 'holy angels;' and their number is very great. They are, accordingly, described as 'an innumerable company.'y The existence of angels is necessary to be observed against the ancient or modern Sadducees, who deny that there are either angels or spirits, whether good or bad.

II. We farther observe, that the angels are described, as to their nature, as incorporeal, and therefore called spirits. It is but a little, indeed, that we can in the present state know concerning the nature of spirits. The first ideas which we have concerning them, are taken from the nature of our souls, as, in some respects, agreeing with that of angels. Being spirits, they have a power of thinking, understanding, willing, choosing or refusing; and are the subjects of moral government, being under a law, and capable of moral good or evil, happiness or misery.

Moreover, they have a power of moving, influencing, or acting upon material beings, even as the soul moves and influences the body, to which it is united. This we understand concerning the nature and power of angels, as spirits, by comparing them with the nature of the soul. There is, indeed, this difference between them, that the souls of men are made to be united to bodies, and to act by and upon them; while angels are designed to exist and act without bodies. Yet, from the works which are often in scripture ascribed to them, it appears that they have a power to act upon material beings. As to the conjecture of some of the Fathers, that these spirits are united to some bodies, though more fine and subtile than ours, and accordingly invisible to us, we cannot but think it a groundless conceit. To assert it, is only to pretend to be wise above what is written, and to give too great a loose to our own fancy without any solid argument.

III. It follows from their being spirits, and incorporeal, that they are immortal, or incorruptible. Nothing is subject to death or dissolution, but what is compounded of parts; for death is a dissolution of the composition of those parts which were before united. This, however, is proper to bodies. A spirit, indeed, might be annihilated; for the same power that brought it out of nothing, can reduce it again to nothing. But since God has determined that they shall exist for ever, we must conclude that they are immortal, not only from the constitution of their nature, but by the will of God.

IV. Besides the excellency of their nature, as spirits, they have other superadded endowments. Of these, three are mentioned in this Answer.

1. They were all created holy. Indeed, it could not be otherwise; since nothing impure could come out of the hands of a God of infinite

purity. Creatures make themselves sinners. They were not made so by him; for, if they were, how could he abhor sin, and punish it, as contrary to his holiness? Nor, if he had created any of the angels in a state of enmity, opposition to, or rebellion against him, could he, as he did, have approved of all his works as 'very good,' when he had finished them.

2. They excel in knowledge, or in wisdom, which is the greatest beauty or advancement of knowledge. Accordingly, the highest instance of wisdom in men, is compared to the wisdom of an angel. Thus the woman of Tekoa, when extolling David's wisdom, though with an hyperbolical strain of compliment, compares it to that of 'an angel of God.' This proves, that it was a generally received opinion, that angels exceed other creatures in wisdom.

3. They are said to be mighty in power. The psalmist speaks of them as 'excelling in strength;' and the apostle Paul, when speaking of Christ's being revealed from heaven, in his second coming, says, that it shall be 'with his mighty angels.'d And as power is to be judged of by its effects, the great things which they are sometimes represented as having done, in fulfilling their ministry in defence of the church, or in overthrowing its enemies, is a certain evidence of the greatness of their power. Thus we read of the whole Assyrian host, consisting of 'an hundred and fourscore and five thousand men,' having been destroyed in one night, not by the united power of an host of angels, but by one of them. 'The angel of the Lord' did it. [See note 3 A, p. 346.] But the power of angels will more evidently appear, when, under a following head, we speak of the ministry of angels.

V. These natural or superadded endowments, how great soever they are, comparatively to those of other creatures, are subject to certain limitations. Their perfections are derived, and therefore are finite. It

is true, they are holy, or without any sinful impurity; yet even their holiness falls infinitely short of God's. Accordingly, it is said concerning him, 'Thou only art holy.' And elsewhere,f concerning the angels, who are, by a metonymy, called 'the heavens,' it is said, 'they are not clean in his sight;' that is, their holiness, though perfect in its kind, is but finite, and therefore infinitely below his who is infinitely holy.

Moreover, though they are said, as was before observed, to excel in knowledge, we must, notwithstanding, conclude, that they do not know all things. Their wisdom, when compared with God's, deserves no better a character than that of 'folly.' 'His angels he charged with folly.' There are many things which they are expressly said not to know, or to have but an imperfect knowledge of, or to receive ideas of by degrees. Thus they know not the time of Christ's second coming;h and they are represented as inquiring into the great mystery of man's redemption, or as 'desiring to look into it.' Let me add, they do not know the hearts of men, at least not in such a way as God, who is said to 'search the heart;' for that is represented as a branch of the divine glory.k Besides this, they do not know future contingencies, unless it be by such a knowledge as amounts to little more than conjecture; or, if they attain to a more certain knowledge of future contingencies, it is by divine revelation. God appropriates this knowledge to himself, as a glory from which all creatures are excluded. Hence, he says, 'Show the things that are to come,' that is, future contingencies, 'that we may know that ye are gods.' This implies that the knowledge of things to come is more than can be affirmed of any finite mind, even that of an angel. As to the way of their knowing things, it is generally supposed by divines that they know them not by intuition, as God does, who is said to know all things in himself by an underived knowledge. Whatever they know, is either communicated to them by immediate divine revelation, or is attained in a discursive way, by

inferring one thing from another. In this respect, the knowledge of the best of creatures appears to be but finite; and is infinitely below that which is divine.

Again, though they are said to be mighty in power, yet it is with this limitation, that they are not omnipotent. There are some things which are the effects of divine power, which angels are excluded from, as being too great for them. Accordingly they were not employed in creating any part of the world; nor do they uphold it. As it is a glory peculiar to God, to be 'the Creator of the ends of the earth,' so he, exclusively of all others, is said to 'uphold all things by the word of his power.' We may add, that we have no ground to conclude, as some of the ancient philosophers seemed to assert, that they are employed in providence, to maintain that constant and regular motion which there is in the celestial bodies. This is the immediate work of God, without the agency of any creature being subservient to it. Again, how great soever their power is, they cannot change the heart of man, take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh, or implant that principle of spiritual life and grace in the souls of men whereby they are said to be 'made partakers of a divine nature,' or 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' This work is ascribed to the exceeding greatness of the divine power; and it is a peculiar glory belonging to the Holy Spirit, whereby believers are said to be born from above. It is therefore too great for the power of angels to effect.

VI. We have an account of the work or employment of angels. It is said, they execute the commands of God, and praise his name. Their executing his commands will be more particularly considered under a following Answer, when we are led to speak of their being employed by God, at his pleasure, in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice. We shall now consider them as engaged in the

noble and delightful work of praise. 'They praise his name.' For this end they were created; and, being perfectly holy and happy, they are fitted for this service, and in the highest degree devoted to it. The work of praise was begun by them as soon as ever they had a being. 'They sang together,' and celebrated God's praise in the beginning of the creation.o And when the Redeemer came into this lower world, and thereby a work more glorious than that of creation was begun by him, they celebrated his birth with a triumphant song. With the angel who brought the tidings to the shepherds, there was 'a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.' Whether all the hosts of heaven were present at that solemnity, we know not; but there is sufficient ground to conclude, from the harmony that there is in the work and worship of the heavenly inhabitants, that they all celebrated his incarnation with their praises. This was a part of that 'worship,' which, upon this great occasion, they gave, by a divine warrant, to him who was then brought into this lower world.q Moreover, they praise God for particular mercies vouchsafed to the church, and for the success of the gospel in the conversion of sinners. They express their joy, as our Saviour observes, though it be but 'one sinner that repenteth.' Finally, they are represented as joining in worship with the saints in heaven. For this reason the apostle, speaking concerning the communion that there is between the upper and the lower world, as well as the union between the saints departed and the angels, in this work of praise, says, 'Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.'s They are represented also as joining with all others who are 'round about the throne, the number of whom is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice,

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.'

Since we cannot but suppose that this branch of that social worship in which they are engaged is performed with harmony, without which it would want a very considerable circumstance necessary to render it beautiful, and becoming a state of perfection, we must conclude that there is the greatest order among these heavenly ministers. Whether, however, they are to be considered as having a government or hierarchy among themselves, so that one is superior in office and dignity to others, or whether they have a kind of dominion over one another, or whether some are made partakers of privileges which others are deprived of, is a question we pretend not to determine. Scripture is silent on the subject. What some have laid down, as though it were deduced from it, is altogether inconclusive. Hence, they who express themselves as peremptorily on this subject as if they had received it by divine inspiration, or had been told it by some who had been conversant among the heavenly inhabitants, must be reckoned among those whom the apostle speaks of, who 'intrude into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind.'

The papists are very fond of this notion; it being agreeable to that unscriptural hierarchy which they establish in the church on earth, and which, instead of better arguments, they pretend to be, in some respects, founded upon it. All the countenance which they pretend to be given to it in scripture, is taken from the various characters by which the angels are described, as 'cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, angels, archangels.' All these expressions they suppose to signify various ranks and orders among them. And when they say that there are three classes or degrees of dignity and office into which they are distributed, and that some of

the characters mentioned are reduced to one, and others to another of them, their assertion is nothing but an imposition of their own chimerical fancies as matters of faith. When they speak further of some of them as being of a superior order, and admitted to greater honours than the rest, whom they compare to ministers of state who always attend the throne of princes or stand in their presence, and of others of them as being employed in particular services for the good of the church, and as ministering in this lower world, they make a distinction of which the scripture says nothing. For all the angels behold the face of God in heaven, and are in his immediate presence; and they are all likewise called 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them which shall be heirs of salvation.' The great oracle which the papists have recourse to, where the scripture is silent, is a spurious writing which goes under the name of Dionysius, the Areopagite, concerning the Celestial Hierarchy.y This contains many things not only fabulous, but unworthy of him who was converted at Athens by the apostle Paul's ministry, as well as discordant with the sentiments of the church in the age in which he lived. We may, therefore, treat the popish assertion respecting an angelic hierarchy, as a vain and trifling conjecture. All that we can assert on the subject is, that there is a beautiful order among the angels, though not of the nature of a hierarchy; and this appears very much in that social worship which is performed by them.

This leads us to inquire how they communicate their ideas to one another, though destitute of organs of speech, like those that men have. That they do, some way or other, impart their minds to one another, is sufficiently evident; for we cannot see how otherwise they could join together or agree in that worship which is performed by them, and in those hallelujahs with which they praise God, and so answer the end of their creation. That they converse together is also evident; for they are represented as doing so, in several places of

scripture. The prophet speaks of 'the angel that talked with him.' He 'went forth, and another angel went out to meet him.' Elsewhere it is said, concerning the angels, that one cried to another, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' The apostle John speaks of 'an angel ascending from the east, who cried with a loud voice to four' other 'angels,'c who were performing a part of their ministry here on earth, and gave them a charge relating to it. Elsewhere he again represents one angel speaking to another, and 'crying with a loud voice,' &c. In some of these instances, if the voices uttered by them were real, the fact may be accounted for, by supposing that they assumed bodies for the purpose, and so communicated their minds to one another in a way not much unlike to what is done by man. This, however, is not their ordinary way of conversing with one another. Yet we may infer from the fact and from many scriptures, which might be brought to the same purpose, that there is some way or other by which they communicate their thoughts to one another. How this is done, is hard to determine, whether merely by an act of willing that others should know what they desire to impart to them, or whether by some other methods. It is the safest way for us to acknowledge our ignorance on the subject, and it would be no disparagement for us to do so, were we the wisest men on earth. To attempt to determine it, is to aim at a matter which, in our present state, is much beyond our reach; for here we know little of the nature or properties of spirits, especially those that are without bodies. It is sufficient for us to conclude, that the angels converse together, when joined in social worship; but how they do this, is altogether unknown to us.

VII. Notwithstanding all the advantages which the angels had from those natural endowments with which they were created, it is farther observed that they were subject to change. Absolute and independent immutability is an attribute peculiar to God; so that whatever

immutability creatures have, is by his will and power. Some of the angels who were created holy, not only were subject to change, but 'kept not their first estate,' and, from being the sons of God, became enemies and rebels. This is an evident proof of the natural mutability of creatures, if not confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness. We have ground also to conclude from it that the rest of the angels might have fallen, as well as they, had they not been favoured with the grace of confirmation, which rendered their state of blessedness unchangeable. But this will be farther considered, under a following Answer.f

[NOTE 3 A. The Angel who slew the Assyrian Host.—The angel who 'smote, in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred fourscore and five thousand,' was 'the angel of the Lord,' or 'the Angel Jehovah.' Even apart from the numerous texts which identify this glorious person with 'God,' 'Jehovah,' the divine head and protector of the church, the context itself leaves little ground to doubt that he was such. 'Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there; for I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And it came to pass that night, that the Angel Jehovah went out and smote,' &c., 2 Kings 19:32–35. Whether he employed any instrument, physical or angelic, the narrative does not say; but that he was himself, not a created Angel, but the Angel of the covenant, the Angel who redeemed Jacob from all evil, the Governor among the nations, it seems plainly to state—ED.]

THE CREATION OF MAN

QUESTION XVII. How did God create man?

ANSWER. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground, and the woman of the rib of the man; endued them with living, reasonable, and immortal souls, made them after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, with dominion over the creatures, yet subject to fall.

Why man was created last

IN this Answer it is observed that man was created after all other creatures. There was a sort of climax or gradation in the work of creation. That the wisdom and power of God might be more admired in the work, he proceeded from things that were less perfect to those that were more so. Man, who is the most excellent creature in this lower world, was framed the last; for God designed by creating him, not only to give a specimen of his power, wisdom, and goodness, but that the glory of those perfections which shine forth in all his other works might be adored and magnified by him, as a creature fitted for that purpose. The bounty and goodness of God appear in man having been the last of the creatures brought into being. All other things were created before him, that the world, which was designed to be the place of his abode, should be stored with all those provisions which were necessary for his entertainment and delight, and that he might hereby be induced to give God the glory which was due to his name, and all other creatures which were formed before him, might be objects leading him to it.

Man created Male and Female

As to the difference of sex, it is observed, that 'man was made male and female.' Adam was first formed; concerning whom we read, which is a humbling consideration, that his 'body was formed of the

dust of the ground,' whence he took his name. This God puts him in mind of, after his fall, when he says, 'Dust thou art.' The best of men have sometimes expressed the low thoughts they have of themselves, by acknowledging this as the origin of the human nature. Thus Abraham, when standing in the presence of God, says, 'I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord which am but dust and ashes.'h This character is considered as universally belonging to mankind, when it is said, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was.'

As to the woman, it is said, she was formed of the rib of the man. The reason of her formation is particularly assigned, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.' There was a garden planted for his delight, and the beasts of the earth were brought and given to him, as his property; and his sovereignty over them was expressed by his giving names to every living creature. But these were not fitted to be his companions, though designed for his use. He was, notwithstanding, alone. Hence, God, designing him a greater degree of happiness, formed one who might be a partner with him in all the enjoyments of this life, that hereby he might experience the blessing of a social life, and that, according to the laws of nature, the world might be inhabited, and its Creator glorified, by a numerous seed who should descend from him.

From Adam's being first formed, the apostle infers his pre-eminence of sex; though not of nature. In respect to nature, the woman is designed to be a sharer with him in his present condition, and his future expectation. Concerning her being formed of a rib, or, as some understand it, out of the side of man, some curious or over-nice observations have been made, which it is needless to mention. The account which the scripture gives, is, that her being part of himself, argued the nearness of relation and unalienable affection which ought to be between man and wife. Adam observed, 'This is now

bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:'m and our Saviour, referring to the same thing, says, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.'

Adam and Eve the First Human Beings

The next thing which may be observed, is, that these were the first parents of all mankind. The apostle expressly calls Adam 'the first man.' This is very agreeable to the account which Moses gives of his creation, on the sixth day from the beginning of time. It is a truth so generally received, that it seems almost needless to insist on any proof of it. The very heathen who knew not who the first man was, or where or when he was created, allowed in general that there was one from whom all descended. Hence, when the apostle Paul argued with them, that 'God had made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth,' none of them pretended to deny it.

None who own the divine authority of scripture ever questioned the account of Moses respecting the origin of the human race, till a bold writer, about the middle of the last century, published a book, in which he advanced a new and fabulous notion. He says that there was a world of men who lived before Adam was created, and that these were all heathen. He alleges that Moses speaks of their creation as having occurred many ages before Adam,—that he speaks of their creation in the first chapter of Genesis, and of Adam's in the second chapter. He further supposes that Adam was created in some part of the world which was then uninhabited, where he was designed to live, and to be the father of the church which was to descend from him; and that, being so far remote from the rest of mankind, he knew not that there were any other men besides himself, till his family increased, and some of them apostatized from the faith, and till, in

particular, Cain and his descendants 'went out from the presence of the Lord,' and dwelt among them. And whereas Adam is called by the apostle Paul, 'the first man,' this writer supposes that he is so styled only as contradistinguished from Christ, who is called 'the second man;' the design being, according to him, to compare the person whom he supposes to have been the head of the Jewish church, with him who is the Head of the Christian church. He insists largely on and perverts that scripture where it is said, 'Until the law, sin was in the world;'r as though the sense of it were, that there was a sinful generation of men in the world, before God erected his church and gave laws to it, when he created Adam as its head and father. The apostle, in that passage, clearly speaks of sin prevailing in the world before the law was given by Moses. As to the historical account of the creation of man in scripture, it is plain that, in the first chapter of Genesis, Moses speaks of the creation of man in general, male and female, and that, in the second chapter, he gives a particular account of the same thing, and speaks of the manner of the formation of Adam and Eve. Besides, when God had created Adam, it is expressly said, that 'there was not a man to till the ground.' There was hence no other man living; a fact which is directly contrary to this chimerical opinion. Besides, if there had been a world of men before Adam, what occasion was there for him to be created out of the dust of the ground? He might have been the father of the church, and yet descended, in a natural way, from one that was then in being. Or if God designed that he should live at a distance from the rest of the world, he might have called him from the place of his abode, as he afterwards called Abraham, without exerting power in creating him; and he might have ordered him to take a wife out of the world, without creating a woman for the purpose. It would be too great a digression, nor would it answer any valuable end, for me to take notice of every particular argument brought in defence of the notion I have stated. But though the book we speak of is not much known in

the world, the notion is propagated and defended by many atheists and deists, who design by it to bring the scripture-history and religion in general into contempt. I am obliged, therefore, in opposition to them, to answer an objection or two.

If Adam was the first man, and his employment was tilling the ground, whence, it is asked, had he those instruments of husbandry which were necessary for agriculture, and other things to subserve the various occasions of life? This question may easily be answered, by supposing that he had a sufficiency of wisdom to find out every thing which was needful for his use and service, whatever improvement might be made in manual arts by future ages. But the objection, though mentioned amongst others, is not much insisted on.

There is another objection which some think a little more plausible, founded on what is stated in the fourth chapter of Genesis. There we read of Cain's killing his brother Abel, which occurred a little before the hundred and thirtieth year of the world. This appears by comparing chap. 5:3. with chap. 4:25. It is said, 'Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat Seth;' and on that occasion, his wife acknowledges it as a mercy, that 'God had appointed her another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.' Now the consequence of the murder was that 'Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod,' and that 'he built a city, and called the name of it after the name of his son Enoch.'u The objectors hence infer, that, in a little above an hundred and thirty years after the world was created, there were several colonies settled in places remote from the land of Eden, where Adam and his posterity dwelt; and that the inhabitants of those countries were of a different religion from him, otherwise Cain's living among them would not be styled his 'going out from the presence of the Lord.' It is

not said, they observe, that Cain peopled that land, but that he went thither, that is, dwelt amongst its inhabitants; and they allege that it must have been by their assistance that he built the city. For it is probable, they say, that the art of building was then hardly known by our first parents and their descendants, who lived separate from the world in tents, and worshipped God in that way which they received by divine revelation, being but few in number, while other parts of the world might be as much peopled as they are at this day. Now to this objection it may be answered, that as the chimerical opinion advocated in it, sets aside or perverts the scripture-account of things, so the absurdity of it may be easily manifested. Their supposition that the number of Adam's posterity was small and inconsiderable, when Cain slew his brother and built the city before-mentioned, will appear to be an ungrounded conjecture, if the blessing, which God conferred on man in his first creation, of increasing, multiplying, and replenishing the earth, took effect, as it doubtless did, and that in an uncommon degree, the necessity of things requiring it. It is not absurd to suppose, that at least as many children were generally born at a birth, and in as early an age of the mother's life, as have been or are in any uncommon instances in later ages. It is also very probable, that the time of child-bearing continued many years longer than it now does in proportion to the number of years in which the life of man exceeded its present standard. And if the age of man was extended to eight or nine hundred years, we may conclude that there were but few who died young. Let these things be taken for granted, which seem not in the least improbable, and any one who is curious in his inquiries about this matter, and desires to know what a number of people might be born in one hundred and thirty years, will find it to be so great that they might spread themselves through many countries, far distant from the place where Adam dwelt. There is, therefore, no need to suppose, that those with whom Cain dwelt in the land of Nod, were persons who lived before Adam was created.

But that this may more abundantly appear, let it be farther considered, that though, immediately after the account of Abel's death, we read of 'Cain's going out from the presence of the Lord,' and his dwelling 'in the land of Nod, and building a city,' there is no reason why we should take for granted that these events happened immediately or within a few years after the murder of Abel, or about the hundred and thirtieth year of the world. Scripture contains the history of the life of Cain in a few verses, without any chronological account of the time when these things were said to be done by him. It hence seems probable, that the event occurred some hundreds of years after Cain slew Abel. We need not inquire, therefore, what a number of persons might be in the world in one hundred and thirty years, but in seven or eight hundred years; and then the world might be almost as full of people as it is now, and the greatest part of the world might be also degenerate, and strangers to the true religion, so that Cain might properly be said to go out from the presence of the Lord, and choose to live with those who were apostates from him and served other gods. No advantage, then, is gained against the scripture-history, by those who, in contempt of it, defend the ill-grounded opinion which we have noticed. We have thus considered man as created male and female, and our first parents, as the common stock, or root, whence all descended.

The Constituent Parts of Man

We shall now take a view of the constitution or frame of the human nature, and consider the two constituent parts of man, namely, the soul and body. With respect to the former, he is, as it were, allied to angels, or, to use the scripture-expression, 'made a little lower than they.' As to the other, which is his inferior part, namely, the body, he is 'of the earth, earthy,' and set upon a level with the lower parts of the creation.

1. We shall consider first the body of man. It was first formed before the soul; and according to the course and laws of nature, it is first fashioned in the womb, and the soul is united to it when it is organized and fitted for its reception. There are many things very wonderful in the structure of human bodies, which might well give occasion to the inspired writer to say, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' This is a subject which would afford us much matter to enlarge on; and we might take occasion to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in this part of his work. Many things might be observed from the shape and erect posture of the body, and the several conveniences which thence arise, and how we are hereby instructed that we were not born to look downwards to the earth, but up to heaven whence our chief happiness is derived. We might here consider the various parts of the body, none of which are superfluous or redundant, and their convenient situation for their respective uses; the harmony and contexture of them, and the subserviency of one part to another; and particularly, how the body is so ordered by the wisdom of the Creator, that those parts which are most necessary for the preservation of life, and which, if hurt, would occasion immediate death, are placed most inward, that they may be sufficiently defended from all external injuries which might befall them; and also the disposition of those parts which are the organs of sense, and their contexture, whereby they are fitted to exert themselves in a way most proper to answer their ends. We might also consider the temperature of the body, whereby its health and vigour are maintained; and that variety that there is in the countenances and voices of men, so great that there is hardly an exact similitude in any two persons in the world, and so beneficent in design as to subserve the general advantage of mankind. These things might have been particularly insisted on, and might have afforded many useful observations. But to enlarge on this head as it deserves, would be to divert too much from our present design. Besides, it will be very

difficult for any one to treat on this subject with more advantage than it has been done by several learned and judicious writers, who, taking advantage of those improvements which have been lately made in anatomy, have set it in a much clearer light than in former ages. It is insisted on so particularly and with such demonstrative evidence by them, that I choose to refer the reader to their writings, rather than insist on it.a All that I shall farther observe is, that there is something wonderful in that natural heat which is continued in the bodies of men for so many years together, and in the motion of the heart, the circulation of the blood and juices, the continual supply of animal spirits, and their subserviency to muscular motion. These things, and many others of a similar nature, are all wonderful in the bodies of men.

It may be objected, that there are other creatures who, in some respects, excel men as to their bodies, and the powers of them,—as the vulture, and many other creatures, in quickness of sight and hearing; the dog in the sense of smelling; many others, in strength and swiftness; and some inanimate creatures, as the sun and other heavenly bodies, in beauty. We reply, that the bodies of men must be allowed to have a superior excellency, if considered as united to their souls, and rendered more capable of glorifying God, and enjoying that happiness which no creatures below them are capable of. It is true, man is not endowed with such quickness of sense, strength of body, and swiftness of motion, as many other creatures are; some of which endowments tend to the preservation of their own lives, while others are conducive to the advantage of man. But man has every thing, in the frame of his nature, necessary to his happiness, agreeable to his present station of life, and suited to his glorifying God and answering higher ends than other creatures were made for. If we judge of the excellencies of the human nature, we must

conceive of man more especially as to that more noble part of which he consists. Accordingly,

2. We shall consider him as having a rational and immortal soul. This not only gives a relative excellency to the body to which it is united, and, by its union therewith, preserves it from corruption, but it uses the various organs of it, to perform actions which are under the conduct of reason. That which renders it still more excellent, is, that it is capable of being conversant about objects abstracted from matter, and of knowing and enjoying God. Whatsoever obstructions it may meet with from the temperament of the body to which it is united, or what uneasiness soever it may be exposed to from its sympathy with it, none of those things which tend to destroy the body, or separate it from the soul, can affect the soul so far as to take away its power of acting. For, when separate from the body, the soul remains immortal, and is capable of farther improvements, and a greater degree of happiness.

We might here proceed to prove the immortality of the soul; but we shall have occasion more particularly to do this, under a following Answer, when we consider the souls of believers, as made perfect in holiness, and thereby fitted for and afterwards received into heaven, and as having, in consequence of their immortality, escaped the grave, in which the body is to be detained until the resurrection.

Man Created after the Image of God

We proceed to consider another excellency of the human nature, as man was made after the image of God. To be made a little lower than the angels, as he is represented to be by the psalmist, is a very great honour conferred on him. But what can be said greater of him than that he was made after the image of God? Yet, though this is a scripture-expression, denoting the highest excellency and privilege, it

is to be explained consistently with that infinite distance that there is between God and the creature. The glorious character which it denotes, does not argue him to partake of any divine perfection; nor is it inconsistent with the nothingness of the best of finite beings, when compared with God. For whatever likeness there is in man to God, there is, at the same time, an infinite dissimilitude or disproportion. We formerly observed this, when we considered the difference between those divine attributes which are called incommunicable, from others which some call communicable.d

If it be inquired, wherein the image of God in man consists, it would be preposterous and absurd, to the last degree, to suppose that it has any respect to the lineaments of the body. There is a direct opposition, rather than similitude, between the spirituality of the divine nature and the bodies of men. Indeed, it would have been needless to mention this, had not some given occasion for it, by perverting the sense of those scriptures in which God, in condescension to our common mode of speaking, is represented, in a metaphorical way, as though he had a body or bodily parts. From these scriptures some have inferred, that he assumed a body at first, as a model according to which he would frame that of man. This opinion, however, is not only absurd, but blasphemous, and carries its own confutation in it. There are others who suppose that man was made after the image of Christ's human nature. This opinion, though it does not altogether contain so vile a suggestion as the former, yet is groundless and absurd. For Christ was made after the likeness of man, as to what concerns his human nature; and man, in that respect, was not made after his image. Let me add, that when the scripture speaks of man as made after the image of God, it plainly gives us ground to distinguish between this image and that glory which is peculiar to Christ, who is said not only to be made after his image, but to be 'the image of the invisible God,'f and the 'express

image of his person.' There is, in this respect, such a similitude between the Father and Son, as cannot, in any sense, be affirmed of the likeness which is said to be between God and the creature.

Moreover, when we speak of man's being made after the image of God, as consisting in some finite perfections communicated to him, we must carefully guard against even the remotest supposition, that he was made partaker of any of the divine perfections. It is true, the apostle speaks concerning believers, as made 'partakers of the divine nature;' but, in studying this phrase, we must take heed that we do not pervert the mind of the Holy Ghost. Nothing is intended by this expression, in which the image of God is set forth, but a sanctified nature, or, as I would rather choose to render it, 'a divine nature,' derived from, and, in some respects, conformed to him, but yet infinitely below him.

The image of God in man, as spoken of in this Answer, is said to consist particularly in three things.

1. In knowledge. This is what we generally call the natural image of God in man, which he is endowed with as an intelligent creature. Not that the degree of knowledge which the best of men are capable of, contains in it any thing properly divine, as to its formal nature; for there is a greater disproportion between the infinite knowledge of the divine mind and that of a finite creature, than there is between the ocean and a drop of water. But it signifies, that as God has a comprehensive knowledge of all things, man has the knowledge of some things, agreeable to his finite capacity, communicated to him. In this sense we are to understand the apostle's words, when he speaks of man's being 'renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.'

2. It consists in righteousness and holiness. This some call the moral image of God in man. If we consider it as restored in sanctification, it may more properly be called his supernatural image. It consists in the rectitude of the human nature, as opposed to that sinful deformity and blemish which renders fallen man unlike to him. We must hence consider him as at first made upright, so that there was not the least tincture or taint of sin in his nature, or any disposition or inclination to it. All the powers and faculties of the soul were disposed to answer the ends of its creation, and thereby to glorify God. Some add, that the image of God in man, consisted in blessedness; so that as God is infinitely blessed in the enjoyment of his own perfections, man was, in his way and measure, blessed in possessing and enjoying those perfections which he received from God. But, though this is true, I would rather choose to keep close to the scripture-mode of speaking, which represents the image of God in man as consisting 'in righteousness and true holiness.'l

Man, having been thus made after the image of God, is farther said, in this Answer, to have had the law of God written in his heart, and power to fulfil it. Herein God first made him, and then dealt with him as a reasonable creature, the subject of moral government. And, that this law might be perfectly understood, it was written on his heart, that hereby he might have a natural knowledge of the rule of his obedience, and might with as little difficulty be apprized of his duty to God, as he was of any thing which he knew as an intelligent creature. And as he was indispensably obliged to yield obedience to this law, and the consequence of violating it would be his ruin, God, as a just and gracious Sovereign, gave him ability to fulfil it; so that he might not, without his own fault, or by a necessity of nature, rebel against him, and so plunge himself into inevitable misery.

3. It is farther observed, that the image of God, in man, consisted in man's dominion over the creatures. This is expressly revealed in scripture, when God says, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' The psalmist describes this dominion in other words, though not much differing as to their general import, when he says, 'Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.'n This dominion consisted in the right which he had to use and dispose of the inferior creatures, for his comfort and delight, and for serving him in all things necessary to the glorifying of his Creator. He had, however, no right nor inclination, in his state of integrity, to abuse them, as fallen man, in various instances, does. [See Note 3 B, below.]

The Fallibility of Man

The last thing observed in this Answer is, that, notwithstanding the advantageous circumstances in which man was created, he was subject to fall. By this we are not to understand that he was forced or compelled to fall, through any necessity of nature; for that would have been inconsistent with the liberty of his will to what was good, or that rectitude of nature whereby he was not only fitted to perform perfect obedience, but to avoid every thing which had a tendency to render him guilty before God, and thereby to ruin him. As to the devil, he had no power to force the will; nor could he lay any snare to entangle and destroy man, but what man had wisdom enough, had he improved his faculties as he ought, to have avoided. Yet, notwithstanding this, it is evident that he was subject to fall; for that

appears by the event. He had, indeed, no disposition to sin in his nature, for God could not create a person in such a state, since that would have rendered him the author of sin; yet he did not determine to prevent it. That man would have eventually been raised above all liability to fall, was a privilege, as will be hereafter considered, which man would have attained to, according to the tenor of the covenant he was under, had he performed its conditions; and so he would have been confirmed in holiness and happiness. But in this state it is certain he was not at first; because he fell. Of this, however, more shall be said under a following Answer.

[NOTE 3 B. The Image of God.—The image of God, in which man was made, must, in order to be understood, be viewed in connexion with man's state after the fall. That it included a resemblance to God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, seems to be fully implied in those passages of the New Testament which speak of the restoration of it in the believing and regenerated, Col. 3:10. Eph. 4:14. Yet, in its primary or chief character, as distinguishing man at his creation, or as distinguishing him among the works of the Creator, it appears to have consisted in his moral intelligence, and in his possessing reasonable control over his own actions, and dominion over the inferior animals. Hence, as explanatory of the statement, 'God created man in his own image,' it is added, 'God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth,' Gen. 1:27, 28. Hence, too, the apostle Paul calls man 'the image and glory of God,' on the particular ground of his being the 'head of the woman,' or having control over her in the domestic constitution, 1 Cor. 11:7.

God made man a moral and intelligent being, possessing freedom of will to control his own actions, and faculties to govern the inferior animals. But man lost neither his moral agency, his rationality, nor altogether his dominion over the brute creation, by the fall. What he lost was his holiness of nature, with whatever powers and enjoyments depended on a state of innocence. His holiness rendered him like God in moral character; but was not what constituted the image of God, as to intellectuality of nature, and government or control over objects and animals destitute of reason. As regarded these, man existed in the image of God as literally after the fall as before. His possessing that image was just what distinguished him from the irrational animals; and so late as the period after the flood, when permission was given to use the flesh of beasts for food, it was the special reason assigned by the divine law giver for distinguishing between man's life and the life of a brute. 'Whoso,' said God, 'sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man,' Gen. 9:6. The apostle James affirms that all men, or men in general, possess the divine image. 'With the tongue,' he says, 'bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the similitude,' or in the image, 'of God,' James 3:9.

How highly does men's possessing the divine image enhance the quality of their actions, and the greatness of their responsibility to the King of heaven! Much is expected from our possessing reason; much from our possessing conscience; much from our possessing access to the light of revelation: how very much, then, from our being 'made after the image of God,' from our resembling the Deity in intellectuality of nature, from our enjoying a controlling power over what is animal, from our wielding influence over the welfare of all connected with us, and dominion over the interests of the lower animals! He who sins against God, sins against himself, for he bears

God's image; and he who abuses his reason, or his intellectual influence, abuses the similitude of the character of his Creator.—ED.]

PROVIDENCE

QUESTION XVIII. What are God's works of providence?

ANSWER. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.

The Meaning of Providence

IN discussing this answer, we must consider what we are to understand by providence in general. It supposes a creature brought into being; and consists in God's doing everything which is necessary for the continuance of that being, and in his ordering and overruling second causes to produce their separate effects, under the direction of his infinite wisdom and the influence of his almighty power. It is owing to providence that all things do not sink again into nothing, or that everything has what it wants to render it fit to answer the end designed in its creation. Pursuant to this general description of providence, it may be considered as consisting of two branches; first, God's upholding or preserving all creatures, and enabling them to act by his divine concourse or influence; and, secondly, his governing or ordering them and all their actions for his own glory.

Upholding Providence

God upholds all things. This he is expressly said to do 'by the word of his power.' As God alone is independent and self-sufficient, the idea of a creature implies dependence; and that which depended on God for its being, must depend on him for the continuance of that being. If any creature in this lower world could preserve itself, surely man

could do so, who is the most excellent of earthly creatures. But it is certain that man cannot preserve himself; for, if he could, he would not be subject to those decays of nature, or those daily infirmities, to which all are liable. He would also, doubtless, preserve himself from dying; for that is agreeable to the dictates of nature, which would, were it possible for him to do it, prevent itself from being dissolved. If man could preserve himself in being, moreover, he might, and doubtless would, by his own skill, maintain himself in a prosperous condition in this world, and always lead a happy life; for this is what nature cannot but desire. The fact, however, that all are liable to the afflictions and miseries of the present state, plainly argues that these are unavoidable, and, consequently, that there is a providence which maintains men and all other creatures in that state in which they are.

In considering the upholding providence of God, we must observe that it is either immediate or mediate. The former consists in his exerting that power by which we live, move, and act, and is sometimes called the divine manutenency. This cannot be exerted by a finite medium, any more than that power which brought all things into being. But besides this, God is said, according to the fixed laws of nature, to preserve his creatures by the instrumentality of second causes. Thus life is maintained by the air in which we breathe, and the food by which we are nourished. Everything, also, which tends to our comfort in life, is communicated to us by second causes, under the influence and direction of providence; to which it is as much to be ascribed, as though it were brought about without means. Accordingly, Jacob considers God as giving him 'bread to eat, and raiment to put on,' whatever diligence or industry was used by him to attain them. God is elsewhere said 'to give food to all flesh.'h And concerning brute creatures it is said, 'These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season; that thou givest

them, they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.'

Governing Providence

God governs all things by his providence, so that nothing happens by chance to him. This appears from those admirable displays of wisdom which come under our daily observation in the government of the world. Many things are ordered to subserve such ends as are attained by creatures without their own knowledge. The sun, for example, and other heavenly bodies, which are a common blessing to this lower world, the rain, the air, vapours, minerals, beasts, vegetables, and all other creatures below men, answer their respective ends, without their own design, and not by the will or management of any intelligent creature. They must, therefore, be under the direction of providence.

That there is a providence which governs the world, is so obvious a truth, that it has been denied by none but the most stupid part of mankind, who have wholly abandoned themselves to sensuality and libertinism, and hardly owned that there is a God, or such things as moral good and evil. These scarcely deserve the name of men. All others have owned a providence, as what is the necessary consequence of the belief of a God. The doctrine of providence, therefore, is founded in the very nature of man; so that the heathen, who have had no other light than that affords, have expressed their belief of it, and have compared the Divine Being to a pilot who sits at the helm and steers the ship, or to one who guides the chariot where he pleases, or to a general who marshals and gives directions to the soldiers under his command, or to a king who sits on the throne and gives laws to all his subjects. Accordingly, the apostle Paul, when arguing with the Athenians from principles which they maintained,

takes it for granted as what would not be contested by them, that there is a providence, when he says, 'In him we live, and move, and have our being.'l Indeed, this truth appears to have been universally believed in the world, by men of all religions, whether true or false. As it is the foundation of all true worship, so that worship which was performed by the heathen, as derived partly from the light of nature and partly from tradition, and those prayers which were directed to God, and those altars which were erected for his service, all argue their belief, not only of a God, but of a providence. This doctrine, therefore, is agreeable to the light of nature, as well as plainly evinced from scripture.

Particular Providence

The providence of God extends itself to all the actions of creatures. That this may appear, let it be considered that there are innumerable effects produced by what we call second causes. This is allowed by all. Moreover, every second cause implies, that there is a first cause, which guides and directs it. Now, no creature is the first cause of any action; for that is peculiar to God. It follows, therefore, that all creatures act under his influence, that is, by his providence. If it is 'in God,' not only that 'we live,' but 'move,' and act, there is no motion or action, in the world, whether in things with or without life, but is under the influence of providence. We shall proceed, therefore, to consider the providence of God, as conversant about all things, the least as well as the greatest, and about things which are agreeable or contrary to the laws of nature, and particularly how it is conversant about the actions of intelligent creatures, such as angels and men.

The greatest things are not above, nor the least and most inconsiderable below, the care and influence of providence; and, consequently, it must extend itself to all things. The most excellent of

finite beings are but creatures; and, as such, are dependent upon God, as much as the least. Accordingly, it is said, 'He doth according to his will, in the army of heaven,' as well as 'among the inhabitants of the earth.' Sometimes we read of the providence of God, as conversant about the most glorious parts of the frame of nature. It is by his influence that the sun appears to perform its regular motions; he hath fixed it in the heavens, as in a tabernacle appointed for it. Those creatures also which are most formidable to men, as the leviathan, which is represented as the fiercest of all creatures which abide in the sea, and the lion, which is the fiercest of all the beasts of the forest, are described as subject to his providence, and as receiving their provisions from it.n Even the inconsiderable 'sparrow doth not fall to the ground without' it; and the very 'hairs of our head are all numbered.' These are proverbial expressions to denote the particular concern of providence, as conversant about the most minute actions of life.

Again, the providence of God is conversant about those things which come to pass, either agreeably or contrary to the fixed laws of nature, the whole frame of which is held together by him. The successive returns of 'seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night,' are all ordered by him. The elements and meteors are subject to his appointment. 'Fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word.'q 'He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven, to make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure; when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder.'

As to effects which are above or contrary to the course of nature, these also are subject to and ordered by his providence. It was contrary to the course of nature for the ravens, which are birds of prey, to bring provisions to mankind, yet these were ordered to bring

a supply of food to the prophet Elijah. The lions, which knew no difference between Daniel and his persecutors, and were naturally inclined to devour the one as well as the other, were obliged to make a distinction between them, and not to hurt the one, but immediately to devour the other.t A whale was provided, by providence, to receive and bring the prophet Jonah to land, when cast into the sea. So the fire had no power over Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when thrown into it, but immediately consumed those who were ordered to cast them in.x

Further, providence is conversant about intelligent creatures, more particularly man, the most excellent creature in this lower world. He is, as it were, the peculiar care and darling of providence. It has rendered him capable of enjoying the blessings of both worlds, fitted him to glorify God actively as well as objectively, and governs him in a way suited to his nature, and as one who is designed for greater things than other creatures below him are capable of. Here we shall consider the providence of God, as ordering the state and condition of men in this world; and then speak more particularly of it, as conversant about the moral actions of men, considered as good or bad.

Providence, as conversant about the state and condition of man in this life, particularly respects both his natural and his religious interests. There is a peculiar care of providence extended towards us, in our birth and infancy. The psalmist acknowledges this, when he says, 'Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts; I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly.' Providence has provided the breast, and the most proper food contained in it, for the nourishment of the infant, at its coming into the world; and it has put those tender bowels into the parents, to

whose immediate care it is committed, in consequence of which, without any arguments or persuasive motives besides what nature suggests, they cannot, unless divested of all humanity, and becoming worse that brutes, neglect and expose it to harm. Accordingly, the prophet says, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?'z Be the parents never so poor, there is something in nature which inclines them rather to suffer themselves, than that the helpless infant should be exposed to suffer through their neglect. This is a peculiar instance of the care of providence. We may add, that the time and place in which we were born or live, the circumstances of our parents as to what concerns the world, especially if they are such as are religious themselves, and earnestly desire that their children may become so, and endeavour to promote their spiritual as well as their temporal welfare, are all instances of the care of providence.—Again, providence has respect to man in his childhood and advancing years. This discovers itself in furnishing us with natural capacities to receive instruction, which are daily improved as we grow in years. And though every one has not a degree of parts fitting him for some station in life which others are qualified for, yet most are endowed with that degree which may fit them for the station of life in which they are placed, so that they may glorify God some way or other in their generation.—Further, the care of providence respects various other ages and conditions of life. It is this which fixes the bounds of our habitation, determines and overrules the advantages or disadvantages of conversation, the secular callings or employments in which we are engaged, together with their issue and success. Health and sickness also, riches and poverty, the favour or the frowns of men, the term of life, whether long or short, are all under the direction of providence. 'One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.'

Likewise, as to what respects the injurious treatment we meet with from men, providence is so far concerned, that it sometimes permits it for the trial of our graces. At other times it averts the evil designed against us, by softening the tempers and allaying the resentments of our enemies,—as in the instance of Laban's and Esau's behaviour towards Jacob; or it finds some way to deliver us from the evil intended against us.—But the providence of God respects, more especially, the spiritual concerns of his people. There are some footsteps of it which have a more immediate subserviency to their conversion, particularly their being placed under the means of grace, either bringing the gospel to them, or ordering their abode where it is preached, and placing it before them in a way most adapted to awaken, instruct, convert, or reprove. Providence is very remarkable, also, in casting our lot where we may contract friendship and intimacy with those whose conversation and example may be made of use to us for our conviction, imitation, and conversion. Let me add, that sometimes there is a peculiar hand of providence, in sending afflictions, which are sanctified, and rendered means of grace, and have a tendency to awaken men out of their carnal security. This is one way whereby God speaks to man, to 'withdraw him from his purpose, and hide pride from him.' Sometimes God makes his exemplary judgments, which are abroad in the world, effectual to warn others to flee from the wrath to come. As for the preaching of the gospel, there is sometimes a peculiar hand of providence in giving a suitable word. In this case, God often overrules the thoughts and studies of his ministers; so that they are, as it were, directed without their own forethought relating to this event, to insist on a subject which God designs to make instrumental for the conversion of souls. He sets this home on the consciences of men, keeps it fixed on the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, and enables them to improve it to his glory in the conduct of their lives.

We shall now consider the providence of God, as conversant about the actions of men. If other creatures are dependent on him, in acting as well as existing, certainly man must not be exempted from this dependence. There are several scriptures which speak of intelligent creatures, as under the influence of providence. Thus it is said, 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will.' And elsewhere the prophet says, 'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;'d that is, he cannot manage himself in the conduct of life, either as an intelligent creature or as a believer, without supposing the natural or spiritual influence of divine providence. Now, these actions are considered as moral, and so are agreeable or contrary to the divine law. In these different respects they are either good or bad. The providence of God, then, is conversant about the good actions of men. Nor is it so only by upholding the powers and faculties of the soul in acting, or by giving a law which is the rule of conduct. Nor is it conversant about good actions only in an objective way, or by moral suasion, as affording rational arguments or inducements; but it is so, as implanting and exciting that principle by which we act, especially as it respects the work of grace in the souls of men. This is what we call the gracious dispensation of providence, exercised towards men, not merely as intelligent creatures, but as believers. This, however, we shall not insist on at present, as we shall be led to discuss it under some following Answers, which more particularly set forth the grace of God as displayed in the gospel. We now consider the actions of men in a more general view, and we call them good only as they contain a less degree of conformity to the divine law. But we refer the consideration of the goodness of actions, as under the influence of special grace, to its proper place. All that we shall observe at present is, that every thing good in the actions of intelligent creatures is under the direction and influence of providence. This assertion does

not carry even the least appearance of a reflection on the divine perfections, while we suppose God to be the Governor of intelligent creatures, acting as such. I presume, therefore, it will not be much contested by any who allow a providence in general.

But the providence of God is conversant also about evil actions. This is a subject which involves a very great difficulty. We must use the utmost caution, lest we advance anything which may argue God to be the author of sin; and yet we are not to suppose that the providence of God is to be wholly excluded from those actions which are sinful. There is certainly some meaning in such scriptures as these: God says concerning Pharaoh, 'I will harden his heart.' 'Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him; for the Lord thy God hardened his heart, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand.'f Concerning Shimei it is said, 'The Lord said unto him, Curse David.' Concerning Joseph's brethren, who sold him into Egypt, it is said, 'It was not you that sent me hither, but God.'h Concerning the false prophets who deceived Ahab, it is said, 'The Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets.' These and similar scriptures are not to be expunged from the Bible, but are to be explained in a way consistent with the divine perfections. Nothing can be inferred from them, if this be not, that the providence of God is in some way conversant about those actions which are sinful. Still it is not in such a way as argues him to be either the author or the approver of sin. Accordingly, I would choose to say, that the providence of God is conversant about those actions to which sin is annexed, rather than that it is conversant about sin itself, or about the obliquity or sinfulness of the actions. That we may understand this matter, we must distinguish between what is natural, and what is sinful in an action. The former is from God; the latter is from ourselves. This is often illustrated by similitudes. The motion of a bowl, for example, is from the hand which throws it; but

the irregularity of the motion is from the bias which turns it aside. The motion of a horse is excited by the whip and spur of the rider; but if it goes lame, the defect or halting which it has in its motion, proceeds from an inward indisposition in the horse, and not from the rider. The sun draws forth vapours from the earth by that heat which has a tendency to exhale them; but the stench which attends what is exhaled from a dunghill, is not from the sun, but from the nature of the substance whence it is drawn. So the providence of God enables sinners to act in a natural way; but the sinfulness, irregularity, or moral defects which attend their actions, is from the corruption of their own nature. The man who blasphemes, for example, could not think or utter his blasphemy without the concurrence of the common providence of God, which enables him to perform the natural actions of thinking and speaking; but that the thoughts or tongue should be set against God or goodness, is from the depravity of his own nature. Again, to kill or take away the life of a man is, in some respects, a natural action, as it cannot be done without thought or strength to execute what we design. These are the gifts of providence; and, as respects these, God concurs in the action. Joab could not have killed Abner or Amasa, if he had not had a natural power to use the instrument with which he acted. This power was from God; but the malice which prompted him to abuse the gifts of providence, his hypocritical subtilty, and his dissimulation or disguise of friendship which gave him an opportunity to execute his bloody design, were from the wickedness of his own heart. The providence of God may thus be conversant about that which is natural in a sinful action, without reflecting dishonour on him, as the author of sin. But we must add some considerations as to the manner in which it is conversant about sinful actions, in order that we may better understand those scriptures which we have just quoted; and, I hope, nothing which shall be stated will be accounted derogatory to the divine glory.

The providence of God, then, may be conversant, in an objective way, about those actions to which sin is annexed, without his being the author or approver of it. Sin would not be committed, in many instances, if there were not some objects presented which give occasion to it. The object which presents itself may be from God, when the sin which is occasioned thereby is from the corruption of our nature. Thus Joseph's brethren would not have thought of killing him, or of selling him into Egypt, at least when they did, if he had not obeyed his father's command, in going to deliver his message, and see how it fared with them. Providence ordered his going to inquire respecting their welfare; and hereby the object was presented to them, which their own corrupt nature inclined them to abuse; so that, as soon as they saw him, they entered into a conspiracy against him. In so far as the providence of God was objectively conversant about this action, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt; though every circumstance in it which was vile and sinful, was from themselves. Again, in the instance before-mentioned, of Shimei's cursing David, providence was conversant about the action, in so far as it ordered that David should come by at that time when Shimei was there, without his doing which Shimei would not have cursed him. When it is said, in the scripture referred to, that 'The Lord said to Shimei, curse David,' the meaning is, 'The Lord hath brought me into so low a condition, that the vilest persons, who, before this time, were afraid to open their mouths against me, now take occasion to give vent to their malicious reproaches, as Shimei did.' The providence of God was conversant about this action, in an objective way. Now, whatever it is so conversant about, God, according to the scripture-mode of speaking, is said to do. When, for example, the manslayer killed one, through inadvertency, who was presented as an object to him, God is said to 'deliver him into his hand.' Yet in all sinful actions, God's presenting the object, does not render him the author of the sin; for this is to be ascribed to the corruption of nature

which took occasion from the sight of the object to exert itself. Accordingly, such an object might have been presented, and the sinful action not have ensued. Thus 'the wedge of gold, and the Babylonish garment,' were no temptation to other Israelites, who, as well as Achan, saw them among the spoils of Jericho; though they were so to him, through the covetousness of his own temper, and the corruption of his nature, which internally moved him to his sinful action. Again, objects are not presented by providence with a design to ensnare or draw persons to sin, though God knows that occasion will be taken from it to commit sin. There are other ends of their being presented; which may be illustrated by a particular instance. God knows, that if the gospel be preached, some will take occasion to reproach it. Yet he orders that it shall be preached, not that men may take occasion to reproach it, but that those whom he has ordained to eternal life may be converted by it. So our Saviour appeared publicly at the feast of the passover, though he knew that the Jews would put him to death; yet, the end of his going to Jerusalem was not that he might draw forth their corruption, but that he might finish the work which he came into the world to do. He was, at that time, engaged in his Father's work; but they performed that which they were prompted to do, by Satan and their own wicked hearts.

Again, when the providence of God is said to be conversant about sin, it is in suffering or permitting it, not in suggesting it or tempting to it. No one, as the apostle James remarks, ought to say, 'when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot tempt any man;' but, when he is tempted, 'he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.' So far as the providence of God denies restraining grace, whence corrupt nature takes occasion to break forth, it is conversant about sin occasionally, not effectively. When the banks or flood-gates which keep waters within due bounds, are broken down by their owner, who does not think fit to repair them, the waters will,

according to the course of nature, overflow the country. Or, if the hedge or enclosure which secures the standing corn be taken away, the beasts, by a propensity of nature, will tread it down, and devour it. So if that which would have a tendency to restrain or prevent sin be taken away, it will be committed; and the providence of God may do this, either in a way of sovereignty, or as a punishment for former sins committed, without being charged as the author of sin. It is not the same, in this case, as when men do not prevent sin in others, when it is in their power to do so; for they are under an obligation to prevent it whenever they can. But God is under no obligation to extend his restraining grace to sinful men; and sometimes he suffers that wrath which he will not restrain, to break forth, as having a design, some way or other, to glorify himself by it. Accordingly, the psalmist says 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'m

Further, the providence of God may be said to be concerned about sin, in overruling it for his own glory, and his people's good. In the former instances, the design or agency of providence discovers itself, before the sin was committed; but, in this, it discovers itself afterwards. It is a wonderful display of his wisdom; for it makes provision that, while the sinner obstinately resolves to rebel against him, his conduct shall tend not to lessen, but to illustrate some of his perfections. Thus he overruled the wicked action of Joseph's brethren, in their selling him into Egypt, to preserve their lives, in the time of famine. Accordingly Joseph says, 'God did send me before you to preserve life.' And the vilest action that ever was committed in the world, namely, the crucifying of the Lord of glory, was overruled for saving his people from their sins. Sometimes also we read of God's punishing the obstinacy and rebellion of men, by giving courage and success to their enemies against them. Thus Nebuchadnezzar's success in arms against the Jews, was ordered by

the providence of God, to punish their idolatry; first, by carrying the greatest part of them captive, and then, when pursuing those who, contrary to God's order, fled into Egypt, by destroying them or carrying them captive likewise. In doing this, Nebuchadnezzar is called 'God's servant;' not as though he had in it any religious regard to the honour and command of God. His design was only to enlarge his dominions, by depriving others of their natural rights; yet God overruled this, for setting forth the glory of his vindictive justice against a sinful people. Cyrus, on the other hand, was raised up to be Israel's deliverer from captivity. His success in war, which God designed should be subservient to his being so, is styled, his 'girding him;'p and God promises, that he would 'loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates.' All this was done with a design that Cyrus should give liberty to God's people; though Cyrus had no more religion, or real regard to the interest of God in the world, than other kings, who design little else but the satisfying of their own ambition. It is expressly said of him, 'Thou hast not known me.' God did not approve of that corruption which might give the first occasion to the war, or that injustice which might appear in it; yet he overruled it to answer the ends of his own glory. Moreover, in the overruling providence of God, there are some things which seem to have a more direct tendency to bring about the ends designed, agreeably to the nature of those second causes which he makes use of, whereby he gives us occasion to expect the event which follows. On the other hand, he sometimes brings about some great and valuable ends by those means, which, at first view, have no apparent tendency to produce them, but which are overruled without or contrary to the design of second causes. In these cases, the admirable wisdom of providence discovers itself. Thus those things which to all appearance seem to threaten our ruin, are ordered to subserve our future happiness, though such a result is at present altogether unexpected. When there was such a dark gloom cast on the world, by

the entrance of sin, who would have thought that this should be overruled by providence, to give occasion to the display of those divine perfections which are glorified in the work of our redemption? I do not, indeed, relish the expression of an ancient writer, who says, "Happy sin! which gave occasion to man's salvation." But I would say, How admirable was the providence of God, which overruled the vilest action to answer so great an end, and brought so much good out of that which, in itself, was so great an evil!

We might here give some particular instances of the dispensations of providence by which God brings good out of evil; and consider those lengths which he hath suffered some men to run in sin, whom he designed, notwithstanding, effectually to call and save. Of this the apostle Paul was a very remarkable instance. He considers divine providence in the events of his history, as an expedient whereby God designed to 'show forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on Christ to life eternal,' and as an encouragement to men, to conclude that 'Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners.' The injurious treatment which God's people have met with from their enemies, has sometimes been overruled for their good. Thus Ishmael's 'mocking,' or, as the apostle calls it, 'persecuting' Isaac, and, as is more than probable, reproaching not only him but the religion which he professed, was overruled, by providence, for Isaac's good, when Ishmael was separated from him. This set him out of danger of being led aside by his bad example, as well as delivered him from that uneasiness which his opposition to him would have occasioned; and it was most agreeable to his future circumstances, whom God designed, not only to be the heir of the family, but the propagator of religion in it. Again, Pharaoh's cruelty, and the methods used to prevent the increasing of the children of Israel in Egypt, were overruled by the providence of God; so that the Israelites appeared afterwards to be, in a peculiar

manner, the objects of providential care. It is particularly remarked, in scripture, as an instance of the kind hand of providence towards them, that 'the more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.'r Again, the inhuman and barbarous cruelty of Simeon and Levi, in slaying the Shechemites, brought on them a curse; and accordingly their father pronounced it, and tells them, that God would divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.' This had its particular accomplishment in Levi's having no distinct inheritance, except those cities which were appointed out of every tribe. But this dividing and scattering of the Levites throughout the whole country, was overruled by the providence of God, for the good of his people in general; for thereby this tribe, which God had ordained 'to teach Jacob his judgments and Israel his law,'u was, through the nearness of their habitation, conveniently situated among them to answer that end. We might farther observe, that Saul's unreasonable jealousy and fury in persecuting David, were overruled by providence for his good. In his exile, he had a greater degree of communion with God than at other times, and, as is more than probable, was inspired to pen the greater number of his Psalms, and was, as it were, trained for the crown in the school of affliction, and so more fitted to govern Israel, when God designed to put it on his head. Let me add, that God's suffering the persecuting rage of the Jews to vent itself against the apostles, when the gospel was first preached by them, was overruled by providence for their scattering, and this for the farther spread of the gospel wherever they went. The apostle Paul observes, that 'his bonds in Christ were not only manifest in all the palace, and in all other places,' but were made conducive to 'the furtherance of the gospel.' As for that contention which occurred, at one time, between him and Barnabas, in which each of them showed that they were but men, subject to like passions and infirmities with others, it seems to have been occasioned by a small and inconsiderable circumstance, and yet rose to such a height,

that 'they departed one from the other.'y Each seemed to be overmuch tenacious of his own humour. But providence suffered the corruption of these excellent men to discover itself, and their separation to ensue, that, by this means, their ministry might be rendered more extensive, and double service be done to the interest of Christ in different parts of the world. We might descend to instances of later date, and consider how God suffered the church of Rome to arrive at the greatest pitch of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, and wholly to forsake the faith of the gospel, so as to establish the doctrine of merit, and human satisfactions; how he suffered its leaders to be so profanely absurd, as to expose pardons and indulgences to public sale; and how his providence overruled all for bringing about the glorious Reformation in Germany. If it be added, that pride, lust, and covetousness, paved the way for it here in England, the fact is no blemish to the Reformation, as the Papists pretend, but a display of the overruling providence of God which brought it about by this means.

I might enlarge on this subject, in considering the providence of God as bringing about wonderful and unexpected changes in the civil affairs of kingdoms and nations, remarkably bringing down some who made the greatest figure in the world, and putting a glory on others raised up out of their ruins. We might show likewise how all political affairs have been rendered subservient to answer the ends of the divine glory, with respect to the church in the world, and the deliverances which God has in various ages wrought for it, when it was, to all appearance, on the brink of ruin. Of this we have many instances not only in scripture, but in the history of almost every age of the world. We might also consider the methods which God has often taken to bring about his people's deliverance, when, to an eye of reason, it seemed almost impossible; and how he has either dispirited their enemies, or removed them out of the way, or found

them some other work to do for their own safety and defence. 'The stout-hearted are spoiled; they have slept their sleep; and none of the men of might have found their hands.' When Saul was pursuing David, in the wilderness of Maon, and had compassed him and his men round about to take them, there came a messenger to him, saying, 'Haste thee and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land.'a Sometimes also he softens their spirits, by a secret and immediate touch of providence, working a change in their natural temper and disposition. Thus he provided for Jacob's escape, from that death which was designed by his brother Esau. And if God intends that his people shall fall by the hand of their persecutors, he gives them courage and resolution, together with the exercise of all those graces which are necessary to support them under and carry them through the difficulties which they have to undergo. But these considerations are so largely insisted on by those who have written professedly on the doctrine of providence, that more needs not be said on this subject. I shall therefore only consider an objection or two, generally brought against it by those who pretend to acknowledge that there is a God, but deny his providence.

It is objected against the concern of the providence of God, with respect to the smallest things in this world, that they are unworthy of his notice, below his care, and therefore not the objects of his providence. But if it was not unbecoming his power to bring the smallest things into being, or to preserve them from sinking into nothing, they cannot be excluded from being the objects of his providence. If we consider the whole frame of nature, it cannot be denied, that some things have a tendency to answer the general design of providence, in a more eminent degree than others, and that there are many things, the use of which cannot be particularly discerned by us, otherwise than as they constitute a small part of the frame of nature. But to say that any part of that frame is altogether

useless, or excluded from being the object of providence, is a reflection on God, as the God of nature. We must hence conclude, that all things are, some way or other, subject to his providence; and that this is so far from being a dishonour to him, that it redounds to his glory.

It is further objected, by those who are disposed to cavil at and find fault with the divine dispensations, that they are not just and equal, because we often see the righteous afflicted, and the wicked posperous in the world. To say this is to reproach, if not wholly to deny, the doctrine of providence. Not only wicked men say it, but believers themselves have sometimes been under a temptation, through the prevalency of corrupt nature, to bring their objections against the equity of providence. Thus the psalmist says, 'But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.' 'These are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.' As for himself, he says, 'Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.'d The prophet Jeremiah, also, when pleading with God concerning his judgments, though he owns, in general, that God was 'righteous,' yet says, 'Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root; they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.' He could hardly reconcile the general idea which he had of God's justice, with the seeming inequality of the dispensations of his providence. The prophet Habakkuk, likewise, though he owns that God was 'of purer eyes than to behold evil,' and that 'he cannot look upon iniquity,' yet

seems to complain, in the following words, 'Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?'f And Job seems to speak very unbecomingly, when he says, 'Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress? that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands? and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?' So that, as the wicked boldly deny a providence, or at least reproach it, others, of a far better character, have, through the prevalency of their unbelief, seemed to detract from its glory.

Now we may reply in general, in the apostle's words, 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' Is there no deference to be paid to his sovereignty, who has a right to do what he will with his own? Is his justice to be impeached and tried at our bar, or his wisdom to be measured by our short-sighted discerning of things, who cannot see the end from the beginning of his dispensations? It is true, good men have been sometimes tempted to question the equity of the distributions of providence, as in the instances just mentioned. We might suppose, indeed, that the prophets Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Job, rather speak the sense of the world, than their own sentiments of things, and desire that God would clear up some dark providences in order that wicked men might not bring their objections against them. It may be doubted, however, whether this be the sense of those scriptures or not. As for the psalmist, it is plain, that, in the scripture quoted, he expresses the weakness of his own faith, which was sometimes almost overset; yet, at other times, God condescends to resolve his doubts, and bring him into a better frame, as appears by some following verses.—But, that we may give a more particular reply, let it be considered that the unequal distribution of things is so far from being a disparagement to any government, that it eminently sets forth its beauty, wisdom, and excellency, and is, in some respects, necessary. As it is not fit that every subject should be

advanced to the same honour, or that the favour of a prince should be dispensed alike to all; so it sets forth the beauty of providence, as God is the Governor of the world, that some should appear to be more eminently the objects of his favour than others.—Again, the wicked, whose condition is supposed, by those who bring this objection, to be more happy than that of the righteous, will not appear, if things were duly weighed, to be so happy as they are pretended to be. By the evils to which they are exposed at present, some of which are the immediate result and consequence of sin, they are, as it were, tortured and distracted with contrary lusts and passions, which militate against the dictates of human nature, and render the pleasures of sin little desirable in themselves. Those tormenting reflections also which they sometimes have after the commission of sin, are altogether inconsistent with peace or happiness, much more if we consider the end of sin, as leading to everlasting destruction. Accordingly, it is said, 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.' The good man, therefore, would not change conditions with the wicked, how destitute soever he may be of those riches, honours, or sensual pleasures which the other reckons his portion. 'A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.'k—As for the good man, who is supposed to be in an afflicted condition in this life, we are not to conclude that he is, in all respects, unhappy; but we are to judge of his state by its end. He who looks upon Lazarus, as full of sores and destitute of many of the conveniencies of life, may reckon him to have been unhappy here, when compared with the condition of the rich man, who is represented in the parable as 'clothed with purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day.' But if we consider him, when leaving the world, as 'carried by angels into Abraham's bosom,' while the other was plunged into an abyss of misery, no one will see reason to charge the providence of

God with any neglect of him, or to regard him as really miserable because of his condition in the present life.—Moreover, if we consider the righteous in his most disadvantageous circumstances as to his outward condition, we must regard him as, notwithstanding these, an object of divine love, and made partaker of those graces and inward comforts which are more than a balance for all his outward troubles. We may say of him, as the apostle does of himself, that though he is 'unknown,' that is, obscure, and as it were disowned by the world, yet he is 'well known,' that is, approved and beloved of God. Does he live an afflicted and dying life? He has, notwithstanding, a better life, which is maintained by God. Is he chastened? He, notwithstanding, is not killed. Is he sorrowful? He, notwithstanding, always 'rejoiceth.' Is he poor? He, notwithstanding, 'maketh many rich.' Has he nothing, as to outward things? He, notwithstanding, 'possesseth all things,' as he is an heir of eternal life.

PROVIDENCE TOWARD ANGELS

QUESTION XIX. What is God's providence towards the angels?

ANSWER. God, by his providence, permitted some of the angels, wilfully and irrecoverably, to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that, and all their sins, to his own glory; and established the rest in holiness and happiness; employing them all at his pleasure, in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice.

IT was observed, in a foregoing Answer, that God created all the angels holy. But in this Answer some of them are described as fallen,

while the rest retained their first integrity; and the providence of God is considered as conversant about this matter in different respects.

Providence toward the Fallen Angels

It is said that 'God, by his providence, permitted some of the angels to fall.' This appears by the event; because there are some wicked and impure spirits, sunk down into the depths of misery, from that state in which they were created, as the consequence of their rebellion against God. And as it was only a part of the angels that fell, we may infer that the dispensation of providence towards the angels was different from that which mankind was subject to when first created; or that one of them was not constituted the head and representative of the rest, in whom they were all to stand or fall, but that the happiness or misery of every one of them was to be the result of his own personal conduct. As their persisting in obedience to God was necessary to their establishment in holiness and happiness, so the least instance of rebellion against him would bring inevitable ruin upon them. Now, that which is observed concerning a part of them, is, that they fell into sin and damnation. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell.' Their sin, or fall, was wilful; they commenced an open war against their Creator. Herein that enmity to God and goodness took its rise, which has ever since, in various instances, been expressed by them. Their sin appears to have been wilful, in as much as it was committed against the greatest degree of light, for all the angels are described as 'excelling in knowledge.' That subtilty also, which discovers itself in the fallen angels, and which is knowledge abused and depraved with sin, argues that their knowledge, before they fell, was very great, and that therefore their rebellion was aggravated in proportion. Moreover, they sinned without a tempter, especially those who first took up arms against God. Whether others, by their

instigation, might not be induced to sin, we know not.n But this is certain, that the rebellion was begun without a tempter. There were no fallen creatures to present a temptation, nor any corruption in their natures, which internally drew them aside from God. Their sin, therefore, might well be styled wilful. The consequence was their irrecoverable ruin. This respects the event of their fall. God designed for ever to leave them in that sinful and miserable state, into which they hereby brought themselves. He might, indeed, have recovered them, as well as sinful man, had he pleased; but he has provided no mediator, no surety, to give satisfaction for them. The blessed Jesus is expressly said, not to have 'taken their nature upon him,'— language which intimates that their condition was irretrievable, and their misery to be eternal.

Now, it is farther observed, that the providence of God was conversant about their sin and fall, in the same sense in which, as has been before observed, it is conversant about sin in general. This is consistent with God's holiness, as well as his other perfections, namely, in permitting, limiting, and ordering their fall and all their other sins, to his own glory.

1. He permitted their fall. To permit, is not to prevent a sin; and to say that God did not prevent their fall, is to assert a truth which none ever denied, or thought necessary to be proved.

2. The providence of God sets bounds and limits to their sin; as it does to the waves of the sea, when he says, 'Hitherto shall ye go, and no farther.' How destructive to mankind would the malice of fallen angels be, were it not restrained! What would not Satan attempt against us, had he an unlimited power! We have a remarkable instance of this in the case of Job. Satan first accused him as a time-serving hypocrite, a mercenary professor, one that did not 'fear God

for nought;' and how desirous was he that providence would give him up to his will, and take away the hedge of its safe protection! But God would not do this. Nevertheless, so far as Satan was suffered, he poured in a confluence of evils upon him, but could proceed no farther. First, he was suffered to plunder him of his substance, and take away his children, by a violent death, but was so restrained, that 'upon himself' he was 'not to put forth his hand.'p Afterwards he was permitted to touch his person; and then we read of his smiting him with 'sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown.' But yet he was not suffered to take away his life. After this, the devil's malice still growing stronger against him, he endeavours to weaken his faith, to drive him into despair, and to rob him of that inward peace which might have given some allay to his other troubles; but he is not suffered to destroy his graces, or to hurry him into a total apostacy from God. What would not fallen angels attempt against mankind, were not their sin limited by the providence of God!

3. God's providence ordered or overruled the fall of angels, and all sins consequent upon it, to his own glory. Their power, indeed, though limited, is great; as appears by the innumerable instances of those who have been, not only tempted, but overthrown and ruined by them. It may truly be said of them, that 'they have cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by them.' Nevertheless, God overrules their power for his own glory; for he hence takes occasion to try his people's graces, to give them a humbling sense of the corruption of their nature, and of their inability to stand in the hour of temptation without his immediate assistance, and puts them upon imploring help from him with great importunity. The apostle Paul did this, when 'the messenger of Satan' was suffered 'to buffet him,' and God took occasion, at the same time, to display that 'grace which was sufficient for him,' and that 'strength which was made perfect in weakness,' and, in the end, to bruise

Satan under his feet, and to make him more than a conqueror over him.

Having thus considered some of the angels, as sinning and falling, it might farther be inquired, whether these all fell at once. Here I cannot but take notice of a very absurd and groundless conjecture of some of the Fathers, and of others who, of late, have been too much inclined to adopt it, that though some of the angels sinned from the beginning, and these were the occasion of the sin of our first parents, as all allow, yet, after this, others who were appointed to minister to men were unfaithful in the discharge of their office, and became partners with them in sin. Accordingly they understand that scripture, in which it is said, 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose,' as though it were meant of angels;t whereas it designates only some of the posterity of Seth who, before the period of which it speaks, were professors of the true religion. There are, indeed, some of late, who have adopted this notion, and strain the sense of that text in Jude, in which it is said, that 'the angels which kept not their first estate, &c. even as Sodom and Gomorrha, giving themselves over to fornication, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' The meaning of that passage they suppose to be, that, even as the Sodomites were guilty of fornication, and were destroyed for it by fire from heaven, so some of the angels were sent down to hell for the same sin. But, it is plain that the apostle does not here compare the angels and the Sodomites, as guilty of the same kind of sin, but as being both condemned to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, and both set forth as warnings to presumptuous sinners. Nothing more needs be added under this Head. It is enough to say, that the opinion in question is contrary to the spirituality of the nature of angels. There are some ancient writers, indeed, who, to give countenance to it, have supposed that

the angelic spirits were either united to some bodies, or that they assumed them for the purpose. But this conjecture is absurd, and without any countenance from scripture. Thus concerning the providence of God as exercised towards the angels that fell.

Providence toward the Holy Angels

Providence is conversant also about the rest of the angels, who retain their integrity. Concerning these it is said, that 'God established them in holiness and happiness.' These two privileges are always connected together. It is not said, that they were brought into such a state, or, like man, recovered out of a fallen state; for they are considered as sinless or holy angels. Nor is it supposed that their holiness was increased; for to suppose this would be inconsistent with its having been perfect before. That privilege, which providence conferred on them, was the confirming or establishing of them in that state in which they were created. This privilege bears some resemblance to that which man would have enjoyed, had he retained his integrity; as he would not only have continued to be holy and happy so long as he remained innocent, but he would have been so confirmed in it, that his fall would have been prevented. Of this, more shall be said in its proper place. Now the angels had something like this; which we call the grace of confirmation.

Some have inquired whether this was the result of their yielding perfect obedience for a time, while remaining in a state of probation, pursuant to some covenant, not much unlike that which God made with innocent man. In other words, they inquire whether this privilege was the consequence of their fulfilling the condition of such a covenant. But this is to enter too far into things out of our reach; nor is it much for our edification to determine the question, though some have asserted without proving it. Others have supposed the

angels were confirmed when first created, and that in their being so, there was among them an instance of discriminating grace, so that they who fell, were left to the mutability of their wills, while they who stood had the grace of confirmation.—I might here have been more particular, in considering what this privilege imports, and how it renders the fall of those who are confirmed impossible, and therefore is a very considerable addition to their happiness. But as we shall have occasion under a following Answer, to speak of the grace of confirmation which man was given to expect in the first covenant, and of the privileges which would have attended it had he stood, we shall add no more on that subject in this place, but proceed to prove that the angels are established and confirmed in holiness and happiness. This may, in some measure, be argued, from their being called 'elect angels.' If election, when applied to men, imports the purpose of God to confer everlasting blessedness on those who are its objects, and so implies not only that they shall be saved, but that their salvation shall be eternal; why may it not, when applied to angels, infer the eternity of their holiness and happiness, and consequently their being established in these? Again, this may be argued from their coming with Christ when he shall appear to judge the world, and from the joining of the saints and angels together in one assembly in heaven. If the happiness of the one be eternal, that of the other must be so likewise. It is also said expressly of the angels, that 'they always behold the face of God.' And when we read of the destruction of the church's enemies, the angels are represented as observers of God's righteous judgments; and then it is added, that the punishment inflicted on those who shall 'drink of the wine of the wrath of God,' shall be eternal, and that this eternal punishment will be 'in the presence of the holy angels.'y If, therefore, the duration of the holiness and happiness of the angels be equal to that of the misery of God's implacable enemies, it follows that, as both are said to be eternal, the angels are established in holiness and happiness.

The Ministry of Angels

It is farther observed, that God employs all the angels at his pleasure in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice. This leads us to speak concerning the ministry of angels, which is either extraordinary or ordinary. Most of the instances which we have of it, especially in the Old Testament, were performed in an extraordinary manner; and sometimes it was attended with their appearance in a human form, assumed for the purpose of their ministering. We may briefly consider the fact of the ministry of angels, and then inquire whether, though their ministry be not visible or attended with such circumstances as it formerly was, there are not some other instances in which the providence of God now employs them for the good of his church.—As to the former, we read that God has sometimes sent them to supply his servants with necessary food when destitute of it, and when there was no ordinary way for their procuring it. Thus an angel brought a cake and a cruse of water to Elijah when he was on his journey to Horeb, the mount of God. And when Abraham's servant was travelling to Mesopotamia, to bring a wife thence for Isaac Abraham tells him that 'God would send his angel before him,'a and so make his journey prosperous.—Again, the angels have sometimes been sent to defend God's people, and to assure them of safety when exposed to danger. Thus, when Jacob was returning from Laban to his own country, and was apprehensive of the danger to which he was exposed from the resentment of his brother Esau, it is said that 'the angels of God met him; and, when he saw them, he said, This is God's host.' And when the prophet Elijah was encompassed about by the Syrian army, sent on purpose to take him, he was defended by an host of angels appearing under the emblem of horses and chariots of fire round about him.c Others, when persecuted, and, as it were, delivered over to death, have been preserved, as Daniel was when cast into the lions' den, by the

ministry of angels. Others have been released by them from their chains, and had their prison doors opened, as Peter and the rest of the apostles.e—Sometimes, also, angels have been employed to deliver messages, and to give the prophets an extraordinary intimation of future events, as the angel Gabriel did to Daniel. An angel was sent to Zacharias to foretell the birth of his son, John the Baptist.'g—Moreover, the angels of God have sometimes been employed to give a check to his enemies, when they have attempted anything against his church. Thus, the angel met Balaam in the way, when he was riding to seek enchantments against Israel; 'his way being perverse before God.' Another angel was sent, as a minister of God's justice, to bring the pestilence on Israel for David's numbering the people; and he appeared 'with his hand stretched out upon Jerusalem to destroy it,' and afterwards withdrew his hand, when God told him, 'It is enough,' and that 'it repented him of the evil.'—We may add, that the angels shall be employed at last in gathering together the elect from the four winds, that they may appear before Christ's tribunal. These, and many other similar instances, are mentioned in scripture, to set forth the extraordinary ministry of angels.

There are also other instances, in which, though miracles have ceased, the angels are employed to perform some works in the hand of providence for God's people. Accordingly, there are some promises, which seem to he applied to the church in all ages, of blessings which should be conferred by their ministry. Thus it is said, 'He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.' This scripture, though it may have a particular reference to their ministry to our Saviour, yet seems to be applicable also to his people. And that promise, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them,'l is

applicable to the people of God in all ages; as well as that in which it is said, concerning the ministry of angels to infants, that 'in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven.' Moreover, the ministry of angels to dying saints, who are, according to what our Saviour says in the parable, 'carried,' by them, 'into Abraham's bosom,'n is true of all saints. It is expressly said, also, with a peculiar application to the gospel-dispensation, that the angels are 'all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' Hence, though their ministry, as to many circumstances of it, differs from what it was of old, there being nothing miraculous now attending it as formerly there was, yet it remains an undoubted truth, that they are and have been in all ages made use of, by the providence of God, in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice. [See Note 3 C, below.]

I shall conclude this Head with a few cautions relating to this matter; as this doctrine is not to be laid down without certain restrictions, or limitations.

1. We must take heed, notwithstanding what has been said concerning the ministry of angels, that we do not take occasion to set aside the immediate influence or concern of the providence of God for his church. Whatever may be ascribed to angels, as second causes, our principal regard must be to him whose ministers they are. Nor are we to entertain even a remote thought that God has committed to them the government of the world or the church. This the apostle expressly denies, when he says, 'Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come.'

2. The praise and glory of all their ministry is not to be ascribed to them, but to him who makes use of them; nor are we to pretend, at all times, to determine, that this or that particular dispensation of

providence is by the immediate hand of God, and another by the ministry of angels. It is enough for us to say, that, though God does not need their assistance, he sometimes sets forth the sovereignty of his providence, and evinces his right to employ all his creatures at his pleasure, as well as gives an additional instance of his care of his churches, by employing them in extraordinary services for their good; though we cannot, at all times, distinguish between what is done by the immediate hand of God, and things performed by their ministry.

3. Whatever we assert concerning the ministry of angels, we must take heed that we do not regard them as objects of divine worship, or exercise that dependence on, or give that glory to, them which is due to God alone. Nor are we to suppose, that God employs them in those works which are the effects of his supernatural or almighty power; in which he deals with the hearts of his people, in a way more immediately conducive to their conversion and salvation.

[NOTE 3 C. The Ministry of Angels.—More is said by most theological writers, and even by Dr. Ridgeley, respecting the ministry of angels, than scripture seems to warrant. That angels do minister, in some manner, to the church, is certain; but that they minister in any such prominent way as theological writers usually represent them to do, is more than doubtful. Passages which intimate their ministration, either speak in general terms, or narrate instances of acting which are far from being so signal as are popularly ascribed to their agency. Most, if not all, of the peculiarly glorious actions which they are usually said to perform, are affirmed of them on the authority of texts which appear to speak of the Angel of the Covenant,—the Angel who conducted Israel from Egypt, and made himself known, as 'I AM,' 'Jehovah,' 'the God of Abraham.' One instance quoted by Dr. Ridgeley, is that of the Angel who brought a

cake and a cruse of oil to Elijah in the desert. Now, though, on the first mention of that person in the narrative, he is called simply, 'an Angel, or 'the Angel;' yet he is afterwards called 'the Angel of the Lord,' or 'the Angel Jehovah.' Even his first appearance, too, was preceded by a prayer on the part of Elijah, which would seem to leave little doubt, or none, that he was the Angel of the Covenant: 'It is enough: now, O Jehovah, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers,' See 1 Kings 19:4–7. Another instance quoted by Dr. Ridgeley is, that of the Angel who appeared to Balaam. Yet not only, in all of nine times in which he is mentioned in the narrative, is that Angel called 'the Angel Jehovah;' but he uses words, claims prerogatives, and is spoken of in language which seem appropriate only to Deity. To say nothing of its being difficult not to identify the Angel with 'Jehovah' in at least one part of the narrative, he appears throughout to speak and to influence Balaam in a divine manner. He says to the infatuated prophet, 'Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy why is perverse before me;' and 'Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.' Balaam, notwithstanding his own perverseness and his disposition to resist even a divine message, 'bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face,' when he beheld the angel; and 'he said unto the Angel Jehovah, I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again,' Numb. 22:22–35. A third instance quoted by Dr. Ridgeley, is still more remarkable; and, even apart from the strong light thrown upon it by the context, appears very distinctly, not only to refer to the Angel of the Covenant, but to describe him as engaged in his mediatorial work of guardianship and care over his redeemed church: 'The angel of the Lord,' or the Angel Jehovah, 'encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them,' Psal. 34:7. Who can imagine that the constant protection of God's people, and the deliverance of them from enemies and dangers, are effected by

any angel but him who 'redeemed Jacob from all evil?' The ascribing of such works to created angels—works which peculiarly belong to 'Him who keeps Israel, and who slumbers not nor sleeps'—is just the crowning error into which men are liable to fall, who theorize minutely and systematically upon the ministry of angels. The sum of what scripture teaches on the subject appears to be that angels do minister, and that their ministry is all of such a nature as perfectly comports with the entire subordination of the creature, the supreme glory of the Deity, and the personal mediatorial administration of the Redeemer and Head of the church. How, in what particulars, or where they minister, we are not told. Enough is said respecting their ministry to show that all things are subordinated to the administration of Messiah for the gathering and well-being of his ransomed: and enough is withheld to caution every man who would trust only in the Lord, not to be 'beguiled of his reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God,' Col. 2:18–20.

When conjecture is let loose on any subject not fully revealed, it seldom fails to run a long and eccentric career of speculation. Not a few persons have not only ascribed particular provinces and specific classes of works or operations to angels, but also assigned a guardian or protecting angel to each human being, or at least to each saint and infant. There are just two passages on which they found this notion. One is that in which several disciples, astonished to be told that the apostle Peter was abroad from prison, said, 'It is his angel,' Acts 11:15. But this proves only that some among the Jews, like not a few among the heathens, believed in the doctrine of guardian angels; for neither in itself, nor by light derived from the context, does it teach

whether the doctrine be true or false. The other passage is that in which our Lord says, 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that, in heaven, their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,' Matt. 18:10. Now, not only are angels here spoken of in the aggregate, but they are described as forming one great community with the saved, and as always employed in contemplating the heavenly manifestation of the divine glory. To say that believers have an interest in whatever is great and glorious in the universe—that 'all things are theirs,' whether the apostles, or 'the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come,'—that theirs are the angels who continually behold the divine glory—that they are come to 'the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven'—to say this respecting them is to exhibit a truly splendid reason why men should take heed 'not to offend them,' or to cast a stumbling-block in their way. But is it a reason equally intelligible to say that each of them has a guardian angel? Or if it be, would it not become more intelligible, and unutterably more glorious, if that angel, in regard to each as well as to all of them, were viewed as the Angel who made his Covenant with ancient Israel, and led them through the wilderness into the promised land? Instead of speculating as to what may or may not be in a matter not revealed,—instead of spending efforts to find some assurance for the conjecture that there are created guardian angels—the mind of a believer delights to meditate on a divine angelic guardianship of which he is made certain. 'For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old,' Isa. 63:8, 9.

Another popular conjecture is, that there are two great classes of angels, or that there are angels and archangels. Now the word 'archangel' occurs in scripture only in the singular number, and appears to denote but one person. The etymological structure of it, too, would seem to intimate that the person whom it designates is 'the ruler of angels.' Paul speaks jointly of 'the voice of the archangel and the trump of God,' not indeed, as if they were the same in identity, yet as if they were the same in dignity. Jude, it is true, speaks of Michael, the archangel.'—a phrase which, by itself, might possibly be construed to imply that Michael is one of a class. But the derivation or intrinsic import of the name Michael is, 'Who is like God?' and he is described, by the prophet Daniel, as 'the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people, who shall stand up, and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt,' Dan. 12:1–3. Similar remarks might be made respecting 'the angel Gabriel;' whose name and recorded ministrations are so peculiar as at least to suggest great caution to an interpreter of the texts of scripture in which he is mentioned.—ED.]

PROVIDENCE TOWARD MAN IN PARADISE

QUESTION XX. What was the Providence of God toward man in the estate wherein he was created?

ANSWER. The providence of God toward man, in the estate wherein he was created, was, the placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of

the earth, putting the creatures under his dominion, and ordaining marriage for his help, affording him communion with himself, instituting the Sabbath, entering into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience; of which the tree of life was a pledge; and forbidding to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.

IN this Answer, we have an account of the providence of God, respecting the outward and the spiritual concerns of man.

Man's outward Condition in Innocence

1. As to man's outward state, we have an account, first, of God's fixing the place of his abode. This was in paradise, a very large and most delightful garden, of God's own planting,—an epitome of all the beauties of nature, which, as it were, presented to his view the whole world in miniature, so that herein he might, without travelling many miles, behold the most beautiful landscape which the world afforded, and partake of all the fruits with which it was stored. The whole world, indeed, was given him for a possession; but this was, as it were, a storehouse of its choicest fruits, and the peculiar seat of his residence.

We find the word 'paradise' used, in scripture, sometimes to signify a delightful garden, and sometimes, in a metaphorical sense, to signify heaven. From the latter application of it, we may conclude that the earthly paradise in which man was placed, was a kind of type of the heavenly blessedness, which, had he retained his integrity, he would have been possessed of, and which they, who are saved by Christ, shall be brought to. Here we may take notice of the conjectures of some ancient and modern writers concerning it; more especially as to what part of the world it was situated in, and whether it is now in

existence, or to be found in any part at this day. Many have given great scope to their wit and fancy about the situation of paradise; and some conjectures are so absurd, that they hardly deserve to be mentioned.

Some have thought that paradise was situated in some place, superior to and remote from the globe of the earth, in which we live. But they have not the least shadow of reason for their supposition; and nothing can be more contrary to the account we have of it in scripture.—Others fancy, that there was really no such place, but that the whole account we have of it in the second chapter of Genesis is allegorical. Origen, Philo, and some modern writers, are of this opinion. But no one can justly assert it who duly weighs the historical account in scripture, with that sobriety and impartiality that he ought. On the same principle of reasoning on which it is founded, we may turn anything into an allegory, and so never come to any determinate sense of scripture, but what the wild fancies of men suggest.—Others again have supposed that the whole world was one great garden or paradise, and that, when man was placed in it, it was described as a garden, to signify the beauties of nature, before they were lost by the curse consequent on sin. But this cannot be true, because God first made man, and then 'planted the garden,' and afterwards 'put him into it;' and, after the fall, he 'drove him out of it.'s

Passing by these groundless conjectures, something may be determined with more certainty concerning the situation of paradise, and more agreeable to scripture. It was situated in Mesopotamia, near Babylon, to the north-east of the land of Canaan. This appears from the country adjacent to it, which is called 'Eden,' out of which 'the river that watered it' is said to proceed. This country was afterwards known by the same name, and is elsewhere reckoned

among those that the king of Assyria had conquered.u Again, two of the rivers which proceeded from Eden and watered paradise were well-known in after-ages, namely, Hiddekel, or Tigris, and Euphrates. The latter especially is often mentioned in scripture. It is certain that these rivers were in Mesopotamia; and hence the garden of Eden was there. And as it was the finest plantation in the world, this was one of the most pleasant climates therein; not situated too far north, so as to be frozen up in winter; nor too near the equator southward, so as to be scorched with excessive heat in summer. This was the place of man's residence at first. But if any are so curious in their inquiries as to desire to know the particular spot of ground in which it was, this is not to be determined. For, though the place where paradise was must be still in being as much as any other part of the world, yet there are no remains of it which can give any satisfaction to the curiosity of men with respect to its particular locality. It is certain that it was soon destroyed as a garden, partly by the flaming sword, or stream of fire, which was designed to guard the way of the tree of life that man might no more come to it, and which intimated that that tree ceased to be an ordinance for his faith concerning the way in which eternal life was to be obtained. It is more than probable that this stream of fire, which is called a flaming sword, destroyed or burnt up the garden. The curse of God, also, by which the earth brought forth briars and thorns, affected this as well as other parts of the world; so that, on account of that curse, and for want of culture, the garden soon lost its beauty, and so could not well be distinguished from the barren wilderness. Let me add that, since the flood, the face of the earth is so altered that it is a vain thing for travellers to search for any traces of it, or to pretend to determine within a few miles the place where it was.

2. Having considered the place of man's abode, we have next an account of his secular employment therein. He was appointed to

dress or manure the garden. Here we may take occasion to observe, that a secular employment is not inconsistent with perfect holiness, or with a person's enjoying communion with God, and that blessedness which arises from it. On the contrary, it may be reckoned an advantage, in as much as it is a preservative against idleness, and those temptations which often attend it. Yet though man was employed in this work, it was performed without the labour, fatigue, and uneasiness, which now attend it, or those disappointments and perplexities which men are now exposed to, whose secular callings are a relief against poverty, and a necessary means for their comfortable subsistence in the world. But had not man fallen, secular callings would not have been attended with those inconveniencies which accompany them now, and which are the consequence of the curse entailed by sin. Accordingly it is said, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.'

3. We have next an account of the provision which providence made for man's subsistence. The great variety of fruits which the earth produced, were given him for food, the tree of knowledge of good and evil only excepted. Here we may observe the difference between the condition of man in paradise, and that of the saints in heaven; in which the bodies of men shall be supported without food, when changed and adapted to a way of living inconsistent with the present state. This seems to be the meaning of that expression of the apostle, 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.'

We may here inquire, whether the fruits of the earth were the only food which man lived on, not only before the fall, but in several following ages; or whether flesh was eaten before the flood? It seems most agreeable to the dictates of nature, to suppose that man would never have found out such an expedient, as killing the beasts and

eating their flesh to subsist him, had he not received from God an express direction to do it, which rendered it a duty. We have a particular intimation of this grant given to Noah after the deluge, when God says, 'Every moving thing that liveth,' namely, every clean beast, 'shall be meat for you.' From this some conclude that there was no flesh eaten before the flood, and that the distinction which we read of concerning clean and unclean beasts which Noah brought with him into the ark, either respected such as were fit or unfit for sacrifice, or, by a kind of prolepsis, denoted what should be clean or unclean when God afterwards gave them for food. The principal reason which induces some to suppose this is, that when God directed Noah and his posterity to eat flesh, and considered this as a peculiar gift of providence, he said, 'Even as the green herb have I given you all things.' This is understood to have a meaning as if he had said, 'As when I created man at first, I gave him every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, that it should be to him for meat; so now have I given you all things, that is, have made a considerable addition to your food, by giving you a liberty to feed on flesh.'a Here, it is alleged, the manner of expression seems to intimate that, as respects an addition being made, man's food differed from what it was before. This conjecture—for that is the most that I can call it—seems to me to have equal if not greater probability than the contrary or commonly received opinion. And, if the conjecture be just, we may, by comparing the food by which man subsisted with the length of his life in the first ages of the world, infer that the most simple diet is the most wholesome. When men become slaves to their appetites, and pamper themselves with variety of meats, they, as it were, dig their own graves, and render their lives shorter than they would be according to the common course of nature.

It may, perhaps, be objected, that man's not feeding on flesh, was such a limitation of his happiness as seems inconsistent with a state of innocency. But for man to feed on what the earth produced, was no mortification or unhappiness to him; especially if it were, by a peculiar blessing of providence, adapted to, as well as designed for, his nourishment, as being his only food; for in this case, none of those consequences would ensue which would now attend a person's being wholly confined to it. If this way of living was so far from destroying or weakening the constitution of man, that it tended, by the peculiar blessing of God, not only to nourish but to maintain health, and was medicinal as well as nourishing, and so conducive to long life; and if the fruits of the earth, before that alteration which they probably sustained by the deluge, or at least before the curse of God was brought upon the earth by man's sin, differed vastly from what they now are, as to both the pleasantness of their taste and their virtue to nourish,—if these things are supposed, it cannot be reckoned any degree of unhappiness, that man in his state of innocence had no other food than what the earth produced. This, however, I reckon among the number of those probable conjectures, concerning which it is not very material to determine whether they are true or false.

4. God gave man dominion over all creatures in this world, or as it is expressed, he 'put them under his feet.' This argues not only a superiority of nature to them, but a propriety in them, and a liberty to use them, to the glory of God and man's own advantage. No creature was in itself a snare to him, or a necessary occasion of sin; for as the creature at first, to use the apostle's phrase, was not liable to 'the bondage of corruption,' so it was not 'subject to vanity,'c by any inclination that he had in his nature to abuse it. As for those creatures which are now formidable to man, as the lion, the tiger, &c., they had not, as is more than probable, their present fierceness

of nature, before the fall of man, and the curse consequent upon it; so that our first parents could make as much use of them, and had them as much under their command, as we have the tamest creatures. It is not improbable, too, that they did not prey upon and devour one another, as now they do, since providence provided the produce of the earth 'for their food,' so that, by a natural instinct, they sought it only thence. The beasts devouring one another, therefore, as well as their being injurious to man, is a standing mark of the curse of God consequent on sin. We read of a time in which the church is given to expect, that 'the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain.'e This, if it shall be literally accomplished, is an intimation that it was so at first; as it contains a prediction of the restoring of this part of nature, in some respects, to its first estate. But, supposing it to be only a metaphorical description of the church's happy state in future ages, the prophet's using the metaphor argues the possibility of the thing having been literally true, and that it is a consequence of man's fallen state that it is not so now. Such conjectures as these may be excused, if we do not set them forth as articles of faith, or think it worth our while to contend with those who deny them.

5. God ordained marriage for man's help; and that not only in what concerns the conveniencies of this life, but as a means to promote his spiritual welfare, such a nearness of relation imposing the strongest obligations to promote it. Another design of marriage was that the world might be increased, without any sinful expedient. In the institution of it in paradise, there was a standing precedent to be observed by mankind in all succeeding ages, that hereby the unlawfulness of polygamy, and other violations of the seventh commandment, might evidently appear.

Man's Communion with God in Paradise

We proceed to consider the providence of God, as conversant about man's spiritual concerns; and that in three respects, namely, in granting him communion with himself, in instituting the sabbath, and in entering into a covenant of life with him.

Man, in the state in which he was created, was favoured with communion with God. This supposes a state of friendship, and is opposed to estrangement, separation, or alienation from him. As the result of it, God was pleased to manifest his glory to man. Nor did he do this only in an objective way, or merely by giving him a conviction that he is a God of infinite perfection; for this a person may have, who is destitute of communion with him. But God displayed his perfections to him in such a manner as to let him see his interest in them, and to show him that, as long as he retained his integrity, they were engaged to make him happy. Moreover, this communion was attended with access to God, without fear, and with a great delight in his presence. Man, being without guilt, was not afraid to draw nigh to God; and, being without spot, as made after his image, he had no shame or confusion of face when standing before him as a holy, sin-hating God. The communion consisted also in his being made partaker of those divine influences, whereby he was excited to put forth acts of holy obedience to, and love and delight in God, which were a spring and fountain of spiritual joy.

Yet, though this communion was perfect in its kind, as agreeable to the state in which he was at first, it was not so perfect, as to degree, as it would have been, had he continued in his integrity, till he was possessed of those blessings which would have been the consequence; for then the soul would have been more enlarged, and made receptive of greater degrees of communion, which he would

have enjoyed in heaven. He was, indeed, at first in a holy and happy state, yet he was not in heaven; and, though he enjoyed God, it was in ordinances, and not in an immediate way. Accordingly, it was necessary for him constantly to address himself to him, for the maintenance of that spiritual life which he had received together with his being. This was not inconsistent with a state of innocency, any more than the maintenance of our natural lives, by the use of proper food, is inconsistent with health, or argues an infirm or sickly constitution, or any need of medicine to recover it. Yet our lives would be more confirmed, and, if we may so express it, less precarious, if God had ordained that they should have been supported without these means. This may serve to illustrate the difference which there is between the happiness which the saints enjoy in God's immediate presence in heaven, and that which is expected as the result of our daily access to him in ordinances, wherein we hope for some farther degree of communion with him. The former, man would have attained to, had he stood; the latter distinguished that state in which he was while in innocency. But as there can be no communion with God unless what has a proportionable degree of delight and pleasure attending it, our first parents may be said to have experienced such pleasure and delight. This contributed to the happiness of that state in which they were; though their joy in regard to it was not so complete as that is which those possess who have not only an assurance of the impossibility of losing that communion which they have with God at present, but have arrived at a state of perfect blessedness.

The Institution of the Sabbath in Paradise

God sanctified and instituted the sabbath for man's more immediate access to him, and, that he might express his gratitude for the blessings he was made partaker of, and might have a recess from that

secular employment, which, as was before observed, he was engaged in. This was, therefore, a great privilege. Indeed, the sabbath was a pledge or shadow of an everlasting sabbath, which he would have enjoyed in heaven, had he not forfeited and lost it by his fall. We shall have occasion, however, to speak more particularly on this subject under the fourth commandment. All we shall add at present, is, that the sabbath was instituted as a day of rest for man, even while he remained in a state of innocency. This appears from its being blessed and sanctified, on occasion of God's resting from his work of creation. It was hence, at that time, set apart to be observed by man.

It is objected, that it might then be sanctified with the view that man should observe it after his fall, or, in particular, at a subsequent time when the observance o it was enjoined. We reply, that there never was any ordinance instituted but what was designed to be observed by man immediately after its institution. Now, the sanctification of the Sabbath imports as much as its institution, or the setting of it apart for a holy use. We cannot, therefore, but suppose, that God designed that it should be observed by man in innocency.

It is farther objected, that it was inconsistent with the happy state in which man was created, for God to appoint a day of rest for him, to be then observed; for rest suppose labour, and is consequently more agreeable to that state into which he brought himself by sin, when, by the sweat of his brow, he was to eat bread. Now, it is true that man, in innocency, was not exposed to that uneasiness and fatigue which attended his employment after his fall, and that the work he was engaged in was not a burthen to him, so as to make a day of rest needful for him to give him ease. A cessation from a secular employment, however, attended with a more immediate access to God in his holy institutions, wherein he might hope for a greater degree of communion with him, was not inconsistent with that

degree of holiness and happiness in which he was created, which, as was before observed, was short of the heaveny blessedness. Hence, though heaven is a state in which the saints enjoy an everlasting Sabbath, it does not follow that man, how happy soever he was in paradise, was so far favoured there, that a day of rest was inconsistent with that state.

The Covenant with Man in Paradise

We shall proceed to inquire how the providence of God had a more immediate referene to the spiritual or eternal happiness of man, in his entering into a covenant of life with him. Under this Head we are to consider the personal concerns of our fist parents in the covenant.

1. That the dispensation they were under was that of a covenant, is allowed by most who acknowledge the imputation of Adam's sin, and the universal corruption of nature, as consequent upon it. Some call it, 'a Covenant of Innocency,' in as much as it was made with man while he was in a state of innocency. Others call it, 'a Covenant of Works,' because perfect obedience was enjoined, as the condition of it. In this light, it is opposed to the covenant of grace; as there was no provision made in it for any display of grace, as there is in that covenant which we are now under. In this Answer, however, it is called 'the Covenant of Life,' as having respect to the blessings which it promised. It may to some seem indifferent whether it ought to be termed a covenant, or a law of innocency. Indeed, we would not contend about the use of a word, if many did not design, by what they say concerning its being a law and not properly a covenant, to prepare the way for the denial of the imputation of Adam's sin, or did not, at the same time, consider him as no other than the natural head of his posterity. This, if it were allowed, would effectually overthrow the doctrine of original sin, as stated in some following Answers. We

must endeavour to prove, therefore, that man was not merely under a law, but under a covenant of works. That we may proceed with more clearness, we shall premise some things, in general, concerning the difference between a law and a covenant.

A law is the revealed will of a sovereign, in which a debt of obedience is demanded, and, in case of disobedience, a punishment threatened, in proportion to the nature of the offence. Here we must consider, that as a subject is bound to obey a law, so he cannot, except in case of disobedience, justly be deprived of that to which he has a right. Hence, obedience to a law gives him a right to impurity, but to nothing more. A covenant, on the contrary, gives a person a right, upon his fulfilling the conditions of it, to all those privileges which are stipulated or promised in it. This may be illustrated, by considering it as applied to human forms of government. In these it is supposed that every subject is possessed of some things which he has a natural or political right to, and which he cannot justly be deprived of, unless he forfeit them by violating the law which, as a subject he is bound to obey. Now, though his obedience gives him a right to impunity or to the undisturbed possession of his life and estate, it does not entitle him to any privilege to which he had no natural right. A king is not obliged to advance a subject to great honours, because he has not forfeited his life and estate by rebellion. If, however, he had promised him, as an act of favour, that he would confer such honours upon him, on condition of his yielding obedience in some particular instances, he would then have a right to them,—not as yielding obedience to a law, but as fulfilling the conditions of a covenant. This may be farther illustrated, by considering the case of Mephibosheth. He had a natural and legal right to his life and estate, which descended to him from his father Jonathan, because he behaved himself peaceably, and had not rebelled against David. But this did not entitle him to those special

favours which David conferred upon him, such as 'eating bread at his table continually;' for these were the result of a covenant between David and Jonathan, in which David promised that he would show kindness to his house after him. Now, in the same way, if we consider our first parents only as under a law, their perfect obedience to it would have given them a right to impunity, since punishment supposes a crime; so that God could not, consistently with his perfections, have punished them, had they not rebelled against him. I do not say that God could not, in consistency with his perfections, have taken away the blessings which he conferred upon them, as creatures, in a way of sovereignty; but this he could not do as a judge. Man, therefore, would have been entirely exempted from punishment, as long as he did not fall. This, however, would not, in the least, have entitled him to any superadded happiness, unless there had been a promise made which gave him ground to expect it, in case he yielded obedience. And if there were, then that dispensation which before contained the form of a law would, by having this circumstance added to it, assume the form of a covenant, and so give him a right to the superadded happiness promised in it, according to the tenor of the covenant. If we can prove, then, as we shall endeavour to do before we dismiss this subject, not only that man was obliged to yield perfect obedience, as being under a law, but that he was given to expect a superadded happiness, consisting either in the grace of confirmation in his present state, or in the heavenly blessedness, it will follow, that he would have had a right to it, in case of yielding that obedience, according to the tenor of the dispensation as being of the nature of a covenant. This I apprehend to be the just difference between a law and a covenant, as applicable to the present argument. We must hence conclude, that the dispensation which man was under contained the ideas both of a law and of a covenant. His relation to God, as a creature, obliged him to yield perfect obedience to the divine will, as having the form of a law; and this

perfect obedience, had it been performed, would have given him a right to the heavenly blessedness, in virtue of that promise which God was pleased to give to man in this dispensation, as being of the nature of a covenant. This will farther appear, when we consider the blessing promised in the covenant.

2. The blessing promised was life. The word 'life' in scripture, is used sometimes to signify temporal, and, at other times, spiritual and eternal blessings. We have these senses joined together in the apostle's words, where we read of 'the life that now is, and that which is to come.' Sometimes, also, 'life' and 'blessing,' or blessedness, are put together, and opposed to death as expressing all the ingredients of evil.k When, in doing this, Moses exhorts the Israelites 'to choose life,' he does not intend merely a natural life, or outward blessings; for these every one chooses, while many are with difficulty persuaded to make choice of spiritual life. In connection with our present subject, we consider life as including both spiritual and eternal blessedness. It is thus to be understood, when our Saviour says, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life;' and also when he says, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.'m We must conclude, therefore, that Adam having a promise of such a life made to him, on condition of perfect obedience, was given to expect some privileges which he was not then possessed of, and which included the enjoyment of the heavenly blessedness. Hence, the dispensation which he was under may well be called a covenant of life.

But, as this is a subject so necessary to be insisted on, we shall offer some arguments to prove it. Some have thought that it might be proved from Hos. 6:7, which they choose to render, 'They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant;' whence they conclude, that Adam was under a covenant. They thus suppose that the word Adam is

taken for the proper name of our first parent; and it is probable that it is so understood elsewhere. Job, for example, says, 'If I covered my transgressions as Adam,' alluding to those trifling excuses which Adam, immediately after his fall,o made to palliate his sin. There are some expositors who conclude, that the interpretation now stated is no improbable sense of the text in Hosea. I would not, however, lay much stress on it; because the words may be rendered, as they are in our translation, 'They, like men,' that is, according to the custom of vain man, 'have transgressed the covenant;' or, they are no better than the rest of mankind, who are disposed to break covenant with God. In the same sense the apostle uses the word, when, reproving the Corinthians, he says, 'Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?'q Passing this by, therefore, let us inquire, whether the doctrine in question may not, in some measure, be proved from that scripture which is often quoted for the purpose, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' From this it is argued, that if man had retained his integrity, he would have been made partaker of the heavenly blessedness. Many, indeed, are so far from thinking this an argument to prove the fact of a covenant, that they bring it as an objection against it. They allege that hereby God gave man to understand, that he was not, pursuant to the nature of a covenant, to expect any farther degree of happiness than what he was already possessed of; but that, agreeably to the sanction of a law, death was to be inflicted, in case of disobedience, and life, that is, the state in which he was created, should be continued, as long as he retained his integrity. When a legislator, they add, threatens his subjects with death in the event of their being guilty of rebellion, nothing can be inferred but that, if they do not rebel, they shall be continued in the quiet possession of what they had a natural right to as subjects, and not that they should be advanced to a higher degree of dignity. This sense of the text, indeed, enervates the force of the argument founded on it to prove that man was under a covenant. Yet I would

not wholly give it up, as containing nothing to support the argument we are defending. For this threatening was denounced, not only to signify God's will to punish sin, or the certain event that should follow it, but as a motive to obedience; and it therefore includes a promise of life, in case he retained his integrity. The question therefore is, What is meant by this life? or, has it any respect to the heavenly blessedness? In answer to this, I see no reason to conclude but that it has; since that is so often understood by the word 'life' in scripture. Thus it is said, 'Hear, and your soul shall live;' and, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;'t so also in many other places. Why, then, should not 'life,' in this place, be taken in the same sense? So, on the other hand, when death is threatened, in several scriptures, it implies a privation of the heavenly blessedness, and not merely a loss of those blessings which we actually possess. Moreover, Adam could not but know God to be the Fountain of blessedness, otherwise he would have been very defective in knowledge; and, when he looked into himself, he would find that he was capable of a greater degree of blessedness than he at present enjoyed, and what is more, he had a desire for it implanted in his very nature. Now, what can be inferred hence, but that he would conclude that God, who gave him these enlarged desires, would, after some farther degree of happiness arising from communion with him, give him to expect it, in case he retained that holiness which was implanted in his nature?

But that it may further appear that our first parents were given to expect a greater degree of happiness, and consequently that the dispensation which they were under was properly federal, let it be considered that the advantages which Christ came into the world to procure for his people, and which are promised to them in the second covenant, are in substance the same as those which man would have enjoyed, had he not fallen. Christ 'came to seek and to save that which was lost,' and to procure the recovery of forfeited

blessings; yet what he came into the world to purchase for them was eternal life. This would have been enjoyed, therefore, if there had been no need of purchasing it, that is, if man had retained his integrity. The apostle, speaking of the end of Christ's coming into the world, observes,x not only that it was to 'redeem us from the curse,' or the condemning sentence of the law, but that his redeemed ones might be made partakers of 'the blessing of Abraham,' which was a very comprehensive one, including that God would be 'his God, his shield, and exceeding great reward.' The same apostle elsewhere speaks of Christ's having 'redeemed them that were under the law,' that is, the curse of the violated law or covenant, 'that we might receive the adoption of sons;'z that is, that we might be made partakers of all the privileges of God's children, which certainly include eternal life. There is another scripture which farther supports this argument. 'What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.' This is as if the apostle had said, 'According to the tenor of the first covenant, eternal life was not to be expected, since it was become weak, or could not give it, because man could not yield perfect obedience, which was the condition of giving it; but God's sending his own Son to perform this obedience for us, was an expedient for our attaining that life, which we could not otherwise have enjoyed.' This seems to be the general scope and design of the apostle in this text; and it is agreeable to the sense of many other scriptures, which speak of the advantages that believers attain by Christ's death, as compared with the disadvantages which man sustained by Adam's fall. It follows therefore, that, had Adam stood, he and all his posterity would have attained eternal life.

We have thus endeavoured to prove, that God entered into covenant with Adam, in as much as he was given to expect, that, if he had

yielded perfect obedience, he should have been possessed of the heavenly blessedness. But supposing this not to be allowed, and the arguments brought to prove it reckoned inconclusive, it would be sufficient to our present purpose, and would argue the dispensation to which Adam was under to be that of a covenant, if God had only promised him the grace of confirmation, and not to transplant him from the earthly to the heavenly paradise. Such a privilege as this, which would have rendered his fall impossible, would have contained so advantageous a circumstance, as to the state in which he was, as would have plainly proved the dispensation he was under to be federal. Now, to be confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness, was necessary to render that state of blessedness in which he was created complete. Whatever advantages he was possessed of, it would have been a great alloy to them to consider, that it was possible for him to lose them, or through any act of inadvertency, in complying with a temptation, to fall and ruin himself for ever. If the saints in heaven, who are advanced to a greater degree of blessedness, were not confirmed in it, if it was possible for them to lose or fall from it, their joy would be rendered incomplete. Much more would the happiness of Adam have been so, had he been to continue for ever without the privilege of confirmation.—Again, if he had not had ground to expect the grace of confirmation in holiness and happiness, upon his yielding perfect obedience, then his perfect obedience could not, in any respect, in propriety of speaking, be said to have been conditional, unless you suppose it a condition of the blessings which he was then possessed of. But this seems not agreeable to the idea conveyed by the word 'condition,' which is considered as a motive to excite obedience, taken from some blessing consequent upon observing it.—If, however, this consideration be not allowed to have sufficient weight, let me add that it is agreeable to, and tends very much to advance the glory of the divine goodness, for God not to leave an innocent creature in a state of perpetual

uncertainty, as to the continuance of his holiness and happiness. Yet this he would have done, had he not promised Adam the grace of confirmation, whereby he would, by his immediate interposition, have prevented every thing which might occasion his fall.—Our position may be farther argued, from the method of God's dealing with other sinless creatures whom he designed to make completely blessed, and so monuments of his abundant goodness. Thus he dealt with the holy angels, and thus he will deal with his saints in another world. The former are, the other shall be, when arrived there, confirmed in holiness and happiness. And why should we suppose that the goodness of God should be less glorified towards man at first, had he retained his integrity?—Moreover, the dispensation of providence which Adam was under, seems to carry in it the nature of a state of probation. If he was a probationer, it must either have been for the heavenly glory, or at least for a farther degree of happiness, containing this grace of confirmation, which is the least that can be supposed if there were any promise given him. Now, if all other dispensations of providence towards man contain so many great and precious promises as it is certain they do, can we suppose that man, in his state of innocency, had no promise given him? And, if he had, then I cannot but conclude, that God entered into covenant with him, which was the thing to be proved.

It is objected that the apostle, in some of the scriptures but now referred to, calls the dispensation which Adam was under, 'a law;' and that therefore we have no right to call it a covenant. Now, it is true that it is often called 'a law.' But let it be considered, that there were two ideas included in it, which are not opposite to, or inconsistent with each other, namely, that of a law and that of a covenant. As man was under a natural and indispensable obligation to yield perfect obedience, and was liable to eternal death in case of disobedience, it had in it the form and sanction of a law. This,

however, is not inconsistent with anything in what we have endeavoured to maintain, that there was something added to it of the nature of a covenant,—which is all that we pretend to prove. The dispensation, therefore, may justly take its denomination from the one idea or the other, provided when one is mentioned the other be not excluded. If we call it a law, it was such a law as had annexed to it a promise of superadded blessedness; and if we call it a covenant, it had, notwithstanding, the obligation of a law, being made with a subject who was bound, without regard to his arbitrary choice, to fulfil the law's demands.

It is objected against what has been said concerning man's having a promise of the heavenly blessedness given him upon condition of obedience, that this is a privilege peculiarly adapted to the gospel-dispensation, and that our Saviour was the first who made it known to the world. 'Life and immortality,' the objectors remind us, 'were brought to light through the gospel, and made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ;' and they hence infer that these were not made known by the law, and that consequently there was no promise of them made to Adam in innocency. Again, the apostle says that 'the way into the holiest of all,' that is, into heaven, 'was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing,' till Christ came, 'who obtained eternal redemption for us.'c From this they argue, that we have no reason to conclude that Adam had any promise or expectation of the heavenly blessedness; and that consequently the argument based on such a promise to prove that the dispensation he was under was that of a covenant, is not conclusive. Now, it seems very strange that any should infer from the scriptures here quoted, that eternal life was altogether unknown in the world till Christ came into it. In the former of them, when the apostle speaks of 'life and immortality as brought to light by the gospel,' nothing else can be intended, but that this is more fully

revealed by the gospel than it was before, or that Christ revealed it as a purchased possession, in which respect it could not be revealed before. If this be compared with the revelation given to Adam of life and immortality in the first covenant, it may be distinguished from it; for though the heavenly blessedness was made known in that revelation, it was not considered as including the idea of salvation, as it does to us when revealed in the gospel. As to the latter scripture concerning 'the way into the holiest of all,' that is, into heaven, 'not being made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing,' the meaning is, that the way of our redemption by Jesus Christ was not so clearly revealed, or revealed with such circumstances of glory, under the ceremonial law as it is by the gospel, or that, at least, whatever discoveries were made of it, the promises had not their full accomplishment till Christ came and erected the gospel-dispensation. But this does not, in the least, militate against the argument we are maintaining. We have thus considered the blessing promised in the covenant, namely, life; from which it farther appears to have been a federal dispensation.

3. We are now to consider the condition of man's obtaining this blessing. This, as is expressed in this Answer, was personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Man was obliged to perform obedience, agreeably to his character as a subject, and thereby to own the sovereignty of his Creator and Lawgiver, and the equity of his law, and his right to govern him according to it. This obligation was natural, necessary, and indispensable.—Moreover, the obedience was to be personal, that is, not performed by any other in his behalf, and imputed to him as his obedience was to be imputed to all his posterity. In that respect, it would not have been personal as applied to them. Nor was the obedience required of Adam such as should be imputed to him, as the obedience of Christ is imputed to us in the second covenant—Again, it was to be perfect, without the least

defect, and extending to both the heart and the life. He was obliged to do every thing which God required, as well as to abstain from every thing which he forbade. We are not to suppose, therefore, that it was only his eating the forbidden fruit which would ruin him, though that was the particular sin by which he fell; for his doing any other thing which was in itself sinful, or his neglecting any thing which was required, would equally have occasioned his fall.

From man's obligation to yield obedience to the divine law, it follows that there needed to be an intimation given of the rule or matter of his obedience, and consequently that the law of God should be made known to him; for it is absolutely necessary that a law should be not only enacted but promulgated, before the subject is bound to obey it. Now the law of God was made known to man in two ways, agreeably to its twofold distinction. First, the law of nature was written on his heart; and in writing it there, the wisdom of God did as much discover itself, as in the matter of the law itself. In this respect, the whole law of nature might be said to be made known to man at once. The knowledge of it was communicated to him, with the powers and faculties of his soul, and was, as it were, instamped on his nature. He might, therefore, as well plead that he was not an intelligent creature, as that he was destitute of the knowledge of the law. Again, there being several other positive laws to which man was obliged to yield obedience, these, though they could not, properly speaking, be said to be written on his heart, were, notwithstanding, communicated to him. Whether the communication was made all at once, or at various times, is not for us to determine. This, however, we must conclude, that these positive laws could not be known in a way of reasoning, as the law of nature might. But as we have sufficient ground to conclude, that God was pleased, in different ways and times, to communicate his mind and will to man, we are not to suppose that man was destitute of the knowledge of all those

positive laws which he was obliged to obey. What the number of these laws was we know not. But as there have been in all ages various positive laws relating to instituted worship, Adam, doubtless, had many such laws revealed to him, though not mentioned in scripture. This I cannot but observe, because some persons use modes of speaking about this matter as if there had been no other positive law, which man was obliged to obey, but that of his not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or, together with it, that which related to the observance of the sabbath.

The obedience which man was to perform was to be perpetual. By this we are not to understand that it was to be performed to eternity under the notion of a condition of the covenant, though it certainly was as this covenant contained the obligation of a law. The reason of this is very obvious. When any thing is performed as a condition of obtaining a subsequent blessing, it is supposed that this blessing is not to be conferred till the condition is performed. But this is inconsistent with the eternal duration of the obedience on the performance of which the heavenly blessedness was to be conferred. Hence, though divines often use the word 'perpetual,' when treating on this subject, it must be understood with this limitation, that man was to obey, without any interruption or defect, so long as he remained in a state of probation, and that his obedience had a peculiar reference to the dispensation as of a federal character. When, however, this state of trial was over, and the blessing promised on this condition conferred, then, though the same obedience was to be performed to eternity, it would not be considered as the condition of a covenant, but as the obligation of a law.

This leads us to inquire, whether we may not, with some degree of probability, without being guilty of a sinful curiosity, determine any

thing relating to the time of man's continuance in a state of trial, before the blessing promised, at least that part of it which consisted in the grace of confirmation, would have been conferred upon him. Though I would not enter into any subject which is over-curious, or pretend to determine that which is altogether uncertain, yet, I think, this is not to be reckoned so, especially if we be not too peremptory, or exceed the bounds of modesty, in what respects this matter. All that I shall say concerning it is, that it seems very probable that our first parents would have passed from this state of probation, and would have attained the grace of confirmation, which is a considerable circumstance in the blessing promised in the covenant, as soon as they had children arrived to an age capable of obeying or sinning themselves. But how long this would have been, it is a vain thing to pretend to determine. The reason why divines suppose that Adam's state of probation would have continued no longer is, that these children must then either be supposed to have been confirmed in that state of holiness and happiness, in which they were, or not. If they had been confirmed in it, they would have attained the blessings of the covenant, before Adam had fulfilled the condition of it. If they had not been confirmed, it was possible for them to have fallen, and yet for him to have stood; and so, contrary to the tenor of the covenant, his performing the condition of it would not have procured its blessing for them. When our first parents would have been removed from paradise to heaven, and so have attained the perfection of the blessings contained in this covenant, it would be a vain, presumptuous, and unprofitable thing to inquire. [See Note 3 D, p. 385.]

4. The last thing observed in this Answer, is what some call the seals annexed to the covenant, as an ordinance designed to confirm our first parents' faith in it. These were the two trees mentioned in the

second chapter of Genesis. The tree of life, however, was more properly called a seal, than the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Concerning the tree of life, several things may be observed. It was a single tree; not, as some suppose, a species of trees, bearing one sort of fruit. This is evident from its being expressly said, that it was planted 'in the midst of the garden.'—Again, the fruit of it is said, in the same scripture, to be 'pleasant to the sight and good for food,' as well as that of other trees which were ordained for the purpose. It is a vain thing to inquire what sort of fruit it was; and it is better to confess our ignorance, than to pretend to be wise above what is written.—Further, it is called the tree of life. Some suppose that the principal if not the only reason of its being so called, was that it was ordained to preserve man's natural life, or to prevent any decay of nature, or, if it were in the least impaired, to restore it to its former vigour. Accordingly, they suppose that, though man was made immortal, yet some things might have happened to him which would have had a tendency to impair his health, in some degree, and to weaken and destroy the temperament of his body, by which means death would gradually, according to the course of nature, be brought upon him; but that as a relief against this, he had a remedy always at hand, for the fruit of this tree, by a medicinal virtue, would restore him to his former state of health, as effectually as meat, drink, and rest have a natural virtue to repair the fatigues and supply the necessities of nature, in those who have the most healthful constitution, which would, notwithstanding, be destroyed, without the use of them. But, though there is somewhat of spirit and ingenuity in this supposition, why may we not suppose that the same effect might be produced by the use of any other food, which would be always ready at hand, whenever he had occasion for it, or wherever he resided? I cannot but conclude, therefore, that the principal, if not the only reason, of the tree of life being so called, was

its being, by God's appointment, a sacramental sign and ordinance for the faith of our first parents, that, if they retained their integrity, they might be assured of the blessed event, namely, eternal life. Of this the tree of life was, as it is called in this Answer, a pledge. It expressed in substance the same idea as other sacraments; that is, it was designed not to confer the blessing promised, but to signify it, and also to encourage expectation of it. Our first parents were to eat of the fruit of this tree, agreeably to the nature of other sacramental signs, that hereby the thing signified might be brought to their remembrance. They might take occasion, at the same time, to rely on God's promise relating to the blessing which they expected; and they might be as much assured, that they should attain eternal life, in case they persisted in their obedience, as they were, that God had given them this tree, and liberty to eat of it, with the expectation of the blessing which it signified.

Now, to make it appear that it was designed as a sacramental sign of eternal life, which was promised in the covenant, we may consider those allusions to it in the New Testament, whereby the heavenly glory is set forth. It is said, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' Again, 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life.'f It seems very plain, that the tree of life, in these scriptures, respects the heavenly glory, which is called the 'New Jerusalem,' for the passages have a particular reference to that state of the church, 'when God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying.' Moreover, mention is immediately afterwards made of 'Christ's coming quickly, and his reward being with him.'h There are also several other passages, which might be easily observed, which agree only with the heavenly state. Now, since the heavenly glory is thus described, why may we not suppose, that the heavenly state was

signified by this tree to Adam, in paradise? That this may farther appear, let it be considered, that nothing is more common, in scripture, than for the Holy Ghost to represent the thing signified by the sign. Thus sanctification, which was one thing signified by circumcision, is called, 'The circumcision made without hands;' and regeneration, which is signified by baptism, is called, our 'being born of water;'k and Christ, whose death was signified by the passover, is called, 'Our Passover.' Many other instances, of a similar nature, might be produced. Now, since the heavenly glory is represented by the tree of life, why may we not suppose that the reason of its being so called was that it was ordained at first to be a sacramental sign or pledge of eternal life, which our first parents were given to expect, according to the tenor of that covenant which they were under. [See Note 3 E, p. 390.]

It is objected by some, that sacramental signs, ceremonies, or types, were adapted only to that dispensation which the church of the Jews were under, and therefore were not agreeable to that state in which man was at first. But though the ceremonial law was not known or instituted while man was in a state of innocency, and though it was not God's ordinary way to instruct him then by signs; yet it was not inconsistent with that state for God to ordain one or two signs as ordinances for the faith of our first parents, the signification of which was adapted to the state in which they were,—any more than our Saviour's instituting two significant ordinances under the gospel, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper, as having relation to the blessings expected therein, is inconsistent with the present dispensation, in which we have no more to do with the ceremonial law, than our first parents had. All this implies nothing more, than that God may, in any state of the church, instruct his people in those things which their faith should be conversant about, in what way he pleases.

It is farther objected, that the tree of life was not designed to be a sacramental sign of the covenant which our first parents were under, but rather, as was before observed, an expedient to render them immortal, in a natural way, in as much as when man was fallen, the tree of life had still the same virtue. Accordingly, it is said, 'Lest he put forth his hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth out of the garden of Eden. And he drove out the man; and placed cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.' Some extend this objection so far as to suppose that man did not eat of the tree of life before he fell; that if he had done so, he would, by virtue of his eating of it, have lived for ever, notwithstanding his sin; and that if, as soon as he had fallen, he had had that happy thought, and so had eaten of it, he might even then have prevented death. They hence allege that God drove him out of paradise, that he might not eat of it, that so the curse, consequent upon his fall, might take effect. The absurdity of this objection, and the method of reasoning made use of to support it, will appear, if we consider that there was something more lost by man's fall than immortality, and something which no fruit, produced by any tree, could restore to him. Besides, man was then liable to the curse which was denounced, by which he was under an indispensable necessity of returning to the dust whence he was taken. The tree of life, therefore, could not make this threatening of no effect, though man had eaten of it after his fall. But as the whole force of the objection depends on the sense which the objectors put on the text relating to man's expulsion from paradise and exclusion from the tree of life, the only reply which we need give to it is to consider what is the true and proper sense of that text. Now when it is said, 'God drove out the man, lest he should eat of the tree of life, and live for ever,' the meaning is as if it had been said, 'Lest the poor deceived creature, who is now become blind, ignorant, and exposed to error, should eat of this tree, and think to

live for ever, as he did before the fall, he shall be driven out of paradise.' This was, in some respect, an act of kindness to him, to prevent a mistake which might have been of pernicious tendency, in turning him aside from seeking salvation in the promised seed. Besides, when the thing signified by this tree was not to be obtained in the way in which it was before, it ceased to be a sacramental sign; and hence, as he had no right to it, it would have been no less than a profanation to make a religious use of it in his fallen state.

The other tree, which we read of, whereof our first parents were forbidden to eat, upon pain of death, is called, 'The tree of knowledge of good and evil.' Though the fruit of this tree was, in itself, proper for food, as well as that of any other, yet God, out of his mere sovereignty, forbade man to eat of it. Hereby, also, he let him know, that he enjoyed nothing but by his grant, and that he must abstain from things apparently good, when he required him to do so. It is vain to pretend to determine what sort of fruit this tree produced. It is, indeed, a commonly received opinion, that it was an apple-tree, or some species of it. But, though I will not determine this to be a vulgar error, I cannot but think it a groundless conjecture. I would rather profess my ignorance as to this matter.

As to the reason of its being called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, some have given great scope to their wit and fancy, in advancing groundless conjectures. The Jewish historian, and, after him, several Rabbinical writers, have supposed, that it was thus described, because there was an internal virtue in the fruit of it to brighten the minds of men, and, in a natural way, make them wise. Socinus and some of his brethren have so far improved upon this absurd supposition, that they have supposed that our first parents, before they eat of this tree, had not much more knowledge than infants have. This notion they found on the literal sense they give of that

scripture which represents them as not knowing that they were naked.p But enough of these absurdities, which carry in them their own confutation. I cannot but think that it is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, to signify, that, as man before knew by experience what it was to enjoy that good which God had conferred upon him, the consequence of his eating of it would be, his having an experimental knowledge of evil.

All that I shall add, concerning the prohibition which God gave to our first parents, is, that, as to the matter of it, it was one of those laws which are founded in God's arbitrary will, and that therefore the thing was rendered sinful, only by its being forbidden. Man's disobedience to it, however, rendered him no less guilty, than if he had transgressed any of the laws of nature. Moreover, it was a very small thing for him to have yielded obedience to this law, which was designed as a trial of his readiness to perform universal obedience. It was not so difficult a duty as that which God afterwards commanded Abraham to perform, when he bade him offer up his son. Nor was Adam under a necessity of eating of the fruit, since he had such a liberal provision of all things for his sustenance and delight. His sin, in not complying with the prohibition, was, in consequence, the more aggravated. Besides, he was expressly cautioned against eating, and told, that 'in the day that he eat of it, he should die.' By this caution, God, foreseeing that he would disobey the command, determined to leave him without excuse. This was that transgression by which he fell, and brought on the world all the miseries that have ensued.

[NOTE 3 D. The Covenant of Works.—Dr. Ridgeley, like most orthodox writers, applies to the constitution of things under which Adam was placed, the name of covenant, and even contends that, in order to our maintaining the doctrine of original sin, this name must be understood of it in a strict or proper sense. He evidently neither

intended nor saw, that, from identifying the idea of a covenant with the constitution established over Adam, multitudes would draw inferences most erroneous and detrimental respecting the nature and basis of the covenant of grace. When, in a subsequent part of his work, he treats of this covenant, he perceives necessity anxiously and closely to caution men against the notion of any divine covenant with man, consisting of what he terms 'stipulation and restipulation.' He there uses great care also to warn his readers against supposing that, in the covenant of grace as made with the redeemed, there either is or can be, on their part, the performance of any condition. Now, had he been equally cautious when about to discuss the nature of the constitution established over Adam, he would have paused before he applied to it the name covenant. One important fact would have readily occurred to him, that it is not once called by that name in scripture; and this fact would probably have suggested the inquiry, whether the inspired usage of the word in cases where it is employed be such as to warrant its application to the Adamic Constitution. The expositions which orthodox writers give of what they term 'the Covenant of Life,' or, 'the Covenant of Works,' are generally just such, it is true, as harmonize with the scripture accounts of the constitution established over Adam; but exactly in the proportion of their being so, they render the word 'covenant,' as applied to that constitution, a misnomer, and, at the same time, give rise to confusedness or inaccuracy of idea in contemplating those transactions which the word properly designates.

A covenant, according to the scriptural use of the word, as employed to designate what God establishes with man, is a constitution, an economy, or a system of promise, established or confirmed by sacrifice. The radical idea included in it, appears to be a promise, actual or prospective, exhibited in moral ordinances, and secured and vindicated by atonement. The Covenant, by way of eminence, is

simply the plan of salvation, consisting in the promise of pardon, of renovating influence and divine favour, through the expiatory work of Immanuel. This is what the scriptures designate the covenant in all the instances in which they represent it as made with the redeemed, or with Christ as their public head. See, in particular, Heb. 8:10–12. All other divine covenants are simply so many editions of this; or they consist of the same promise, in connection with the same sacrifice, but exhibited in distinct or peculiar moral ordinances. The Most High appears to have established his covenant with Adam immediately after the fall. Both his words to Noah, when establishing his covenant with him, and the slaughter of animals previous to the time when permission was given to use their flesh for food, prove that the communication made to fallen man, the communication under the warrant of which Abel believed and sacrificed, and 'Enoch walked with God,' was a covenant, a promise of salvation, through a Saviour to come, exhibited in a sacrificial institution which prefigured the Saviour's expiatory work. The covenants with Noah, with Abraham, with the Israelites at Sinai, were all of the same character. All, in some form or other, substantially consisted in the 'promise of eternal life, which God promised in Christ before the world began,' or in a renewal, repetition, or special promulgation of that promise, in connection with such sacrificial performances or enactments as showed that the promise should be vindicated and made sure by the atoning death of the Redeemer.

I should occupy too much space were I to prove by detailed argument that the view I have stated of the divine covenants is correct. Paul's reasoning in Gal. 3:15–18, proceeds on the principle that God's covenant and his promise are the same thing; and it even uses the two words interchangeably, or as expressive of the same idea. His reasoning, or rather his direct assertion, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, proves also that 'a covenant,' there most

improperly translated 'a testament,' is of force only over dead victims, or is, in every case, vindicated and ratified by sacrifice. Though many promises were made to Abraham during the earlier period succeeding his call, no divine communication to him is called a covenant till a promise was made in connection with a special sacrificial offering. Abraham, by divine direction, slew certain victims, and 'divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another;' he then fell into a deep sleep, and, on awaking, beheld 'a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp,' the symbols of the divine presence and glory, passing between the pieces. He himself took no part in the transaction of making the covenant; he expressed no assent to proposed or optional terms, and did not pass between the divided pieces of the victims; he only received a gracious or sovereign promise from God, and, under divine instruction, recognised it to be of a character which should be vindicated and ratified by sacrifice.

A divine covenant or covenants have thus reference to man as a fallen and sinful being; and point to his restoration from guilt and pollution, through the mediatorial work of Christ. Accordingly, the root whence the word בריה, covenant, is derived, signifies to purify; the word covenant itself, literally means a purification, or a purification sacrifice; and the phrase, for making a covenant, means, to cut a purification sacrifice, or cut off a purifying victim. Throughout the scriptures, therefore, the one pervading idea of the divine covenant or covenants, amidst all the variety of phraseolgy and of reference which occurs, is just the great concentrating idea of the gospel,—the promise of salvation through the sacrifice of the Redeemer,—the offer and assurance of redemption through his blood 'shed for remission of sins unto many.'

As exhibited in the typical ordinance instituted with Abraham, the promise of salvation is called 'the covenant of circumcision,' Acts 7:8. Rom. 4:11, compared with Gen. 17:13, 14; as exhibited in the ceremonial ordinances instituted at Sinai, it is called 'the old covenant,' or 'the covenant made with Israel;' and as exhibited in the simple and permanent ordinances of the Christian dispensation, it is called 'the new, the well-ordered, the everlasting covenant.' By a very obvious metonymy, the name Covenant is occasionally applied to the ordinances which exhibited it, or to the documents in which it is recorded. Accordingly, the entire ceremonial law, the Sabbatic institution, the two tables of the decalogue, as deposited beneath the mercy-seat, the books of Moses, and the entire body of the scriptures, are all, more or less directly, termed covenants. All were exhibitions, either in themselves or in the connection they held with prefigurative or other institutions, of life and deliverance to man through the blood of Christ, and the dispensation of the Spirit. Hence, while they are occasionally mentioned in a metonymical way as covenants, they are in general described by appropriate literal epithets, and in one or two instances are designated not as covenants themselves, but as ordinances in which the covenant is exhibited. Circumcision is termed 'a sign and seal of faith,' and the scriptures or the writings of Moses, are termed 'the book of the covenant,' Exod. 27:7; 2 Kings 23:2; 2 Chron. 34:30. The very metonymical use of the word, is evidence, therefore, that a divine covenant is, as we have repeatedly stated, the promise of salvation vindicated and ratified by sacrifice.

Human covenants mentioned in scripture, as all human covenants necessarily must be, are essentially different, in nature and object, and almost all properties, from the divine covenant. When men observed that God's special promise, as announced to an individual or community, was confirmed by sacrifice, they naturally inferred

that the solemn slaying of a victim was the highest ratification which could be afforded of a promise between man and man. Every promise in particular, and even every mutual stipulation or transaction of whatever sort, which received this ratification, they would term a covenant. The word, as applied to any engagement between man and man, almost necessarily assumed the sense of a ratified or solemn agreement; and eventually it bore, in this application of it, no other meaning, and denoted simply such agreement whether confirmed by sacrifice or not. Dr. Ridgeley himself, however, when he afterwards treats of the covenant of grace, ably and carefully shows, that all ideas of a human covenant are to be scared away from the mind, and not suffered in any degree to intrude, when we contemplate a covenant made by the Most High. Interpret the constitution of things established over Adam at his creation as we may, we must not apply to it any of the notions of a covenant between man and man. In inquiring whether it possessed in any sense the nature of a covenant, we must be guided solely by the scriptural uses of the word when employed to designate what is strictly divine.

Now, there are two facts, which seem fatal to the notion that the Adamic constitution was of the nature of a covenant. The first is, that it is not once called a covenant in scripture; and the second is, that it was, in all respects, unconnected with sacrifice. In some cases, as in that of the doctrine of the Trinity, the absence of a word does not by any means infer the absence of the idea which it is used to designate. But, in all such cases, the word does not occur in scripture in any sense: it is absolutely awanting. To supply an appropriate word whereby a peculiar doctrine of scripture may be expressed in a single term, is one thing; and to take a word of very frequent occurrence, and apply it to something different from any of the matters to which scripture applies it, is another. The former may be perfectly

warrantable; while the latter can hardly fail to be wrong. The word 'covenant' is not of rare or obscure occurrence, but is used freely and very often. The Adamic constitution, too, is mentioned not merely in a general way which might comport with latitude of phraseology, but in a peculiar and specific manner, as the basis of at least two closely compacted arguments (See Rom. chap. 5; 1 Cor. chap. 4) requiring the utmost nicety of phrase and exactitude of definition. Yet out of about two hundred and forty times that the word covenant occurs, it is not once, either directly or indirectly, employed to designate the Adamic constitution. The advocates of the supposed covenant of works, feel that this fact presses hard on their theory; else they would scarcely make an attempt to find a solitary instance in the passage in Hosea, 'They, like men, have transgressed the covenant.' Dr. Ridgeley shows, that the phrase, 'like men,' is rightly translated, and ought not to be, 'like Adam;' and he judiciously declines to base on it any argument in support of his views. The whole passage bears internal evidence that our translation is correct. The people whom the prophet describes 'transgressed the covenant;' they broke away from that dispensation of the divine promise which was established with their fathers at Sinai; they forsook the ordinances of the God of Israel, and fell a-lusting after idols; and they thus acted 'like men,' under the influence of the depravity of heart, and the enmity against God which had drawn the nations into heathenism, and which had often incited God's own peculiar people to apostacy and revolt. Can any ideas be more distant than these are from allusion to either the nature or the demolition of the Adamic constitution? Yet the passage which appears to contain them, is the only one from which an attempt is made to obtain scriptural sanction for calling that constitution a covenant!

The other fact to which I alluded is peculiarly decisive,—that the Adamic constitution was, in all respects, unconnected with sacrifice.

Man was in a state of innocence; he was a stranger to even the knowledge of evil; he could have no idea, and he had no need, of redemption or atonement; he could think of a divine promise only as a simple communication of the divine mind, and could form no conception of it as either vindicated or made sure by a work of atonement. The very elementary ideas of a divine covenant, according to the scriptural and the only legitimate usage of the term, were foreign to his condition and to all his modes of thinking. Even apart, however, from these considerations, the simple fact that the Adamic constitution had no manner of connexion with sacrifice, is conclusive that it was not, in the scriptural sense of the word, a covenant.

Dr. Ridgeley admits, or rather states, that to claim the name of covenant for it is desirable on account only of the consequences which have been drawn from its being termed a law. He says, 'We would not contend about the use of a word, if many did not design, by what they say concerning its being a law and not properly a covenant, to pave the way for the denial of the imputation of Adam's sin. or did not, at the same time, consider him as no other than the natural head of his posterity.' But he was not warranted to give us the alternative of using the word law, or the word covenant. The truth lies between the extremes which these words designate. To say that the Adamic constitution was simply a law, is manifestly wrong; but to say that it was a covenant is not, on that account, right. Its grand peculiarity was its representative character. It was not merely an enactment, as a law is, for a multitude of individuals singulatim, but was also and peculiarly an enactment for a whole race in the person of their first parent as their legal public head. This, and this only, is the feature of the Adamic constitution which is specified in the definitions and descriptions of it in the writings of the New Testament: this, and this only, is the feature of it in which even Dr.

Ridgeley himself, in his discussion under a subsequent Answer, sees its connexion with the doctrine of original sin. Why then should he say, that the withholding from it of the title 'covenant,' 'paves the way for the denial of the imputation of Adam's guilt?' The idea of representation, and the idea of a covenant, are widely apart. On the principle of representation, the whole doctrine of original sin is clear and consecutive; while, on the principle of a covenant, it looms confusedly before the mind, and fails to come distinctly into view, if indeed it comes into view at all, till seen in the light of the principle of representation. Adam was the public head of his posterity, Christ is the public head of the redeemed; the effects of Adam's disobedience come on all his offspring, the effects of Christ's obedience come on all his chosen people. But here the parallel between the first and the second Adam ends. All the rest of our Redeemer's work—all of it which is peculiarly connected with the idea of the divine covenant—has reference to the vindicating and ratifying of the promise of eternal life, the manifesting of the divine holiness and glory in the saving of sinners, by the great work of expiation.

Dr. Ridgeley, with the view of proving his doctrine, gives an illustrative argument which not only fails to show that the Adamic constitution was a covenant, but also tends fearfully to misrepresent the covenant of salvation. 'If,' says he, 'a king had promised a subject, as an act of favour, that he would confer honours upon him, on condition of his yielding obedience, in some particular instances, then he (the subject) would have a right to them,—not as yielding obedience to a law, but as fulfilling the conditions of a covenant.' Now, though sovereign promise, or promise as an act of favour, is one element in the idea of a covenant, it is not the only one, nor even the chief. A promise, as constituting a divine covenant, is vindicated —it is exhibited in harmony with truth and holiness—by connexion

with sacrifice. God's promise to save men,—his covenant that he will put his laws into their minds,—that he will be their God, and they his people,—that all shall know him from the least to the greatest,—and that their sins and their iniquities he will remember no more,—is illustrated as to its moral glory, and made righteous and sure in its fulfilment, by the expiatory work of Immanuel. A divine covenant with man supposes him to be in a condition to be benefited by sovereign goodness, not simply as such, but as displayed in a way of sacrificial ratification. But very different from this was the condition of Adam. The divine promise to him, like his existence itself, sprang from sovereign bounty, but had no connexion with a sacrificial work. Nor, again, are the state and character of men with whom God establishes his covenant of salvation, such as admit of their acquiring 'a right' to 'honours' by performing enjoined 'conditions.' Dr. Ridgeley himself, when treating of that covenant, uses care to show that, on man's part, there neither is nor can be acquired right,—that all the blessings of the covenant are gifts of the free love of God,—that they are bestowed simply because 'God is love,' or because, as displayed through the work of the Redeemer, he is 'the just God and the Saviour,'—'just, and the justifier of every one who believes in Jesus.' Dr. Ridgeley's illustrative argument, then, from the supposed case of a prince promising honours 'on condition of some particular instances of obedience,' comes short of proving that the Adamic constitution was a covenant, and, at the same time, tends to suggest momentous error respecting the nature of the covenant of salvation.

As to the case of Mephibosheth, which forms Dr. Ridgeley's only other direct argument, it was the result of a human covenant. Can any mistake be more palpable, than to institute a parallel between the sovereign enactment of Deity to Adam, and a mutual promise between David and Jonathan,—between man and man? Yet this mistake is just what constitutes Dr. Ridgeley's illustrative argument,

and forms the basis on which he constructs his consequent inferences.

We come now to glance at the second of the topics into which he distributes his discussion,—the blessing promised to Adam in the event of obedience. Dr. Ridgeley views this blessing as 'superadded happiness,' confirmation in holiness, translation to heaven; and he treats it throughout as the pivot on which all his ideas and proofs of an Adamic covenant turn. In his direct arguments in favour of his doctrine, he takes this point for granted; he feels that the assumption of it is essential to the tenableness of his opinion; and he now attempts to find proof for it as the sine qua non of the supposed covenant of works.

His first argument is based on the original threat, 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' Surely he must see quite through an opaque body, who can discern here a promise of superadded happiness, of confirmation in holiness, of translation to heaven. Any man, be he who he may, who comes direct to the Bible, without calling at the academy of the schoolmen, or taking initiatory lessons from framers of theological theories and systems, could never, one should think, discover these ideas in the threatening. He might run hazard of not seeing in it more than a simple denunciation of death in the event of disobedience; and, after mature reflection, he should become able to see in it at best an implied promise, or a promise, negatively expressed, of a continuance of the blessings which man possessed, in the event of his continuing to obey. Whatever promise the threatening implies, is strictly negative; and cannot, without the most violent construction, be made to include such positive blessings as lay beyond the range of Adam's experience or knowledge. Exactly the same form of expression occurs repeatedly in scripture; and, when it admits a negative or implied construction, it appears in every

instance to involve a promise simply of the continuance of such life as the denounced party possessed. One instance may sufficiently serve for illustration. 'God said to Abimelech in a dream, Restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine,' Gen 20:6, 7. Here the threatening, in just the same words as that to Adam, stands accompanied with an express statement of the promise which it implies. Death is denounced in the event of disobedience; and life—the continuance of that which Abimelech possessed—is promised in the event of obedience. The circumstances of Adam and of Abimelech, it is true, were widely different. They acted, the one in his individual capacity; and the other as the representative of his posterity. The life possessed was, in the one case, the forfeited life of a mortal; and, in the other case, the uncondemned life of a holy creature. Still the language of the threats against both in the event of disobedience is the same, and requires to be understood according to an uniform law of interpretation. Hence, as the counterpart of the threat against Abimelech was, that he should continue to wear out the mortal life he possessed; so the counterpart of the threat against Adam was, that he should continue to enjoy the unforfeited paradisaic life with which he was blessed. Dr. Ridgeley truly remarks, that this sense of the text enervates the force of the argument to prove that man was under the covenant. Yet he offers no reasoning to avert it, and seems obliged to content himself with mere assertion. We wonder the more at his doing so, that the interpretation in question, not only 'enervates' the arguments for the supposed covenant of works, but absolutely demolishes them. If the blessing promised to Adam was the continuation of the life which he possessed, then it was exactly, in its basis and character, such a blessing as his existence itself, his creation, his endowment with moral powers, his possessing the image of his Creator, and his

enjoying the boons of the paradisaic state. These were what constituted his life,—his life as it began, and his life as it was continued. Now, no one pretends that the bestowal of this life either was or could be the result of a covenant with Adam. To suppose that it was, is to say, that there was a result of the covenant before the covenant was made, and that Adam existed, and existed as partaker of the covenant, before he was created.

Dr. Ridgeley's next argument is a piece of reasoning unconnected with any appeal to scripture. He supposes Adam to have been conscious that he possessed capacity for a greater degree of blessedness than he enjoyed in paradise, and to have had a desire for this implanted in his very nature; and he infers that God 'who gave him the desire,' would, after a given period, gratify it, by conferring on him superadded happiness and confirmation in holiness. It might be enough simply to ask, Whence were these conceits obtained? in what part of the Bible is information respecting them to be found? But, while we deprecate and might summarily dismiss idle conjecture and assumption in general, we cannot but remark on the peculiar infelicity of supposing Adam to have had a less proportion of happiness than his capacity admitted. To say so is not only to contradict the necessary law between proportionate holiness and happiness, but also to impugn the beneficence of the Creator. A capacity for blessedness, accompanied by a craving for it, but continuing for a time unsatisfied, is a monstrous idea to be associated with the notion of paradisaic bliss,—or of the bliss of any holy creature. That Adam, indeed, had not the degree of happiness which a redeemed soul in heaven has, seems certain. He had not before him the brightest of all manifestations of the divine love and glory,—that manifestation into which 'angels desire to look,' whence seraphs draw their highest joy, and by which is 'made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold

wisdom of God.' 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus'—the light of the divine character displayed in the surpassingly wonderful plan of redemption—did not beam on Adam's path. But though he had not the blessedness of beholding it, —and though, in other respects, he was less exalted, less glorious, than a ransomed soul who 'is one spirit with Christ,' whose life is 'hid with Christ in God,' and who is ever with Immanuel beholding his glory and bearing his likeness,—he unquestionably was happy to the utmost extent of his capacity. Degrees of blessedness, and incompleteness of blessedness, are matters essentially different. Just as two vessels may be equally full, the one of which contains an hundred times more than the other; so two sinless beings may be equally replete with happiness, one of whom has small and the other vast capacity. Wherever sin is absent, be the capacity of the soul what it may, the displays of the divine holiness and beneficence fill it with happiness to the brim. To assert the opposite is to impeach the character of Deity, and contradict the established laws of his moral government; and to be obliged to assert it in order to maintain the doctrine of a Covenant of Works, is strongly presumptive evidence that no such covenant existed.

Dr. Ridgeley further attempts to prove a conditional superadded happiness, confirmation in holiness and translation to heaven, from some texts of scripture which speak of the work of redemption as a work of recovery for man. He says, 'Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, and to procure the recovery of forfeited blessings; yet, what he came into the world to purchase was eternal life. This would have been enjoyed, therefore, if there had been no need of purchasing it, that is, it man had retained his integrity.' But where did Dr. Ridgeley learn that eternal life is purchased? 'This is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' 'The gift of God is eternal life.' Christ purchased, not

eternal life, but the people to whom God gives it. He came to seek and to save, not forfeited blessings, but lost or guilty souls. Where, besides, is the evidence that the life which he gives—the life which his expiatory work rendered it a righteous thing for God to bestow—is the same in nature, the same in identity, as that which was forfeited by Adam's transgression? The one was life in paradise, the other is life begun on earth and perpetuated in heaven; the one was life in direct communion with God, the other is life through a Mediator; the one was life in the representative keeping of a man who was 'of the earth earthy,' the other is life in the representative keeping of the Lord from heaven; the one was life which, even on Dr. Ridgeley's theory, was liable for a season to be forfeited, the other is life so secure that from the moment of the bestowal of it, the divine public Head who sustains it says to all its possessors, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' Had the work of redemption been, in Dr. Ridgeley's sense, a work of mere recovery, it would at best have placed the saved in just the condition in which Adam was when he fell. But, blessed he God, it does unutterably, more. For 'not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification of life; for if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.' Grace did more than undo the mischiefs of the fall,—achieved more than to recover to man what he had lost,—was more, far more, than commensurate with the evil which it assailed. For, 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.' What follows but that the eternal life in question is peculiarly a result of the work of redemption; that it differs, as to the amount and circumstances of the blessedness involved in it, from the life which was forfeited by Adam's transgression; and that, therefore, there is no

correspondence between the promise of the one life and the promise of the other, or that the promise to Adam was not, like that of the redeemed, of the nature of a covenant?

Dr. Ridgeley adduces still another argument, based on Rom. 8:3, 4:1 confess myself utterly at a loss, however, to see its meaning. The text on which he founds it is generally understood by orthodox writers, and if I mistake not, is understood by himself, to mean, that fallen man, through his inability to obey, could not obtain salvation by works, or that the law could not achieve his well-being in consequence of the depravity of his nature; but that God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for a sin offering, defeated the power of our depraved nature, and accomplished our deliverance. Now, what connexion this can be supposed to have with proving Adam to have been under a covenant, or to have had a promise of confirmation in holiness and translation to heaven, on condition of continuing for a period in obedience, is more than I can discover. The argument, if there be one, eludes perception, and, of course, must pass unanswered.

Dr. Ridgeley next proceeds to take lower ground. Supposing his arguments in favour of translation to heaven as the result of keeping the condition of the alleged covenant, not to be admitted, he says it will he sufficient for his purpose to show that Adam had a conditional promise of confirmation in holiness. A few sentences will suffice for examining his proofs. The first is, that the grace of confirmation was necessary to render Adam's happiness complete. Here he falls into the same mistake as before, of supposing that Adam had a blessedness inferior to his capacity of enjoyment, and an apprehension of losing even such as he had, which are utterly incompatible with the established connexion between proportionate happiness and holiness. Adam was a stranger to the knowledge of

evil,—altogether a stranger to such fear or solicitude as does not comport with a state of entire blessedness. Dr. Ridgeley's assumption is based too much on a latent idea that man in paradise had the susceptibilities, and in a degree the liability to apprehension, of a being practically acquainted with evil. But even were the assumption unburdened with objectionable consequences, it is mere conjecture, and cannot be allowed to stand as argument. Dr. Ridgeley's next proof is still more gratuitous: it entirely rests on a mere assumption of the peculiarly conditional character of Adam's obedience,—an assumption which takes for granted, not only the point immediately in question, but the whole doctrine of the supposed covenant of works. His third proof is a duplicate of his first; and supposes Adam, but for the prospect of the grace of confirmation, to have been subject to an unhappy feeling of uncertainty utterly inconsistent with all just notions of the condition and experience of a sinless being. His fourth proof is again a begging of the question to be proved: it takes for granted that the constitution established over the angels, and the covenant of salvation established with believers, are based on the same principle, or stamped with the same character, as the constitution established over Adam. His last proof is the most unblushing of all his assumptions: it begs the question to be proved, in the very words in which that question is stated. The question is, Whether Adam's probation was a trial of continuance in the state in which he was created, or a trial of fitness for another and more glorious state? Now, says Dr. Ridgeley, by way of proviny the latter side of the question, 'If he was a probationer, it must have been for the heavenly glory, or at least for a further degree of happiness, containing this grace of confirmation.' Such are his reasonings in support of his point—naked, unargued, unillustrated, empty assumption. Silence would have been less injurious to his cause. They just serve—and serve not a little cogently—to show that there is

no proof for his doctrine,—not one piece even of presumptive evidence.

We need not follow Dr. Ridgeley in his statement and examination of objections against his doctrine. He deals chiefly, if not entirely, with those who regard the Adamic constitution as having been a law apart from representation, and who deny the imputation of Adam's guilt. His proper opportunity for confronting these antagonists would have been when he came to discuss the character of Adam as a public head. Under his present topic, his business was to have dealt with men who hold the doctrines of representation, of original sin, and generally of the Calvinistic system as tenaciously as himself; but who regard the theory of the Covenant of Works as an idle invention of philosophizing or scholastic divines, and an obscuration of the clearly simple exhibitions of divine truth in the Word of God. He has not, however, confronted this class of thinkers; and, in consequence, does not say anything which requires remark.

No part of the third division of Dr. Ridgeley's discussion—his examination of the condition of the covenant—calls for notice, except the concluding portion in which he treats of the duration or length of man's probationary period. This is altogether a deduction from the doctrine of a covenant with Adam, and supposes that doctrine to have been proved. We notice it merely to point it out as an illustration of the inconveniences which attend a theorizing on divine truth. Having, as he supposes, found Adam under a covenant, Dr. Ridgeley is bound to inquire what the condition of the covenant was, how long it was to he fulfilled, when the terms of it would expire, how the reward of it would be bestowed, what the position of those whom Adam represented would have been when he himself ceased from his probation. But as to these and some other curious points, Dr. Ridgeley and the theologians who think as he does on the subject,

are all at sea, without compass, and even without a guiding star. They have no guidance, not even a very distant suggestion from scripture; they are beyond the view of even analogy or any general principle of reason; and they plough their way through the waves of fancy, with idle conjecture for their steersman. Even apart from the question of a paradisaic covenant, theologians who speculate thus ought to reflect that all the events of Adam's history were foreseen and provided for exactly as they occurred; that, in the sure purposes of God, there was no contingency, and therefore no possibility of another state of things arising, than the establishing of an economy of mercy over our whole race as parties fallen in Adam, and 'shut up' for salvation to the faith of Christ; and they ought, in consequence, to see how very idle, how positively injurious, how fitted to convert the study of actual truth into imaginative reflection on things which never were and never could be, it is to institute inquiries and write discussions as to what would have been if Adam had not fallen. Let us be silent where the word of God is silent; and, when it lifts up its thousand voices to tell us of the wonderful and glorious things which God has wrought for us, let us yield up to its instructions our undivided attention, our entire mind, our absorbing desire to be taught of God the great things which it reveals.—ED.]

[NOTE 3 E. The Design of the Tree of Life.—To call the tree of life a sign, seems perfectly legitimate. A sign is simply a symbol, or a metaphorical or commemorative exhibition of some truth. That the tree of life possessed this character, appears certain. But to call it 'a sacramental sign,'—'a sign of eternal life,'—can, in our opinion, be correct only if we discard the notion of the Adamic constitution having been a covenant. After what was stated in the former Note, we need offer no additional reason for regarding the tree as having been simply a sign, that so long as Adam obeyed he should live,—that holiness and happiness are inseparably connected,—that a soul in a

state of communion with God and subjection to his will, has free and constant access to every means and resource of spiritual life and enjoyment.

To call the tree of life 'the seal of the covenant,' appears, in my humble judgment, to use words in defiance of all meaning. Let any person reflect on what a divine covenant with man is, and then try whether he can imagine such a thing as a sealing of that covenant. Sealing has reference to attestation, and applies to a testamentary deed, and, in scripture, to a person. But neither in the ordinary nor in the scriptural acceptations of the word, does the notion of sealing accord, in any respect, with the idea of a divine covenant. As to 'a sealing ordinance,' or 'the sealing ordinance of a covenant,' a person unambitious to grapple with the phraseology of the schoolmen, will be very willing to confess himself unable to understand it. An ordinance, for the most part, is a symbolical or a commemorative sign of truth; but how it comes either to seal a covenant, or to seal the person over whom the covenant is established, is more than can be very easily perceived. Believers in Christ, or partakers in the covenant of salvation, are 'sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.' Abraham received circumcision, indeed, as both a sign and a seal,—both a symbol of truth and an attestation from God; but then it was in itself, or in its own nature, a sign; and as a seal it attested neither the covenant established with him, nor his personal connexion with the covenant, but simply the genuineness of his faith. 'He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.' This text, so far as I am aware, is the only one which has been construed to sanction the whole theory respecting 'the seals of covenants' and 'sealing ordinances;' yet it utters a meaning widely different from the complex one of that theory, and beautifully accordant with the simple, untechnical, unincumbered statements of truth in the Bible.—ED.]

THE FALL

QUESTION XXI. Did man continue in that estate wherein God, at first, created him?

ANSWER. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God, in eating the forbidden fruit, and thereby fell from the state of innocency wherein they were created.

The Freedom of Man's Will

IN this Answer there is something supposed, namely, that our first parents were endued with a freedom of will. This is a property belonging to man, as a reasonable creature. We may as well separate understanding from the mind, as liberty from the will; especially when it is conversant about things within its own sphere, and, most of all, when we consider man in a state of perfection as to all the powers and faculties of his soul, as he was before the fall. Now, that we may understand what this freedom of will was, let it be considered, that it consisted in a power, which man had, of choosing or embracing what appeared, agreeably to the dictates of his understanding, to be good, or of refusing and avoiding what was evil, —and this without any constraint or force laid upon him, to act contrary to these dictates. It supposes also a power to act pursuant to what the will chooses; otherwise it could not secure the happiness which it desires, or avoid the evil which it detests, and then its liberty would be little more than a name. Moreover, since the thing which

the will chooses is supposed to be agreeable to the dictates of the understanding, it follows, that if there be an error in judgment, or if a destructive or an unlawful object present itself, under the notion of good, while it is really evil, the will is said to act freely, in choosing or embracing it. Accordingly, it is free to evil as well as to good.

To apply this to our present purpose, we must suppose that man, in his state of innocency, was without any defect in his understanding, and that, in consequence, he could not, when making a right use of the powers and faculties of his soul, call evil good, or good evil. Yet through inadvertency, his mind might be imposed on; and that which was evil might be represented under the appearance of good, and accordingly the will determine itself to choose or embrace it. This is not inconsistent with liberty; for as the result might have been avoided by the right improvement of his natural powers, he was not constrained or forced to sin.

Now, that our first parents had this freedom of will, or power to retain their integrity, appears from their being under an indispensable obligation to yield perfect obedience, and liable to punishment for the least defect in it. This supposes the thing not to have been in itself impossible, or the punishment ensuing unavoidable. It follows, therefore, that they had a power to stand, or, which is the same thing, a liberty of will to choose that which was conducive to their happiness. This might be argued also from the difference that there is between man's innocent and his fallen state. Nothing is more evident than that man, as fallen, is by a necessity of nature inclined to sin. Accordingly, he is styled, 'a servant of sin,' or a slave to it, entirely under its dominion. But it was otherwise with him before his fall; when, according to the constitution of his nature, he was equally inclined to what is good, and furnished with every thing

which was necessary to his yielding that obedience which was demanded of him.

Man Left to the Freedom of his Will

It is farther observed, that our first parents were left to the freedom of their own will. This implies, that God did not design, especially while they were in the state of probation, to afford them, by the interposition of his providence, that immediate help which would have effectually prevented their compliance with any temptation to sin. That would have rendered their fall impossible, and would have been a granting them the blessing of confirmation, before the condition of their receiving it was fulfilled. God could easily have prevented the devil's entrance into paradise; as he does his coming again into heaven, to give disturbance to, or lay snares for, any of its inhabitants; or, though he suffered him to assault our first parents, he might, by the interposition of his grace, have prevented that inadvertency by which they gave the first occasion to his victory over them. There was no need for God to implant a new principle of grace in their souls; for, by the right use of the liberty of their own wills, they might have defended themselves against the temptation; and had he, at the time when there was most need of it, given them a present intimation of their danger, or especially excited those habits of grace which were implanted in their souls, their sinful compliance with Satan's temptation would have been prevented. But this God was not obliged to do; and accordingly he is said to have left them to the freedom of their own wills. This did not render him the author of their sin, or bring them under a natural necessity of falling; in as much as he had before furnished them with sufficiency of strength to stand. Man was not like an infant, or a person enfeebled by some bodily distemper, who has no ability to support himself, and, if not upheld by another, must necessarily fall. He was like a strong man,

who, by taking heed to his steps, may prevent his falling, without the assistance of others. He had no propensity in nature to sin, in consequence of which he stood in need of preventing grace; and God, in thus leaving him to himself, dealt with him in a way agreeable to the condition in which he was. He did not force or incline him to sin; but left him to the mutability of his own will, according to the tenor of the dispensation which he was under.

The Temptation

It is farther observed, that there was an assault made on our first parents by Satan, not by violence, but by temptation; the consequence of which was, that, by sinful compliance, they fell from their state of innocency. It appears very evident from scripture, that they were deceived or beguiled. Eve says, 'The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.' The apostle Paul says, to the same effect, 'The woman being deceived, was in the transgression.'s Here, though it is said, in the foregoing words, that 'Adam was not deceived,' probably nothing more is intended than that the man was not first deceived, or that he was deceived, not immediately by the serpent, but by his wife. Some, indeed, give another turn to the expression, and suppose that Adam sinned knowingly, being content to plunge himself into the depths of misery, in complaisance to Eve, that she might have a partner with her in her sorrows. We think, however, that the apostle does not speak of Adam's not being deceived, but rather of his not being first deceived, or first in the transgression.

Now this deception, or temptation, was from the devil, who, because of his subtilty, is called, 'That old serpent.' He is also said to make use of 'wiles,'x that is, various methods of deceit in so suiting his temptations that men may be ensnared by them. This leads us to consider the methods he took to deceive our first parents. We have a

particular account of these, and of their compliance with them, in Gen. 3:1–6. Here we shall take occasion to observe who the tempter was, and the way and manner in which he assaulted them.

There are, on the former of these subjects, two extremes of opinion, which some run into, and which are both to be avoided. Some suppose that the tempter was a beast, or natural serpent, and that the devil had no hand in the temptation; while others suppose that there was no serpent made use of, but that the devil did all without it, and that he is styled a serpent from his subtilty. These we call extremes of opinion; and the truth lies in a medium between them. We must suppose, therefore, that there was really a natural serpent, a beast so called, made use of as an instrument by the devil, by which he managed the temptation, and, accordingly, that he possessed and spake by it. This is the most common opinion, and agrees best with the account given in scripture; and it is also consistent with what our Saviour says of him, that 'he was a murderer from the beginning.' That it was not only, or principally, the natural serpent that tempted our first parents, will appear, if we consider that, though the serpent is said to be more subtile than all the beasts of the field, it never was endowed with speech.z It hence could not, unless actuated by a spirit, hold a discourse with Eve, as the serpent in question is said to have done.—Again, brute creatures cannot reason or argue, as the serpent did. Whatever appearance of reason there may be in them, it would be very hard to prove that they are capable of digesting their ideas into a chain of reasoning, or of inferring consequences from premises, as the serpent did. Much less are creatures which know nothing of God or the nature of moral good or evil, capable of reasoning about divine subjects, as the serpent that tempted Eve must be supposed to have done.—Though, however, the serpent was not the principal agent in the temptation, yet it was made use of by the devil. The history which we have of the temptation in the Book of

Genesis, is not an allegorical account of what Satan did, as some suppose, without any regard to the part that the serpent bore. This appears from the curse denounced against the serpent: 'Because thou hast done this,' saith God, 'thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.' This is applicable only to the beast so called; and we see it evidently fulfilled at this day. Some, not, I think, without reason, infer hence that the serpent, before this, went erect; whereas afterwards, as the visible mark of the curse, it is said to go on its belly. This part of the curse, therefore, respected the natural serpent only. That, however, which is stated in the following words, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,'b respects the devil, that actuated, or spake by it. I am not insensible, indeed, that some Jewish writers, and others who would exempt the devil from having had any hand in the temptation, and who throw all the blame on the brute creature, the natural serpent, give a very jejune and empty sense of this text; understanding it altogether according to the letter, as importing that there should be a war between man and the serpent in order that man might be revenged on him, and that this war should never cease till he had slain him or had bruised his head. But it seems very plain, that as the former verse respects the instrument made use of, namely, the natural serpent, so this respects the devil, and contains a prediction that his malice should be defeated, and his power destroyed, by our Saviour, who is here promised, and described as 'the seed of the woman.' We are bound to conclude, therefore, that the devil, making use of the serpent, was the tempter, by whom our first parents were seduced and led astray from God to the ruin of themselves and all their posterity.

There are several things which may be observed in the method Satan took in managing the temptation by which he seduced and overcame our first parents. Of these we have an account in the scripture before-mentioned.—First, he concealed his character as a fallen spirit, and pretended that he was in circumstances not unlike those in which our first parents were. He seemed at least to pay a deference to the great God, so far as to allow that he had a right to give laws to his creatures. It is more than probable, also, that the event occurred immediately after his fall, and that our first parents knew nothing of a rebellion in heaven, and did not, in the least, suppose that there were any creatures who were enemies to God, or were using endeavours to render them so. Had the devil given Eve an historical narration of his sin and fall, and begun his temptation with open blasphemy or reproach cast on God, whom he had rebelled against, he could not but have apprehended that our first parents would treat him with the utmost abhorrence, and flee from him as an open enemy. But he conceals his enmity to God, while he pretends friendship to them. This was an instance of great subtilty; in as much as an enemy is never more formidable than when he puts on a specious pretence of religion, or conceals his vile character as an enemy to God, and, at the same time, pretends a great deal of friendship to those whom he designs to ruin.

Again, as he tempted our first parents soon after his own fall, which shows his restless malice against God and goodness, so he did so not long after their creation. In selecting this period he showed his subtilty, because, as some suppose, he was apprehensive that the longer man stood, the more his habits of grace would be strengthened, and so it would be more difficult for the temptation to take effect. But that which seems to have been the principal reason, was, either that he was apprehensive that man might soon have an intimation given him that there were some fallen spirits laying snares

for his ruin, and that, in consequence, he would become more guarded against him; or that he did not know but that man might soon be confirmed in his state of holiness and happiness. How long God would continue man in a state of probation, was not revealed; and the devil knew very well, that, upon his obtaining the grace of confirmation, after he had yielded obedience for a time, all his temptations would prove ineffectual. He hence applied himself to his work with the greatest expedition.

Further, he assaulted Eve when she was alone. This, indeed, is not expressly mentioned in scripture. It seems, however, to be very probable; in as much as he directed his discourse to and held a conference with her, and not with Adam, which, doubtless, he would have done, had he been present. In that case, too, it could hardly be said, as the apostle does in the scripture formerly quoted, that the woman was 'first in the transgression,' and that she was first deceived by the serpent. Indeed, had Adam been with her, though she might have been first in eating the forbidden fruit, he would have sinned as being a partaker with her, by suffering her to comply with the temptation, and not warning her of her danger, or endeavouring to detect the devil's sophistry, and to restrain her from compliance. As the law deems all to be principals in traitorous conspiracies against a prince, who are present and do not use the proper means which they ought to prevent them; so if Adam had been with Eve, he would have sinned with her, before he received the forbidden fruit from her hand. This, however, we do not find him charged with. We hence infer that she was alone, and that, on account of her being so, the devil took her at the greatest disadvantage. As the wise man well observes, 'Two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth.'

Further, the instrument Satan made use of, was, as formerly observed, the serpent. Probably he was not suffered to take a human shape. Or if he had, it would, perhaps, not so well have answered his end; since it would have tended to amuse and surprise our first parents, and have put them upon inquiries who he was, and whence he came, for they knew that there were no human creatures formed but themselves. If he had made use of an inanimate creature, it would have been more surprising to hear it speak and reason about the providence of God. If, again, he had not assumed any visible shape, he could not have managed the temptation with success, for there was no corrupt nature in our first parents to work upon, as there is in us. Hence some conclude, that no temptation can, in an internal way, be offered to an innocent creature by the devil; that, therefore, it must have been presented to the senses of our first parents; and that hence it was necessary for him to assume some shape, particularly that of some brute creature, in order that he might more effectually carry on his temptation. It was also expedient to answer his design, that he should not make use of any brute creature which is naturally more stupid, and therefore less fit for his purpose. Accordingly he made use of the serpent, concerning which it is observed, that it is 'more subtile than any beast of the field.' Some suppose, too, that it was, at first, a very beautiful creature, however odious it is to mankind at present; and that it had a bright shining skin curiously painted with variety of colours, which, when the sun shone upon it, cast a bright reflection of all the colours of the rainbow. But we pass this by, as what is uncertain.

Again, it is probable that the devil took his opportunity to discourse with Eve about the tree of knowledge, when she was standing by it, or at least not far from it; that so he might prevail with her to comply with the temptation in haste. Had he given her room for too much deliberation, it might have prevented his design from taking effect;

and if she had been at some distance from the tree, she would have had time to consider what she was going about. She did not want understanding to detect the fallacy, had she duly weighed matters, and therefore would hardly have complied with the temptation. That she was, at least, within sight of the tree, appears from the fact, that the serpent takes occasion, from the beholding of it, to discourse about it, and commend it. While he was speaking about it to her, 'she saw that it was pleasant to the eye, and good for food.'

As to the matter of the temptation, we may observe that the devil did not immediately tempt her to blaspheme God, to proclaim open war against him, or to break one of the commandments of the moral law. What he tempted her to do, was to violate a positive law. This indeed was heinous in its own nature; as it was a practical disowning or denying of the sovereignty of God, and had many other aggravations attending it. Yet the breach of positive laws, founded on God's arbitrary will, are generally reckoned less aggravated than the breach of moral laws; and we are inclined to entertain temptation to them with less abhorrence, than when we are tempted to break one of the moral laws, which are founded in the nature of God. Had he tempted her to deny that there was a God, or that there was any worship due to him, or to murder her husband, or to commit any other crime which is in itself shocking to human nature, he would have had less ground to conclude that his temptation would have taken effect.

Here we may observe, that he proceeded, in a gradual way, from less to greater insinuations, brought against God. He does not immediately and directly, in his first onset, bring a charge against God or his providence, but pretends ignorance, and speaks as one who wished information. He says, 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?' as if he had said, 'Here is a garden well stored with fruit, the trees of which are designed for your food;

are there any which you are prohibited from eating of?' This question occasions her reply, 'The woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it; neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' Some think, that her sin began here, and that she misrepresents the divine prohibition. She was not forbid to touch it; it is said only, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' But I cannot see that this was any other than a just inference from the prohibition itself; as every thing is to be avoided which may prove an occasion of sin, as truly as the sin itself. Others suppose that there is a degree of unbelief indicated by the expression, 'Lest ye die.'e This may be rendered, 'Lest péradventure ye die;' and it is thought to imply that it was possible for God to dispense with his threatening, and that, therefore, death would not certainly ensue; whereas God had expressly said, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.'—We pass this, however, as an uncertain conjecture, and remark, that Satan afterwards proceeds from questioning, as though he desired information, to a direct and explicit confronting of the divine threatening, endeavouring to persuade her, that God would not be just to his word. He says, 'Ye shall not surely die.' He next proceeds to cast an open reproach on the great God, and he says, 'God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'—Here he prefaces his reproach in a most vile and wicked manner, with an appeal to God for a confirmation of what he was about falsely to suggest, 'God doth know,' & c.—Again, he puts her in mind that there were some creatures above her, with an intent to excite in her pride and envy. It is as if he had said, 'Notwithstanding your dominion over the creatures in this lower world, there are other creatures above you;' for so our translation renders the word 'gods,' meaning the angels. Satan farther suggests, that these excel man, as in many other things, so particularly in

knowledge; thereby tempting her to be discontented with her present condition. And as knowledge is the highest of all natural excellencies, he tempts her to desire a greater degree of it than God had allotted her, especially in her present state, and so to desire to be equal to the angels in knowledge; which might seem to her a plausible suggestion, since knowledge is a desirable perfection. He does not commend the knowledge of fallen angels, or persuade her to desire to be like them; but he speaks of her becoming like those who are the greatest favourites of God. It may hence be remarked, that it is a sin to desire many things which are in themselves excellent, provided it be the will of God that we should not enjoy them. A different sense, however, may be given of the Hebrew word which we translate 'gods;' for it may as well be rendered, 'Ye shall be like God;' that is, 'Ye shall have a greater degree of the image of God,' particularly that part of it which consists in knowledge. But however plausible this suggestion might seem to be, she ought not to have desired this privilege, if God did not design to give it; especially before the condition of the covenant she was under was performed. Much less ought she to have ventured to have sinned against God to obtain it.—Further, Satan suggests, that her eating of the tree of knowledge would be a means to attain this greater degree of knowledge. Hence, he says, 'In the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened,' &c. We cannot suppose that he thought her so stupid as to conclude that there was a natural virtue in the fruit of the tree to produce this effect; for none can reasonably suppose that there is a natural connection between eating and increasing in knowledge. We may suppose, therefore, that he pretends that the eating of it was God's ordinance, for the attaining of knowledge; or that, as the tree of life was a sacramental ordinance, to signify man's attaining eternal life, this tree was an ordinance for her attaining knowledge; and hence, that God's design in prohibiting her from eating of it, was that she should be kept in ignorance, in comparison with what she might attain to by eating of it. Vile and

blasphemous insinuation to suggest, not only that God envied her a privilege, which would have been so highly advantageous, but that the sinful violation of his law was an ordinance to obtain it!

It is farther supposed by some, though not mentioned in scripture, that Satan, to make his temptation more effectual, took and eat of the fruit of the tree himself, and pretended, as an argument to persuade her to do so likewise, that it was by this means that he, being a serpent, and, as such, on a level with other beasts of the same species, had attained the faculty of talking and reasoning, so that now he had acquired a kind of equality with man; and that, therefore, if she ate of the same fruit, she might easily suppose she should attain to be equal with angels. By these temptations, Eve was prevailed on; and so we read, that 'she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.' It may be, the fruit was plucked off by the serpent, and held out to her, and she, with a trembling hand, received it from him, and thereby fell from her state of innocency.

Having considered the fall of Eve, who was first in the transgression, we are now to speak of the fall of Adam. This is expressed more concisely in the words, 'She gave also unto her husband, and he did eat.' We are not to suppose that she gave him this fruit to eat without his consent to take it, or that she did not preface the action with something not recorded in scripture. It is most probable that she reported to him what had passed between her and the serpent, and prevailed on him by the same arguments by which she was overcome. So that Adam's fall was in some respect owing to the devil; though Eve was the more immediate instrument of it. We may add that, besides her alleging the arguments which the serpent had used to seduce her, it is more than probable that she continued to eat of the fruit, and that she commended the pleasantness of the taste of it above that of all other fruits; for it might seem to her, when fallen, to

be much more pleasant than it really was, forbidden fruit being sweet to corrupt nature. We may suppose, too, that, through a bold presumption, and the blindness of her mind, and the hardness of her heart, which immediately ensued on her fall, she might insinuate to her husband that what the serpent had suggested was really true; for as he had said, 'Ye shall not surely die,' so now, though she had eaten of it, she was yet alive; and therefore that he might eat of it, without fearing any evil consequence. By these means he was prevailed upon, and hereby the ruin of mankind was completed.

The Consequences of the Fall

Having considered the sin and fall of our first parents, we shall now consider what followed, as related in Gen. 3:7, &c. Here we observe that they immediately betray and discover their fallen state, in as much as they who before knew not what shame or fear meant, now experienced these consequences inseparable from sin. They knew that they were naked, and accordingly they were ashamed. They had also a sense of guilt in their consciences, and therefore were afraid.—When God calls them to an account for what they had done, they, through fear, hide themselves from his presence. This shows how soon ignorance followed after the fall. How unreasonable was it to think that they could hide themselves from God! since 'there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.'—Farther, God expostulates with each of them, and they make excuses. The man lays the blame upon his wife: 'The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.'g These words contain a charge against God himself, as throwing the blame on his providence: 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me.' Here, too, was an instance of a breach of affection between him and his wife. As sin occasions breaches in families, and an alienation of affection in the nearest relations, so he

complains of her as the cause of his ruin, as though he had not been himself active in the matter. The woman, on the other hand, lays the whole blame on the serpent: 'The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.' There was, indeed, a deception or beguiling; for, as has been already observed, an innocent creature can hardly sin, but through inadvertency, as not apprehending the subtilty of the temptation, though a fallen creature sins presumptuously and with deliberation. She should not, however, have laid the whole blame on the serpent; for she had wisdom enough to have detected the fallacy of the temptation, and rectitude of nature sufficient to have preserved her from compliance with it, if she had improved those endowments which God at first gave her.

We shall now consider the aggravations of the sin of our first parents. It contained many other sins. Some have taken pains to show how, in particular instances, they broke all the ten commandments. But, passing that by, it is certain that they broke most of them, and these both of the first and the second table. It may truly be said, likewise, that by losing their innocency, and corrupting, defiling, and depraving their nature, and rendering themselves weak and unable to perform obedience to any command as they ought, they were virtually guilty of the breach of them all. Accordingly the apostle says, 'Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' But, more particularly, there were several sins contained in their complicated crime. There was a vain curiosity to know more than what was consistent with their present condition, or, at least, a desire of increasing in knowledge in an unlawful way. There was discontentment with their present condition, though without the least shadow of reason leading to it. There was pride and ambition to be like the angels, or like God, in those things in which it was unlawful to desire it. It may be, they might desire to be like him in independency, absolute sovereignty, &c.; and it involves

downright atheism for a creature to desire thus to be like him. There was also profaneness in supposing that the tree was God's ordinance for the attaining of knowledge, and in accounting that which was in itself sinful a means to procure a greater degree of happiness. Their sin likewise contained unbelief, and a disregard either to the promise annexed to the covenant given to excite obedience, or to the threatening denounced to deter from sin; and, on the other hand, they gave credit to the devil rather than God. There was, moreover, bold and daring presumption in concluding that all would be well with them, or that they should remain happy though in open rebellion against God by the violation of his law; or in concluding, as the serpent suggested, that they should not surely die. Their sin, too, was the highest display of ingratitude, in as much as it was committed soon after they had received their being from God, and the honour of having all things in this world put under their feet, and the greatest plenty of provisions for both their satisfaction and their delight, while no tree of the garden was prohibited except that only of which they eat.k Moreover, as it was committed against an express warning, whatever dispute might arise concerning other things being lawful or unlawful, there was no question that it was a sin, because expressly forbidden by God, and a caution given them to abstain from it. Farther, if we consider them as endowed with a rectitude of nature, and in particular with that great degree of knowledge which God gave them, it must be reckoned a sin against the greatest light. Whatever inadvertency there might have been as to what first led the way to a sinful compliance, how much soever they pretended themselves to be beguiled and deceived as an excuse for their sin, they had a sufficient degree of knowledge to have guarded against the snare; and, had they made a right use of their knowledge, they would certainly have avoided it. Again, one of our first parents proving a tempter to the other, and the occasion of his ruin, was a flagrant instance of that want of conjugal affection and concern for

the welfare of each other which the law of nature and the relation they stood in to one another required. Farther, as our first parents were made after the image of God, their sin involved their casting contempt upon it; for they could not but know that it would despoil them of it. As eternal blessedness, too, was to be expected if they yielded obedience, this also they contemned; and, as every sinner does, they despised their own souls in so doing. Finally, as Adam was a public person, the federal head of all his posterity, intrusted with the important affair of their happiness, and, as he knew that his fall would ruin them together with himself, there was in it not only a breach of trust, but a rendering of himself the common destroyer of all mankind. This was a greater reproach to him than his being their common father was an honour.

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of the Fall

We shall conclude with a few inferences from what has been said concerning the fall of our first parents.

1. If merely the mutability of man's will, without any propensity or inclination to sin in his nature, may endanger, though not necessitate his fall, especially when left to himself, as the result of God's sovereign will; then how deplorable is the state of fallen man, when left to himself by God in a judicial way, he being, at the same time, indisposed for any thing that is good!

2. From the action of the devil, in attempting to ruin man, without the least provocation, merely out of malice against God, we may infer the vile and heinous nature of sin; its irreconcilable opposition to God; and how much they resemble the devils who endeavour to persuade others to join with them as confederates in iniquity, and thereby to bring them under the same condemnation with

themselves. To do this is contrary to the dictates of human nature, unless considered as vile, degenerate, and depraved by sin.

3. How dangerous a thing is it to go in the way of temptation, or to parley with it, and not to resist the first motion which is made to turn us aside from our duty! And what need have we daily to pray, as instructed by our Saviour, that God would not, by any occurrence of providence, lead us into temptation!

4. Observe the progress and great increase of sin. It is like a spreading leprosy, and arises to a great height from small beginnings. Persons proceed from one degree of wickedness to another, without considering what will be the sad effect and consequence.

ADAM'S REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER, AND THE IMPUTATION OF HIS GUILT

QUESTION XXII. Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?

ANSWER. The covenant being made with Adam, as a public person, not for himself only but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression.

The Federal Position of Eve

HAVING shown, under the foregoing Answer, how our first parents sinned and fell, we are now led to consider how their fall affected all their posterity, whom they represented. It is said, that the covenant was made with Adam, as a federal head, not for himself only, but for all his posterity; so that they sinned and fell with him.

Before we enter more particularly on this subject, it may not be improper to inquire, whether the character of being the head of the covenant respects only Adam, or both our first parents? I am sensible there are many who think this covenant was made with Adam, as the head of his posterity, exclusive of Eve. They think, likewise, that, as he did not represent her therein, but his seed, she was not, together with him, the representative of mankind; that, though the covenant was made with her, and she was equally obliged to perform its conditions, she was to stand or fall only for herself, her concern in it being only personal; that when she fell, being 'first in the transgression,' all mankind could not be said to sin and fall in her, as

they did in Adam; and that, if she alone had sinned, she would have perished alone. When it is objected to this theory, that she could not, according to it, be the mother of innocent children, for 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' the usual reply, which is only matter of conjecture, is, that God would have created some other woman, who should have been the mother of a sinless posterity. The reason why they suppose the covenant to have been made only with Adam, is, that we never read expressly, in scripture, of its being made with Eve in behalf of her posterity; and that, in particular, it is said that 'the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' It is observed, that the law here was given to him before the woman was created; for it is said, in the following words, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.' In other scriptures which treat of this matter, we read of the man's being the head of the covenant, but not his wife. Thus the apostle compares Adam, whom he styles 'The first man,'m as the head of this covenant, with Christ, whom he calls, 'The second man,' as the head of the covenant of grace. Elsewhere also he says, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.' Again, 'By one man sin entered into the world,'o &c.; and, 'By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners.' From its being said, not by the disobedience of our first parents, but by that of one of them, namely, Adam, it is inferred that he only was the head of the covenant, and the representative of mankind.

Now, though I would not be too peremptory in determining this matter, yet, I think, a reply may be made to the reasoning which I have stated. Though it is said, in the scripture referred to, that God forbade the man to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, before the woman was created, yet she expressly says, that the

prohibition respected them both, when she tells the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat thereof, lest ye die.'r Besides, we read, that Eve had dominion over the creatures, as well as Adam. It is said, indeed, that 'God created man,' &c. but by the word man both our first parents are intended. For it immediately follows, 'And he blessed them;' so that the woman was not excluded. We may, therefore, apply the apostle's words, though used with another view, 'The man is not without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord,'t to this particular dispensation of providence. There seems, also, to be the same reason for one's being constituted the federal head of their posterity, as the other; for they were both designed to be its common parents. The tenor of the covenant seems to be the same with respect to them both; and the tree of life was a seal and pledge of blessings to be conveyed by both.

The Representative Character of Adam

We now proceed to prove that Adam was a public person, the head of the covenant, with whom it was made for himself and for all his posterity. When we speak of him as the head of his posterity, we mean something more than that he was their common parent. Had there been no other idea than this in his being their head, I cannot see how they could be said to fall in him. For it does not seem agreeable to the justice of God to punish children for their parents' sins, unless they make them their own,—at least, not with such a punishment as involves a separation from his presence, and a liability to the condemning sentence of the law. Adam, therefore, must be considered as constituted the head of his posterity in a federal way, by an act of God's sovereign will; and so must be regarded as their representative, as well as their common parent. If this can be proved, they may be said to fall with him. To understand

this, we must conclude him to have been the head of the world, even as Christ is the Head of his elect; so that in the same sense as Christ's righteousness becomes theirs, namely, by imputation, Adam's obedience, had he stood, would have been imputed to all his posterity, as his sin is now that he has fallen. This is a doctrine founded on pure revelation; and we must have recourse to scripture to evince its truth.

There are several scriptures in which this doctrine is contained; as that in which the apostle speaks concerning our fall in Adam, whom he calls, 'the figure of him that was come.'x Now, in what was Adam a type of Christ? Not as he was a man, consisting of soul and body; for, in that respect, all that lived before Christ might as justly be called types of him. Whenever we read in scripture of any person or thing being a type, there are some peculiar circumstances by which it may be distinguished from all other persons or things which are not types. Now Adam was distinguished from all other persons, as he was the federal head of all his posterity. That he was so, appears from the fact that the apostle not only occasionally mentions it, but largely insists on it, and shows in what respect it was true. He particularly observes, that as one conveyed death, the other was the Head or Prince of life. These respective things, indeed, were directly opposite; so that the analogy or resemblance consisted only in the manner of conveying them. Hence, as death did not, in the first instance of our liability to it, become due to us on account of our own actual sin, but on account of the sin of Adam; so the right we have to eternal life, by justification, is the result, not of our own obedience, but of Christ's. This is plainly the purport of the apostle's reasoning. Now, if Christ was, in this respect, a federal Head and Representative of his people, then Adam, who was in this, or in nothing, his type or figure, must be the head of a covenant in which his posterity were included. Another scripture, by which this may be proved, is that in which the apostle

speaks of 'the first and the second Adam.' By the latter, he means Christ. Now, why should he be called 'the second Man,' who lived so many ages after Adam, if the apostle did not design to speak of him as typified by Adam, or as bearing some resemblance to him? In other expressions, he seems to imply as much, and shows how we derive death from Adam, of whom he had been speaking in the foregoing verses. Thus he says, 'The first man was of the earth, earthy;' and, 'As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy;' and, 'We have borne the image of the earthy.' Now, if Adam was the root and occasion of all the miseries we endure in this world, arising from his violation of the covenant he was under, it plainly follows, that he was the head and representative of all his posterity. For farther proof we may consider the apostle's method of reasoning, in the scripture first quoted: 'By one man sin entered into the world, for that all have sinned.' This I would choose to render, 'By one man sin entered into the world,' that is, by the first man, 'in whom all have sinned,'z rather than as it is rendered in our translation. For this seems to be the most natural sense of the words; it agrees best with the apostle's general design or argument, insisted on and farther illustrated in the following verses; and it proves that Adam, in whom all sinned, was their head and representative. Again, the apostle speaks of penal evils, consequent on Adam's sin, which could not have befallen us, had he not been our federal head and representative. Thus he says, 'By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.'c It may be observed, that the apostle, in this text, uses a word translated 'condemnation,' which cannot, with any manner of consistency, be understood in any other than a forensic sense. Hence, what he argues is, that we are liable to condemnation by the offence of Adam. And this certainly proves the imputation of his offence to us; and consequently, that he is considered as our federal head.

That Adam was the federal head of his posterity, appears farther from the fact that all mankind are exposed to many miseries and to death, which are of a penal nature, and which must therefore be considered as the consequence of sin. Now, they cannot be the consequence of actual sin, in those who are miserable and die as soon as they are born, who have not 'sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.' But they must be the result of his sin; and this they could not be, had he not been the federal head of all his posterity.

It is objected to this, that God might, out of his mere sovereignty, ordain that his creatures should be exposed to some degree of misery; that, if this misery be not considered as the punishment of sin in infants, it does not prove the imputation of Adam's sin to them; that even their death, considered only as a separation of soul and body, may not contain a proper idea of punishment, which consists in the stroke of justice demanding satisfaction for sin, but may be reckoned only an expedient or a necessary means for their attaining eternal life; and that therefore it does not follow, that our being liable to death before we have done good or evil, is necessarily a punishment due to that sin which was committed by Adam. Now, I will not deny that God might, out of his mere sovereignty, dispense some lesser degrees of natural evil to a sinless creature; nor will I contend with any who shall say, that he might, without any dishonour to his perfections, send on him an evil, sensibly great, provided it were not only consistent with his love, but attended with those manifestations and displays of it which would more than compensate for it, and, at the same time, not have any tendency to prevent the answering of the end of his being. Yet I may be bold to say, that, from the nature of the thing, God cannot inflict even the least degree of punishment on a creature who is, in all respects, guiltless. If, therefore, these lesser evils are penal, they are the

consequence of Adam's sin. Now death must be considered as a penal evil; for, as such, it was first denounced as a part of the curse, consequent on Adam's sin. The apostle also says, 'The wages of sin is death;' and elsewhere he speaks of all men as 'dying in Adam.'f The sin of Adam, therefore, is imputed to all mankind; and, consequently, he was their federal head and representative in the covenant that he was under.

Christ not Represented by Adam

They whose federal head and representative Adam was, are such as descended from him by ordinary generation. The design of this limitation is to signify, that our Saviour is excepted; and that he did not sin or fall in him, in as much as he was born of a virgin. Though he had the same human nature with all Adam's posterity, he did not derive it from him in the same way as they do. A similitude of nature, or his being a true and proper man, does not render him a descendant from Adam, in the same way as we are. The formation of his human nature having been the effect of miraculous, supernatural, creating power, he was no more liable to Adam's sin, as being a man, than a world of men would be, should God create them out of nothing, or out of the dust of the ground, by a mediate creation. Such a creation would be no more miraculous, or supernatural, than was the formation of the human nature of Christ in the womb of a virgin. Now, as persons so formed would not be concerned in Adam's sin or fall, whatever similitude there might be of nature, even so our Saviour was not concerned in it.

That we might understand that he was not included in the federal transaction with Adam, the apostle, in the passage formerly quoted, opposes him as 'the second man,' the federal head of his elect or spiritual seed, to Adam, 'the first man,' and head of his natural seed.

Again, as an argument, that his extraordinary and miraculous conception exempted him from any concern in Adam's sin and fall, the angel who gave the intimation tells the blessed Virgin, his mother, that 'the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the Highest should overshadow her,' says, 'therefore that Holy Thing, that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.' Here he implies, that, in the formation of our Lord's human nature, he was holy; and that he had no concern in the guilt of Adam's sin, because of the manner of his formation or conception. This is certainly a better way of accounting for his being sinless, than to pretend, as the Papists do, that his mother was sinless. And that pretence of theirs will do no service to their cause, unless they could ascend in a line to our first parents, and so prove that all our Saviour's progenitors as well as the Virgin, were immaculate; and this is more than they pretend to do.

Man not Represented by Adam after his Fall

It is farther observed, in this Answer, that mankind sinned and fell with Adam in his 'first transgression.' We hence infer that they had no concern in those sins which he committed afterwards. Adam, as soon as he sinned, though he was their natural head or common father, lost the honour and prerogative of being the federal head of his posterity. The covenant being broken, all the evils arising thence, to which we were liable, devolved upon us. Nor could any of the blessings contained in the covenant be conveyed to us by him after his fall; for it was impossible for him then to perform sinless obedience, which was the condition of the life promised. This result does not arise so much from the nature of the covenant, as from the change which there was in man, with whom it was made. The law or covenant would have given life, if man could have yielded perfect obedience; but his fall rendered that impossible. The obligation of it

as a law distinct from a covenant, and also the curse, arising from its sanction, remain still in force against fallen man; but, as a covenant in which life was promised, it was, from that time, abrogated. Hence, the apostle speaks of it as being 'weak through the flesh,' that is, by reason of Adam's transgression. From the time of his fall, therefore, Adam ceased to be the federal head of his posterity, or the means of conveying life to them. Hence, those sins which he committed afterwards were no more imputed to them, to enhance their condemnation than his repentance or good works were imputed for their justification.

The Imputation of Adam's sin, and his Representative Character defended

Having considered the first transgression of Adam as imputed to all those who descended from him by ordinary generation, we shall proceed to consider how this doctrine is opposed by those who are in the contrary way of thinking.

1. It is objected, that what is done by one man, cannot be imputed to another, as being contrary to the divine perfections, to the law of nature, and the express words of scripture. What is done by us in our own persons, it is allowed may be imputed to us, whether it be good or evil. Thus it is said, that Phinehas' zeal in executing judgment, by which means the plague was stayed, was counted to him for righteousness; and so was Abraham's faith.'k Accordingly, God approved of their respective good actions, as what denominated them righteous persons; and placed them to their account, as bestowing on them some corresponding rewards. So, in the same way, a man's own sin may be imputed to him, and he may be dealt with as an offender. We are told, however, that to impute the sin committed by one person to another, is to suppose that he has

committed that sin which was really committed by another, and that, in doing this, the Judge of all the earth would not do right.

Now, when we speak of persons being punished for a crime committed by another as being imputed to them, we understand the word 'imputation' in a forensic sense; and we do not suppose that there is a wrong judgment passed on persons or things, as though the crime were reckoned to have been committed by them. Accordingly, we do not say, that we committed that sin which was more immediately committed by Adam. In him it was an actual sin; it is ours as imputed to us, or as we are punished for it, according to the demerit of the offence, and the tenor of the covenant in which we were included. Moreover, it is not contrary to the law of nature or nations, for the iniquity of some public persons to be punished in many others, so that whole cities and nations suffer on their account. As to scripture instances of this, we often read of whole families and nations suffering for the crimes of those who have been public persons, and exemplary in sinning. Thus Achan who coveted the wedge of gold, suffered not alone for his sin; but 'his sons and his daughters were stoned, and burned with fire,' together with himself, though we do not expressly read that they were confederates with him in the crime. God also threatened the Amalekites, who, without provocation, came out against Israel in the wilderness, that he would have 'war with them for this, from generation to generation;'m and, in pursuance of this threatening, God, imputing the crime of their fore-fathers to their posterity some hundreds of years after, ordered Saul, 'to go and utterly destroy them, by slaying both man and woman, infant and suckling.' The sin of Jeroboam, in like manner, was punished in his posterity, according to the threatening denounced;o as was also the sin of Ahab. The church, too, acknowledges that it was a righteous dispensation of providence for God to bring upon Judah those miseries which immediately

preceded and followed their being carried captive; for they say, 'Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquity.'q Our Saviour speaks to the same purpose, when he tells the Jews, that 'upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.' These instances, and others of a similar nature, prove that it is no unheard-of thing, for one man to suffer for a crime committed by another.s

But I am sensible that the principal thing intended in the objection, when imputation is supposed to be contrary to scripture, is, that it contradicts the sense of what the prophet says, when he tells the people, that 'they should not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;' for 'the soul that sinneth shall die.' Now, the meaning of this scripture is, that if they were humble and penitent, and did not commit those crimes which their fathers had done, they should not be punished for them. This was a special act of favour, which, on the supposition of their acting as they were required to do, God would grant to them; and it is as much as to say, that he would not impute their fathers' sins to them, or suffer them to be carried captive, merely because their fathers had deserved this desolating judgment. But this does not, in all respects, agree with the instance before us. We are considering Adam as the federal head of his posterity; but their fathers were not so considered in this and similar scriptures. Moreover, the objectors will hardly deny, that natural death, and the many evils of this life, are a punishment, in some respects, for the sin of our first parents. Hence, the question is not, Whether some degree of punishment may follow from it? but, Whether the greatest degree of the punishment of sin in hell, can be said to be the consequence of it? But this we shall be led more particularly to consider under a following Answer.u

2. It is farther objected, that it is not agreeable to the divine perfections for God to appoint Adam to be the head and representative of all his posterity, so that they must stand or fall in him, with respect to their spiritual and eternal concerns; in as much as this was not done by their own choice and consent, which they were not capable of giving, since they were not in existence. The case, say the objectors, is the same as if a king should appoint a representative body of men, and give them a power to enact laws, whereby his subjects should be dispossessed of their estates and properties, which no one can suppose to be just; while, if they had chosen them themselves, they would have no reason to complain of any injustice that was done them, in as much as the laws, made by their representatives, are, in effect, their own laws. So, say they in the case before us, had all mankind chosen Adam to be their representative, or consented to stand or fall in him, there would have been no reason to complain of the dispensation of God's providence, in making him their public head; but as it was otherwise, it does not seem agreeable to the justice of God, so to constitute him the head and representative of all his posterity, that, by his fall, they should be involved in ruin and eternal perdition.

There are various methods taken to answer this objection. Some say little more to it than that if Adam had retained his integrity, we should have accepted of and rejoiced in that life which he would have procured by his standing. There would then have been no complaint, or finding fault with the divine dispensation, as if it had been unjust. Hence, since he fell, and brought death into the world, it is reasonable that we should submit, and acknowledge that all the ways of God are equal. But, though we must all allow that submission to the will of God, in whatever he does, is the creature's duty, I cannot think this a sufficient answer to the objection, and therefore would not lay much stress upon it, but proceed to consider what may be

farther said in answer to it. Others say, that, since Adam was the common father of mankind, and consequently the most honourable of them, our Saviour only excepted, whom he did not represent, it was fit that he should have the honour conferred upon him of being their representative; so that, had all his posterity been in existence, and the choice of a representative been wholly referred to them, the law of nature would have directed to and pointed out the man, who ought to have the preference to all others. This answer bids fairer, I confess, to remove the difficulty than the other; especially if it be added, that God might have given Adam some advantages of nature above the rest of mankind, besides the relative one arising from his being their common father, and that, therefore, it would have been their interest, as well as their duty, to have chosen him, as being best qualified to perform the work that was devolved upon him. But as this will not wholly remove the difficulty, it is farther alleged that as God chose him, we ought to acquiesce in his choice. Indeed, had all mankind been then in existence, supposing, as we are obliged to do, that they were in a state of perfect holiness, they would have acknowledged the equity of the divine dispensation; otherwise they would have actually sinned and fallen, in rejecting and complaining of the will of God. This, however, will not satisfy those who advance the contrary scheme of doctrine, and deny the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, who still complain of it as a very severe dispensation, and conclude that the sovereignty of God is pleaded for against his other perfections. Something farther, therefore, must be added, in answer to the objection. Now, we freely allow, that it is not equitable, to use the similitude taken from human forms of government, for a king to appoint a representative who shall have a power committed to him to take away the properties or estates of his subjects. But this, in many respects, does not agree with the matter under consideration. Yet, if we suppose that these subjects had nothing which they could call their own, separate from the will of the

prince, that their properties and estates were not only defended, but given by him, and that they were given upon the tenure that he reserved to himself a right to dispossess them of them at his pleasure; in this case, he might, without any injustice done them, appoint a representative by whose conduct they might be forfeited or retained. This agrees with our present argument. Accordingly, there were some things which Adam possessed in his state of innocency, and others which he was given to expect, had he stood, which he had no natural right to, separate from the divine will. It hence follows, that God might, without doing his posterity any injustice, repose this right in the hands of a mutable creature, so that it should be retained or lost for them, according as he stood or fell. This will appear less exceptionable, too, when we consider the nature of that guilt which all mankind were brought under by Adam's sin, and the loss of original righteousness as the consequence of his fall. They who maintain the other side of the question, generally represent us as if we supposed that there were no difference between this guilt, and that contracted by actual sins, together with the punishment resulting from them, how great soever they are. This subject, however, will be more particularly considered under a following Answer; when we shall endeavour to take a just estimate of the difference between the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to us, and that of actual sins committed by us.

ORIGINAL SIN

QUESTION XXIII. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

ANSWER. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

QUESTION XXIV. What is sin?

ANSWER. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.

QUESTION XXV. Wherein consisteth the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

ANSWER. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, which is commonly called Original Sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions.

QUESTION XXVI. How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?

ANSWER. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them, in that way, are conceived and born in sin.

The Nature of Sin

HAVING considered the fall of our first parents, and the imputation of the sin of it to all mankind, we are now led to speak concerning the sin and misery which followed. This is not called merely a single act of sin, or one particular instance of misery, but a state of sin and misery. Man's being brought into a state of sin, is sometimes called sin's reigning or having dominion over him; and his being brought

into a state of misery, is called the reign or dominion of death. As, by various steps, we proceed from one degree of sin unto another, so our condemnation is gradually enhanced. This is the subject of the first of these Answers.

Here we have a brief definition of sin. In this something is supposed, namely, that there was a law given and promulgated, as a rule of obedience to the reasonable creature, without which there could be no sin committed, or guilt contracted. 'Where no law is, there is no transgression.' 'Sin is not imputed where there is no law.'z And its being observed that the subjects bound by this law are reasonable creatures, gives us to understand, that, though other creatures are the effect of God's power, and the objects of his providence, they are not the subjects of moral government. Hence, they cannot be under a law; in as much as they are not capable of understanding their relation to God as a Sovereign, or their obligation to obey him, or the meaning of a law as the rule of obedience.

Moreover, we have, in this Answer, an account of the formal nature of sin. It is considered, first, in its negative or rather privative idea, as a defect or want of conformity to the law, a privation of that rectitude of nature or righteousness which man had at first, or our not performing that which we are bound by this law of God to do. Those particular instances of sin which are included in the idea of it, are called sins of omission. It is next described by its positive idea; and so is called a transgression of the law, or a doing of that which is forbidden by it. The apostle calls it, 'The transgression of the law.' We shall not, however, insist on this subject at present; as we shall have occasion to enlarge on it, when we consider the sins forbidden under each of the Ten Commandments, and the various aggravations of them.b

The Sinfulness of all Mankind as fallen in Adam

We are, in the next Answer, led to consider the sinfulness of all mankind, as fallen in Adam, or original sin, as derived to and discovered in us. This consists more especially in our being guilty of Adam's first sin, in our wanting that righteousness which he was possessed of, and in that corruption of nature whence all actual transgressions proceed.

1. We shall inquire what we are to understand by the guilt of Adam's first sin. His disobedience, as was formerly shown, being imputed to his posterity, the result is, that all the world becomes guilty before God. Guilt is an obligation or liableness to suffer punishment for an offence committed, in proportion to its aggravations. Now, as this guilt was not contracted by us but imputed to us, we must consider it as the same in all, or as not admitting of any degrees. Yet there is a very great difference between that guilt which is the result of sin imputed to us, and that which arises from sin's being committed by us. They who do not put a just difference between these, give occasion to many prejudices against this doctrine, and do not sufficiently vindicate the perfections of God, in his judiciary proceedings, in punishing the one or the other of them. That we may avoid this inconvenience, let it be considered, that original and actual sins differ more especially in two respects. First, the sin of our first parents, how heinous soever it was in them, as being an actual transgression, attended with the highest aggravations, cannot be said to be our actual sin, or committed by an act of our will. Hence, though the imputation of it to us, as has been before proved, is righteous; yet it has not such circumstances attending it as if it had been committed by us. Secondly, the guilt of it, or the punishment due to it, cannot be so great as the guilt we contract, or the punishment we are liable to for actual sins. These are committed

with the approbation and consent of the will, and are opposed to some degree of light, and convictions of conscience, and manifold engagements to the contrary. But these circumstances do not properly belong to Adam's sin, as imputed to us; nor is the punishment due to it the same as if it had been committed by us in our own persons.

That we may not be misunderstood, let it be considered, that we are not speaking of the corruption of nature inherent in us. We do not deny that the fountain which sends forth all actual sins, or sin reigning in the heart, is, in various respects, more aggravated than many others committed by us, which we call actual transgressions; just as the corrupt fountain is worse than the streams, or the root than the branch, or the cause than the effect. But when, as at present, we consider Adam's sin only as imputed, and as being antecedent to that corruption of nature which is the immediate cause of sinful actions, or when we distinguish between original sin as imputed and inherent, we understand by the former, only that it cannot expose those who never committed any actual sins to so great a degree of guilt and punishment, as the sins committed by actual transgressors expose them to.

Let it be farther observed, that we do not say that there is no punishment due to original sin as imputed to us. To say this, would be to suppose that there is no guilt attending it; which is contrary to what we have already proved. All our design, at present, is, to put a just difference between Adam's sin, imputed to us, and those sins which are committed by us. Indeed, if what we have said on this subject be not true, the state of infants dying in infancy, under the guilt of Adam's sin, must be equally deplorable with that of the rest of mankind. When I find some expressing themselves to this effect, I cannot wonder that others who deny the doctrine of original sin are

offended at it. It is one thing to say that they are exposed to no punishment at all, which none who observe the miseries to which we are liable, from our first appearance in the world till our leaving it, whether sooner or later, can well deny; and another thing to say, that they are exposed to the same punishment for it as if they had actually committed it. The former we allow; the latter we must take leave to deny, lest we should give occasion to any to think that the Judge of all does any thing which wears even the least appearance of severity and injustice. What we have thus said concerning the imputation to us of the guilt of Adam's first sin, leads us to consider its effects. Accordingly,

2. Man is said to want that righteousness which he had at first, which is generally called 'original righteousness.' This is styled the privative part of original sin; as the corruption of the human nature, and its propensity to all sin, is the positive part. In considering the former, or man's want of original righteousness, we may observe, that man has not wholly lost God's natural image, which he possessed as an intelligent creature, consisting in his being endowed as such with an understanding capable of some degree of the knowledge of himself and divine things, and a will, in many respects, free, namely, as to what concerns natural things, or some external branches of religion, or things materially good, and in his having executive powers to act agreeably to the dictates of his will and understanding. These, indeed, are miserably defaced, and come far short of that perfection which he had in the state in which he was created. Some have compared his condition to an old decayed building, which has, by the ruins of time, lost its strength and beauty; though it retains something of the shape and resemblance of what it was before. Thus the powers and faculties of the soul are weakened, but not wholly lost, by the fall. They are like the fruits of the earth, which are shrivelled and withered in winter, and look as though they were

dead; or like a man who has outlived himself, and has lost the vivacity and sprightliness of his parts, as well as the beauty of his body, which he formerly had. Again, our ability to yield acceptable obedience to God, much more perfect obedience, is wholly lost; we being destitute of a principle of spiritual life and grace, which must, if ever we have it, be implanted in regeneration. Hence, every one may say with the apostle, 'In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' Moreover, we are destitute of a right to the heavenly blessedness, and all those privileges which were promised on condition of our first parents performing perfect obedience, according to the tenor of the covenant made with them in their state of innocency.

This want of original righteousness is the immediate consequence of Adam's first sin. By original righteousness, we understand that freedom from guilt which man had before he sinned, which exempted him from any liability to condemnation, and afforded him a plea before God for his retaining the blessings he possessed, and which, had he persisted longer in his integrity, would have given him a right to a greater degree of happiness. His perfect obedience was his righteousness, in a forensic sense; and the failure of it in our first parents, rendered both them and us destitute of it. But as this is the same as what is meant by the foregoing words, which speak of us as guilty of Adam's first sin, we must consider something else as intended, when we are said to want that righteousness wherein he was created. We formerly observed, that by the fall of our first parents, the natural image of God in man was defaced. But now we are to speak of his supernatural image, as what was wholly lost; so that all mankind are, by nature, destitute of a principle of grace. On this account it may truly be said, as the apostle does, 'There is none righteous; no, not one.' Elsewhere man is called, 'a transgressor from the womb;'e and is said to be, by nature, not only 'a child of wrath,'

but 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Till, therefore, we are created again to good works, or a new principle of grace is implanted in regeneration, there is no salvation. Our being destitute of the supernatural principle of grace, is distinguished from that propensity to sin, or corruption of nature, which is spoken of in the following words of this Answer. Considering it as thus distinguished, and as called, by some, the privative part of original sin, we speak of man's destitution or deprivation as of that which was his glory, and which tended to his defence against the assaults of temptation, and those actual transgressions which are the consequence. This excellent endowment man is said to have lost.

Some divines express themselves with a degree of caution when treating on this subject. Though they allow that man has lost this righteousness, they will hardly own that God took it away, though it were by a judicial act, supposing that this would argue him to be the author of sin. I would not blame the least degree of concern expressed to guard against such a consequence, did it really follow from our asserting it. I cannot but conclude, however, that the holiness of God may be vindicated, though we should assert that he deprived man of this righteousness as a punishment of his sin, or denied him that power to perform perfect obedience which he conferred on him at first. There is a vast difference between God's restoring to him his lost power to perform that which is truly and supernaturally good in all its circumstances, and the infusing of habits of sin into his nature. The latter we acknowledge he could not do consistently with his holiness, and shall make this farther appear under a following head. But the other he might do, that is, leave man destitute of a power to walk before him in holiness and righteousness. For if God had been obliged to have given him this power, then his bestowing it on fallen man would be rather a debt

than a grace, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel. But this leads us to consider the positive part of original sin.

3. Man's sinfulness, as fallen, consists in the corruption of his nature, or a propensity and inclination to all evil. This, it is observed, is commonly called original sin, that is, original sin inherent, as distinguished from sin imputed to us, which has been already considered. That the nature of man is vitiated, corrupted, and prone to all that is bad, is taken for granted by all. Indeed, he who denies it must either be very much unacquainted with himself, or hardly retain the common notices which we have of moral good and evil. Man's corruption is frequently represented in scripture as a plague, defilement, or deadly evil with which his heart is affected. On this account it is said that 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' and that 'out of it proceed evil thoughts,' and all other abominations of the most heinous nature,h unless prevented by the grace of God.

This propensity of nature to sin, discovers itself in the first dawn of our reason. We no sooner appear to be men, than we give ground to conclude that we are sinners. Accordingly it is said, 'The imagination of man's heart is only evil,' and that 'from his youth.' And he is represented as 'estranged from the womb, going astray as soon as he is born, speaking lies.' These statements, however, are to be understood with the limitation that we are prone to sin as soon as we have any dispositions or inclinations to any thing; for it cannot be supposed that man is disposed to commit actual sin before he is capable of acting. Some, indeed, have attempted to prove that the soul of a child sins as soon as it is united to the body in the womb, and have carried this indefensible conjecture so far as to maintain that actual sin is committed in the womb. This opinion, however, is

not only destitute of all manner of proof, but seems so very absurd that few will be convinced by it; and hence it needs no confutation.

Man's propensity to sin, whenever it may be said to discover itself, is certainly not equal in all. In this respect it differs from Adam's guilt, as imputed to us, and from our want of original righteousness, as the immediate consequence. The corrupt inclinations of man appear, from universal experience, as well as from the concurrent testimony of scripture, to be of an increasing nature. Hence some are more obstinate and hardened in sin than others; and corrupt habits in many are compared to the tincture of the Ethiopian, or the leopard's spots, which no human art can take away. We are, indeed, naturally prone to sin at first; but afterwards the leprosy spreads, and the propensity or inclination to it increases by repeated acts, or a course of sin. The psalmist takes notice of this, in a beautiful climax or gradation: 'They know not, neither will they understand, they walk in darkness.'m

The Origin of Sin in Man

We shall now take occasion to speak something concerning the rise or origin of man's sinfulness. This is a difficulty which many have attempted to account for and explain, though with as little success as anything which comes within the compass of our inquiries. Some ancient heretics thought that, because it could not be from God, who is the author of nothing but what is good, there are two first causes; one, of all good, which is God, and the other of all evil. But this is deservedly exploded, as a most dangerous and absurd notion. Others seem to assert that God is the author of it; and, that they may exculpate themselves from making him the author of sin, which is the vilest reproach that can be cast upon him, they add, that he inflicts it in a judicial way, as a punishment for the sin of our first

parents, and that it is no reflection on him to suppose that, as a judge, he may put this propensity to sin into our nature; so that it is, as it were, concreated with the soul, or derived to us at the same time that it is formed in and united to the body. But we cannot by any means conclude God to be the author of it, though it be as a Judge; for that would be to suppose his vindictive justice inconsistent with the spotless purity of his nature. We read, indeed, of God's 'giving men up to their own hearts' lust,'o as a punishment for their sins; but never of his producing in them an inclination to sin, though it be under the notion of a punishment. But this having been proved and illustrated under a foregoing Answer, when we spoke concerning the providence of God as conversant about those actions to which sin is annexed in a judicial way, we shall pass it over in this place.

The Pelagians, and after them, the Papists, and some among the Remonstrants, being sensible that this propensity of nature to sin cannot be denied, have taken such a method to account for it, as makes it a very innocent and harmless thing. That it may appear agreeable to the notion which they maintain of the innocency of man by nature, they suppose that the first motions or inclinations of the soul to sin, or, to use their own expression, the first acts of concupiscence, are not sinful. To support this opinion, they maintain, that nothing can be deemed a sin, but what is committed with the full bent of the will; and that when an unlawful object presents itself, how much soever the mind may be pleased with it, there is no sin till there is an actual compliance with it. For proof of this, they bring that scripture: 'When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin,' which they interpret to mean that the second act of concupiscence, or the compliance with the first suggestions to sin, alone is denominated sin. As a consequence from this supposition, they pretend that these first acts of concupiscence were not inconsistent with a state of innocency; so that when 'Eve saw that the

tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,' she did not sin till 'she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.' As a farther consequence deduced from their supposition, they conclude, that the original righteousness which our first parents had, did not consist so much in a perfect freedom from all suggestions to sin, but rather in being a bridle to restrain them from compliance with them, by not making a right use of which, they complied with the motions of concupiscence, and so sinned. According to this scheme, that propensity of nature to sin which we have in our childhood, is an harmless and innocent thing; and therefore we may suppose it to be from God, without concluding him to be the author of sin. The scheme, however, is a vile and groundless notion, and such as savours more of Antinomianism than many doctrines that are so called. Indeed, it is to call that no sin which is, as it were, the root and spring of all sin, and to make God the author and approver of that which he cannot look on but with the utmost detestation, as being contrary to the holiness of his nature. We need not say more than this; for the notion carries the black marks of its own infamy in itself.

There are others who oppose the doctrine of original sin, and pretend to account for the corruption of nature, by supposing that all men sinned for themselves. This is nothing else but reviving an old opinion taken from the schools of Plato and Pythagoras, namely, that God created the souls of all men at first; that these before they were united to their bodies, at least those which now they have, sinned; and that, as a punishment of their crime in their former state, they were condemned not only to their respective bodies, but to suffer all the miseries to which they are exposed in them; so that the sin which they commit in these bodies, is nothing else but the farther propagation of that which had its rise in the acts of the understanding and will, when they first fell into a state of sin. This is

so chimerical an opinion, that I would not have mentioned it, were it not maintained by some of those who deny original sin, as an expedient to account for the corruption of nature, and affirmed with an assurance as if it were founded in scripture. I cannot think, however, that it has the least countenance from it. They first take for granted, without sufficient ground, that those scriptures which speak of the pre-existence of Christ in his divine nature, are to be understood concerning the pre-existence of his soul; and thence they infer, that it is reasonable to suppose that the souls of other men pre-existed likewise. They also strain the sense of two or three other scriptures to prove it. When it is said, that, when God had laid the foundation of the earth, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,' they understand by 'the morning stars,' as others do, the angels, and, by 'the sons of God,' they suppose is meant the souls of men which were then created, and untainted with sin. To gain farther countenance to their opinion, they explain agreeably to it, what is said in a following verse,t where, when God had continued the account which he gives of his having created the world, he adds, 'Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?' These words they render, 'Knowest thou that thou wast then born, and that the number of thy days are many?' or they depend upon the translation which the LXX. give of the text, 'I know that thou wast then born, for the number of thy days are many;' that is, say they, 'Thou wast then existent; for though thou knowest not what thou didst from that time till thou camest into the world, yet the number of thy days are great; that is, thou hadst an existence many ages before.' How easy a matter is it for persons to strain the sense of some words of scripture, contrary to its general scope and design, in order to serve a purpose, when they attempt to gain countenance to any doctrine of their own invention! As to the scriptures which they bring to prove that the Jews were of their opinion, I will not deny the inference thence, that

some of them were. This appears from the report which the disciples gave to our Saviour, when he asked them, 'Whom do men say that I am?' They replied, 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets;' that is, they judged, according to the Pythagorean hypothesis, that the soul of Jeremias, or of one of the prophets, dwelt in that body which he had, and therefore that he was one of them. Again, our Saviour's disciples, speaking concerning the blind man, asked him, 'Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'x that is, 'Was it as a punishment for some sin which this man's soul committed before it entered into the body to which it is united, that he was born blind?' I say, I will not deny that some of the Jews may, from these scriptures, be supposed to have adopted the fabulous notion in question, agreeably to the sentiments of the philosophy with which they had been conversant. But I will not allow that our Saviour's not confuting the opinion, is an intimation, as its defenders generally conclude it to be, that he reckoned it just. I rather think that he passed it over as a vulgar error, not worthy of his confutation. As to the passage which they quote from the apocryphal book of Wisdom, where one is represented as saying, that 'because he was good, he came into a body undefiled;' it is no proof from scripture, and it proves only that this was the opinion of some of that trifling generation of men. Moreover, the fact that it was maintained by some of the Fathers, who received the notion from the heathen philosophy, is also as little to the purpose. Indeed, all the other arguments which they bring, amount to nothing else but this, that, if the scripture had not given us ground to establish the contrary doctrine, there might have been at least a possibility of the truth of the opinion. But to lay this as a foundation for asserting the truth of it, with a view to account for the origin of man's sinfulness, is nothing else but for men to set up their own fancies, without sufficient ground, as matters of faith, and to build doctrines upon them as if they were contained in scripture. I

pass by other improvements which they make on this fabulous notion, which appear to be still more romantic.

There is another attempt to account for the origin of moral evil, without inferring God to be the author of it. This has been advanced by those who deny the imputation of Adam's sin. They suppose that the soul is polluted by the traduction or propagation of sin from the soul of the immediate parent; so that, in the same manner as the body is subject to hereditary diseases, the soul is defiled with sin, both the one and the other being the consequence of their formation, according to the course of nature, in the likeness of those from whom they immediately derive their being. They suppose also that a similitude of passions and natural dispositions in parents and children, is an argument to evince the truth of their opinion. But it appears so contrary to the light of nature, and to all the principles of philosophy, to suppose that one spirit can produce another in a natural way, and so repugnant to the ideas which we have of spirits, as simple beings, or not compounded of parts, as bodies are, that it seems to be almost universally exploded, as being destitute of any tolerable argument to support it, though it was formerly embraced by some of the Fathers. They who pretend to account for it, by the similitude of one candle's lighting another, while the flame remains the same that it was before, only make use of an unhappy method of illustration, which comes far short of a conclusive argument to their purpose. As to the likeness of natural dispositions in children to their parents, it does not, in the least, prove the opinion; for this arises very much from the temperament of the body, or from the prejudices of education. But as this method of accounting for the origin of moral evil, is not much defended at present, we may pass it over as a groundless conjecture.

As for Arminius and his followers, they have very much insisted on a supposition, which they have advanced, that the universal corruption of human nature arises only from imitation. Now, though I will not deny that the progress and increase of sin, in particular persons, may be very much owing to the pernicious example of others with whom they are conversant; yet it seems very absurd to assign this, as the first reason of the corruption of their nature. It may easily be observed, that this corruption or disposition to sin, is visible in children, before they are capable of being drawn aside by the influence of bad examples. Indeed, their being corrupted thereby, is rather the effect than the cause of the first propensity which there is in nature to sin. It would soon appear, that, if they never saw any thing but what is excellent, or worthy to be imitated, in those under whose care they are, they would, notwithstanding, discover themselves prone to the contrary vices. We may, in fact, as well suppose that wisdom or holiness takes its rise from imitation in a natural way, as that sin or folly does so. Yet nothing is more common than for children to be very much degenerated from their parents. Whatever attempts are used to instil principles of virtue into them, are nothing else but a striving against the stream of corrupt nature, unless the grace of God interpose, and do that which imitation can never be the cause of.

We must, therefore, take some other method to account for man's corruption of nature; and must, at the same time, maintain that the soul is from God by immediate creation. Though the latter doctrine is not so plainly taught in scripture as other articles of faith are, yet scripture seems not to be wholly silent respecting it. God says, 'Behold, all souls are mine;' and elsewhere, which is more express to the purpose, he speaks of 'the souls that he made,'b or created. The apostle, for this reason, styles him, 'the Father of spirits;' and that in such a sense as is opposed to 'the fathers of our flesh.' Taking this for

granted, therefore, the difficulty which will recur upon us, and which we are to account for, is, How can the soul that comes out of God's immediate hand be the subject of moral evil? To assert that it is created guilty of Adam's first sin, or under an obligation to suffer that degree of punishment which is due to it, is not inconsistent with the divine perfections, as will farther appear, when, under a following Head, we consider what this punishment is; but to suppose that it is created by God impure, or with an inclination or propensity to sin, cannot well be reconciled with the holiness of God. This has been acknowledged by most divines to be one of the greatest difficulties which occur in the whole scheme of divinity. Some, with a becoming and religious modesty, have confessed their inability to account for it; and advise us rather to bewail our sinfulness and strive against it, than to be too inquisitive about the origin and cause of it. Indeed, this is far better than either to darken counsel by words without knowledge, or to advance what we cannot prove; and I would choose rather to acquiesce in this humble ignorance of it, than to assert any thing which contains the least insinuation of God's being the author of it. It is certain, there are many things which we know to be true, though we cannot account for the manner of their being what they are, and are at a loss to determine their origin or natural cause. Thus, though we are sure that the body is united to the soul, which acts by it, yet it is very hard to determine by what bands they are united, or how the soul moves the body as its instrument in acting. Moreover, we know that the particles of matter are united to one another; but it is difficult to determine what is the cause of their union. So if we inquire into the reason of the different colour or shape of herbs and plants, or why the grass is green, and not white or red, no one would be blamed if he should acknowledge himself to be at a loss to account for these and other things of a similar nature. The same may be said if we should confess that we are at a loss to determine what is the first rise of the propensity of the nature of man to sin. Yet, if we keep

within the bounds of modesty in our inquiries, and advance nothing contrary to the divine perfections, we may safely, and with some advantage to the doctrine of original sin, say something on the subject, and may hereby remove the objections that are brought by some against it. Various ways have been taken, as was before observed, to account for the origin of moral evil, which we cannot acquiesce in, on account of the many absurdities which attend them. It may hence be more excusable for me to offer my humble thoughts on this subject; and I hope I shall not deviate much from the sentiments of many who have judiciously and happily maintained the doctrine. There is, indeed, one conjecture which I meet with, in a learned and judicious divine, which differs very much from any account which we have of it by any other, namely, that the mother, while the child is in the womb, having a sinful thought, impresses it on its soul, whereby it becomes polluted, in the same manner as its body is sometimes marked by the strength of her imagination. But this opinion is so very improbable, that it will hardly gain any proselytes; and it only discovers how willing some persons are to solve this difficulty, though in an uncommon method, as being apprehensive that others have not sufficiently done it.

That we may account for the matter in the most unexceptionable way, and in one which does not, in the least, infer God to be the author of sin, or overthrow the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, we must consider men's propensity of nature or the inclination of their souls to sin, as a corrupt habit, and consequently, as what is not infused by God. Hence, though the soul, in its first creation, is guilty, that is, liable to suffer the punishment due to it for Adam's sin imputed, yet it does not come defiled out of the hands of God; or, as one well expresses it, "We are not to think that God put original sin into men's souls; for how should he punish those souls which he himself had corrupted?" He adds, that "it is a

great wickedness to believe that God put into the soul an inclination to sin; though it is true God creates the souls of men destitute of heavenly gifts and supernatural light, and that justly, because Adam lost those gifts for himself and his posterity." Another judicious divinef expresses himself to the effect, that, though the soul is created spotless, yet, as a punishment of Adam's first sin, it is destitute of original righteousness. Accordingly he distinguishes between a soul's being pure, as the soul of Adam was when it was created, that is to say, not only sinless, but having habits or inclinations in its nature which inclined it to what was good; and its being created with a propensity or inclination to evil, which he, with good reason, denies. As a medium in which the truth lies between these extremes, he observes, that the soul is created by God, destitute of original righteousness, unable to do what is truly good, and yet having no positive inclination or propensity in nature to what is evil. This is plainly the sense of his words, which I have appended in a note.

Now, if it be inquired, how this corrupt habit or inclination to sin is contracted, we reply that the corruption of nature necessarily ensues on the privation of original righteousness. Some have illustrated this by an apt similitude, taken from the traveller's wandering out of his way, or taking a wrong path, in consequence of the darkness of the night. Here his want of light is the occasion, though not properly the cause, of his wandering. So, as the consequence of man's being destitute of original righteousness, or of those habits of supernatural grace which are implanted in regeneration, his actions, as soon as he is capable of doing good or evil, must contain nothing less than a sin of omission, or a defect of and disinclination to what is good. By this means, the soul becomes defiled, or inclined to sin. We suppose that it is indisposed to what is good, and that this arises from its being destitute of supernatural grace, which it lost by Adam's fall We

suppose also, that God may deny this grace, without being the author of sin since he was not obliged to continue that to Adam's posterity which Adam forfeited and lost for them. What follows is, that the heart of man, by a continuance in sin, after it is first tinctured with it, grows worse and worse, and becomes more inclined to it than before. This I cannot better illustrate, than by comparing it to a drop of poison, injected into the veins of a man, which will by degrees corrupt the whole mass of blood. As to what concerns the body to which the soul is united, giving occasion to corrupt habits being contracted, some have compared it to sweet oil being infected by a musty vessel into which it is put. The soul, created good, and put into a corrupt body, receives contagion from it; and this conjunction of the pure soul with a corrupt body, is a just punishment of Adam's sin. In this manner, a very learned and excellent divine accounts for the matter. This similitude, indeed, does not illustrate it in every circumstance, in as much as that tincture which is received from a vessel in a physical way, cannot well correspond with the corruption of the soul, which is of a moral nature; yet I would make so much use of it as to observe, what daily experience suggests, that the constitution or temperament of the body has a very great influence on the soul, and is an occasion of various inclinations to sin, in which respect it acts in an objective way. When we suppose that a soul is united to a body which, according to the frame and constitution of its nature, has a tendency to incline it to sin, and that this soul is deprived of those supernatural habits which would have protected it against contagion; what can follow, but that corruption of nature whereby men are inclined to what is evil? The inclination thus formed increases daily, till men acquire the most rooted habits and dispositions to all that is bad, and they are with corresponding difficulty reclaimed from it.

The Conveyance of Original Sin by Natural Generation

We shall now consider the conveyance of original sin from our first parents to their posterity by natural generation, or how we are said to be born in sin. It is not the sin of our immediate parents which is imputed to us; for they stand in the relation, not of federal, but of natural heads of their posterity. The meaning of the Answer in which this doctrine is stated is only this, that original sin is conveyed to us by our immediate parents with our being, so that as we are born men, we are born sinners. Now, that we may consider this in consistency with what was formerly laid down, nothing can be inferred from it but that the guilt of Adam's first sin is conveyed to us with our being, and that the habitual inclination that we have to sin, and which we call a propensity of nature, is the consequence. Hence, what our Saviour says is a great truth, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh;' or every one that is born of sinful parents will, as soon as he is capable of sin, be prone to commit it.

This leads us to consider an objection against what has been laid down in explaining this doctrine, that it is inconsistent with the sense of several scriptures which speak of sin as derived from our immediate parents. For understanding this in general, let it be considered that no sense of any scripture is true which casts the least reflection on the divine perfections. If we could but prove that our souls are propagated by our immediate parents, as our bodies are, there would be no difficulty in allowing the sense which the objectors give of several scriptures whence they attempt to account for the corruption of nature in a different way from what we do; for, in that case, God would not be the author of that corruption. But, supposing the soul to be created by God, we must take some other method to account for the sense of some scriptures which are brought in opposition to the explanation we have given of the origin of moral evil.

The first scripture which is generally brought against it is, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' But the meaning of this is as if it had been said, 'I was conceived and born guilty of sin, with an inability to do what is good, and in such a state that actual sin would necessarily follow as soon as I was capable of committing it, and would bring with it a propensity to all manner of sin.' That David had a sense of guilt, as well as of pollution of nature, is plain from several places of the context, especially from the ninth and fourteenth verses of the psalm. His words, therefore, are as if he had said, 'I was a guilty creature as soon as I was conceived in the womb, and left of God, and so sin has the ascendant over me. I was conceived a sinner by imputation, under the guilt of Adam's first sin; and I have added much guilt, and lately that of blood-guiltiness.' Hence, though he is said to have been 'shapen in iniquity,' it does not necessarily follow that his soul was created with infused habits of sin. Whatever the parents are the cause of, with respect to this corruption and pollution, let it be attributed to them; but far be it from us to say that God is the cause. Again, it is said, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' Now, it is no strain upon the sense of this text to suppose that, by 'unclean,' Job means guilty; and by 'cleanness,' innocency, as opposed to guilt. In most places of the book of Job, it is so taken, that is, in a forensic sense; and why not in this? If so, it is not at all inconsistent with our explanation of the doctrine. When Job says, in the fourth verse of the eleventh chapter, 'I am clean in thine eyes,' the meaning is, 'I am guiltless,' otherwise Zophar's reply to him would not have been so just, 'God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.' Again, when he says, 'What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?'l to be 'righteous,' seems to be exegetical of being 'clean;' and both, when understood in a forensic sense, agree well with what Job is often reproved for by his friends, namely, boasting too much of his righteousness, or cleanness. Thus he says, 'I

am clean without transgression; neither is there iniquity in me;' that is, 'I am not so guilty as to deserve such a punishment as he inflicts.' Surely 'cleanness' here is the same with innocence, as opposed to guilt. Again, when he says, 'If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean,'n he plainly implies, that if he should pretend himself guiltless, yet he could not answer the charge which God would bring against him, neither could they 'come together in judgment.' Now, if this be so frequently, if not always, the sense of 'clean' in other places of this book, why may not we take the sense of the words, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' to be, that a guilty child is born of a guilty parent, and that its being guilty will be accompanied with uncleanness, so that it will be prone to sin, as soon as it is capable of committing it?

Another scripture which we bring to prove original sin, is Gen. 6:5, 'Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man is only evil continually.' Now, why may we not understand it to mean that the imagination of the thoughts are evil, as soon as there are imaginations or thoughts, though not before? This respects rather the corruption of nature than the origin of it; and so does the parallel scripture, 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,' which means that sin increases with the exercise of reason. This passage also, 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies,'q agrees well enough with what we have said concerning their separation from God, from the womb, whence arises actual sin; so that they 'speak lies' as soon as they are capable of doing so. There is another scripture, usually brought to prove original sin, which is to be understood in a sense not much unlike that now mentioned, 'Thou wast called a transgressor from the womb.' This does not overthrow what we have said; for a person may be a transgressor, as it were, from the womb, and yet the soul not have a propensity to sin implanted in it by God

in its creation. Again, it is said, 'Adam begat a son in his own likeness,'s that is, a fallen creature, involved in guilt, and liable to the curse, like himself, and one who would be like him in actual sin, when capable of it,—born in 'his image,' as having lost 'the divine image.' Farther, it is said, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' We may understand this to mean, that every one who is born of sinful parents, is a sinner, destitute of the Spirit of God; and this is a great truth. But surely our Saviour did not design hereby to signify, that any one is framed by God with a propensity to sin; which is all that, in this section, we oppose.

The Connection of Actual Transgression with Original Sin

The last thing to be considered is, that all actual transgressions proceed from original sin. These are like so many streams which flow from this fountain of corruption. The one discovers to us what we are by nature; the other, what we are by practice; and both afford us matter for repentance and great humiliation, in the sight of God. But as we shall have occasion under some following Answers, to enlarge on that part of this subject which more especially relates to actual transgressions, with their respective aggravations, we pass it over at present; and shall conclude this Head with some practical inferences from what has been said, concerning the corruption of our nature, as being the spring of all actual transgressions.

1. We ought to make a due distinction between the first discoveries there are of this corruption of our nature in our infancy, and that which arises from a course or progress in sin. The latter has certainly greater aggravations than the former, and is like a spark of fire blown up into a flame. Accordingly, it is our duty, as the apostle says, 'to exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any be

hardened,' that is, lest this corruption of nature be increased, 'through the deceitfulness of sin.'

2. Let us carefully distinguish between our being born innocent, which the Pelagians affirm and we deny, and our being born defiled with sin, and so having a propensity of nature to it as soon as we have a being. Let us more especially take heed that we do not charge this on God, as though he were the author of it, as well as of our being, or as if it were infused by him, and not acquired by us.

3. Since this corruption of nature so early discovers itself, and abides in us as long as we are in this world, let us take heed that we do not use means to increase it, by giving way to presumptuous sins, or endeavour to excite it or draw it forth, either in ourselves or others; for this will occasion abundance of actual transgressions.

THE PUNISHMENT CONSEQUENT ON ORIGINAL SIN

QUESTION XXVII. What misery did the fall bring upon mankind?

ANSWER. The fall brought upon mankind the loss of communion with God, his displeasure and curse, so as we are, by nature, children of wrath, bond-slaves to Satan, and justly liable to all punishments in this world, and that which is to come.

HAVING considered that guilt which we bring with us into the world, and that corruption of nature which discovers itself as soon as we

appear to be intelligent creatures, or are capable of any disposition to sin, we proceed to speak concerning the misery and punishment which follow. Now, as original sin is equal in all; and as inherent corruption increases in proportion to that degree of obstinacy and hardness of heart which discovers itself in all ages and conditions of life, and is attended with greater guilt, being more deeply rooted in us, and gaining very great strength by actual sin; it is necessary for us to consider the punishment due to original sin, as such, and how it differs from a greater degree of punishment as due to increasing guilt. The former is not distinguished from the latter, by many who treat on this subject; which gives occasion to some who deny original sin, to represent it in a most terrible view, as though there were no difference between the wrath of God to which infants are exposed, and that which is inflicted on the most obdurate sinner. That we may remove prejudices against this doctrine, and set it in a just light, we shall consider the punishment due to original sin, both as regards itself, and as regards its connection with actual transgression.

The Condition of those who Die in Infancy

Let us consider the punishment due to original sin, as such, namely, in those who are charged with no other guilt than that of Adam's first sin. This more especially respects those who die in their infancy, before they are capable of making any addition to it. Concerning these, I cannot but conclude with Augustin, in his defence of original sin against the Pelagians, that the punishment is the most mild of any, and cannot be reckoned so great that it may be said of them, 'It had been better for them not to have been born.'

That this may appear, let it be considered, that the punishment due to actual sin, or the corruption of nature increased thereby, is attended with accusations of conscience, in as much as the guilt

which is contracted by it arises from the opposition of the will to God. The alienation of the affections from him is often attended with rebellion against a great degree of light, and with many other aggravations arising from the engagements which we are under to the contrary; and is persisted in with obstinacy, against all checks of conscience, and means used to prevent it. Now, in proportion to the degree of it, they who contract its guilt are said, as our Saviour speaks of the Scribes and Pharisees, to be liable to 'the greater damnation.' The prophet Jeremiah speaks of some of the greatest opposers of his message, as those who should be destroyed with 'double destruction.'a This is certainly a greater degree of punishment than that which is due to original sin, as such. With respect also to those who are liable to it, there are often many sad instances of the wrath of God breaking in upon the conscience. He says by the psalmist, that he would 'reprove them, and set their iniquities in order before their eyes;' and what our Saviour says concerning the 'worm that dieth not,'c is to be applied to them. This punishment, however, does not belong to those who have no other guilt than that of Adam's sin imputed to them.

If we can make this appear, as I hope we shall be able to do, it may have a tendency to remove some prejudices which many entertain against the doctrine of original sin, who express themselves with an air of insult as if they were opposing a doctrine which is contrary to the dictates of human nature, as well as represents God as exercising the greatest severity against those who are chargeable with no other sin than this. They generally lay hold of some unwary expressions, contributing very little to the defence of this doctrine, which might as well have been spared. These expressions are no less exceptionable, that the persons who use them preface them with an apology for the want of pity which they evince, and say that the milder thoughts of others on the subject will do those infants who are tormented in hell

no good, as their severer ones can do them no prejudice. We may, therefore, be allowed to make a farther inquiry into this matter; especially when we consider, that those who die in infancy will appear at the last day to have been a very considerable part of mankind. Some tender parents also have had a due concern of spirit about their future state; and would be very glad, were it possible for them, to have some hopes concerning their happiness.

Various have been the conjectures of divines about infant-salvation. The Pelagians, and those who verge towards their scheme, have concluded that they are all saved; supposing that they are innocent, and not in the least concerned in Adam's sin. This, however, is to set aside the doctrine we are maintaining; and I cannot think their reasoning very conclusive. Others, who do not deny original sin, suppose, notwithstanding, that the guilt of it is atoned for by the blood of Christ. This would be a very agreeable notion, could it be proved; and all that I shall say in answer to it is, that it wants confirmation. As for those who suppose, with the Papists, that the guilt of original sin is washed away by baptism, as some of the Fathers also have asserted, their opinion has so many absurd consequences, that I need not spend time in opposing it. One of them is, that it makes that which, at most, is but a sign or ordinance for our faith, in the use of which we hope for the grace of regeneration, to be the natural means of conferring that grace. But this is contrary to the design of all the ordinances which God has appointed. Others have concluded that all the infants of believing parents, dying in infancy, are saved; supposing that they are interested in the covenant of grace, in which God promises that he will be a God to believers and their seed. This would be a very comfortable thought to those who have hope concerning their own state. I cannot find, however, that the argument in support of it is sufficiently maintained; for it seems very evident, that all such promises respect rather the external

than the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. Others, therefore, who are good and pious Christians, and who have been enabled by an act of faith in which they have enjoyed some sensible experience of the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, to give up their infant-seed to Christ, whether in baptism or not, have concluded from the frame of their own spirit, and the evidence they have had of the power of God exciting their act of faith, that God will own that grace which he had enabled them to exercise, and that he has accepted of their solemn act of dedication of their infants to him. This mode of reasoning has given them comfortable and quieting thoughts about the salvation of their infant-seed, and it is not only excellent in itself, but seems to be as just a way of reasoning about the salvation of those who die in infancy, as any that is generally made use of. Perhaps from some such method as this, David inferred the salvation of his child, when he said, 'I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me.' But as these are uncommon instances of faith, and such as every sincere Christian has not always been found in the exercise of, I would hope that there are multitudes of infants saved, concerning whom we have no certain ground to determine who they are. Why, too, may not we suppose that there are many of them, belonging to the election of grace, who are not the seed of believing parents? Yet, notwithstanding all the pious and kind thoughts which the conjectures of men suggest, we must be content to leave this, as a secret that belongs to God, and not unto us to know.

All that I shall attempt, at present, is to prove, that if all who die in their infancy are not saved, their condemnation is not like that which is due to actual sin, or to those habits of it which are contracted by men. Here it must be allowed, pursuant to our former reasoning, that if they are not saved, they have the punishment of loss inflicted on them; for the right to the heavenly blessedness which Adam forfeited and lost, respected not only himself but all his posterity. Whether

they have any farther degree of punishment inflicted on them, or how far they are liable to the punishment of sense, I dare not pretend to determine. I am not willing to conclude, with some of the Remonstrants, such as Episcopius, Curcellæus, and others, that they always remain in an infantile state, or that they have no more ideas in the other world than they had in this; for this is to suppose what cannot be proved. Besides, if they always remain in this state, their doing so must be supposed either to be the consequence of nature, and must be argued from their want of ideas while they were in this world; or it must be by a particular dispensation of providence respecting some infants in the next world, and not all. To suppose the former, is to suppose that none are saved, since remaining in an infantile state is not salvation; for it is beyond dispute, that the soul which is saved, whether it went out of the world an infant or a man, is exceedingly enlarged, and rendered receptive of the heavenly blessedness. If, on the other hand, they suppose, that their remaining in an infantile state, is by a particular dispensation of providence, this, were it true, would be a small punishment, indeed, inflicted on them for Adam's sin. But we have as little or less ground to conclude this, than that all infants are saved. I cannot, therefore, adopt this notion. Indeed, it differs little from that of the Papists, who suppose them, if dying unbaptized, to remain in a state of insensibility; which is no other than an ungrounded conjecture The account, also, which we have, in some of their writings, concerning the place allotted for infants, which they call 'Limbus Infantium,' and suppose to be situated between heaven and hell, is no better than a theological romance, and cannot but be reckoned trifling and ludicrous, and nothing else but an imposing of their own fancies as an article of faith.

I dare not, indeed, allow myself to be too peremptory, or give my thoughts too great a loose, on this subject. But while it is taken for

granted by all who believe the doctrine of original sin, that infants, if not saved, are liable to the punishment of loss, which has been already considered as the immediate consequence of the imputation of Adam's sin; it doth not appear to me that they have such a tormenting sense of the greatness of their loss, as others have who were adult, and had received the knowledge of divine things of which infants are not capable. The latter, as is more than probable, carry the ideas which they had received of divine things out of the world with them which infants cannot be said to do. Hence, if ever infants have the knowledge of divine things, and consequently of the glory of the heavenly state, it must be by extraordinary revelation. How far they may be led into this matter, by observing the glorious work which shall be performed, in the most visible manner, in the day of judgment, I pretend not to determine. This, indeed, will give them some apprehensions of the happiness which others are possessed of, and they are excluded from. But even this cannot have a tendency to enhance their misery to so great a degree as that of hardened and presumptuous sinners, who have despised and neglected the means of grace. The latter, as our Saviour says to the Jews, shall 'see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, while they themselves are thrust out;' that is, their seeing the heavenly glory will, in a judicial way, be a means to enhance their misery. They will necessarily have such a tormenting sense of their having neglected that glory, as will make their loss appear greater, and so render them more miserable than infants can be, who never had the means of grace in this world.

But as it is not safe to be too peremptory on this subject, all that I shall farther observe is, that whatever conceptions infants may have of the happiness which they are not possessed of, they shall not have that part of the punishment of sin which consists in self-reflection on the dishonour that they have brought to God, or the various

aggravations of sin committed, which is a very great degree of the punishment of sin in hell. The wrath of God breaking in on the consciences of men, whereby, in a judicial way, actual sins which were committed, and means of grace which were neglected, are brought to remembrance, and occasion the greatest distress and misery,—this certainly is a punishment to which infants cannot be liable. Again, if the condition of the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon is represented by our Saviour as more tolerable than that of Capernaum; so, in proportion, the condemnation of infants, who have no other guilt than that of original sin, will be more tolerable than that of the heathen, in as much as they had no natural capacities of doing good or evil. This is all that I pretend to determine; and the amount of it is, that, as punishment must be proportioned to crime, and as they are liable only to the guilt of Adam's sin, which is much less than being liable to it together with those other transgressions which proceed from it, their punishment must be less than that of any others. This, I think, may safely be asserted; and, if we proceed no farther in our inquiries about the matter, but confess our ignorance of many things relating to the state and capacity of separate souls, we shall be more excusable than if we pretended to a greater degree of knowledge than is consistent with our present state. [See Note 3 F, page 422.]

Punishment due to Original Sin in Actual Transgressors

We shall now consider the punishment due to original sin, when attended with many actual sins, proceeding from a nature defiled and prone to rebel against God. This is greater or less, in proportion to the habits of sin contracted; as will be more particularly considered, when we speak of the aggravations of sin, and its desert of punishment. We shall, at present, speak on the subject in the order in which it is laid down in this Answer.

1. By the fall of our first parents all mankind lost communion with God. This was enjoyed at first; for God having made man with faculties capable of this privilege, designed to converse with him. Indeed, this was one of the blessings promised in the covenant which he was under; and it was a kind of prelibation of the heavenly state. It follows, therefore, that the fall of our first parents could not but expose first themselves, and then their posterity, to the loss of this privilege. Indeed, this was the more immediate result of sin committed, and of guilt thereby contracted. It is a reflection on the divine perfections, to suppose that God will have communion with sinners, while they remain in a state of rebellion against him; or that he will love and manifest himself to them, and admit them into his presence as friends and favourites, unless there be a Mediator, who engages to repair the injury offered to the holiness and justice of God, and secure the glory of his perfections, in making reconciliation for sin, and thereby bringing them into a state of friendship with God. But this privilege man had no right to, or knowledge of, when he fell; and consequently, God and man could not 'walk together,' as 'not being agreed.' God was obliged, in honour, to withdraw from him, and thereby testify his displeasure against sin; as he tells his people, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.'h This consequence of sin is judicial. At the same time, through the corruption of nature, as the result of that enmity against God which follows on our fallen state, man is farther considered as not desiring to converse with God. His guilt inclined him to flee from him, as a sin-revenging Judge; and his loss of God's supernatural image, consisting in holiness of heart and life, rendered him disinclined, yea, averse to this privilege. As he was separate from the presence of God, he desired to have nothing more to do with him; and this is the immediate result of his sinful and fallen state.

2. Man, by his fall, was exposed to the divine displeasure, or to the wrath of God. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'We are by nature children of wrath.' Here we are not to understand, as some do who deny the guilt and punishment of original sin, that nothing is intended but that we are inclined to wrath, or that we have those depraved and corrupt passions whereby we are prone to hate God and holiness, which is his image in man; for this is rather the consequence of original sin, and discovers what we are by practice, whereas the text speaks of what we are 'by nature.' It seems also a very great strain and force on the sense of the words, to understand the phrase, 'we are the children of wrath,' as meaning that we are children of wrath only by custom, which, according to the proverbial expression, is a second nature; or as signifying only the temper of men's minds, or their behaviour towards one another, in giving way to their passions, 'living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.'k According to the latter view, it would denote only the effects of the corruption of nature, not liability to the wrath of God due to it. Now it is plain that the apostle makes use of an Hebraism, very frequently occurring in scripture, both in the Old and in the New Testament. As a person guilty of a capital crime, and liable to suffer death, is called 'a son of death;' or as our Saviour calls Judas, who was liable to perdition, 'a son of perdition;' so here 'children of wrath' are those who are liable to the wrath of God, or that punishment which is the demerit of sin. Not that wrath is a passion in God as it is in us; but it signifies either his will to punish, or—designing to glorify his holiness—his actual inflicting of punishment on the guilty, in proportion to the crimes committed. Now, as all mankind come into the world with the guilt of the sin of our first parents, in which respect guilt denotes a liability to punishment, and all punishment contains some degree of wrath; I say, if this be the meaning of their being guilty or liable to punishment by nature, I am far from denying it. The only thing which I have opposed is the

supposition, that the punishment due to original sin imputed bears an equal proportion to that of guilt contracted, whereby the nature of man is rendered more depraved by a continuance in sin. I cannot, therefore, but acquiesce in the explanation of this matter given by the learned Beza, who is a most strenuous defender of the doctrine of original sin, who, when he speaks of men as 'children of wrath, by nature,' all mankind being included, understands the phrase as referring, not to the human nature as created by God, but to that nature as corrupted by its compliance with the suggestions of Satan. We suppose, therefore, that as the corruption of nature is daily increased, whatever punishment is due to it at first, there is, notwithstanding, a greater condemnation to which it is exposed, as the consequence of sin committed and continued in. This is described, in scripture, in such a way as renders it, beyond expression, dreadful. 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.'n 'Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide, in the fierceness of his anger?'

3. Man, as fallen, is exposed to the curse of God. This is an external declaration of his hatred of sin, and of his will to punish it; and is sometimes called the condemning sentence of the law. 'As many,' says the apostle, 'as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Whatever threatenings there are, by which God discovers his infinite hatred of sin, these we are all liable to, as the consequence of our fallen state. Accordingly, as we were at first separate from God, the sin of our nature tends, according to its various aggravations, to make the breach the wider, and our condemnation much greater.

4. By the fall we became bond-slaves to Satan. Thus it is said, that the devil hath 'the power of death.' Sinners are described as 'walking

according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.'r He is elsewhere described as a strong man armed, who keeps the palace, till a stronger than he shall overcome him, and take from him all his armour. The heart of man is the throne in which he reigns, and men are naturally inclined to yield themselves slaves to him, and corrupt nature gives him the greatest advantage against us. None of us can say, as our Saviour did, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me;'t for we are as ready to comply as he is to tempt, especially if not prevented by the grace of God, and therefore may well be said to be bond-slaves to him. No age or condition of life is exempted from his assaults. He suits his temptations to our natural tempers, and hereby we are overcome, and more and more enslaved by him. Now certainly this must be a state of misery; more especially because those who are subject to it are enemies to Christ, and withdraw themselves from his service, despising his protection, and the rewards he has promised to his faithful servants. Our Saviour says, that 'we cannot serve two masters;' and so long as we continue bond-slaves to Satan, we contract greater guilt, and the dominion of sin increases. Hence, to be the servants of Satan, is to be the servants of sin. In this, too, are sinners miserable, that they serve one who intends nothing but their ruin, and is pleased in all the steps leading to it, and will be as ready to accuse, torment, and make them more miserable in the end, as he is to solicit or desire their service, or as they can be to obey him. Let us, therefore, use our utmost endeavours, that we may be free from this bondage and servitude. Accordingly let us consider, that Satan has no right to our service. Though he be permitted to rule over the children of disobedience, yet he has no divine grant or warrant for our service to render it lawful for him to demand it, or for us to yield it. He is no other than an usurper, and declared enemy to the King of heaven; and though sinners are suffered to give themselves up to him, this is far from being by divine approbation. Hence, let us

professedly renounce, groan under, and endeavour, through the grace of God, to withdraw ourselves from his service, whenever we are led captive by him; and not be his willing slaves, to obey him with our free consent, or out of choice, and with pleasure. In order to this, let us enlist ourselves into Christ's service, put ourselves under his protection, and desire his help, against the wiles and fiery darts of the devil. Let us improve the proclamation of liberty made in the gospel, and rejoice in it, as the most desirable blessing: 'If the Son make you free, then shall ye be free indeed.'

The last thing observed in this Answer, is, that as fallen creatures, we are justly liable to all punishments in this world, and in that which is to come. By these we are to understand, the consequences, not only of original sin imputed to us, but of sin inherent in us, and increased by that guilt which we daily contract, and which exposes the sinner to punishment in both worlds, in proportion to its aggravations. This subject we are led to discuss under the two following Answers.

[NOTE 3 F. Infant-Salvation.—Dr. Ridgeley's statements on the subject of infant-salvation are exceedingly conjectural and altogether unsatisfactory. So far as appears from his reasonings, all dying in infancy may be lost, or all may be saved. He elicits no data for the assured hope of the salvation of even one; and, while admitting or rather teaching that some are saved, he affords no criteria for discriminating between them and others, or for ascertaining what class they belong to, what characteristics they possess, in what circumstances they are found, or to what comparative numbers they amount. Now, though not much is said in scripture respecting infants as such, there are clearly revealed several great principles which distinctly apply to their condition and hopes. The Bible, while chiefly a revelation to man as the subject of moral government, and consequently occupied with prelection and appeal to the adult mind,

is, at the same time, a revelation of the nature, objects, and results of the dispensation of sovereign mercy established over the whole of our race. Some light, therefore, if not in the form of direct or argumentative statement, at least in the form of great general principles, may be expected to beam from it on the condition of persons dying in infancy. To this light, and not to idle conjecture, or the still idler deductions of philosophizing or scholastic theology, ought to be all our appeal.

I cannot, within the compass of a short note, do more than sketch an outline of thought on the subject of infant-salvation. My statements must be so succinct, and so unenforced by illustration, as to make a particular demand upon a reader's attention, and upon his subsequent careful reflection. That he may not unnecessarily be startled by any of them, he is requested to observe that they all proceed on the assumption of the doctrines of original sin, sovereign grace, particular election, and Adamic and mediatorial representation.

A prefatory idea of some importance is, that whatever reason is assigned for the salvation of any dying in infancy, virtually infers the salvation of all. Infants, it must be remembered, have 'not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;' they sustain more a relative than a positive relation to the state of things under which man is placed; they are free from actual or personal sin, and are guilty and destitute of righteousness only by their connexion with Adam. They, in other words, possess not a personal but an aggregate character: they are distinguishable, in a moral point of view, not as individuals, but as a class. Hence, whatever consideration applies to the condition of one, applies to the condition of all. They are justly condemned in Adam, and, as subjects of original sin, may be dealt with by the divine equity. But they are free from the personal

transgressions which form the ground of the proceedings of the divine equity toward adults. If, therefore, the representative work and righteousness of the Redeemer take effect on any of them, the principle on which they do so is such as to involve their taking effect on all. When divine sovereignty reigns to the salvation of some adults, and the passing by of others, a reason is found for the difference in positive rejection of the gospel, in wilful blindness and idolatry, or in voluntary self-convicted commission of sin. But such a basis as this of the exercise of divine equity, super-induced on the manifestation of the divine grace, does not apply to the case of infants. The sins which free grace reigns to do away in adults are personal and individually characteristic, and are as varied in aggravations, number, and circumstantial properties as the persons in whom they are found; but the sin which free grace reigns to do away in any who die in infancy is, as to all its characteristics and as to even its very identity, the same in all the individuals of their class. Admit, then, any principle which involves the salvation of some dying in infancy, and you admit a principle which infers the salvation of all. Dr. Ridgeley appears to have had some remote view of this reasoning before his mind, and to have felt perplexed or stultified by its force. For, how else can we account for the extraordinary hypothesis which he commends—the only one, too, which is advanced in the course of his statements—to account for the salvation of some who die in infancy,—the hypothesis that parents have grace to make a special dedication of their offspring to the Lord, and that the Most High regards this grace of dedication as a reason for their offspring's salvation? Dr. Ridgeley clearly does not mean that the parental act is the ground of the infant's being saved: he no doubt ascribes the infant's salvation solely to the sovereign mercy of God reigning through the sacrificial righteousness of the Redeemer. But then he feels, that he has admitted a principle which infers the salvation of all who die in infancy,—a principle which applies, not to

individuals, but to a class; and he, therefore, endeavours to find, in the dedicatory act of parents, a circumstance which will individualize the application of the principle, or limit it to a characteristic number. But all scripture, all propriety of thinking, appears to exclaim against his limiting hypothesis. The amount of it is that, in virtue of an act of dedication, any ordinary parents may become the moral and legal representatives of their offspring; that, by means of such an act, they have the power of swaying or determining their children's eternal destiny; and, the performing of the act being purely voluntary, that it is quite in their own choice to assume or not the supposed representative character, and to entail upon their offspring its results. Who does not see that every part of the hypothesis is worse than unwarrantable,—that it involves doctrines at war with the elementary truths of the gospel,—that, in particular, it contradicts the great pervading principle of divine dispensations toward man as to moral and legal representation—such representation as affects man's eternal well-being—being found only in the first Adam who was of the earth, earthy, and in the second Adam who is the Lord from heaven? Placing aside this hypothesis, then, Dr. Ridgeley, in assigning a reason for the salvation of some who die in infancy, assigns a reason which infers the salvation of all. Let the arguments of any other writer who teaches partial infant-salvation be examined; and, so far as they are sound, so far as they rest on any admitted principle of the scheme of mercy, they will be seen to lead to the same result.

Some light is thrown on the subject of infant-salvation by the character of the mediatorial dispensation. Sovereign favour, tree mercy, saving love, is the basis on which the dispensation rests. Its object is to destroy sin, to destroy death, to destroy him that hath the power of death, and, in general, to counterwork the effects of the fall, and to bring peace on earth, good-will to man, and glory to God in

the highest. But it does not force its boons on men; it does not compel their acceptance of its provisions; it does not operate upon them by a physical necessity, or irrespectively of suitable moral means: on the contrary, it appeals to their understandings; it deals with them as reasoning and personally responsible beings; it places the acceptance or refusal of salvation with themselves; it attaches the obligation of duty to the acceptance of it, and a special guilt and penalty to its rejection; and it thus assumes the character, employs the machinery, and works out the results of a moral administration. But who does not see that it does all this only as respects adults, or those of mankind who have the faculty of active understanding? All who die in infancy come short of the time and the circumstances in which its character and results as a moral administration are developed. Its machinery of moral means has no bearing upon them; and its entailment of obligation to believe and of penalty against unbelief does not apply to their condition. What follows, then, but that, as far as they are concerned, it maintains simply its fundamental character of a dispensation of sovereign mercy, of free favour, of saving love, of a divinely wise and effective scheme for neutralizing the effects of man's fall, and raising soul and body to immortal honour and glory?

Closely allied to this thought is another,—that the test of the gospel to the future condition of adults, has no applicability to the case of infants. 'He that believeth on the Son of God, hath life; and he that believeth not on the Son of God, hath not life,' are words which belong to the gospel-economy as a moral administration. Positive faith or positive unbelief decides the condition of every one who, having a capacity to understand, is under an obligation to believe. But infants, in the present life, can have neither positive faith, nor positive unbelief. No man can say regarding any one dying in infancy that it rejected any part of divine truth,—that it was, in any actual

sense, an unbeliever. In its connexion with Adam, it was lost and dead. But Christ came 'to seek and to save that which was lost;' he 'destroyed death, and him that had the power of death.' To such a people as the Jews who lived under his own public ministry, he says, 'How often would I have gathered you, but ye would not.' To even the brutalized and savage heathen, he says, 'When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; and as many as sinned without law, shall also perish without law, the work of the law being written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.' But what shall he say to those who die in infancy? The test of condition, the reason for giving over to punishment, the rule of giving or withholding the blessings of redemption, which applies to hearers of the gospel, to heathens, to the participants of present or of traditionary revelation, to rational adults of any class, does not apply to them. What inference, then, is to be drawn but that those who die in infancy are among the lost whom Christ came to save, the dead whom he came to make alive?

Another principle which throws light on infant-salvation, is the rule of decision at the final judgment. I need not quote texts to show that this rule is actual personal character, evinced or exhibited in conduct. To persons acquainted with scripture, not a few texts will occur which identify the process of final judgment with a process of deciding according to men's works,—according to their deeds done in the body. Wherever the rule of judgment is spoken of, it is stated to be positive character, the result of wilful sinning in the wicked, and the result of renovating, active grace in the redeemed. Now, either this rule is utterly inapplicable to such as die in infancy, or it can become applicable to them only in connexion with the economy of salvation. They neither have nor are capable of having positive character as the result of wilful or personal sinning; and if they can

have positive character at all, it must be as the result of renovating influence on their soul, and the implantation within them of the principles of active holiness. I do not say that they enjoy renovating influence before they die—I do not say that they receive it in the act of transition from the present life—I do not pretend to conjecture either when or how it is imparted to them; I state only that if, in any sense, they shall, as subjects of the final judgment, possess the elements of positive personal character, it must necessarily be, not in the way of having committed actual sin, but in the way of having been subjects of the implantation of principles of holiness by the renovating influence of heavenly grace. My argument, however, requires, not that they should be, in some sense, regarded as having personal character, but simply that they should be viewed as necessarily destitute of the character which results from actual sinning,—that character which will be the rule of judgment for condemnation. No one will say, no one can imagine, that, in any sense, they have that character. What follows, then, but that they will not be condemned,—that, free from personal sins, they have been made free also from original sin through the blood of the everlasting covenant,—and that they shall class with those whose 'names were written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world.'

A fourth great principle which throws light on the subject of infant-salvation, is the doctrine of the resurrection. That the dead shall be raised as a result of Christ's mediatorial work, needs no proof. As by Adam came death, so by Christ came the resurrection of the dead. The Adamic constitution, when viewing man as a fallen being, brings his body to the dust, and leaves it there. Only as a consequence of the work of the Mediator, can any of the dead be raised again to life. The resurrection, therefore, is, in itself, a blessing, a counterpart of the temporal death included in the original curse, and an immediate fruit of what was in all respects redemptional and restorative. To the

wicked, indeed, it will be transmuted into an evil. Their peculiar sin under the moral administration of the economy of mercy, their personal iniquity superinduced on their original sinfulness, their guilt in rejecting the direct or traditionary light of revelation, will entail upon them, in the form of suffering in a resuscitated body, a punishment additional to that which flows from the breach of the Adamic constitution. Very different, however, will be the case of all who die in infancy. They have no personal transgression, no guilt against divine revelation, no iniquity superinduced on original sin, which can entail on them a superadded penalty. The resurrection will come to them, not as a boon of mercy which they have perverted by personal guilt into a means of peculiar punishment; but it will come to them in its proper, untransmuted character, as a blessing, a saving good, a direct result of Christ's redemptional work. What follows, then, but that they are interested in Christ as Mediator, that they have a part in the benefits of his atonement, that, being made assured partakers of one of the results of his saving work, they are made partakers of the whole?

A fifth great principle which throws light on the subject of infant-salvation, is the differential character of Jewish and of Gentile children under the Mosaic dispensation. Jewish children were, Gentile children were not, admissible to the ordinances of the covenant. Multitudes of the Jews inferred from this fact that all their own children were saved, and that all those of the Gentiles perished. But Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, shows that the reason of evil as regards any infants of the human family is a reason which applies equally to all,—that without distinction of Jew and Gentile, death reigned from Adam to Moses over all who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,—and that, in consequence, all infants, be they who they may, are alike affected by the results of the breach of the Adamic constitution. The reason, then, of the

admissibility of all Jewish children to the ordinances of the typical economy, and of the exclusion from them of all the children of the Gentiles, must be found in the covenant-character of that economy,—in its being an administration, or an exhibition by figurative ordinances, of the covenant of salvation. Abraham himself 'received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.' Before he could be circumcised, he required to be actively a believer. Before, too, any Gentile could be circumcised, he required to be personally or actively a proselyte to the Jewish faith. Before any adult, be he who he might, could be circumcised, he required to assume for himself the responsibility of concurrence in the obligations and doctrines of the Mosaic dispensation. But infants—all infants who were under the economy—infants simply as such, were circumcised. Their eligibility consisted solely in their being born under the covenant of typical ordinances,—that covenant or economy which symbolized and exhibited the covenant of salvation. What, then, was their participation in the symbolical rite, but a pledge or exhibition of the participation of infants as such—or of all who die in infancy, and do not contract personal iniquity—in 'the righteousness of the faith' of the well-ordered and everlasting covenant?

Another great principle which throws light on the subject of infant-salvation, is the parallelism between the representation of Adam and the representation of Christ, in all particulars except 'the one' and 'the many offences,' and 'the receiving' or the rejecting of 'the abundance of grace.' Paul, in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, professedly exhibits this parallelism. He announces that the representations are the same in character, the same in adaptation,—that 'Adam was the figure of him that was to come,'—that 'as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.' In all particulars, except two, he describes them in

strictly parallel or antithetic phraseology. Adam's representation, he says, is by one offence unto condemnation; but Christ's representation is over many offences—for the removal not only of original sin, but of actual transgressions—unto justification of life. Adam's representation results only in placing man under the divine economy as relative sinners, and leaves them, at their personal responsibility, to work out 'many offences' for themselves; but Christ's representation results in their 'receiving abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness,' or of their 'receiving power to become the sons of God,' and in their being sustained and directed in a course of holiness, till they 'reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.' These two points constitute the excelling power, or the abounding of grace by Christ; and they are stated by the apostle as the points of difference between Christ's representation and that of Adam. In all other respects, he treats the two representations as parallel; and does so, with the case of infants, or of 'those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,' directly in his view. Now, while the two points of difference are exactly such as occasion a separation between the believing and the unbelieving, the subjects of grace and the rejecters of mercy, the saved and the lost, among adults; they are of a character which is in no respect applicable to infants. Neither the many offences, nor the receiving or refusing of the grace of active faith, is affirmable of any one who has not the capacity of active moral agency and active understanding. What follows, then, from the parallelism of the two representations in all other particulars, but that all who die in infancy as surely receive life and salvation in connexion with Christ, as they undergo suffering and temporal death in connexion with Adam?

A chief great principle which throws light on the doctrine of infant-salvation, is the illustrative harmony of that doctrine with the general scheme of saving truth. 'They brought young children to Jesus,' says

the evangelist, 'that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them,' Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17; Matt. 19:13–15. These words might be quoted as a direct assertion of the doctrine of infant-salvation. The gloss which some commentators put upon them—that of such as resemble little children in disposition is the kingdom of heaven—hardly requires refutation. Our Lord is assigning a reason why infants themselves should be brought to him; and he surely cannot be construed to mean that the resemblance of his people to them in disposition is such a reason. Can we really understand him to say, 'Suffer a child to come to me, because a believing adult who resembles a child in temper is an heir of heaven?' If so, the reason would apply also to sheep and lambs; his people being as truly compared to them as to children, and compared to both on the same principle. He speaks, then, of infants in their own persons; he affirms that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven,'—intimating, as would appear, that the society of the redeemed is, to a large and even distinguishing amount, composed of them; and he adds, 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein.' Infant-salvation, as to its basis and mode, is the very exemplar of salvation in general. Those dying in infancy are saved by grace, wholly by grace, altogether in virtue of the representative work and substitutionary righteousness of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. They are, in every view, monuments of sovereign mercy; simply as sinners, condemned and void of righteousness, they are objects of redeeming favour; not by works of righteousness which they have done, but according to God's mercy, they are saved; and, as

ransomed from the power of the grave, as redeemed from every part of the curse, as imbued with a new, a spiritual, an everlasting life, they are altogether to the praise of the glory of God's grace, who accepts them in the Beloved. They are saved from every part of the curse entailed upon them by Adam, except that temporal portion which, with a wise and beneficent design, Christ allows to remain, that he may transmute it into a means of translating them to heaven and investing them with bodies spiritual, immortal, incorruptible, and fashioned like unto his own glorious body. But as sin reigns to the infliction on them of temporal death, 'even so grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord,' Now just as they are saved, so must adults. Our salvation must be wholly of grace, directly from God's mercy, altogether a result of Christ's representative and redemptional work, leaving us to 'groan in this tabernacle, being burdened, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein.'

I might adduce other arguments; but I choose rather to let those which I have stated give an impetus of inquiry to the mind of any doubtful reader, and to leave him to find corroborations of them in texts, such as Matt. 18:1–14, which may occur in the ordinary course of his reading or reflection. I have virtually anticipated reply to objections. That the number of the saved is small, is an idea which occurs only in connexion with the administrative character of the gospel-economy, and, in consequence, so far as it is true, applies only to adults. That salvation is sovereign, and is bestowed according to God's eternal purpose, or the good pleasure of his own will, is not contradicted, but exhibited, illustrated, and enforced, in the fact of the salvation of all dying in infancy. They are all, as we have seen, of one class; they all, in the same sense and in the same circumstances,

lie under the effects of strictly one act; and they are all saved by sovereign mercy, by free favour, to the praise of the glory of God's grace.—ED.]

THE PUNISHMENTS OF SIN

QUESTION XXVIII. What are the punishments of sin in this world?

ANSWER. The punishments of sin in this world, are either inward, as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, hardness of heart, horror of conscience, and vile affections; or outward, as the curse of God upon the creatures for our sakes, and all other evils that befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations, and employments, together with death itself.

QUESTION XXIX. What are the punishments of sin in the world to come?

ANSWER. The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most-grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire for ever.

The Punishments of Sin in the Present Life

IN the former of these Answers, we have an account of those punishments to which sin exposes men in this world. These are distinguished as either inward or outward, personal or relative. Those which are styled outward, respect more especially our

condition in the world, as we are liable to many adverse dispensations of providence; and are generally reckoned by sinners the greatest, as they are the most sensible, subjecting them to the many evils and miseries which befall them in their bodies, names, estates, relations, and employments, and as they end in death, the most formidable of all evils. In reality, however, the punishments of sin which are styled inward, such as blindness of men, hardness of heart, &c., how little soever they are regarded by those who fall under them, by reason of that stupidity which is the natural consequence of them, are by far the greatest, and most dreaded by all who truly fear God, and see things in a just light, being duly affected with that which would render them most miserable in the end.

I. We shall consider, first, the punishments which are called inward. These respect either the understanding, will, conscience, or affections.

1. We are said to be exposed to blindness of mind. This the apostle describes, in a most moving way, when he speaks of the Gentiles, as 'walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Ignorance and error are defects of the understanding, in consequence of which it is not able to find out, or desirous to inquire after, the way of truth and peace. Accordingly the apostle says, 'The way of peace have they not known.'z By reason of this, we are naturally inclined to deny those doctrines which are of the greatest importance, namely, such as more immediately concern the glory of God, and our own salvation. This ignorance is certainly most dangerous, and cannot be exempted from the charge of sin; much more, when we are judicially left to it, as a punishment for other sins committed by us.

2. Another punishment of sin, mentioned in this Answer, is, strong delusion. This is the consequence of the former. That it is a punishment of sin, is inferred from the apostle's words. 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' The meaning is, that God suffers those who receive not the love of the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness, to be deluded, by denying them that spiritual and saving illumination, which would effectually prevent their delusion. Now, that we may consider what the apostle means by 'strong delusion,' we may observe, that every error or mistake in lesser matters of religion, is not intended; for then few or none would be exempted from this judgment. But it includes a person's entertaining the most abominable absurdities in matters of religion, which are contrary to the divine perfections, and the whole tenor of scripture, and subversive of those truths which are of the greatest importance; or pretension to revelations, or a turning away from the truth, by giving credit to the amusements of signs and lying wonders. Antichrist is said to come with such signs and lying wonders, 'after the working of Satan;' and the consequence is, that his followers 'believe a lie,' which they suppose to be confirmed by them.

Errors, in matters of religion, are sometimes invincible and unavoidable, for want of objective light or scripture-revelation; as in heathens, Mahommedans, and others, who, through the disadvantages and prejudices of education, are estranged from the truth. But even the ignorance of these, in some respects, may be said to be judicial; for though they do not sin against gospel-light, yet they are guilty of other sins, which justly provoke God to leave them in this state of darkness and ignorance. But the punishment of sin, when God gives men up to this judgment, is more visible in those who have had advantages of education above others, and have had early instructions in the doctrines of the gospel, and who by degrees

have turned aside from them, and denied them, and so 'forsaken the guide of their youth.' These sometimes call those sentiments about religious matters which once they received, implicit faith, and please themselves with their new schemes of doctrine, looking, as they say, with pity, or, I might rather say, disdain, on others who are not disentangled from their fetters, or have not shaken off the prejudices of education, or arrived at so free and generous a way of thinking as these pretend to have done. But how much soever they may glory in it, it is a sad instance of God's giving them up, in a judicial way, to the vanity and delusion of their minds. Accordingly they believe that to be a truth which others can prove to be a lie, and which they themselves once thought so. Now, that this is a punishment of sin, appears from the fact that the gospel, which once they professed to believe, had not its due effect or tendency to subdue their lusts and corruptions. They rebelled against the light, and were under the power of presumptuous sins. Their understanding and talents of reasoning have been enlarged; and, at the same time, the pride and vanity of their minds have not been subdued and mortified, by the grace of God. Hence, they have been given up first to question, then to deny, and afterwards to oppose, and, in the most profane and invidious manner, to ridicule those sacred and important truths which they once received. This is a sad instance of the punishment of sin; and I would make some use of it, in a few practical inferences.

We ought not to be content with a mere speculative knowledge of divine truths, but should endeavour to improve them, to promote practical godliness, as they have a tendency to do in all those who, as the apostle says, 'have so learned Christ,' that they have been 'taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.' Nor ought we to content ourselves with an implicit faith, or to believe the doctrines of the gospel, merely because they have been received by wise and good men in former or later ages; but should be able to render a reason of the faith and hope

that is in us, as built upon clear scripture-evidence. On the other hand, we must take heed that we do not despise the many testimonies which God's people have given to the truth, or forsake the footsteps of the flock; as though God had left his servants to delusions or groundless doctrines, and as though there were no light in the world or the church, till those who have studiously endeavoured to overthrow the faith delivered to and maintained by the saints, brought in that which they, with vain boasting, call new light. Further, let us strive against the pride of our understanding, which oftentimes tempts us to disbelieve any doctrine which we cannot fully account for by our shallow methods of reasoning; as though we were the only men who knew any thing, and as though, as Job says, 'Wisdom must die with us.'d Again, if we are in doubt concerning any important truth, let us apply ourselves, by faith and prayer, to Christ, the great Prophet of his church, who has promised his Spirit 'to lead' his people 'into all' necessary 'truth,' to establish them in it, and to keep them from being turned aside from it 'by every wind of doctrine,' through the management and sophistry of those who 'lie in wait to deceive.' We ought also to bless God for, and to make a right use of, the labours of others, who have not only been led into the knowledge of the gospel themselves, but have taken much pains, and that with good success, to establish the faith of others therein. Finally, if we have attained to a settled knowledge of the truth, more especially if we have been blessed with a spiritual and practical discerning of it, let us bless God for it, and endeavour to improve it to the best purposes. Our doing this will be a preservative against the sore judgment of being given up to the blindness of our minds, or strong delusions, and thereby to forsake our first faith.

3. Another punishment of sin is hardness of heart, and a reprobate sense. This more especially respects the will; and is inflicted when

men are given up to the perverseness and obstinacy of their natures, so that they are fixedly resolved to continue in sin, whatever be the consequence, and cannot bear reproof for it, and refuse to be reclaimed from it, whatever methods are used for recovering them. Thus, though the prophet describes a people as having had forewarnings by sore judgments, and as being at the time under sad rebukes of providence; yet God says concerning them, 'They will not hearken unto me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.' The apostle also speaks of some who 'have their consciences seared with a hot iron;'f and of others as 'sinning wilfully,' that is, resolutely, being headstrong, and determined to persist in their iniquity, like the man described in Job, 'who stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty; he runneth upon him, even upon his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers.'h In this manner, corrupt nature expresses its enmity and opposition to God; and when sinners are suffered to go on in this way, it may well be reckoned a punishment of sin, or an instance of God's judicial hand against them for it. This hardness of heart is sometimes compared to 'a stone,' or 'a rock,'k or 'an adamant,' which is hardly broken with an hammer, or 'an iron sinew.' Sometimes, also, their 'brow' is said to be 'as brass;'m and at other times they are compared to 'a swift dromedary, traversing her ways;' to 'the wild ass, used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure;' to 'the bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke;'o or to 'the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, that will not hearken to the voice of the charmers, charming never so wisely.' This stupidity of the heart of man is so great, that it inclines him to go on in a course of rebellion against God, and at the same time to conclude all things to be well. This is the most dangerous symptom, and a visible instance of God's judicial hand, as a punishment of sin in this life.

There are several instances, in which this hardness of heart discovers itself. One instance is when men are not afraid of God's judgments threatened, and do not regard the warnings given of them beforehand; or when they refuse to humble themselves under them, as God says to Pharaoh, 'How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?' Another instance is, when they stifle and do not regard those convictions of conscience which they sometimes have; or when, though they know that what they do is sinful and displeasing to God, they break through all the restraints which should have prevented their committing it. 'Who knowing the judgment of God,' says the apostle, 'that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.'r Again, men may be said to be hardened in sin, when they do not mourn for it or repent of it, after they have committed it; but, on the other hand, endeavour to conceal, extenuate, and plead for it, rather than forsake it.

Here we may inquire what those sins are which more especially lead to this judgment of hardness of heart. One is a neglect of ordinances, such as the word preached, as though we counted it an indifferent matter whether we wait at wisdom's gate or not, or whether we make a visible profession of subjection to Christ, and desire of communion with him; and particularly when we live in the constant neglect of secret prayer. Accordingly the hardened sinner is thus described, 'Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.'— Another sin leading to it, is a person's delighting in or associating himself with such companions as are empty and vain, express an enmity to the power of godliness, and frequently make things sacred the subject of their wit and ridicule; choosing such for his bosom-friends, who cannot bear to converse about divine things, but rather depreciate or cast contempt on them. Such an one is called, 'a companion of fools,' and is contrasted to those that 'walk with wise

men, who shall be wise.'t There is no method which will have a more direct tendency to harden the heart, or root out any of the remains of serious religion, than this.—A third sin tending to hardness of heart, is a shunning of faithful reproof, or concluding those to be our enemies who, because they administer to us faithful reproof, are our best friends. He who cannot bear to be told of his crimes by others, will in a little while cease to be a reprover to himself, and in consequence will be exposed to the judgment of hardness of heart.—A fourth sin leading to this judgment, is our venturing on occasions of sin, or committing it presumptuously, without considering its heinous aggravations, or the danger which will follow. These things will certainly bring on us a very great degree of hardness of heart.

But as there are some who are afraid of falling under this judgment, and are ready to complain that the hardness which they find in their own hearts is of a judicial nature, we shall inquire what the difference is between that hardness of heart which believers often complain of, and the judicial hardness which is considered in this Answer as a punishment of sin. There is nothing that a believer more complains of, than the hardness and impenitency of his heart, its lukewarmness and stupidity under the ordinances; and there is nothing that he more desires, than to have this redressed. He is sometimes, also, not without a degree of fear, lest he should be given up to judicial hardness. Now, to prevent discouragements of this nature, let it be considered, that judicial hardness is very seldom perceived, and never lamented. A broken and a contrite heart is the thing which the judicially hardened least desire. But it is otherwise with believers. As it is said of Hezekiah, that 'he was humbled for the pride of his heart;' so all they who have the truth of grace, and none but such, are exceedingly grieved for the hardness of their heart. This is an evidence that it is not judicial, how much soever it be, in common with every sin, the result of the corruption of nature, and

the imperfection of the present state.—Again, judicial hardness is perpetual. Or, if ever there be any remorse or relenting, or the soul is distressed by reason of its guilt or the prevalency of sin, it is only at such times when he is under some outward afflictions, or filled with a dread of the wrath of God; and, as this wears off, or abates, his stupidity returns as much, or more, than ever. Thus it was with Pharaoh. When he was affrighted with the mighty thundering and hail with which he was plagued, 'He sent for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.'x But, when the plague was removed, it is said, that 'he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart.' It is otherwise, however, with a believer. Sometimes, when no adverse dispensations, with respect to his outward circumstances in the world, trouble him, he is full of complaints, and greatly afflicted, that his heart is no more affected in holy duties, or inflamed with love to God, or zeal for his glory, or that he cannot delight in him as he would, or obtain a complete victory over indwelling sin, which is his constant burthen. And whenever he has a degree of tenderness or brokenness of heart, under a sense of sin, it is not merely fear of the wrath of God as a sin-revenging Judge, or of the dreadful consequences of sin committed, which occasions it, but a due sense of that ingratitude and disingenuity, which there is in every act of rebellion against him who has laid him under such inexpressible obligations to obedience.—Further, judicial hardness is attended with a total neglect of all holy duties, more especially those which are secret. But that hardness of heart which a believer complains of, though it occasion his going on very uncomfortably in duty, yet rather incites him to it, than drives him from it.—Moreover, when a person is judicially hardened, he makes use of indirect and unwarrantable methods to maintain that false peace which he thinks himself happy in the enjoyment of. That which he betakes himself to, deserves no better a character than a refuge of lies; and the peace he

rejoices in, deserves no better a name than stupidity. But a believer, when complaining of the hardness of his heart, cannot take up with any thing short of Christ and his righteousness. It is his presence which gives him peace; and he always desires that faith may accompany his repentance, that so, whenever he mourns for sin, the comfortable sense of his interest in him may afford him a solid and lasting peace. This is vastly different from that stupidity and hardness of heart which is a punishment of sin.

There is another expression in this Answer, 'a reprobate sense,' or, as the apostle calls it, 'a reprobate mind,' which denotes little more than a greater degree of judicial hardness. This God is said to have given those up to, 'who did not like to retain him in their knowledge.' The meaning is, that persons, by a course of sin, render their hearts so hard, their wills so obstinate and depraved, as well as their understandings so dark and defiled, that they hardly retain those notices of good and evil which are enstamped on the nature of man, and which, at times, have a tendency to check and restrain from sin. These become entirely lost, and are extinguished by the prevalency of corrupt nature, and a continued course of presumptuous sins; and, as the result of this, they extenuate and excuse the greatest abominations. Thus Ephraim is represented as saying, 'In all my labours, they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin;'z whereas God says, in a following verse, that 'they provoked him to anger most bitterly.' Persons who are given up to a reprobate mind eventually entertain favourable thoughts of the vilest actions. 'They call evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness; they put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.'

4. The next spiritual judgment, mentioned in this Answer, as a punishment of sin, is a person's being given up to 'vile affections.' This God is said to have done to those whom the apostle describes, as

'giving themselves over to the committing of those sins' which are contrary to nature, such as all men abhor who do not abandon themselves to the most notorious crimes. This is a contracting of that guilt which is repugnant to those natural ideas of virtue and vice which even an unregenerated man, who has not arrived to this degree of impiety, cannot but abhor. These are such as are not to be named among Christians, or thought of without the utmost regret, and an afflictive sense of the degeneracy of human nature.

5. The last thing mentioned in this Answer, in which the inward punishment of sin, in this life, consists, is, 'horror of conscience.' Under the foregoing instances of spiritual judgments, conscience seemed to be asleep; but now it is awakened, and that by the immediate hand of God; and this is attended with a dread of his wrath. Horror and despair are the result. 'The arrows of the Almighty are with in him, the poison whereof drinketh up his spirit; the terrors of God do set them selves in array against him.' 'Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and, as a storm, hurleth him out of his place. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of his hand.'e

This differs from those doubts and fears which are common to believers; in as much as it is attended with despair, and a dreadful view of God, as a God 'to whom vengeance belongeth,' and is attended, as the apostle says, 'with a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' Before experiencing it, the sinner took a great deal of pains to stifle convictions of conscience; and now he would fain do it, but cannot. This is a sad instance of the wrath of God pouring forth gall and wormwood, according to the prophet's words, 'Thine own

wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee.'g

But, now that we are speaking concerning horror of conscience, we must take heed lest we give occasion to doubting believers, who are under great distress of soul, through a sense of sin, to apply what has been said, to themselves, for their farther discouragement, and to conclude that this is a judicial act of God, and a certain evidence that they have not the truth of grace. There is a difference in three respects, between that horror of conscience which we have been describing, and that distress of soul to which believers are often liable. The unregenerated, under horror of conscience, flee from God as from an enemy, and desire only to be delivered from his wrath, and not from sin, the occasion of it. The believer, on the contrary, desires nothing so much as that his iniquity, which is the occasion of it, may be subdued and forgiven, and that he may have that communion with God, which he is destitute of. In order to this he constantly desires to draw nigh to him in ordinances, and, if he cannot enjoy him, he mourns after him. Thus the psalmist complaineth, as one in the utmost degree of distress, 'Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.' Yet he says, 'Unto thee have I cried, O Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.'i Again, the one reproaches God, and entertains unworthy thoughts of him, as though he were severe, cruel, and unjust to him; while the other, with an humble and penitent frame of spirit, complains only of himself, acknowledges that there is no unrighteousness with God, and lays all the blame on his own iniquity. Further, horror of conscience, when it is judicial, seldom continues any longer than while a person is under some outward afflictive dispensation of providence. Under this his sin is increased; and the removal of it leaves him as stupid as he was before. But it is otherwise with a believer. The removal of God's afflicting hand, as to

outward troubles, will not afford him any remedy against his fears, unless sin be mortified, and God is pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and give him joy and peace in believing.

II. Having considered the inward punishments of sin, in this life, we are now to say something concerning those which, in this Answer, are styled outward. Of these, some are the immediate consequence of the first entrance of sin into the world, and others are increased by the frequent commission of sin. The former include the curse of God upon the creature for our sakes, and our liability to death; the latter respect the various other evils that befall us, of which some are personal, and others relative. Many evils are said to befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations, and employments.

1. The curse of God was denounced against the creatures, immediately after man's apostacy from him. This is, in part, contained in the threatening, 'Cursed be the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground.' It is very elegantly described by the apostle, who speaks of 'the creature' as 'subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope;' and of 'the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together until now.'l The general scope and design of this passage seems to be, that the creature retains the visible marks of the curse of God, which followed upon man's sin. I rather think this to be the sense of it, than to suppose, as some do, that 'the creature' spoken of is the Gentile world, and 'the vanity' which it was subject to, that idolatry to which they were universally addicted. That interpretation does not seem to agree with what the apostle says, when he supposes that their subjection to this vanity was 'not willingly;' nor can it well be called 'the bondage of corruption.' If, on the other hand, we understand it to mean that the part of the

creation which was more immediately designed for the use of man, was abused, and so made subject to that vanity which is the consequence of his fall, this agrees very well with its being 'not willingly.' For the apostle is speaking here of creatures not endowed with understanding and will, yet abused by those that are; and therefore their subjection to men's vanity is not so much from themselves, as from man's sin. He then speaks of the liability of all these things to corruption, as the world is decaying, and growing towards a dissolution. [See Note 3 G, page 434.] How far this curse of God on the creature extended itself, whether only to this lower world, or to the heavenly bodies themselves, such as the sun, moon, and stars, I pretend not to determine. I desire not to extend my conjectures beyond the line of scripture, which speaks of 'the earth,' as 'cursed for man's sake;' and how far the other parts of nature are liable to corruption, or inclined towards a dissolution, it is hard to say. All that I shall add on this subject, is, that when the curse on the creature is called a punishment consequent on man's sin, it more especially respects man, who is the only subject of punishment in this world. Inanimate creatures are the matter in which he is punished; but he alone is the subject of punishment. But there are evils which befall us, in which we are more immediately concerned; and these are either personal or relative. Accordingly,

2. We are liable to bodily diseases, which are a continual weakness, or a decay of nature; and afterwards to death, which is the dissolution of the bodily frame. All the pains and disorders of nature whereby our health is impaired, and our passage through this world rendered uneasy, are the consequence of our sinful and fallen state, and, in that respect, are sometimes styled a punishment of sin. Thus, when our Saviour healed the man who was sick of the palsy, he intimates by the mode of expression used that his sickness was the consequence of sin: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' The psalmist also

speaks of God's 'pardoning the iniquities of his people, and healing all their diseases,'n at the same time. In this respect, diseases are styled, in a more large sense, a punishment of sin. But, when they have a mixture of the wrath of God in them, and are not rendered subservient to our good, or included among those dispensations which are called fatherly chastisements, as is the case in those who are in an unjustified state, they are, in a more proper sense, punishments of sin. Thus the diseases which God brought on the Egyptians are reckoned among the plagues of Egypt, and so were a visible instance of the vindictive justice of God. The same thing may be said of death, which is the dissolution of the frame of nature. It is a consequence of sin, in all; and, in the most proper sense, it is a punishment of sin in those who are liable, not only to the stroke, but to the sting of death, and thereby are brought under the power of the second death.

3. There are many evils which befall us in our names, when we meet with reproaches and injurious treatment, as to what concerns our character in the world, from those who act as though their tongues were their own, and they were not accountable to God for those slanders and revilings which they load us with. We are in this case very ready to complain of the injustice done us, by their endeavouring to deprive us of that which is equally valuable with our lives. But we ought to consider that sin is the cause of all this; and God's suffering them thus to treat us, and thereby to hinder our usefulness in the world, must be reckoned a punishment of sin.

4. There are other evils which befall us in our secular concerns, that is, in our estates and employments in the world, which are entirely at the disposal of providence. These evils render us rich or poor, or they succeed or blast our lawful undertakings. God may send them to us out of his mere sovereignty, without giving an account of his matters

to any one. Yet, when we meet with nothing but disappointments or want of success in business; when whatever diligence or industry we use, appears to be to no purpose; when adverse providences, like a torrent, sweep away all that we have in the world; and when poverty comes upon us like an armed man, our condition is to be reckoned no other than a punishment of sin.

5. There are other evils to which we are exposed in our relations. By these we understand the wickedness of those who are nearly related to us, or the steps they take to ruin themselves, and cast a blemish on the whole family to which they belong. The bonds of nature and of natural affection render these very afflictive. When, in particular, they who are related to us attempt anything against us to our prejudice, their doing so is a circumstance which sharpens the edge of the affliction. And, as it is a sin in them contrary to the dictates of nature; so sometimes we may reckon it a punishment to which we are liable, as the consequence of our sin in general. But, if we have occasion to reflect on our former conversation, as not having filled up every relation with those respective duties to which it engages us; if we have been undutiful to our parents, or unfaithful servants to our masters, or broken the bonds of civil society, by betraying or deserting our friends, and setting aside all those obligations which they have laid us under; our conduct often exposes us to afflictive evils of a similar nature, whereby the affliction we meet with in others appears to be a punishment of our own sin.

Having thus considered the punishment of sin in this life, we may make a few remarks for practical improvement. Whatever evils we are exposed to in this world, we ought to be very earnest with God that he would not give us up to spiritual judgments. The punishments of sin which are outward may be alleviated and sweetened with a sense of God's love, and made subservient to our

spiritual and eternal advantage. But blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and those other evils which tend to vitiate and defile the soul, which have in them the formal nature of punishment, are to be dreaded like hell. And, as we are to be importunate with God to prevent them, so we ought to watch against those sins that lead to them. Let us, therefore, take heed of being insensible or stupid under any afflictive evils, as neglecting to hear the voice of God who speaks by them, or refusing to receive instruction by correction.—Again, let us not be too much dejected or sink under those outward afflictive providences to which we are liable. For though they are the consequence of sin, yet, if we have ground to conclude by faith that our sins are forgiven, they are not to be reckoned the stroke of justice, demanding satisfaction, and resolving never to remove its hand from us till we are consumed by it. Believers often experience what the prophet prays for, that God 'in wrath remembers mercy.'—Further, let us take heed that we do not ascribe afflictive providences to chance, or content ourselves with a mere reflection on them as the common lot of man in this world, who is 'born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards;' for this we may do, and not be humbled for that sin which, as they are to be reckoned a punishment for it, they are designed to bring to remembrance. Finally, let us not murmur or quarrel with God, as though he dealt hardly with us in sending afflictive evils; but rather let us bless him, how heavy soever they appear to be, that they are not extreme, but mitigated, and have in them a great mixture of mercy. Thus God says, concerning the evils which he had brought upon Israel, that 'in measure he would debate with them, who stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind; and by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.' By this means, God not only afflicts us less than our iniquities deserve, but brings good to us in the end. If the guilt of sin is taken away, we have ground to conclude that all these things 'shall work together for good,' as he has promised they shall to 'those that love him.'

The Punishment of Sin in the Future State

We are now to consider the punishment of sin in the world to come. Though the wrath of God be revealed, in many instances, in a very terrible manner, as a punishment of sin in this life, yet there is a punishment unspeakably greater which sinners are liable to in the world to come. That this may appear, let us consider the following propositions.

1. That the soul exists after its separation from the body by death, which is evident, from the immateriality thereof, and its being of a different nature from the body. This was known and proved by the light of nature; so that the very heathen, who had no other light than that to guide them, discover some knowledge of it. But this is more plain from scripture; as when it is said, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'

2. The soul thus existing, though separate from its body, must be supposed to retain those powers and capacities it had, while united to it, which are proper to it as a spirit, and particularly as the subject of moral government; and those powers and capacities may also be supposed to be in it in a greater degree, when dislodged from the body, which is a great hinderance to it in its actings, as every one sensibly experiences.

3. It follows, that the soul cannot but be happy, or miserable, in another world; for there is no middle state between these two. This is farther evident from what was observed in the last proposition, concerning the continuance and increase of its powers and faculties, whereby it is rendered more capable of happiness or of misery than it is now.

4. If it goes out of this world under the weight and guilt of sin upon it, it must retain that guilt, because there is no sacrifice for sin, extending itself to that world; no mediator, no gospel, or means of grace; no promises of, or way to obtain, forgiveness.

5. Hence, wicked men, whose sins are not forgiven in this world, are the subjects of punishment in the other.

6. This punishment cannot be castigatory, or paternal, or consistent with the special love of God, or for their advantage, as the punishments of the sins of believers are in this world, since it is always expressed as the stroke of vindictive justice, demanding satisfaction for sins committed.

7. Some are happy in a future state, namely, those who are justified; for 'whom he justified, them he also glorified.' But this is not the privilege of all. They who are not justified, or whose sins are not pardoned, are the subjects of the punishment of sin in the world to come. This is a very awful subject, and should be duly improved, to awaken our fears, and put us upon using those means which God has ordained to escape it. But I shall not, in this place, enlarge upon it, since it is particularly insisted on under another Answer.s I shall at present observe only, that, as sin is objectively infinite, as being against an infinite God, it deserves eternal punishment. All the punishments inflicted on sinners, in this world, are not proportioned to it; and, consequently, there are vials of wrath, reserved in store, to be poured on those who wilfully and obstinately persist in their rebellion against God, and the punishment will be agreeable to the nature of the crime. Hence, as sin is a separation of the heart and affections from God, and includes a disinclination to converse with him, as well as unmeetness for it, the punishment thereof will consist in a separation from his comfortable presence; and that is to be

separated from the fountain of blessedness, which must render the soul beyond expression miserable. This is generally called a punishment of loss. But there is, besides, a punishment of sense, expressed by those grievous torments which are to be endured in soul and body. The soul, in a moral sense, may be said to be capable of pain, as it has an afflictive sensation of those miseries which it endures; and the body is so in a natural sense, which, as it has been a partner with the soul in sinning, must likewise be so in suffering. This farther appears, from the fact that the body endures several pains and evils, as punishments of sin in this life, which shall be continued and increased in another. This is usually expressed by that punishment which is most terrible, namely, of fire; and the place in which it is inflicted, is hell, and the duration of it is to eternity. But of these things more shall be said elsewhere.

[NOTE 3 G. The Creation Subject to Vanity.—Numerous conflicting opinions are entertained as to the meaning of Rom. 8:19–23. In only one thing do they seem agreed,—that the word κτισις, which is rendered 'creature' and 'creation,' being uniform in the original, ought to have been uniformly translated. This 'creature' or 'creation' is contended to be the inanimate mass of our world,—the lower animals,—the whole frame of nature,—the Gentile world,—the Jewish race,—the good angels,—the spirits of fallen angels and men. Against all these opinions, there is an objection which appears to me insuperable: they are utterly inconsistent with both the preceding and the subsequent context. Except by an effort of fancy, or a flourish of rhetoric, they admit the view of no consecutive or intelligible point of transition, either to the passage from what goes before, or from it to what follows. Interpret them as we may, they reduce the entire statement respecting 'the creature' or 'creation,' not simply to a remarkable digression, but apparently to an aimless and unaccountable episode. Other objections occur against the opinions

in detail, and particularly against that which is adopted by Dr. Ridgeley. Instead, however, of stating these, I shall give a brief outline of reasons for understanding the passage to speak of the mortal condition, the longings, the hopes, and the eventual glorification of the people of God.

A preliminary remark of some importance is, that the words 'create' and creation' are used, in the New Testament, quite as freely in the moral as in the physical sense. They occur five times in reference to physical creation in the abstract, six times in reference to the inanimate creation, six times in reference to intelligent creatures, and five times in reference to redeemed and regenerated men. Thus, as far as regards New Testament usage, the authority for interpreting the terms in these several applications is very nearly equal. Internal evidence and the scope of a context must alone, in any instance, determine in which of the senses they are to be understood. The passages in which they are applied to regenerated men are as unequivocal, as characteristic, as fully in the current style of inspired writing, as those in which they are applied either to all rational creatures or to the physical world. 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' 'Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' 'Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.' 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,' καινη κτισις. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,' καινη κτισις, Eph. 2:10. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17. These texts apply the name κτισις just as directly and distinctively to a regenerated believer on earth, as other texts apply it to any intelligent creature or to any human being. Hence, if the collective appellation πασα ἡ κτισις is, as two passages in the New Testament (Mark 16:15; Col. 1:23.) show it to be, properly expressive of the aggregate body of human beings, it

must also be properly expressive of the aggregate body of regenerated men on earth. Now, in which of these senses, or in which of any others, must it be understood in Rom. 8:22? Internal evidence, it would seem, is not sufficiently strong, or at least is not sufficiently discerned, to lead almost any two commentators to the same determination. What remains, then, but that the sense must be decided wholly by the context? Even apart from the various and the equally authenticated senses of the word κτισις, and apart also from the absence, real or supposed, of a decisive internal guide in the passage in question, the rule of exposition is, on all hands, admitted to be of paramount and conclusive authority, that whichever of two or more senses of a scripture accords best with its context is the most sound. To ascertain, therefore, what 'the creation' is which is 'subject to vanity,' and which 'waits for the adoption, the redemption of the body,' we need only to notice the connexion in which the statements respecting it are introduced.

From the commencement of the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, on to what immediately precedes the passage in question, the apostle discusses the results of justification. He speaks, without even one slight digression, solely of the condition and character of regenerated men on earth. He shows what blessings they enjoy, what moral evils they conflict with, what principles actuate them, what hopes they possess; and he finishes his extended view of the moral results of their justification, by saying, 'Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs;

heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together,' Rom. 8:12–17. He here, in the conclusion of his summary view, glances at the fact of God's justified people being subject, while on earth, to physical suffering. Though, as justified persons, they are fully delivered from the condemning power of sin, and are 'heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ;' yet they are not, in the present life, freed in any degree from the evils of mortality and physical affliction. Now how comes it, some might ask, that, the penalty of sin being removed, and the sinner himself accepted as righteous in the sight of God, he should still remain subject to the exterior or physical part of the original curse? The apostle proceeds as if some such question as this had been proposed; he, at all events, glances at the fact that God's justified people continue subject to physical suffering, and goes on to explain how it comports with their justified condition, with the great principles of their redemption from all evil, with, on the one hand, their deliverance from condemnation, and, on the other, their hopes and safety as the appointed and purchased subjects of assured, complete, and everlasting well-being. 'For,' says he, 'I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,' chap. 8:18. He thus intimates that, as the sufferings of believers are a 'suffering with Christ,'—a suffering in a state of union with him, and under the administration of his mediatorial government over the redeemed; so they have connexion with 'a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory' in another world,—a connexion with it so intimate, so preparative, so morally instrumental, that, being assuredly sufferers with Christ, they shall also be assuredly 'glorified together' with him. Then, to explain what this connexion is between present physical suffering and future glory, he proceeds to say: 'For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manfestation of the sons of God; for the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of

him who hath subjected it, in hope that this very creation shall be treed from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God,'—Τῃ γαρ ματαιοτητι ἡ κτισις ὑπετκγη, ουχ ἐκουσα, αλλα δια τον ὑποταξαντα, επ' ελπιδι ὁτι και αυτη ἡ κτισις ελευθερυθησεται απο της δουλειας της φθορας εις την ελευθεριαν της δοξης των τεκνων του Θεου. The phrase 'manifestation of the sons of God,' ἡ αποκαλυπσις των υἱων, as applied to a future event, or an event which shall take place in a future state of things, implies that the present condition of the sons of God is clouded, screened, unrevealed, not open to the view. Believers, as subject to the same physical evils which afflict the rest of men, are 'in disguise;' they do not appear to the eye of sense to possess the surpassingly glorious distinctions which really belong to them; and they earnestly expect the manifestation, the revelation, the unveiling, the unclouded display of the dignity and excellence which redeeming mercy and sovereign favour have conferred on them as the sons of God. For, though apparently afflicted with the same evils as the rest of men, they know themselves to be distinguished far above them, and possess a living and rejoicing hope as to the design and results of their very suffering. They are subject to vanity, or to mortality and physical evil, not willingly,—not as a final end, not as a result of their amenability to divine justice, not simply that they may suffer and die; but according to an economy of divine sovereignty, wisdom, and love, 'by reason of him who hath' placed them in the condition which they occupy, 'in hope that they shall all,' the most afflicted and obscure as well as the more prosperous and eminent, 'be freed from the bondage,' the confined and enslaved state of privilege and enjoyment, in which they are held by their mortality, 'into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.' 'For we know,' continues the apostle, 'that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,'—all believers on earth experience the pressure of their mortal state, and feel that, though they have the glory, they

have not yet the freedom of the glory of God's children; 'and not only so,' ου μονον δε, 'but even we who have the first fruits of the Spirit,' we apostles and others who enjoy the pentecostal, supernatural, or most excellent gifts of the Spirit, and who of all believers may justly be esteemed the most honoured and happy, 'even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body; for we are saved by hope,'—we are, in the present life, under a dispensation, not of the full bestowal of the blessings of redemption, but of only begun enjoyment of them, and of living and assured hope that they shall all at last be perfectly and for ever realized,—that, while the soul shall be made completely pure and glorious, 'the vile body itself shall be changed and fashioned like unto Christ's own glorious body.'

I might proceed to show how well the brief exposition I have now given accords with all the subsequent context down to the close of the chapter. Any attentive reader, however, will be able to trace the accordance for himself. The passage, as thus understand, seems compactly and consecutively connected with the whole preceding and subsequent scope of the apostle's statements and reasonings; and it abounds in beautiful, exquisite truths, intimately in keeping with the great subject of discussion in the epistle, and altogether requisite to complete the view which is there exhibited of the results of justification and the position of the justified. Nearly a parallel passage to it is 2 Cor. 5:1–9.—ED.]

GENERAL VIEW OF SALVATION

QUESTION XXX. Doth God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

ANSWER. God will not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery, into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the covenant of works; but, of his mere love and mercy, delivereth his elect out of it, and bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace.

The Design and Nature of Salvation

WE have considered man as made upright, and having many blessings in possession, and more in expectation, according to the tenor of the covenant he was under. We have considered also the first entrance of sin into the world, with all those miseries that attended it. And we are now led to speak of that inestimable display of divine love and grace which appears in our salvation. This is considered in a general way in the present Answer.

Something is supposed, namely, that if God had left man in the state into which he brought himself by sin, he would have perished for ever. He was not only in danger of ruin, but sunk in it. He was like a brand in the fire, that would soon have been consumed, had he not been plucked out. His state was not only miserable, but hopeless; in as much as he could not think of any expedient how he might recover himself. He was guilty, and no creature could make atonement for him. He was separated from the comfortable presence of God, whose terrors made him afraid, and whose hand was heavy upon him; and

he could not apply himself to any one who would interpose or appear in his behalf, or by whom he might be restored to the enjoyment of those privileges which he had forfeited and lost. What tongue can express, or heart be suitably affected with, the misery of his condition! And this would have been our deplorable case for ever, had we been left by God in our fallen state. But we have, in the gospel, a door of salvation opened; we have there glad tidings proclaimed to those who were sunk as low as hell. This is the only spring of hope and comfort to those who are afflicted with a sense of their sin and misery.

Accordingly, it is farther observed, that God will not leave all mankind to perish in that state, but designed to deliver his elect out of it, and bring them into a state of salvation. That God designed not to leave mankind in this miserable condition, appears from the discovery he made of the way of salvation, in the promise which he gave to our first parents, respecting 'the seed of the woman' who was to 'break the serpent's head;' or the Saviour's being 'manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' All the promises contained in the gospel are, as it were, an improvement on this, or a continued declaration of God's purpose relating to the salvation of his people. The work of redemption, wrought out by Christ as God incarnate, was a wonderful discovery of the great truth, that God had a design to recover and save lost sinners. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, by whom the redemption purchased by Christ is applied, and that joy and peace which they have in believing, which are, as it were, the first-fruits of eternal life, are also a convincing proof that God determined not to leave man to perish in his fallen state. We may add, that even the malice and rage of Satan, and all the endeavours used by him to defeat this design, and the glorious victory which God enables his people to obtain over him, 'who are made more than conquerors through him that loved them,' are so many convincing

proofs, that God designed not to leave man in his ruined condition, but to make known to him the way of salvation,—first to make him meet for it, and then to bring him to the possession of it.

Salvation is an inestimable privilege, containing all the ingredients of blessedness, such as are adapted to the condition of miserable sinners. It is a very comprehensive privilege. This will appear, if we consider from what it delivers us, and what it brings us into the possession of. There is a great variety of blessings contained in our deliverance. We are saved from sin, that is, from the guilt of it in justification, and from the dominion of it in sanctification. We are saved also from that bondage to which we were liable, whereby we were in perpetual dread of the wrath of God, desiring to flee from his presence, and naturally inclined to yield ourselves subjects and slaves to his greatest enemy. All these we are delivered from. And there are many positive blessings and privileges which we are made partakers of; such as, grace and peace begun here, and perfected in glory here-after. And these are such as not only exceed our highest desert but tend to make us completely and eternally happy.

The Subjects of Salvation

Salvation is not extended to all miserable creatures. Angels, who were the first that rebelled against God, were left to perish, without hope of salvation, being reserved for ever in chains under darkness. As for fallen man, how extensive soever the proclamation of salvation in the gospel is, as preached to all nations, and though all who sit under the sound of it are commanded and encouraged to press after salvation; yet it is applied only to those who were ordained to eternal life. The purpose of God relating to it, and to the application of it, are joined together in that golden chain, 'Whom he predestinated, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom

he justified, them he also glorified.' This, however, has been more particularly considered elsewhere.u

The Reason of Salvation

The only moving cause, or reason, why God bestows this great salvation, or why he has designed to bring any of the sons of men to it, is his mere love and mercy. Salvation, whether considered in its rise in God's eternal purpose, or in the execution of it in the work of conversion and sanctification, as well as in the completing of it in glorification, is ascribed to the sovereign grace and mercy of God. Are we 'chosen in Christ to be holy,' or 'predestinated to the adoption of children by him?' This is said to be 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' The apostle elsewhere, when resolving this great privilege of salvation, in all the branches of it, namely, regeneration, renovation, and justification, into the same original cause and ground, the kindness, love, and grace of God, excludes all those works of righteousness which we have done, from being the inducement or moving cause leading to it.y It was the grace of God which laid the foundation-stone; and it is that which brings the work to perfection.

To make this farther appear, let it be considered that salvation must either be of grace or of debt; that either it must be the result of God's free favour to us, or it must proceed from some obligation which he is laid under by us to confer this privilege. Now it is certain, that it cannot take its rise from any obligation which we can lay on him; for whatever superiority the best of saints has over the worst of sinners, it is from God, and not from the sinner himself. We have nothing but what 'we received' from him, 'of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things.'—Moreover, this salvation must be conferred in such a way as redounds to the glory of him who is the Author of it, whereby all boasting in the creature is excluded; and therefore it

cannot take its rise from any thing done by us. It is 'not of works lest any man should boast.'a Indeed, that it should be so, is contrary to the main design of the gospel, which is, that no flesh should glory in his presence.—The circumstances, also, in which those are who are said to be the objects of salvation, are such as argue it to be altogether of grace. Whom did the Son of man come to seek and to save, but 'them that were lost?' or to whom was the way of salvation discovered, but those who were going astray from God, and were inclined neither to return to him, nor to apply themselves to any one who might direct them how to regain his lost favour. Even, indeed, if they had been inclined to do the latter, it would have been to no purpose; since no creature could make known the way of salvation, any more than apply its blessings.

Were man to be considered only as a creature, and so not properly the object of salvation, which is no other than a lost sinner, or did he expect nothing else but some effects of common goodness or the blessings of nature, he could not expect them in a way of merit. To suppose it otherwise, is contrary to the dependence of the creature on God; and hence the blessings of providence must be considered as the result of his free favour. And were man in a sinless state, and able to perform perfect obedience as he was at first, his ability must be supposed to be an unmerited favour. Accordingly, the obedience performed would be no other than a just debt due to God, and it would afford him no plea, from any merit of condignity, for the conferring of any privilege as a reward of it; so that the conferring of the privilege must be the result of the divine favour. But, when we consider him as a sinner, he is altogether unable to do what is good. Hence, if salvation were entirely to depend on our performing obedience, so that any failure in this would deprive us of it, we should never attain it; for the obedience would be so imperfect, that God could not, in honour, accept of it. But, alas! fallen man is so far

from any disposition or inclination to perform obedience, that his heart is naturally averse to it: 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' If therefore such an one is saved, and that in such a way that God is pleased to love him and manifest himself to him, his salvation must be a wonderful instance of divine grace, which no one who has experienced it can think on but with admiration, especially when considering how discriminating it is. 'How is it,' said one of Christ's disciples to him, 'that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?'c

General View of the Divine Covenants

Having considered salvation as designed for all the elect, we proceed to consider the means of their attaining it; or their being brought into a state of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace. As salvation is ascribed to the grace of God; so it is an instance of condescending goodness, that our faith relating to it should be confirmed by such a dispensation as is generally styled a covenant. Thus David, speaking concerning it, says, 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.' This covenant, as respects the parties concerned in it, and the manner in which the grace of God is displayed in it, together with its various dispensations or administrations, is particularly considered under the five following Answers. The only thing which remains to be insisted on here, is its being called 'the Second Covenant,' as opposed to the covenant of works, which is styled the First. The covenant of works has been considered under a former Answer.e All that I shall observe concerning it, at present, is, that though life was promised in it, as including all those blessings which were suited to the state of man in innocency, there was no promise of salvation in it, which is the

restoring of forfeited blessings, or a recovery from a state of death and ruin. In this respect, the covenant of grace is opposed to it. Again, though Adam was the head of that covenant, whose obedience or apostacy would convey life or death to all his posterity whom he represented, yet he stood not in the relation of a mediator or surety to them; for that was inconsistent with the dispensation he was under, and is applicable to no other covenant than that which we are considering as opposed to it. Moreover, perfect obedience was demanded as a condition of man's attaining life, and this he was thoroughly furnished to perform; while, in the covenant of grace, if God should insist on our performing perfect obedience, the condition would be, in its own nature, impossible, and we should in consequence, rather be excluded from, than brought into, a state of salvation. Whatever obedience we are engaged to perform as expectants of salvation, is entirely owing to the grace of God, by which 'we are what we are,' as well as attain to the blessings we hope for. Herein the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace differ.

The next thing which we have to observe is, that the covenant of grace is called the Second Covenant. This leads us to inquire whether we have any ground from scripture to conclude that there are more covenants than these two; or at least, whether what we call the second covenant, or the covenant of grace, may not be subdivided into two covenants. The apostle seems to speak of two covenants made with fallen man,—one made with the Israelites, given from mount Sinai, which was designed to continue no longer than during the dispensation they were under; and the other, that which the church has been under ever since the gospel-dispensation was erected, which is to continue to the end of the world. These are described by their respective properties in an allegorical way, and illustrated by a similitude taken from two mountains, Sinai and Sion, and two persons, Agar and Sarah. The former is said 'to gender unto

bondage;' the latter brings those who are under it into a state of liberty. The one is said to be 'better' than the other, and is particularly called 'a new covenant;' while the other is represented as 'decaying, waxing old, and ready to vanish away.'g Moreover, the apostle seems to speak of more covenants than one made with the Jewish church; for he says, that 'to them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants,' &c. Speaking elsewhere concerning the Gentiles, as 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,' he adds, that 'they were strangers from the covenants of promise.'i In both these places, his language seems to argue, that there were more than three covenants made with man. One is the covenant which was made with innocent man; another, the gospel-covenant which we are under; but, besides these, there were other covenants made with Israel. This seems to assume the appearance of an objection to what was formerly observed, that there were in reality but two covenants, and that, whenever we read of any covenant in scripture, it is reducible to one of them. The seeming objection, however, will disappear, if we consider the sense of the scriptures just mentioned.

As to the passages which seem to speak of two distinct covenants made with fallen man, namely, one with the Israelites, and the other that which we are under, they really intend nothing more than two different dispensations of the covenant of grace. In this sense we are to understand the apostle, when he speaks of the two covenants, the old and the new, the first and the second. The covenant is the same, though the dispensation of the grace of God in it, or the way of revealing it to men, differs. This, however, will be more particularly insisted on in those following Answers which treat of the various administrations of grace under the Old and New Testament. As to the scriptures which seems to speak of more covenants than one which the Jewish nation was under, the apostle, by the covenants, seems to intend some different times or periods of the church before

our Saviour's incarnation. Of these some divines take notice of four, in each of which there was something new and distinct from the rest in the dispensation of divine providence towards the church. The first took its rise from the promise which God gave to man as soon as he fell, relating to that salvation which was to brought about in its proper time by the seed of the woman. The second period of the church began after the flood, when God is said to have revealed his covenant to Noah, which he 'established between him and all flesh upon the earth.' A third remarkable period, or change of affairs in the church, was when God called Abraham out of an idolatrous country to 'sojourn in the land of promise, as in a strange country;' at which time he established his covenant with him, promising to be 'a God to him, and his seed,' and instituted circumcision 'as a token of it,'l on which account it is called, 'the covenant of circumcision.' The fourth and last dispensation or period, which more especially respected the seed of Abraham as increased to a great nation, is what we read of soon after they were delivered from the Egyptian bondage, when God was pleased to separate that nation as a peculiar people to himself, and sent Moses from mount Sinai, where he appeared to them to demand their explicit consent to be his people. On this occasion, when they had promised that all that 'the Lord had said, they would do, and be obedient,' and when a public and solemn sacrifice was offered, and the people were sprinkled with the blood of it, it is said, 'they saw God, and did eat and drink,' as a farther sign and ratification of this dispensation of the covenant. Afterwards many statutes and ordinances were given them, containing those laws which God enacted for them as a covenant-people. This state of things continued till the gospel-dispensation, which succeeded it, was erected. When the apostle, then, in the scriptures in question, says that the church of the Jews had 'the covenants,' he seems to intend nothing else but the dispensation of the covenant of grace, as subdivided into several periods during the various ages of the

church, from the fall of Adam till our recovery by Christ. Hence, though these dispensations were various, yet whatever God has transacted with man, in a federal way, may be considered under two general Heads,—the first called the covenant of works, the other the covenant of grace. The latter of these is to be farther considered under the following Answers.

THE COVENANT OF GRACE

QUESTION XXXI. With whom was the covenant of grace made?

ANSWER. The covenant of grace was made with Christ, as the second Adam, and in him, with all the elect, as his seed.

AS the covenant of grace is opposed to that which was made with Adam as the head of mankind, so it is considered, in this Answer, as made with the second Adam, and, in him, with all his elect. These are described, by the psalmist, as 'a seed that should serve him, which should be accounted to the Lord for a generation;' and the prophet Isaiah, speaking of them, says, 'He shall see his seed.'p

The meaning of the Word 'Covenant'

In explaining this Answer, we shall commence by considering what we are to understand by a covenant in general, and more particularly how the word is to be understood as used in scripture. The word commonly used in the Old Testament to signify a covenant being taken in several senses, may be understood better by observing how it is used in those places where we find it, than by inquiring into the sense of the root whence it is derived.—Sometimes it signifies such a

compact between two parties as agrees with our common acceptation of the word, especially when applied to transactions between man and man; as in the case of the covenant between Abraham and those neighbouring princes who were 'confederate with him,'r in the covenant between Isaac and Abimelech, and in that between Jonathan and David.t In all these instances there was mutual stipulation as there is in human covenants; and, for this reason, some affix that idea to the word when it is used to signify God's entering into covenant with man.—But there is another acceptation of it, when God is represented as making a covenant with man, which is more agreeable to the divine perfections and to that infinite distance which there is between him and us. We find, in several places of scripture, that when God is said to make a covenant, there is an intimation of some blessings which he would bestow upon his people, without any idea of stipulation being annexed. Thus we read of God's 'covenant of the day and night,' or that there should be day and night in their season. We read also of God's establishing 'his covenant with Noah and his seed, and every living creature, that all flesh should not be cut off any more by the waters of a flood.'x And in Ezek. 34:25, when God promises that 'evil beasts should cease out of the land,' that his people should 'dwell safely in the wilderness,' and that he would confer several other blessings upon them mentioned in the following verses, he is said to make with them 'a covenant of peace.'—Again, when he promises spiritual blessings to his people, he says, 'This is my covenant with them; my Spirit that is upon thee, and the words that I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever.'—Moreover, sometimes the Hebrew word which we translate 'covenant,' is used to signify a statute or ordinance which God has established or appointed in his church. Thus, when God ordained that Aaron and his sons should have the heave-offerings of the holy

things, he says, 'These have I given thee, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee, to be a statute for ever;'z and adds, in the words immediately following, 'It is a covenant of salt for ever, before the Lord.'—As for the word used in the New Testament, by which the LXX. generally translate the Hebrew word in the Old Testament, it signifies the same thing; so that both the words imply little more than a divine establishment, or ordinance, in which God gives his people ground to expect promised blessings, in such a way as redounds most to his own glory. At the same time, they who are expectants of the blessings, are not exempted from an obligation to perform those duties to which his grace obliges them, and which will be an evidence of their right to them.

I cannot but farther observe, that, among other acceptations of the word, especially as used by the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, it signifies a testament. This word some who treat on the subject rather choose to make use of than to call it a covenant, being warranted so to do by the sense given of it in the scripture. Their reason is, not only that, as the apostle says, it was 'confirmed by the death of the testator;' but that to call it so conduces more, as they believe, to the advancing of the grace of God in this dispensation, than to style it a covenant in the sense in which the word is commonly used when applied to other matters. But I would rather acquiesce in the medium which some have adopted, who join the ideas of a covenant and a testament together,c and style it, in some respects, a covenant, and in others, a testament. If it be called a covenant, they abstract from their ideas of it some things which are contained in the word as applied to human contracts, and add to it other things contained in a testament,—such as the giving or bequeathing of certain legacies, as an act of favour, to those who are thence denominated legatees, interested in gifts which are disposed of by the will of the testator. If, on the other hand, we call it a

testament, it seems very agreeable to this dispensation to join with it the idea of a covenant, more especially as to what respects the concern of Christ in it, as its Head or the Person in whom all the benefits contained in the testament are first reposed, as they are purchased by his blood, and in consequence of this, applied by his Spirit. This view agrees very well with the scope of this Answer, in which the covenant is said to be made with Christ, and with the elect in him; as well as with what is contained in the Answer immediately following, in which the covenant of grace is described in a way accordant with the ideas of those who say that it was made with believers. What we have stated was necessary to be premised, that we may not, in our explanation of the doctrine, advance any thing which is inconsistent with its being a covenant of grace.

Difference between a Human Covenant and the Covenant of Grace

That we may further understand this matter, we shall show what there is in the idea of a covenant, as we generally understand the word, when applied to signify a contract between man and man. In this case there are two parties, one of whom is said to stipulate, or enter into a covenant with the other. He makes a proposal that he will, on certain conditions, confer some favours on him, provided he will oblige himself to fulfil them; and the other party complies with the proposal made, and, in expectation of those advantages, consents to fulfil the conditions enjoined, and accordingly is said to restipulate. When, for example, a person engages another to be his servant, and to give him a reward for his service, and the other consents to serve him, in expectation of the wages which he engages to give him, each party is supposed to be possessed of something to which the other has no right but by virtue of the contract made between them. The servant has no right to the rewards which his

master promises, nor has the master any right to his service, but by mutual consent. Each party also proposes some advantage to himself; and when they enter into the agreement, they are supposed, in some respects, to stand on a level with each other. No one will enter into a covenant with another for performing that to which he had an antecedent right; nor will any one engage to perform any service, as a condition of his receiving benefits to which he had a right without any such condition. Moreover, when two parties are said to enter into covenant with one another, they are supposed, in some respects, to stand in need of some things to which they had before no right. One party needs the reward proposed; the other, the service which he enjoins, as a condition of his bestowing it. These things are generally supposed, and contained in contracts between man and man.

But when God is said to enter into covenant with man, what method soever we take to explain the federal transaction, we must take heed that we do not include in it any thing which is inconsistent with his infinite sovereignty, or which argues him to be dependent on his creatures, as though he had not an antecedent right to the obedience which he demands in the covenant, or as though it were left to man's arbitrary will whether he would perform it or not. Though men may be said to have some things in their own power, so that one has a right to that which another has no right to but by his own consent, and are entirely left to their liberty, whether they will consign over that right which they had to it to another who could not otherwise lay claim to it; yet this is by no means to be applied to man, when considered as having to do with the great God. The best of creatures have no right to any thing, separate from his arbitrary will; and therefore, though stipulation and restipulation are proper words, when applied to a man's covenant, they ought not to be made use of, when we explain the covenant between God and man.

Though the parties concerned in the covenant, as explained in this Answer, namely, God the Father, and Christ the head of his elect, are both divine Persons, so that one of them is not infinitely below the other, as man is below God; and though it is on that account more properly called a covenant, than that which God is said to enter into with man, so that if the ideas of stipulation and restipulation were, in any respect, applicable to the divine dispensation, they might be applied here; yet there are some things implied in the idea of a covenant between man and man which cannot, consistently with the glory of these divine Persons, be supposed of the federal transaction between them, particularly that he who enters into covenant with another, proposes some advantage to himself. A master, when he stipulates with one to be his servant, is supposed as much to need his service as the servant does the wages which he promises to give. There is thus a kind of mutual advantage arising from their agreement. But in the covenant of grace, whether God be said to make it with man, or with Christ as the head of his elect, the advantage which arises from it is ours, and not God's. In this respect, what was done by Christ, made no addition to the essential glory of God or the divine blessedness, any more than man can be said, in that respect, to be profitable to him. Thus some understand those words of the psalmist as spoken by our Saviour, 'My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints which are in the earth.' And this agrees very well with some other things, contained in the same psalm, which are expressly, in other parts of scripture, applied to Christ. If so, the meaning is, that whatever glory God the Father designed to demonstrate by the federal trasanction with his Son, he did not, as men do by entering into covenant with one another, propose to receive any addition of glory from it, as though he were really to be profited by it.—Again, when men enter into covenant with one another, they are supposed to have different wills. They might refuse to enter into those engagements which they bring

themselves under, as well as to comply with them. The obligation on both sides, is founded in mutual consent; and that is supposed to be arbitrary. But when we consider the eternal compact between the Father and the Son, we must conclude that though they are distinct as to their personality, yet, having the same essential perfections, the will of the Father and that of the Son cannot but be the same. Many who explain this doctrine, represent the one as proposing, the other as complying with the proposal, the one as demanding, the other as expecting, and each as depending on mutual promises, made by the one to the other. Now, though such a representation seems to be founded on some scripture-expressions to the same purpose, in which the Holy Ghost is pleased to condescend to make use of modes of speaking which are agreeable to the nature of human covenants, as he does in various other instances; yet we must not so far strain the sense of words, as to infer, hence, any thing which is inconsistent with the divine glory of the Father and the Son. We may add, that no act of obedience can be performed by a divine person in the same nature; as there cannot be an act of subjection in that nature which is properly divine. Hence, when we consider Christ, in this respect, as entering into covenant, and as engaging to perform those conditions which were insisted on in it, these are supposed to be performed by him as Mediator, or God incarnate, in his human nature. In this respect, he is the head of the covenant, which is made with him, and in him with the elect. We may suppose, therefore, when we speak of a covenant between the Father and the Son, that, whatever be the will of the Father, the same is the Son's will; and whatever conditions the Son consented to perform, as stipulated in the covenant, it was in his human nature that the work was to be done. It is, hence, well observed, in some following Answers, that he who is the Head or Mediator of this covenant, is, as it was absolutely necessary for him to be, both God and man, in one Person. But of this more hereafter. [See note 3 H, page 451.]

Proofs of the Covenant of Grace

There are several expressions used in scripture which give us sufficient ground to conclude, that there was an eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, relating to the salvation of his elect. This, if explained agreeably to the divine perfections, and consistently with the glory of each of these divine Persons, is not only an undoubted truth, but a very important article of faith; as it is the foundation of all those blessings which are promised and applied to us in the covenant of grace, in which is all our salvation and our hope. Here let it be considered, that, when we speak concerning a covenant as passing between the Father and the Son, we understand thereby, that there was a mutual consent between them, that the work of our redemption should be brought about in the way in which it was by our Saviour, when this eternal agreement had its accomplishment. Accordingly, the Father is said to 'have set him up,' as the Head of his elect, 'from everlasting,' and to have ordained that he should execute those offices which he was to perform as Mediator, and receive that revenue of glory which was the result. The Son, as having the same divine will, could not but consent to do this. His doing so is called his eternal undertaking; and both these together are styled the eternal covenant between the Father and him.

For the proof of this doctrine, we might refer to the various scriptures which speak of our Saviour as 'called,' and 'given for a covenant of the people,' and 'foreordained'g to perform the work which he engaged in, in the behalf of his elect. We might refer to those also which consider him as consenting to do every thing for his people which he did in time, and to stand in every relation to them which was subservient to their redemption and salvation; which he could not but do, as having the same divine will with the Father, while, without his consent, it could not properly be said that there

was a covenant between them. We might further prove the doctrine from those scriptures which speak of him as 'sanctified, and sent into the world' to act as Mediator, as 'sealed by the Father,'i and as receiving a 'power to lay down his life, and take it again,' that so he might thereby answer the great end of our redemption. We might draw proofs also from his being empowered to execute the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; from his being confirmed in his priestly office by the 'oath'l of the Father; his being sent by him to execute his prophetic office to those whom he was to guide in the way of salvation; and his being 'God's King, set on his holy hill of Zion.' When we consider all these things done, on the Father's part, as antecedent to Christ's acting as Mediator, and, at the same time, compare them with scriptures which speak of the Son as consenting to do the will of God, or complying with his call, willing to be and do whatever was necessary to secure the great ends designed; when we consider him as taking the human nature into union with the divine, not without his own consent to do so, and as bearing the punishment due to our sin, which it would not have been just for God to have inflicted, without his will or consent; we have sufficient foundation for asserting, that there was a covenant between the Father and the Son relating to the redemption and salvation of the elect.

But we shall now inquire more particularly into the sense of those scriptures on which this doctrine is founded. Here we cannot wholly pass over what we read in Psal. 119:122, 'Be surety for thy servant for good;' and in Hezekiah's prayer, 'I am oppressed, undertake,' or be surety, 'for me.' The Hebrew word is the same in both places, and signifies, not merely to confer some privileges on persons, but to do this under the character of a surety. Hence, when David and Hezekiah pray that they may be delivered, either from their enemies, or their afflictions, by addressing themselves to their Deliverer under this character, it must be supposed that they understand him as

having undertaken to be a Surety for his people, which is a character that belongs only to the Son. And since it is evident, that his mediatorial work and character was well known to the Old Testament church, their salvation being equally concerned in it with ours, and since they are often represented as addressing themselves to him by faith and prayer, it seems more than probable that he is considered in his mediatorial character in those texts in which they desire that he would be 'surety for them;' in other words, they pray that, as he was appointed by the Father, and had undertaken by his own consent to stand in that relation, they might be made partakers of the benefits arising thence.

There is another scripture, in which the same word is used, which also seems to be applied to our Saviour: 'Their nobles,' or, as it ought to be rendered, in the singular number, 'their noble,' or magnificent person, 'shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them, and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me; for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?'p This sense of the text is very agreeable to several other prophecies relating to the Messiah's being of the seed of Israel. And when it is said, 'I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me,' the words imply, that he should sustain the character and perform the work of a surety, in behalf of his people; for that is the proper sense of the word there used. 'For who is this that hath engaged his heart to approach unto me?' that is, 'Who is there, among the sons of men, that dares engage in this work, or is qualified for it?' Or the words may be understood with a note of admiration, as if it had been said, 'How glorious a person is this, who hath engaged his heart, or (as it was determined that he should) has freely consented to approach unto me,' that is, in so doing, 'to act as a surety with me for my people!' That this is a more probable sense of the text, than to suppose that it is meant

either of Zerubbabel, or some other governor who should be set over them after the captivity, appears, if we compare it with the ninth verse, in which it is said, 'They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King.' This can be meant of none but Christ; for David was dead; and none that sat on his throne or descended from him can, in this place, be called David. Divine worship is said to be performed to the person here spoken of; and this could not be done to a mere creature without idolatry, to which no true sense of scripture can give countenance. Besides, the name 'David the King,' is given to our Saviour in other scriptures. Thus, 'I will be their God, and my servant David a Prince among them;' and, 'They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their King, and fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter day,'r that is, when they are converted in the latter days, they shall adhere, and give divine worship, to the Messiah, whom their fathers rejected. Now it is this 'David, their King,' who is said to have 'engaged his heart to approach unto God.' Then, in the words immediately following, God reveals himself, as a Covenant-God, to them; which is the consequence of Christ's engaging his heart to approach to him, 'Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.' Now this proves an eternal transaction between the Father and the Son: the Father wills or determines that he shall draw near or approach to him as a surety, and the Son consents, in that he has engaged his heart to do it; and all this with a design that his covenant should be established, and that he should be a God to his people.

There is another scripture which proves, from several expressions used in it, that there was a federal transaction between the Father and the Son. 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give

thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.' This is, beyond dispute, spoken concerning our Saviour; for it is applied to him in the New Testament.u Here God the Father calls him 'his Servant,' intimating that it was his will, or, to use the mode of speaking which is generally applied to covenants between man and man, that he stipulated with him, that he should perform the work which he engaged in as Mediator. To this work he is said to be 'called in righteousness.' And, with respect to his human nature, in which he performed it, he is styled 'God's elect,' as foreordained to it, and the person 'in whom his soul delighteth,' as glorified by him in the faithful discharge of it. That he might not fail in it, God promises 'to hold his hand, and keep him;' and, as the result of his accomplishing it, he promises 'to give him for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.'

Another scripture to the same purpose, is Isa. 49:8, 9. which also appears to be spoken to Christ, not only from the context, but from the reference to it in the New Testament, 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.' Here we have a plain intimation of his being ordained by the Father to perform that work which he was engaged in as Mediator. His being 'given for a covenant of the people,' signifies his being sent into the world, in pursuance of a covenant which had respect to the salvation of his people.

There is another scripture to our purpose, in which our Saviour, speaking to his disciples, says, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;' or, I confer the blessings of this kingdom upon you, in a covenant-way, as my Father hath appointed

me to do, in that eternal covenant which passed between him and me.

Again, there are several rewards which were promised to him, as the consequence of his discharging the work committed to him. Some of these respected that glory which belongs to his Person as Mediator; and others, more especially, respected the salvation of his people, and in this, the success of his undertaking. Thus it is said, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.' In the context, also, several other things are said relating to the event and consequence of his performing the work he was engaged in.

Moreover, as he was called to this work, or as it was, as we formerly showed, the result of the Father's will that he should perform it; so we have elsewhere an account of his own consent, implying that it was the result of his own will, as well as of his Father's. Thus it is said, 'Mine ears hast thou opened,' or bored, alluding to a custom used under the ceremonial law, by which the willing servant was signified to be obliged, by his own consent, 'to serve his master for ever.'b Thus God the Father engaged Christ, if I may so express it, to perform the work of a Mediator; and then we have an account of his consent, when he says, 'Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.' This mutual consent is expressed also in Isa. 50:5, 'The Lord God had opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious; neither turned away back.'

Further, Christ is represented as making a demand, or insisting on the accomplishment of what was stipulated in this covenant; and this he had a warrant to do from the Father: 'Ask of me, and I shall give

thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.'

These, and many other scriptures of a similar nature, sufficiently prove the doctrine, that there was an eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, relating to the redemption and salvation of the elect. This implies more than his being merely 'foreordained' to perform the work he was engaged in, as he is said to have been. That alone would not have proved that there was a federal transaction between the Father and him; since it may be said of any one who is engaged in works of an inferior nature, that God, who called him to perform them, foreordained that he should do them. But when it is said, concerning our Saviour, that he engaged in the work of our redemption, as the result, not only of his Father's will, but of his own, and so consented to do whatever was incumbent on him as Mediator, the statement certainly argues that there was an eternal covenant between the Father and him with relation to this matter, so far as we may be allowed, when we speak of any transaction between two divine Persons, to retain any of the ideas taken from human covenants.

There is but one scripture more that I shall mention. This, though some will not allow that it relates to the subject, if duly considered as to its scope and design, together with its connection with the foregoing words, may probably appear to be of some weight to confirm the doctrine. The passage is Zech. 6:13, in which it is said, 'The counsel of peace shall be between them both.' Some, in deed, understand these words as referring to Joshua and Zerubbabel, and as signifying their mutual consent to promote the peace and welfare of the church. But this cannot reasonably be concluded to be the sense of the text. Zerubbabel is not mentioned in the chapter; nor are any two persons spoken of in it to whom the words can be applied

except Jehovah and the Branch, that is, the Father and the Son, who are mentioned in the foregoing words. Christ, who is called 'the Branch,' is said 'to build the temple of the Lord,' and to be 'a Priest upon his throne;' and the work in which he was engaged, and the royal dignity to which he was advanced, are both said to be the result of a counsel, or federal transaction, which was between them both. If it be objected, that this counsel of peace respects only the harmony which there is between Christ's priestly and kingly offices, as both of them have a reference to our salvation, we reply that this interpretation cannot well agree with the meaning of the word 'counsel,' which implies a confederacy between two persons, and not the tendency of two offices, executed to bring about the same end. If it be further objected, that the grammatical construction of the words does not favour the sense which we give of them, in as much as they contain an account of something that was future, and not from all eternity; we reply, that it is no uncommon thing, in scripture, for that to be said to be which appears to be. Thus it is said, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ;' that is, he hath, by his raising him from the dead, demonstrated him to be 'both Lord and Christ,' which, in reality, he was from all eternity. So, in this text, when it is said that 'the counsel of peace shall be between them both,' signifies, that Christ's building the temple and bearing the glory, and sitting as a priest upon his throne, is a plain evidence or demonstration, that there was a counsel or covenant between the Father and him from all eternity, relating to the peace and welfare of his people, who are the spiritual house that he builds, and the subjects whom he governs, defends, and saves.

Distinctions as to the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace

We have thus considered the federal transaction which was between the Father and the Son. Now, as this is called, in the Answer, 'the covenant of grace,' it may be necessary for us to inquire whether it be a distinct covenant from that which God is said to enter into or make with man. This covenant is said, indeed, to be made with Christ, as the Head of his elect. But it may be inquired, whether there be not also another covenant, styled the covenant of grace, which is made with the elect, as parties concerned in it.

Every one conversant in the writings of those who treat on this subject, will observe that divines often distinguish between the covenant of redemption and that of grace. The former they suppose to be made with Christ, in the behalf of his elect; the latter, in which all spiritual blessings founded on Christ's mediation are promised and applied to them, they suppose to be made with them. Accordingly, they say that the covenant of redemption was made with Christ more immediately for himself; and that the covenant of grace is made with believers for Christ's sake. In this respect they suppose that these are two distinct covenants; and they explain themselves in several particulars as follows.—1. In the covenant of redemption, made with Christ, there were several promises given, which more immediately respected himself. Some of these related to those supports and encouragements which he should receive from the Father, which were necessary in order to his being carried through the sufferings that he was to undergo; such as that God 'would hold his hand, that he should not fail, or be discouraged.' Others respected that mediatorial glory which should be conferred upon him, when his sufferings were finished, such as 'Ought not Christ to have suffered, and to enter into his glory'?g 'He hath a name given him which is above every name,' and many other promises to the same effect. Besides these, there were promises made to him, respecting his elect; that 'he should have a seed to serve

him;'i that 'he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;' and that God 'would divide him a portion with the great, and he should divide the spoil with the strong,' or that his difficult undertaking should be attended with its desired success, that so it might not be said he died in vain. In the covenant of grace, on the other hand, which they suppose to be distinct from that of redemption, God promiseth forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, through Christ; or that that should with great advantage be restored to us by him, which we lost by our fall in Adam; and that all the blessings which we stand in need of, for the beginning, carrying on, and completing the work of grace in us, and for making us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, should be freely given us. Now, as these promises are made to the elect, the covenant, in which they are contained, is called 'the covenant of grace,' and so distinguished from the covenant of redemption.—2. In the covenant of redemption, as they farther explain it, the elect, on whose account it was made, were considered as to be redeemed by Christ. But in the covenant of grace they are to be considered as redeemed by him. Hence the covenant of redemption is antecedent, or subservient, to the covenant of grace.—3. They farther suppose, that the conditions of the covenant of redemption, on which the promises made in it were founded, are what Christ did and suffered in his own person; whereas faith, wrought in us, is generally styled by them a condition of the covenant of grace. As such, faith is variously explained, as we shall have occasion to observe under the next Answer, in which it is said to be required as the condition to interest believers in the covenant. In this respect, among others, the covenant of redemption is often explained as a distinct covenant from that of grace.

I confess, I am not desirous to offend against the generation of those who have so insisted on this subject as not to advance any doctrine derogatory to the divine perfections, or subversive of the grace of

God displayed in the covenant. I am inclined to think, as some have done, that this controversy may be compromised; for if we duly weigh those distinctions which are necessary to be considered, it will appear to consist in little more than different modes of explanation, used by those who in the main intend the same thing. I shall humbly offer my thoughts about this matter in four particulars.

1. It is to be allowed, on all hands, that the covenant of redemption, as some style it, is a covenant of the highest grace, so far as it respects the advantages which the elect are to receive from it. It is a wonderful instance of grace, that there should be an eternal transaction between the Father and the Son relating to their salvation; and that in this transaction he should promise to Christ, that, as the reward of his obedience and sufferings, he would give grace and glory to them. And it is allowed by all who have just notions, either of the covenant of redemption or that of grace, that he did make such a promise.

2. It must be farther allowed on both sides, whether it be supposed that the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption are distinct covenants or not, that salvation, and all the blessings which we generally call privileges of the covenant of grace, have their foundation in this transaction between the Father and the Son; so that, if there had not been such a covenant, which some call a covenant of redemption, we could have had no promise of these privileges made in the covenant of grace.

3. As there is nothing promised or given in the covenant of grace, but what is purchased and applied by Christ; so there is nothing promised to Christ in the covenant of redemption, as some style it, but what, some way or other, respects the advantages of his people. Whatever was stipulated between the Father and the Son, in that

covenant, was with a peculiar regard to their salvation. Did Christ, as their surety, promise to pay that debt which was due from them to the justice of God? This must be considered as redounding to their advantage. Was there a promise given him, as was formerly observed, that God 'would hold his hand, that he should not fail, or be discouraged,' till he had finished the work that he came about? This also must be supposed to redound to our advantage; as hereby our salvation is secured, which it could not have been had he sunk under the weight of that wrath which he bore. Was there a promise given him that he should, after his sufferings, 'enter into his glory?' This also redounds to the advantage of the elect; for it not only consists in his being freed from his sufferings, and having some personal glories put upon him, but in his going thither to prepare a place for them, and in order that they should be brought there 'to behold his glory.' It is considered also as a pledge and earnest of their future happiness; and accordingly he says to them, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

4. When we consider this covenant as made with Christ, whether we call it the covenant of redemption or the covenant of grace, we must look upon it as made with him as the Head and Representative of his elect, and consequently as made with them, as is observed in this Answer, as his seed. Hence, if the question be only this, Whether it be more or less proper to call this two covenants, or one? I will not contend with those who, in compliance with the common mode of speaking, assert that they are two distinct covenants. Yet I would rather choose to call them two great branches of the same covenant; one of which respects what Christ was to do and suffer, and the glory which he was to be afterwards possessed of; and the other, of which more immediately, respects that salvation which was to be treasured up in him, and applied by him to his elect. I cannot but think, therefore, that what is contained in this Answer, that the covenant of

grace was made with Christ as the Head, and, in him, with the elect as his seed, is a very unexceptionable explanation of this doctrine.

The Covenant of Grace as made with Man

We frequently read in scripture of God's entering into covenant with man, and man with him. This is next to be explained in such a way as is consistent with the divine perfections. In order to our doing so, we, in our entrance on this subject, inquired into the grammatical sense of the word covenant, and into its common acceptation in scripture when applied to any transaction between God and man. We showed that, however there may be stipulation and restipulation, and thereby a passing over of mutual rights from one party concerned to the other, in covenants between man and man; yet that this cannot, consistently with the glory of God, and that infinite distance which there is between him and the creature, be affirmed of the covenant of grace. We also produced some scriptures to prove that the main thing to be considered in that covenant is God's promising to his people the blessings which accompany salvation. Other scriptures might have been quoted to the same purpose; in which, when God is said to make a covenant with his people, we read of nothing but promises of temporal or spiritual privileges which he would confer on them. Thus, when he made a covenant with Abraham, he says, 'Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.'n Elsewhere he says, 'This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' We might consider, also, the description of the covenant, as 'a covenant of promise,'p and of the persons interested in it, as 'the children of promise.' Nevertheless,

God has ordained that, pursuant to this method of applying the promises of the covenant, none should have ground to expect to be made partakers of them, but in such a way as tends to set forth his infinite sovereignty and unalienable right to obedience from his creatures, which they are bound to perform, not only as subjects under a natural obligation to obey the divine law, but as persons laid under a superadded engagement by the grace of the covenant. These statements will prepare the way for what may be farther said, in order to our understanding the meaning of those scriptures which speak of God's entering into a covenant with man, and man with him.

1. Let it be observed, then, that when God entered into a covenant with Christ as the Head of his elect, this included his entering into covenant with them, as is stated in this Answer; so that they have their respective concern therein in all things, excepting what relates to his character as Mediator, Redeemer, Surety, and those peculiar branches of this covenant which, as was before observed, belong only to himself, which some call the covenant of redemption, as distinct from the covenant of grace. From this we may, without any strain on the sense of words, infer that the same covenant which was made with him was, in that peculiar branch of it which respected the elect, or as regards privileges which they were to receive from him, made with them. This is very agreeable to, and tends to explain, the apostle Paul's peculiar and frequent mode of speaking concerning believers being 'crucified with Christ;' 'dead,'s 'buried,' 'quickened' or 'risen,'u and made to 'sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;' as denoting their being made partakers, as his members, of the benefits arising from Christ's sufferings and glory, as really as though they had suffered, and were now actually glorified with him.

2. As the covenant of grace is sometimes, for the reasons formerly mentioned, called a covenant of promise, we may easily understand that God's entering into covenant with his people, signifies his giving, or making known to them, those great and precious promises contained in the covenant which have a more immediate reference to their salvation. On the other hand, his keeping covenant with them, implies his bestowing on them the blessings promised in it. This is otherwise called, his 'remembering his holy covenant,' or his 'performing the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which he had sworn unto them from the days of old.'z Sometimes also it is called his 'showing them his covenant,' not merely in a way of revelation, but by special application of the blessings contained in it; and his 'bringing them into the bond of the covenant,'b that is, engaging or obliging them to obedience, from the constraints of his love and grace, manifested in the promises of this covenant, so that now they are doubly bound to be his, not only as he is their Creator and Sovereign, but as he has made them, by this federal transaction, the peculiar objects of his favour and grace.

3. When God is pleased, as he often is, to annex to the covenant a demand of faith, repentance, or any other graces, to be exercised by those who may claim an interest in its blessings, his doing so is agreeable to that feature of the covenant, formerly mentioned, by which it is denominated an establishment, or divine appointment, or, as it is sometimes called, 'a statute.' This feature respects the connexion of the graces with salvation; or the indispensable obligation of those who hope to attain salvation to possess the graces. It is, however, rather a consequence of God's entering into covenant with them, than an antecedent condition stipulated by him; for the latter would infer a kind of suspense in him, whether he should fulfil his promise or not till the conditions were performed. This is the principal thing we object to when we except against the use of the

word 'stipulation' with relation to this subject. If nothing were intended by this word, but the necessary connection which God has ordained between the blessings promised and the grace demanded in the covenant,—and some understand it only in this sense—I would not contend about persons using or laying aside an improper, and, I think I may say, unscriptural mode of speaking.

Having considered the meaning of God's entering into covenant with man, we shall now proceed to inquire what we are to understand by those scriptures which speak of man's entering into covenant with God. Such a mode of speaking we have, when Moses says to the people, 'Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day.' Elsewhere it is said, 'The people entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul;'e and 'Josiah made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart, and with all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant, that were written in this book; and all the people stood to the covenant.' This is a most solemn transaction, and includes the very essentials of practical religion; so that it is necessary for us to inquire what we are to understand by it. As scripture is the best interpreter of itself, and parallel texts give light to each other, we may observe what is said elsewhere, upon a similar occasion, where God speaks of some who 'choose the things that please him, love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, and take hold of his covenant.'g To enter into covenant, is thus to take hold of God's covenant,—to embrace the blessings promised therein. Accordingly, the apostle says of those 'who died in faith,' that though they 'had not received the promises,' or the blessings promised, yet 'having seen them afar of, they were persuaded of them, and

embraced them.' Again, as we receive the blessings of the covenant by faith; so, to enter into covenant with God, implies a professed dedication of ourselves to a Covenant-God, with a due sense of our obligation to yield that obedience to which we are thereby engaged, or a declaration that we pretend not to lay claim to the blessings of the covenant, without being enabled, by his grace, to comply with its demands. This is sometimes expressed by 'swearing to the Lord:' 'Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.'i As God, when he enters into a covenant with man, is sometimes said to swear to him, or to confirm his promise by his oath, on which account the covenant of grace is sometimes called 'his oath,' as in one of the scriptures formerly mentioned, and in others which might have been referred to; so, our entering into covenant with him, is our swearing fealty, as subjects do to their princes, whereby they own them to be their rightful governors, and themselves under an obligation to serve them.

This is farther explained by that solemn transaction which passed between God and his people, in the close of the ministry and life of Moses; from which we may understand what is meant, in other places, by God's entering into covenant with them. This is expressed by his 'avouching them to be his peculiar people, as he had promised them, and that they should keep all his commandments;' that is, he conferred this privilege upon them with the view that they might reckon themselves under the highest obligation to be obedient to him. Then we have an explanation of man's entering into covenant with God, when it is said, 'Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God;' that is, 'Thou hast publicly declared, that thou art willing to be subject to him, as thy covenant God, and pursuant to this, hast expressed a ready inclination to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice.' This is such an entering into covenant as is incumbent

on all who expect its blessings. And if any one, when he uses the word in explaining the doctrine, intends nothing more than this by restipulation, I will not contend with him; yet as it is to use the word without its proper ideas, which others annex to it, I humbly conceive the doctrine may be better explained without it.

[NOTE 3 H. The Covenant of Grace.—What most theological writers, including Dr. Ridgeley as well as some eminent men who have written voluminously on the subject, say respecting the covenant of grace, or rather respecting the covenants connected with the plan of redemption, is so deeply tinged with the systematizing spirit of the schoolmen, that one fails to use it as a lucid or distinct medium of discerning the simple statements of the divine word. I shall extract a short passage from Dr. Russell, which may probably aid a humble Christian's conception of the doctrine of the covenant of grace as taught in scripture, more than many entire large treatises which have been written. "The redemption of mankind was the subject of an eternal purpose; and this purpose was originally revealed in the form of a promise. For 'it is written in the volume of the book,' Psal. 40:7, or in the commencement of the revelation of mercy, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; and, in many subsequent promises, the same blessed truth is declared. It was the eternal purpose of the one Jehovah, that the Word should become incarnate, and, in human nature, effect the redemption of mankind by the sacrifice of himself. Hence, the manifold wisdom of God is said to have been revealed in the plan of salvation, 'according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,' Eph. 3:11. In his eye, the eternal Word was from everlasting considered as Emmanuel, and hence we are said to be saved 'according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,' 2 Tim. 1:9. As the Lamb of God, Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world; but it was only in

these last times that he was made manifest for us, 1 Pet. 1:20. To God all things are, and must ever have been present; and accordingly, the things which he hath purposed are represented as if existing from the very date of his purpose. But still the purpose and the execution of it are in themselves quite distinct; the latter being the subsequent consequence and result of the former. In reference to the promissory form in which the revelation of mercy was first made, eternal life is said to have been promised by God before the world began; because all in relation to the plan of redemption was then fully determined, and of this determination the promise of redemption was but the transcript and development.

"God having revealed his purpose of mercy in the form of a promise, the plan of redemption is denominated a covenant. That which the scriptures call the covenant of God, his covenant of peace, and the new and everlasting covenant, is just the gospel of his grace, in connexion with the blood of Christ, as the ground on which it proceeds, and the medium through which its blessings are dispensed. And of this the other covenants recorded in scripture were so many signs and pledges. In particular, when we read in scripture of the old and the new, or of the first and the second covenants, the reference is to the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations, Gal. 4:24–26; Heb. 7:22; 8:6–13; 9:15–23; 12:24; Matt. 26:28. And when the latter is denominated 'the everlasting covenant,' the reference is to its everlasting duration, as distinguished from the temporary nature of the former, Heb. 13:20. The old covenant stood related to the new as its type or figure, and was therefore subservient to the latter as that in which it met its ultimate design; and hence it vanished when the second was established, Heb. 7:18, 19; 8:13. But the latter shall never wax old, or vanish away, as did the former; and it is on this account that it is said

to be everlasting."—'A Familiar View of the Old and New Covenants,' By David Russell, D.D., Dundee, pp. 13–15.—ED.]

THE DISPLAY OF GRACE IN THE COVENANT

QUESTION XXXII. How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant?

ANSWER. The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him: and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces, and to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thanfulness to God, and as the way which he hath appointed to salvation.

AS the covenant which we have begun to consider is called the covenant of grace, it is necessary for us to show in what respects the grace of God is manifested in it.

1. We observe, then, that life and salvation, which are very comprehensive blessings, containing all that sinful creatures stand in need of, are promised in the covenant. Hereby the grace of God is more eminently illustrated than it was in the first covenant; in which, though life was promised, there was no promise of salvation or of the recovery of a forfeited life. Life is brought to light only by the gospel; which contains a glorious discovery of the grace of this covenant. The blessings promised in it are grace here and glory hereafter. These are

contained in that promise, 'I will be a God to thee;' that is, 'I will deal with thee in such a way as that all my divine perfections shall contribute to thy happiness.' Sometimes, also, when God reveals himself as a covenant God, he promises, as he did to Abraham, that 'He will be their shield, and their exceeding great reward.' There are promises likewise respecting the forgiveness of sin; as when God says, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.'n That we may see this in its utmost extent, the apostle says as much as can be expressed in words; when, speaking of the consequence of God's being a covenant God to his people, he informs them, 'All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.'

2. Man could not have been made partaker of the invaluable blessings contained in this covenant, without the interposition of a mediator. He no sooner rebelled against God, than he was separated from his presence, and deprived of all those blessings which he might otherwise have expected; and on the other hand, the holiness and justice of God obliged him to testify his displeasure against him, whereby he was utterly excluded from all hope of obtaining any blessings from him. The perfections of the divine nature rendered it necessary that a satisfaction for sin committed should be insisted on; and this could not be given by man in his own person, nor could he reasonably expect that God should receive him into favour without it, he having rendered himself guilty in his sight, and so liable to condemnation. Hence, as he could do nothing which had any tendency to repair the injuries which he had offered to the divine justice, if ever he have access to God and acceptance in his sight, it must be in and through a mediator. This leads us to consider what we are to understand by a mediator, and what was to be done by him in order to the procuring of this favour.

A mediator, in general, is one who interposes between two parties that are at variance, in order to make peace. This he does, either by endeavouring to persuade the party offended to lay aside his resentment and forgive the injury, which is a less proper sense of the word; or else by making an overture of satisfaction, as an inducement to his doing so. In the former sense, it would have been an affront to the divine Majesty, and an injury to his justice, for any one to desire that God should be reconciled, without a satisfaction given; in the latter, we are to understand the word 'Mediator,' when applied to Christ in this Answer. He is, therefore, to be considered not merely as a Mediator of intercession, or as pleading that God would remit the debt, out of his mere sovereignty or grace, but as a Mediator of satisfaction, or a Surety, entering into an obligation to answer all the demands of justice. In this respect, he is the Mediator of the covenant, whereas, when he is sent by God to reveal, or make known the blessings of the covenant to man, he is styled, 'The Messenger of the covenant.' It was possible for a mere creature to perform the work of a mediator in the lower and less proper sense of the word, or, provided satisfaction were given to the justice of God, to intercede with him for the sinner, or entreat him to turn away from the fierceness of his wrath, which sin deserved. In this sense Moses is styled a mediator, and in no other.q So some understand that text as spoken of him in which the apostle says of the law, that it was ordained by angels, in the hand of a Mediator.' Agreeably to this, Moses says, 'I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid, by reason of the fire.'s Elsewhere, also, after Israel had sinned in worshipping the golden calf, he says, 'You have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.' Not that he was to be accounted a mediator of satisfaction; for the atonement which he hoped to make was by entreaty or humble supplication, that God would not destroy them, as they had deserved.

This I call a less proper sense of the word 'Mediator.' In this Answer, on the other hand, Christ is styled a Mediator, in the same sense in which he was a Redeemer, or Surety, for man, or made a proper atonement to procure reconciliation between God and man by his blood. But more will be said on this subject, when we speak concerning Christ's priestly office.

3. It is a very great instance of grace, that God should admit of a Mediator, who might have exacted the debt of us in our own persons, and, as we were unable to pay it, might have punished us with everlasting destruction. That he was not obliged to admit of a Mediator, will appear if we consider the nature of the debt due from us. We were obliged to perform perfect obedience, or to suffer punishment; and hence he might have refused to allow of this being performed by another, in our stead. In this case, it is not as when pecuniary debts are paid, which cannot be refused by the creditor, though paid by one who is the surety for the debtor. As, however, this subject will be more particularly considered when we speak concerning the satisfaction which Christ, as our great High Priest, gave to the justice of God, all that we shall add concerning it, at present, is, that it was an instance of that grace which was displayed in the covenant, in which Christ is considered as a Mediator of satisfaction.

4. The grace of God farther appears, in his not only admitting of a Mediator, but in his providing one. It was impossible for fallen man to find out any one who would so much as plead his cause, or speak a word in his behalf, till satisfaction were first given; and no mere creature could pay unto God a ransom that was worthy of his acceptance, or available to answer the end designed. If the best of creatures had undertaken the work, it would have miscarried in his hands. How deplorable and hopeless, then, must the condition of

fallen man for ever have been, if God had not himself found out the expedient to bring about our redemption! This was a blessing unthought of and unasked for by man. I will not deny that man might have some ideas of the divinity and glory of the second Person in the Godhead. For the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed to him, while in a state of innocency, as it was necessary that it should be, in order to his worshipping each of the divine Persons; and I doubt not that he retained some ideas of it when fallen. But it may be questioned whether he knew that it was possible for the Son of God to be incarnate. Or suppose, for argument's sake, that he had some idea of the possibility of this, yet he could never have known that the Son was willing to submit to this astonishing instance of condescension, and thereby to put himself in the sinner's room, that he might procure that redemption which was necessary for him. This mystery of the divine will was hid in God: it could never have been known by man without revelation; and consequently would not have afforded him any matter of relief in his deplorable state. How wonderful, therefore, was the grace of God, that he should find out this expedient, and lay help on One that is mighty, or provide one to do that for man which none else could have done!

We may add, that it was no less an instance of divine grace, that God the Son should consent to perform this work for man. His undertaking it was without the least force or compulsion; for that would have been inconsistent with his consenting to becoming a Surety for us, and as such, to suffer in our room and stead, since all punishment must either be deserved by him who bears it, or else be voluntarily submitted to. The former can by no means be said of Christ; for a personal desert of punishment is inconsistent with his spotless purity, and would have rendered the price laid down by him for our redemption invalid. Hence, he voluntarily condescended to engage in this work. He gave his life a ransom for many; and his

doing so is considered by the apostle as a peculiar display of grace: 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.'

5. This Mediator being provided for man, without his desert or expectation, we proceed to consider him as offered to him, and, together with him, life and salvation. The great design of the gospel is to discover or make an overture of Christ and his salvation to man. Without this, the gospel could not be preached, nor a visible publication made of the grace of the covenant which it contains. But as the overture of grace, or the call of God to accept of and embrace Christ as offered in the gospel, is more particularly considered under a following Answer, we shall reserve the farther consideration of this matter to that place.

6. It is farther said, in this Answer, that the grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in his 'requiring faith as the condition to interest' believers in Christ. This expression may be allowed, or excepted against, according to the method taken to explain it. We shall endeavour to show what it means; and shall point out in what sense we deny the covenant of grace to be conditional. We shall next inquire, whether there be not another sense, agreeable to the divine perfections, in which these words may be understood as well as other expressions of a similar nature, in which faith is styled a condition, and which are frequently used by divines.

Now a person's having an interest in Christ, implies his having a right to claim him, as his Mediator, Surety, Advocate, and Saviour, and with him all those spiritual blessings which are purchased and applied by him to those whom he has redeemed; so that such an one may say, on good grounds, 'Christ is mine, together with all spiritual

blessings in heavenly things in him.' Here let it be considered, that it is one thing to say, that Christ is the Redeemer and Saviour of man, or, in particular, of his elect, who are given to him that he may save them; and another thing for a person to say, He is my Redeemer or Saviour. The former is a truth founded in scripture-revelation. Accordingly every one may say, as Moses expresses it, 'Yea, he loved the people,' or his peculiar chosen people; or, as the apostle says, 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.'z But he who has an interest in Christ, has a right to claim him as his Saviour, and therefore may say, with the apostle, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' This I rather choose to express, by a believer's having a right to claim him as his Saviour, than by his being actually enabled so to do; in as much as many have an interest in Christ, who are destitute of that assurance which would give them a comfortable sense of it in their own souls.

We are now to consider how faith is said to be required, as the condition to interest us in Christ; or how far this expression may be qualified and explained, without asserting any thing derogatory to the glory of God or the grace of the covenant. The word 'condition,' though often used when we speFak of contracts between man and man, as an essential ingredient in them, is not so plainly contained in those explanations of the covenant of grace which we have in scripture; and, whenever we use it with a particular application to this, we must understand it in such a sense as is agreeable to the divine perfections.

Now, that we may compare these two senses of the word 'condition,' in order to our determining how far, in explaining this doctrine, it may be used or laid aside, let us consider that in human covenants, in which things are promised on certain conditions, these conditions are supposed to be possible to be performed; otherwise the promise

depending on the performance of them is rendered void, and contains no other than a virtual denial to make it good. Thus the king of Israel did not, at first, understand the message sent him by the king of Syria requiring of him to heal Naaman of his leprosy, as a condition of peace and friendship between them; and the inference he makes from it was, that he had a design to seek a quarrel against him. And his reasoning would have been just, had it been intended in this sense; since the condition was not in his own power. Moreover, if a master should tell his servant, that he would give him a reward, in case he would perform the work of ten days in one, the servant would conclude nothing else from it, but that he was resolved not to give him any thing. Now, to apply this to our present purpose, we must consider whether faith, when it is a condition of the covenant of grace, be in our own power or not. There are some external acts of it, indeed, which are so; but these are too low to be deemed conditions of salvation, or of the blessings of the covenant of grace. As for those acts which are supernatural, or the effects of the exceeding greatness of the power of God, though they are inseparably connected with salvation, yet they are not in such a manner in our power that we may conclude them to be proposed as conditions, in the same sense as those things are said to be, which are properly conditions. In this respect, the covenant of grace, as to the conditionality of it, differs from the covenant of innocency. In the latter covenant, perfect obedience, which was the condition of it, was so far in man's power, that he could have performed it without the superadded assistance of divine grace. But when, on the other hand, perfect obedience is considered as a condition of fallen man's 'entering into life,' in which sense our Saviour's reply to the young man's question is understood by many, a plain intimation is made that eternal life is not to be obtained in this way, in as much as the condition is impossible.

Again, when conditions are insisted on in human covenants, it is generally supposed that, though it be possible for the person who enjoins them to assist and enable him who is under this obligation to perform them, yet he will not give him that assistance; for, if he does, the contract can hardly be reckoned conditional, but absolute. Thus, if a creditor should tell an insolvent debtor, that he will discharge him, provided he pay the debt, and, at the same time, gives him to understand that he will supply him with a sum of money which shall enable him to pay it, the transaction is altogether the same as if he had discharged him without any conditional demand of payment. This I cannot but mention, because there are some persons, who speak of faith as a condition of the covenant of grace, and, at the same time, take it for granted, that it is not in our own power to perform it; and who, because God has promised that he will work it in us, conclude it to be conditional,—though such a promise renders the covenant absolute, or, at least, not conditional in the same sense in which human covenants are; and they infer only, what we do not deny, that there is a necessary connection between that grace which God will enable us to perform, and salvation which he has promised in the covenant.

Further, when any thing is promised to another on condition that he do what is enjoined on him, it is generally supposed to be a dubious and uncertain matter whether this condition shall be fulfilled, and the promise take place; or, as I may express it, every condition contains, not a necessary, but an uncertain connection between the promised advantage and the duty enjoined. The reason of this is, that all human covenants depend on the power and will of men, who are under conditional engagements to perform what is demanded in them; that, as these are supposed to be mutable and defective, as far as they are so, the performance of the condition may be reckoned dubious; and that he who made the promise is liable to the same

uncertainty, whether he shall make it good or not. This view of the matter will hardly be denied by those who defend the other side of the question; who, in explaining the nature of human liberty, generally suppose that every one who acts freely, might do the contrary. They must hence conclude, that, if the performing of the conditions of a covenant be the result of man's free-will, it is possible for him not to perform them; and that, therefore, it must be a matter of uncertainty, whether a person who promises a reward on the performance of these conditions will confer it or not. But, however this may be applied to human covenants, we are not to suppose that faith or any other grace, is in this respect, a condition of the covenant of grace; as though God's conferring the blessings promised in it were dependent on the will of man, as determining itself to the exercise of these graces. In this respect, we cannot but deny that the covenant of grace is conditional.

Again, if we take an estimate of the worth and value of a condition enjoined, the advantages which he who enjoins it expects to receive from it, or the reference which the performance of it has to the procuring of the blessing promised, in which case the person who has fulfilled it may be said to possess merit, or to have in himself whereof to glory, as to the part he has performed; these things must not be applied to any transaction between God and man, and are wholly to be excluded from those ideas which are expressed by the word 'condition' when applied to the covenant of grace. This will be allowed by most who do not acquiesce in the Popish doctrine of the merit of good works. Concerning the worth and value of faith, and all other graces, I would not be thought in the least to depreciate them, or to divest them of that excellency which they have above all other effects of God's power and blessings of providence; for certainly we ought to bless God for them, or glory in him as the author of them. That which we would guard against in this matter, is nothing more

than what our Saviour guards us against, when he says, 'When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.' I would not have any one suppose, that whatever condition is performed by us has such a value put on it that, on the ground of it, eternal life is due to us in a way of debt; which would make way for boasting. The conditions, indeed, which Christ performed in that branch of the covenant which more immediately respected himself, which some call the covenant of redemption, were properly meritorious; and the blessings he purchased thereby were given him in a way of debt, and not as an undeserved favour. But if we suppose that, in faith or in any other grace possessed by us, there is the same reference to the salvation which we expect, we turn the covenant of grace into a covenant of works, and resolve that into ourselves which is due to God alone.

Many excellent divines, however, have asserted faith to be a condition of the covenant of grace, who do not understand the word 'condition' as meaning either anything dubious or uncertain on the one hand, or anything meritorious on the other. They probably choose to express themselves so in compliance with custom, and to explain away the common ideas of the word 'condition' as applied to human covenants, rather than altogether to lay it aside. It may be, also, that they do this, lest they should be thought to deny the necessary connection between faith and salvation. I shall, for the same reason, conclude this Head, by stating a few propositions, whereby our not using the word 'condition' may be vindicated from any just exception, or our using it may not appear to be inconsistent with the divine perfections, or the grace of the covenant.

We lay it down, then, as an undoubted truth, the denial of which would be subversive of all religion, that faith and all other graces are required by God, and that our obligation to possess them is

indispensable. Whether our possessing them be reckoned a condition of the covenant or not, it is no less a duty. Some, indeed, distinguish between the obligation of a law and that of a covenant; the former of which depends on an express command, while the latter is the result of some blessings promised or conferred, and has the obligation, but not the formal nature, of a law. They accordingly conclude, that we are commanded by God, as a Lawgiver, to believe and repent; but that it is more proper to say, we are engaged by him, as a covenant God, rather than commanded, to exercise these graces. But this dispute is rather about the propriety of words, than the substance of the doctrine itself. I shall, therefore, enter no farther into it, but content myself with the general assertion, that faith and all other graces are necessary duties, without which, to use the apostle's expression, 'it is impossible to please God,' or to have any right to the character of Christians.

Again, faith and all other graces are to be considered also as blessings promised in the covenant of grace. This appears from those scriptures which speak of them as 'the gifts of God,' purchased by the blood of Christ, founded on 'his righteousness,'f and wrought in us by his Spirit, and 'the exceeding greatness of his power,' and as discriminating blessings, which all are not partakers of. 'All men,' says the apostle, 'have not faith.'h Our proposition may be farther argued, from what Christ undertook to purchase for and apply to his people, as their federal head. In pursuance of his work in this capacity, all spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, are bestowed on them, in him; and the covenant is made good to them, as God is said, 'together with Christ, to give them all things.' First, Christ is given for a covenant of his people; and then, upon his fulfilling what he undertook to procure for them, all that grace which is treasured up in him is applied to them. Hence, faith and other concomitant graces are covenant-blessings.

Further, there is a certain connection between faith and other concomitant graces, and salvation. This we considered elsewhere, together with the sense of those scriptures which seem to be laid down in a conditional form, whence the arguments to prove the conditionality of the covenant of grace are generally taken. All that we shall add, at present, is, that since, in the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, it was agreed, established, and, on our Saviour's part, undertaken, that the elect should be not only redeemed, but sanctified, and enabled to exercise all grace, before they are brought to glory, this is made good to them in this covenant; and that, therefore, as the consequence of Christ's purchase, faith and all other graces are wrought in the souls of those who afterwards, in receiving the end of faith, are brought to eternal salvation; so that we may as well separate Christ's undertaking to redeem his people from their attaining salvation, as we can separate from it his applying those graces which accompany salvation. When, however, we speak of these graces as connected with salvation, we must not conclude that they are the cause of it. Though we are saved in a way of believing, we are not saved for our faith. I cannot, therefore, but approve of what is observed by many divines who treat of this subject, that these graces are the way to heaven, while Christ's righteousness is the cause of our going thither.l I am sensible there are persons who express their dislike of some of the most unexceptionable modes of speaking, if not altogether agreeable to those which they make use of; and who can hardly approve of any one's asserting, that faith and other graces are the way to salvation, partly, because they are the beginning of salvation, and principally, because Christ styles himself, 'The way.' But though grace is glory begun, it may as truly be said to be the way to complete salvation, as the traveller's setting out and going forward on his journey is the way to the end of it, without which it can never be attained; and though Christ is the way to salvation, as every thing which tends to fit us for

it and bring us to it is founded on what he did for us as Mediator; yet this does not, in the least, overthrow the connection of grace with glory, in the method in which he brings his people to it, by first working faith and all other graces in them, before the work is brought to perfection, or the top-stone thereof is laid.

Further, if we assert more than this, namely, that faith is a condition of the covenant of grace, or, as it is expressed in this Answer, a condition to interest believers in Christ, we must distinguish between God's bestowing the blessings of the covenant of grace, pursuant to his secret will or his eternal purpose, and our having a visible ground or reason to claim an interest in them. The former of these cannot be supposed to be conditional, without making God dependent on our act; the latter may, and, I think, ought, to be deemed so. Thus faith is a condition, or an internal qualification, without which no one has a warrant to conclude his interest in, or lay claim to, the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. Hence, when it is said to be a condition to interest believers in Christ, we are to understand it as that which evinces our claim to him, or which gives us ground to conclude that we are redeemed by him, and to expect that he will bestow upon us complete salvation. To deny this, would be to suppose that an unbeliever has a warrant to conclude that Christ loved him and gave himself for him, or that he shall be saved by him. But that is a doctrine which I cannot but oppose with the greatest detestation, as what contains an unwarrantable presumption, and leads to licentiousness; which, I hope, nothing that has been said on this subject has the least tendency to do. We have thus considered how faith may be said to be a condition of our laying claim to an interest in Christ.

7. We proceed to consider how the grace of God is glorified, in his having ordained that we should apprehend or discern our interest in

Christ, and in the blessings of the covenant, by faith. Of all graces, faith is that which has the greatest tendency to discover to the soul its own vileness and nothingness. Indeed, every thing which we behold in Christ its object, has a tendency to abase us in our own sight. Do we, by faith, behold Christ's fulness? This has a tendency to humble us, under a sense of our own emptiness. Do we look on Christ as the Fountain of all righteousness and strength? This leads us to see that we are destitute of these in ourselves. So that, as faith beholds all that we have or hope for, as being founded on and derived from Christ, and gives us, in consequence, the greatest sense of our own unworthiness, it is, in its own nature, adapted to advance the grace of God. Hence, God, in requiring faith as an instrument to apply the blessings of the covenant, ordained the best expedient to illustrate and set forth his own grace, as displayed in the covenant.

8. But as it is a very difficult matter to believe, the grace of faith being the gift and effect of the power of God, we are now to consider that the grace of the covenant is farther manifested, in God's having promised, and, consequently, in his giving, his Holy Spirit to work faith and all other graces which are connected with it or flow from it. That we have, in the covenant of grace, a promise of the Holy Spirit, to work in us that grace which God requires, is very evident. He says, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace, and of supplications.' Elsewhere God promises to 'pour his Spirit upon their seed, and his blessing upon their offspring.'o This is farther set forth, in a metaphorical way, when he promises to 'sprinkle clean water' on his people, and that 'he would cleanse them from all their filthiness, and from all their idols, and give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them, and take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh.' All this is said to be done by 'his Spirit,' which he promised 'to put within them.' More particularly, the Spirit, as working faith in

the hearts of believers, is called, for that reason, 'The Spirit of faith;'q and all other graces are called, 'The fruit of the Spirit.' Hence these graces are from the Spirit, as the Author of all grace; and they proceed from faith, as one grace tends to excite another. Thus the heart is said 'to be purified by faith;'s which is said also 'to work by love,' and to be that whereby we are enabled 'to overcome the world.' It also produces all holy obedience, which is called, 'The obedience of faith.'u Thus concerning the Spirit's working faith, and all other graces.

It is added, that the truth and sincerity of faith is evidenced, as well as the grace of faith wrought, by the Spirit. This also is a blessing promised in the covenant of grace. Hereby we are enabled to discern our interest in Christ, and our right to all the blessings which accompany salvation. In this respect, 'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he shows them his covenant.' He discovers to them, not only that there is such a dispensation of grace in general, but that they have a right to the blessings promised in it; and accordingly 'seals them unto the day of redemption.'y They are thus enabled to walk comfortably, as knowing in whom they have believed, and are induced to the greatest thankfulness, as those who are under the highest obligations to God, who promises and bestows these blessings, and all others whereby his grace is abundantly manifested in this covenant.

THE ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

QUESTION XXXIII. Was the covenant of grace always administered after one and the same manner?

ANSWER. The covenant of grace was not always administered after the same manner; but the administrations of it, under the Old Testament, were different from those under the New.

QUESTION XXXIV. How was the covenant of grace administered under the Old Testament?

ANSWER. The covenant of grace was administered under the Old Testament, by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances, which did all foresignify Christ then to come, and were, for that time, sufficient to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they then had full remission of sin, and eternal salvation.

QUESTION XXXV. How is the covenant of grace administered under the New Testament?

ANSWER. Under the New Testament, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the same covenant of grace was, and still is to be, administered in the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper, in which grace and salvation is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and efficacy, to all nations.

HAVING considered the nature of the covenant in which God has promised salvation to his people, and how his grace is manifested in it, we proceed to speak concerning the various dispensations of it, or the way in which God has been pleased, from time to time, to discover and apply the blessings contained in it, for the

encouragement of his people to hope for salvation. This he has done 'at sundry times, and in divers manners.' The first method of administration was before Christ's incarnation; the other, in all succeeding ages, to continue to the end of the world.

The Administration of the Covenant under the Old Testament

Let us consider, then, how the covenant of grace was administered under the Old Testament. [See Note 3 I, page 470.] As God has always, even in the earliest ages, had a church in the world which has been the seat of his special presence, and been favoured with the displays of his glory; so he has made known and applied to them the blessings of salvation, or the promises of this covenant in which they are contained. How he has done so, is particularly considered in this Answer. Here there is something supposed, namely, that it was absolutely necessary, for the salvation of the elect, that God should, some way or other, reveal Christ to them, by whom they were to obtain remission of sins. He was to be the object of their faith, as well as the fountain of their blessedness; and this he could not have been, unless God had taken some methods to lead the world into the knowledge of his Person, and of that work he designed to engage in, whereby they who lived before his incarnation might be encouraged to look for the benefits which he would procure by what he was to do and suffer. Now, that he has done so, and that the method which he has taken was sufficient to build up his elect in the faith of the promised Messiah, is what we are particularly to consider.

I. We shall first show that God revealed Christ, and the blessings of the covenant of grace, to his church of old. There were two ways by which he did this. One was by express words, or by an intimation given from heaven, that the Messiah, the Prince of life, should, in the

fulness of time, take our nature and dwell among us,—and that what he was then to be and do, should be conducive to the salvation of those who lived before his incarnation, as much as though he had appeared from the beginning of the world. The other method was by types, or significant ordinances, which were only different ways of discovering the same important doctrines.

1. God revealed Christ to come to the Old Testament church, by promises and prophecies. He did this, that, though they were not at that time to behold him as manifested in the flesh, they might take a view of him by faith; and that he might be rendered the object of their desire and expectation, so that his coming might be no unlooked for event, but the accomplishment of those promises and predictions which related to it. Thus God told Abraham, not only that he should be blessed with a numerous offspring, but that, 'in his seed,' that is, in the Messiah, who should descend from him, 'all the nations of the earth should be blessed.' He likewise said to Israel, by Moses, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from among thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.' In following ages, also, there were promises and predictions which gave farther light concerning the person and offices, the sufferings and glory of the Messiah. Accordingly, it is said, 'To him gave all the prophets witness.'b The prophet Isaiah is so express in the account he gives of this matter, that he is styled by some, the evangelical prophet. What he says concerning him, is as particular as if it had been an history of what was past, rather than a prophecy of what was to come. He foretells that he should 'be born,' or 'given' as a public blessing to the world; and describes him, not only as having 'the government upon his shoulders,' but as having the perfections of the divine nature, which discover him fit for that important trust. He styles him, 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.' As he speaks of his birth, so he intimates

that he should be 'born of a virgin.'d He describes him as condescending to bear our sins, as standing in our room and stead, designing hereby to make atonement for them. He speaks of him, as 'brought like a lamb to the slaughter,' and 'cut off out of the land of the living, making his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.' He states that, after this, 'he should prolong his days,' and that the consequence should be glorious to himself, and of the highest advantage to his people. He also describes him elsewhere,f in a most elegant manner, as one triumphing over conquered enemies, 'travelling,' or pursuing his victories, 'in the greatness of his strength,' and making it appear that he is 'mighty to save.' Another prophet speaks of him as 'a Branch' that should grow out of the root or stock of David, when it was almost dead and dry, and that he should set up a more glorious throne, and exercise a government over his people in a spiritual way. The prophet Micah gives us an account of the very place of his birth; and speaks of Bethlehem, as rendered famous and renowned by his being born therein 'who should be a Ruler in Israel,' though otherwise it was 'little among the thousands of Judah.'h Another prophet signifies that he should come at a time when God would 'shake all nations,' that is, fill the world with civil commotions, and cause it to feel the sad effects of those wars whereby the kingdoms of the world had been disjointed, and many of them broken in pieces. 'Then,' says the prophet, 'the Desire of all nations shall come, and fill his house,' that is, the second temple, 'with glory.' The prophet Daniel speaks of him as the Messiah, or Christ, the character by which he was most known when he was on earth; and gives a chronological account of the time when he should come, and 'be cut off, though not for himself,' and hereby 'confirm the covenant,' and, at the same time, 'cause the sacrifice and oblation,' that is, the ordinances of the ceremonial law, 'to cease,' and so make way for another dispensation of the covenant, namely, that which we are under, which was to succeed in the room of the other.

2. The covenant of grace was administered also by the various types and ordinances of the ceremonial law. These were all significant signs of that grace which should be displayed in the gospel, and which was to be obtained by Christ. Many of the types and ordinances were instituted before the whole body of the ceremonial law was given from mount Sinai. The first we read of was that of sacrifices, which were offered in the first ages of the world: whereby mankind had an early intimation given them of the blood of the covenant, which should be shed to expiate sin. After this, circumcision was instituted. It was first given to Abraham, as a visible mark or 'token of the covenant,' immediately before the birth of Isaac, the promised seed, at the time when God was pleased to enter into covenant with him; and it was continued in the church, throughout all generations, till our Saviour's time; and is explained by the apostle, as having been a sign or 'seal of the righteousness of faith.'l Another type was the passover. This was instituted in commemoration of Israel's departure out of Egypt; and had in it many significant rites and ceremonies, whereby our redemption by Christ was set forth. On this account, the apostle calls him 'our Passover, who is sacrificed for us;' and, in allusion to it, he is styled, 'The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'n There were many other ceremonial ordinances or types which God gave to the Jewish nation, which were significant representations of the grace that was to be displayed in the gospel. As is stated in this Answer, they foresignified Christ then to come; or as the apostle expresses it, they were 'a shadow of good things to come.' They all pointed at the grace of the covenant, or the accomplishment of what was to be performed by Christ after his incarnation. This, however, will be more particularly considered, when we speak, under a following Answer,p of the ceremonial law, as distinguished from the moral. At present, we shall only consider the types in general, and their reference to the grace of the covenant, whereby the Old

Testament church were led into the knowledge of the Messiah then to come, together with what he was to do and suffer, in order to purchase and apply the blessings of this covenant to his people.

Here we shall show that there were typical ordinances under the ceremonial law. This we are obliged to maintain against those who have advanced several things relating to the origin of the ceremonial law, which tend very much to divest it of its spirituality and glory. They assert, that all the rites and ordinances of that law were derived from the Egyptians; that they were observed by them before they were known and received by the church; and that the reason why God accommodated his law to them, was that he knew how tenacious they were of that religion in which they had been trained in Egypt, and how difficult it would be for them wholly to lay it aside, and to adopt another way of worship altogether foreign to it. They say, however, that he cut off or separated from it every thing which was idolatrous, and adapted other things to the Egyptian mode of worship which he thought most conducive to his glory. But though he commanded his people, when they left Egypt, to borrow vessels of silver and gold to be used in the service they were to perform in the wilderness; far be it from us to suppose, that God, in ordaining the ceremonial law, borrowed any part of it from the Egyptians. It is true, there were rites of worship used by the Egyptians, and other nations, which had some affinity with the divine law, and were received by them, in common with other heathen nations, by tradition, from the church in former ages. Nor can it be denied, that the Israelites sometimes corrupted the worship of God, by introducing some things into it which were practised by neighbouring nations. But God gave no countenance to this matter, by accommodating his law to theirs. Since, however, this has been purposely and largely insisted on, with much learning and judgment, by others,r I shall pass it over.—There are others, who make farther

advances, tending to overthrow that which appears to be the main design of the ceremonial law, together with the spiritual meaning of it. These conclude that the main end of God's giving it to the Jews was its being necessary that there should be some form of worship erected; that had it not been given them, they would have invented one of their own, or practised that which they had received from the Egyptians; and that the more pompous and ceremonious it was, and especially the nearer it came to that of neighbouring nations, it would the more readily be received and complied with. They conclude, also, that there was no design in it to typify or shadow forth Christ or the blessings of the covenant of grace; and that the things enjoined by it were commanded duties, whereby the people were to be kept employed, but not typical ordinances. But it is very strange that any who have read some explanations of the ceremonial law occasionally mentioned in the Old Testament, and especially the large comment on it, given by the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, should embrace this opinion.

Whatever ordinances were typical, respected Christ, his person, his offices, the grace of the covenant, and the way of salvation by him. I cannot approve, therefore, of what I occasionally meet with in some ancient commentators and modern writers, who sometimes speak of things being typical of other things besides Christ and what relates to the work of redemption. Some, for example, speak of the notoriously wicked persons mentioned in scripture, as Cain, Pharaoh, and others, as types of the devil; and of Antiochus Epiphanes, as a type of Antichrist. Others speak of some things as types of gospel-ordinances: they call circumcision a type of baptism, and the passover a type of the Lord's Supper. Several writers amongst the Papists, also suppose that the bread and wine which were brought forth by Melchizedek to Abraham, were a type of the Eucharist, as they call the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Others speak of Noah's

being saved in the ark from the deluge, as a type of baptism. These are misled by a mistaken sense of the word used by the apostle when, after having spoken of Noah's being saved in the ark, he says, 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us,' & c. But the meaning of the Greek wordu is not that this was a type of baptism, but that it signified, as baptism also doth, that salvation which we have by Christ.

When we consider what was typified by the ordinances under the ceremonial law, we must avoid two extremes, namely, that of those who make more types than the Holy Ghost designed in scripture, and that of others who will not acknowledge many things to be types which plainly appear to be so. The former give too great scope to their wit and fancy, when they reckon every thing to be a type which may be adapted to Christ and the gospel-state. They, accordingly, suppose many persons, and actions done by them, to be typical, which it is hard to prove were designed to be so, or were looked upon as such by the Old Testament church. It would be a difficult matter, for example, to prove that Samson, especially in any other respect than as he was a Nazarite, was a type of Christ. But if it could be proved, that the success he sometimes had in his skirmishes with the Philistines was a type of Christ's victories over his and our enemies; yet it does not appear, though some have extended the parallel so far, that his carrying the door and posts of the gate of Gaza to the top of a hill which is before Hebron, signifies Christ's resurrection. And it is abominable when any one supposes, as some have unwarily done, that his loving a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah,y was a type of Christ's loving the Gentile church. But as I would not give any occasion to conclude that I have light thoughts of the performance of some, who have explained many things, which they call types, in scripture, with a very honest and good design to lead the world into the knowledge of several great gospel-truths, I

shall take leave to distinguish between those things which were plainly designed in scripture to be types, and some others which, though it does not appear that they were looked upon as such by the Old Testament church, may be accommodated to illustrate or explain some doctrines contained in the gospel. If any one call these methods of illustration types, because there is some analogy or resemblance between them and Christ or the benefits of the covenant, they may extend their illustrations as far as they please; I will not contend with them. It is not their saying that such and such things are similitudes by which Christ may be set forth, but their asserting that these similitudes were designed by God to be ordinances for the faith of his church, to lead them into the knowledge of Christ, which I militate against, when I suppose that some are chargeable with an extreme in extending this matter too far, which, it is certain, many have done.

But this may give occasion to inquire when we may determine that a thing is designed by God, to be a type of Christ and the grace of the covenant. Now, as to persons, or, as it is commonly expressed, personal types, though I cannot say that every one whose life and actions bear a very great resemblance to some things which are remarkable in the life of Christ, is a type of him, in any other sense than as we are led, by the analogy or resemblance of things, to speak of it in a way of accommodation or illustration; yet we have some directions given us, by which we may conclude some persons to be types of Christ. One of these is, when he is called by their name. Thus our Saviour's being called David, in several scriptures, and David's speaking in the Person of our Saviour in several of his Psalms, seem to intimate that he was looked upon, by the church in his day, as a type of Christ. Moses also seems to imply as much concerning himself, when he speaks of Christ, as a 'Prophet, whom the Lord God should raise up from among their brethren;' for he adds, that he should be 'like unto him,' and consequently typified by him.a The

apostle seems to intimate this when he compares Moses and Christ in point of faithfulness, that 'the one was faithful as a servant' in God's house, the other 'as a Son over his own house.'—Again, when any remarkable actions were done by persons mentioned in scripture which were allowed to be typical, it follows that the persons who were appointed to be God's ministers in doing them were types of Christ. Accordingly, we may conclude Joshua to have been reckoned by Israel a type of Christ, in leading them into the land of Canaan, upon the same ground that they regarded that land as a type of the gospel-rest, which we are brought to by Christ. For the same reason, Solomon might be called a type of Christ, as he built the temple, which was reckoned, by the Jews, a type of God's presence, in a way of grace with his people. There are also other passages in scripture which might be referred to as proof that he was a type of Christ.c—Moreover, nothing is more evident, than that the priests under the law, who were ministers in holy things, and the high priest, in a way of eminency, were types of Christ. They are so considered in the explanation of the types given in the epistle to the Hebrews. They appear to have been so, from the fact that their ministry was typical, or that the gifts or sacrifices which they offered were types of what was offered by Christ for our redemption.

There were also types called real, or things done, as ordinances designed to signify the grace of the covenant. These were either occasional or stated. The former were designed for types, at the times when the things were performed; but do not appear to have been so in succeeding ages. Such were the passage of the Israelites through the Red sea, their being under the cloud, their eating manna in the wilderness, and their drinking the water which came out of the rock. All these things are expressly mentioned by the apostle as types. We may add to them the brazen serpent, which was plainly a type of Christ, and which, as such, was applied by our Saviour to himself.e

But all these were occasional types, or were ordinances to the church no longer than the action was continued. There were other things, however, which seemed to be standing types or ordinances, in all successive ages, till Christ, the Antitype, came. Such were circumcision, the passover, sacrifices, and other rites of worship, used in the temple-service. These things being expressly mentioned in scripture as types, we have ground to determine them to be so.

II. We are now to consider, that the method which God took in the administration of the covenant of grace, under the Old Testament, was sufficient to build up his elect in the faith of the promised Messiah. There were, indeed, many types given to the church; but these would not have led them into the knowledge of Christ, and of salvation to be obtained by him, unless God had taken some method to explain them. They had not a natural tendency to signify Christ, and the blessings of the covenant of grace, as words, according to the common sense of them, have to make known the ideas they convey. Their signification was, for the most part, if not altogether, instituted, or annexed to them by the divine appointment; and many of them had not the least resemblance, in themselves, to what they were ordained to signify. It was necessary, therefore, that they should be explained. We may say the same thing of a type which is said of a parable; for both are figurative representations of some less known ideas which are designed to be conveyed by them. Now a parable is styled, by the psalmist, 'a dark saying;' and, by the prophet Ezekiel, 'a riddle.'g Our Saviour, speaking of it in this sense, tells his disciples that 'unto them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables.' They are elsewhere opposed to a plain way of speaking; as when the disciples say, 'Now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb,'i or parable, as the word is rendered in the margin. When Nathan reproved David for his sin, in the matter of Uriah, he first represented it by a parable, taken

from the rich man's robbing the poor man of his ewe-lamb. The meaning of this, before he explained it, was not understood by David; but when he told him, 'Thou art the man' intended hereby, it was as evident to him as if he had made use of the most significant words. The same may be said concerning types under the Old Testament dispensation. They would have been unintelligible, had there been no explanation annexed to them, whereby their spiritual meaning might be understood. And if we consider them as a part of religious worship, we cannot suppose that that consisted only in some bodily exercises, such as killing of beasts, sprinkling the blood, & c.; for that is no part of religion, any otherwise than as it refers to things in which religious worship more immediately consists, and leads the faith of those who are engaged in it into the knowledge of these.

But this argument having been insisted on elsewhere, and the necessity of God's leading his church into the meaning of the ceremonial law having been considered and proved from the divine goodness, and a brief account having been given of the method which God took to lead them into it, which tends to obviate any objection that might be made against it, we shall only observe, at present, that as there is a very clear explanation given of the ceremonial law, in several places of the New Testament, so there are some expressions used in the Old which seem to refer to its spiritual meaning. Now, if it be allowed, as there is ample reason to do, that the church had then an intimation given them, either by some hints contained in scripture, or by some other methods of revelation, that there was a spiritual meaning affixed to the ceremonial law, it follows that they might easily have applied a general direction to particular instances, and have attained a very great degree of the knowledge of the spiritual meaning of these types and ordinances. That this may farther appear, let it be considered that they were led into several

doctrines relating to the Messiah, and the offices which he was to execute as Mediator, by express words. These were such that they must have been given up to a very great degree of judicial blindness, as the Jews are at this day, if they could not understand by them many of those great truths which relate to the way of salvation by Christ. Now, if they were led into them by this more plain method, they might easily accommodate the typical ordinances to it; so that the one would be a key to the other. Thus, when they were told by the prophet Isaiah, of the Messiah's 'bearing the iniquity' of his people, or of 'the Lord's laying on him the iniquity of us all,'m they might easily understand that the same thing was signified by some rites used in sacrificing; as the priest laying his hand on the head of the sacrifice before he slew it, and the sacrifice being, in consequence, said 'to bear the iniquity of the congregation.' They could not be at a loss as to the spiritual meaning of this; and when we read elsewhere such expressions as plainly refer to the thing signified by some ceremonial ordinances, such as, 'the circumcision of the heart,'o 'the calves of the lips,' 'the sacrifice of thanksgiving,'q and many others of a similar nature, it cannot reasonably be supposed that they were wholly strangers to their meaning. The types and ordinances, therefore, were, in an objective way, sufficient to build them up in the faith of the Messiah.

This being considered, it may very evidently be inferred that, as is farther observed, they had full remission of sins and eternal life. It is not necessary to suppose, with some of the Pelagians and Socinians, that they might be saved without the knowledge of Christ; nor, with the Papists, that they were incapable of salvation, till Christ came and preached to them after his death, and discharged them from the prison in which they were detained; nor with some among the Protestants, that the bondage of the Old Testament church was such that they were not fully justified, but lay under a perpetual dread of

the wrath of God, and so had not complete forgiveness. This last opinion we often meet with in the writings of many who, in other respects, explain the doctrine of the covenant of grace in a very unexceptionable way. Here I cannot but observe, what is well known by those who live in the United Netherlands, that this matter has been debated with so much warmth in those parts, as to have occasioned divisions and misunderstandings among divines, who, in other respects, have adhered to, and well defended the doctrines of the gospel against those who have opposed them. The judicious and learned Cocceius, whom I cannot but mention with the greatest respect, who lived about the middle of the last century, has been and is now followed by many divines in those particular modes of explaining this doctrine which he makes use of. His sentiments, indeed, about this matter, were not wholly new; but having written commentaries on several parts of scripture, he takes occasion to explain great numbers of texts, agreeably to that particular scheme which he maintains. While, on the one hand, he runs great lengths, in explaining what he reckons to be scripture-types and predictions, and thereby gives great scope to his wit and fancy; on the other hand, he extends the terror, bondage, and darkness which the church was under, during the legal dispensation, farther than can well be justified, and advances several things, in defending and explaining his scheme, which many divines, who do not give in to his way of thinking, have excepted against. Instead of making but two dispensations of the covenant of grace, according to the commonly received opinion, he supposes that there were three. The first, he says, was from God's giving to our first parents immediately after they fell, the promise, relating to the seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head, to his delivering the law from mount Sinai. This dispensation, he adds, had nothing of terror or bondage in it, any more than the dispensation which we are under; and he supposes that the church had clearer discoveries of Christ, and the

blessings of the covenant, than they had after Moses' time. The second dispensation he says was that which was established when God gave Israel the law from mount Sinai. This he generally describes as a yoke which they could hardly bear, and sometimes as a curse, a rigorous dispensation, in which there was a daily remembrance of sin. The reason which he assigns for God's exercising this severity, and shutting them up in a judicial way under terror, darkness, and bondage, is that they revolted from him, by worshipping the golden calf, a little before the law was given. On this occasion, he says, God put a vail upon his ordinances, covered the mysteries of the gospel by types, and, at the same time, did not lead them into their meaning; and this, as was before observed, would have a tendency to leave them in a state of darkness, as to the great doctrines which were signified by these types and ordinances of the ceremonial law. This he supposes to be the meaning of what the apostle says concerning the double vail; one put on the things themselves, the other on the hearts of the Jews. He says that both these were typified by the vail which Moses put over his face;s and that this darkness was attended with distress and terror of conscience, whereby they were, as the apostle says elsewhere, 'all their life-time subject to bondage,'—words which he explains to refer to the church of the Jews under the legal dispensation. He adds, that all this continued as long as that dispensation lasted, or till it was succeeded by the third, or gospel-dispensation which we are under; whereby the church was delivered from this yoke, which 'neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.'

Now, they who follow this scheme seem to make the terror, bondage, and darkness which the church was under, greater than they ought to do; for I humbly conceive that all those scriptures which they refer to for proof, are to be taken, not in an absolute, but in a comparative sense. It is one thing to say, that this dispensation was less bright

and comfortable than the present dispensation is; and another thing to say, that it was so dark and comfortless as they generally represent it to be.—I cannot but think, as I have already observed, that the church of Israel had a clearer discerning of the meaning of the ordinances of the ceremonial law, than these divines will allow them to have had; or at least, that the vail which was upon their hearts, principally respected a part of them, and that in some particular ages, not in every age, of the Jewish church. For some of the Old Testament saints seem to have discovered a great degree of light in the doctrines of the gospel; as appears more especially from several of the Psalms of David, and some of the writings of the prophets.—Again, whatever degree of judicial blindness the church of the Jews might be exposed to for sin, it does not clearly appear that it was inflicted on them as a punishment for worshipping the golden calf at the foot of mount Sinai. There were several instances of idolatry and apostacy from God which gave occasion to it; and when they repented of, and were reformed from these, the effects of his wrath were taken away. We are not to suppose, therefore, that the ceremonial law was given, at first, as a yoke or curse laid on them for this sin in particular.—Nor are we to extend the bondage and darkness of the ceremonial law so far with respect to any of them, as to suppose, that, under that dispensation, they had not full remission of sin. The contrary of this seems to be stated in several scriptures. Thus it is said, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.' 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'x 'Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee; thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin.' 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion

upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.'z These and similar scriptures seem so plainly to overthrow this part of their scheme, that they are obliged, in defence of it, to understand them all as containing only a prediction of that blessedness which the New Testament church should receive, and not as describing a privilege which was enjoyed under the legal dispensation. This I cannot but think to be an evasive perversion of the sense of the scriptures just referred to, and others of a similar nature. It is plain that the apostle, referring to one of them, namely, the words of the psalmist, says that therein David 'describes the blessedness that cometh not on the circumcision only,' that is, not only on the Jews, 'but on the uncircumcision also,' that is, the gospel-church. This is a plain argument, that the blessedness which accompanies forgiveness, was a privilege which the Old Testament church enjoyed, and not merely a promise of what the New Testament church was to expect. The apostle's reasoning is as if it had been said, 'Were the Old Testament church the only blessed persons in enjoying forgiveness?—No; as they formerly enjoyed it, so we who believe are made partakers of the same privilege.'

We may add, that, in consistency with their scheme, the followers of Cocceius entertain some unwarrantable notions about the justification of the Old Testament church. Some say that it was less full; others, which is a more unguarded way of speaking, that it was less true. Agreeably to their opinion, the latter suppose that the Old Testament church had no other ideas of the doctrine of justification, than as implying the divine forbearance, or not punishing sin; though they had a perpetual dread that it would be punished at last, and no comfortable sense of the forgiveness of it.c But this is certainly to extend the terror and bondage of that dispensation farther than we have just ground from scripture to do, whatever turns they give to several texts in its defence. We must conclude,

therefore, as is observed in this Answer, that the Old Testament church had full remission of sins, as well as eternal salvation.

The Administration of the Covenant under the New Testament

We are now to consider the covenant of grace, as administered under the New Testament. This is the dispensation of it which we are under, and is to continue to the end of the world, and which, by way of eminence, we call the gospel-dispensation. Concerning this dispensation, it is observed that it began when Christ, the substance, was exhibited.

1. He is called the substance of it, without any particular limitation of the word. We may understand that he was the substance of the ceremonial law, as all the promises and types of it had a peculiar reference to him: 'To him give all the prophets witness.' Or he may be considered as the substance of the New Testament dispensation, the great topic of the minstry of the gospel. The apostle speaks of 'Christ crucified,' as the principal thing which 'he determined to know,' or insist on, in the exercise of his ministry, He said this with good reason; for all gospel doctrines were designed to lead us to him, and set forth his glory, as the fountain and author of our salvation.e The seals of the new covenant also, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper, signify that salvation which we enjoy and hope for by Christ, our consecration to him, and our communion with him. He is truly styled the substance of both the dispensations of the covenant. The former looked forward, and pointed out Christ to come, as the object of the church's desire and expectation; the latter represents him as having come, and as being the object of our joy and thankfulness, for the blessings which he has procured for us.

2. This leads us to consider when it was that the New Testament dispensation commenced. This is here said to be upon Christ's being exhibited. Christ's exhibition either implies his public appearing when he 'was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us,' or it has a particular respect to the time when he entered on his public ministry, and went about doing good, confirming his mission by uncontested miracles. This he did immediately after his baptism; whereby he appeared to be the person whose coming the prophets had foretold, and whom John the Baptist had pointed at, and given the world ground to expect that he would immediately show himself to them in a public manner. This appearing of Christ was like the sun's rising after a night of darkness; and in some respects, the gospel-dispensation might be said to begin then. Nevertheless, in propriety of speaking, it could not be said fully to commence till Christ's resurrection. Then it was that the ceremonial law ceased, all the types and ordinances of it having had their accomplishment in him. Thus the prophet Daniel speaks first of Christ's 'being cut off,' and thereby 'confirming the covenant,' and then of 'the sacrifice and oblation ceasing.' When that dispensation was at an end, the gospel-dispensation immediately succeeded it. [See note 3 K, page 470.]

3. We are now to consider how the two dispensations differ. They were, indeed, the same in substance, both before and since the coming of Christ. This we observed, when we considered that the covenant of grace, notwithstanding the different dispensations of it, is but one. Besides, the blessings promised in the covenant were the same, namely, redemption through the blood of Christ, and complete salvation by him. He was the Mediator and fountain of all that happiness which his people enjoyed, either before or after his incarnation. Still, however, the way of administering this covenant under the gospel-dispensation differs from the former way.

One difference is, that, before the gospel-dispensation, it was predicted and signified that Christ should come; and, hence, the Old Testament church waited for his appearing. Accordingly, they are represented as saying, 'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.' But the New Testament church adores and magnifies him, as having appeared 'to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,' and thereby fully to accomplish the work of our redemption. In the preaching of the gospel, he is represented as 'having abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light,' and done every thing for us which is necessary to bring about our redemption. This is signified also by the sacraments of the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's Supper; which, though they may be justly called gospel-types, or external signs of Christ and the blessings of the covenant of grace, yet differ from the types under the ceremonial law, not only in the matter of them, but in their referring to the work of redemption as fully accomplished by him, which the ceremonial law could not, from the nature of the thing, be said to have done.

The gospel-dispensation further differs from the legal, and very much excels it, as grace and salvation are therein held forth in more fulness, evidence, and efficacy, to all nations. The apostle, when comparing the two dispensations, calls the one 'the ministration of death,' or 'condemnation,' and describes it as now 'done away,' and as what, while it continued, was 'glorious;' the other he calls 'the ministration of the Spirit,' or 'of righteousness,' and speaks of it as 'excelling in glory.' Whether the former is styled, 'the ministration of death,' because of the terrible manner in which the law was given from mount Sinai, on which occasion the people said to Moses, 'Let not God speak with us,' in such a way, 'any more, lest we die,' or whether it is so styled in reference to the many curses and threatenings, denounced in that dispensation to deter the people

from sin, we will not determine. But it is certain, that the apostle speaks of the gospel-dispensation, as excelling in glory; and this is the principal thing which we are now to consider.

Now the gospel-dispensation excels, in as much as grace and salvation are therein held forth with greater clearness or evidence. This we may truly say, without supposing the legal dispensation to have been so dark, that none of the church, in any age of it, could see Christ and the way of salvation by him to be signified by any of its types or ordinances. We may observe, that, when the apostle speaks of that dispensation, he does not say absolutely that it had no glory, but that 'it had no glory in this respect, by reason of,' or compared with, 'the glory that excelleth.' Now the gospel-dispensation excels the legal, as to its clearness or fulness of evidence, in that the accomplishment of the predictions, or the making good of the promises of redemption and salvation by Christ, affords greater evidence of the truth and reality of these blessings, than the mere giving of the promises could be said to do. For though the one gave them the expectation, the other put them into actual possession, when Christ, the substance, was, as was before observed, exhibited, and the ceremonial law had its accomplishment in him.

Again, under the gospel-dispensation, the grace and salvation revealed in it, are attended with greater efficacy. For the greatest part of the Old Testament church, through the blindness of their minds, and the hardness of their hearts, were not so much disposed as they ought, especially in some ages, to inquire into, or endeavour to attain a clearer discerning of, the spiritual meaning of the ceremonial institutions; and in consequence of this, there was but a small remnant of them who obtained mercy to be faithful, who rejoiced to see Christ's day, and embraced the promises which they beheld afar off. After the commencement of the gospel-dispensation, on the

other hand, 'the word of the Lord had free course, and was more eminently glorified' in those places where it was made known.

This will more clearly appear if we consider, further, that the gospel-dispensation excelled in glory, in regard to extent. It was under this dispensation that the promise was to have its accomplishment, that Christ should be 'a light to the Gentiles,' and God's 'salvation unto the end of the earth;' or that God would 'destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that was spread over all nations.'k It was then that a commission was given to 'preach the gospel to every creature,' or that Christ should be 'preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world.'m In this respect, the gospel-dispensation certainly excelleth in glory; and it is owing to this feature of it that we enjoy at present, the invaluable privilege of the gospel. But if the present dispensation be reckoned only the dawn and twilight, or the beginning of that glory which shall be revealed at Christ's second coming, as grace is sometimes styled glory begun; or if the apostle's description of it, when he says, that 'we are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,' contains an intimation, that the glory which still remains to be revealed, is nothing else but the perfection of the present dispensation; then we may conclude that it far excelleth all others in glory.

From what has been said, in comparing the former and present dispensation of the covenant of grace, we may infer the care of God extended to his church in all ages. He never left them without the means of grace; which, how various soever they have been as to the matter of them, have tended to answer the same end, namely, the leading of the church into the knowledge of Christ.—We may farther infer the necessity of external and visible worship. This the church

was never wholly destitute of; for then it would have ceased to have been a church.—We may infer, likewise, the necessity of divine revelation, as to what respects the way of salvation by Christ. We must not conclude, that the church was, at any time, without some beams of gospel-light shining into it; or that they were left, as the heathen are, 'to seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him;' or that, before the gospel-dispensation commenced, salvation was to be obtained by adhering to the light and dictates of nature, which discovers nothing of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, or of that remission of sin which is to be obtained only through him.—Again, Christ's having been revealed to, and consequently known by, the Old Testament church, as the promised Messiah, may give some light to our understanding what we often read in the New Testament concerning persons believing in him, upon his working miracles or using some other methods to convince them that he was the Messiah; when, at the same time, we do not read of any particular discovery made to them relating to the glory of his Person and offices, and the design of his coming into the world, which was necessary to their believing him, in a saving way, to be the Messiah. Thus when he converted the woman of Samaria, by revealing himself to be 'that Prophet' whom the church expected, and by telling her some of the secret actions of her life, she immediately 'believed in him;'p and many of her fellow-citizens believed on him, upon the report that she gave them of what he said. So, also, when he opened the eyes of the man who was born blind, he only asked him this question, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' and then discovered that he was the Person; and it immediately follows, that the man 'believed and worshipped him.'r There are many other instances of a similar nature recorded in the New Testament,—instances in which persons believed in Christ, before he gave them a particular account of his design in coming into the world, merely upon his working miracles, which gave them a conviction that he was the Messiah. Yet

faith supposes not only a conviction that Christ is the Messiah, but a knowledge of his Person, and of the offices he was to execute as such. Now, that the individuals in the instances referred to possessed this knowledge, may very easily be accounted for, by supposing that the Jews had been instructed in it, and therefore wanted no new discoveries of it. Accordingly, they believed in him, and worshipped him, being induced to do so, by those intimations which were given to them, under the Old Testament dispensation, that the Messiah, whenever he appeared, would be the object of faith and worship.—Finally, the gospel being more clearly preached under the present dispensation than it was before, tends to aggravate the sin of those who despise Christ as revealed in it. 'This is the condemnation,' says our Saviour, 'that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' Before our Saviour's incarnation, the Old Testament church might be said to reject the covenant of promise, or not regard the gospel contained in it; but, under the New Testament dispensation, sinners reject the covenant of grace, as confirmed, ratified, and sealed by the blood of Christ, and, as the apostle says, 'count the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing,' and therefore 'are thought worthy of much sorer punishment.'t

[NOTE 3 I. The Administrations of the Covenant.—'The Administration of the Covenant under the Testament,' is an extraordinary phrase. We showed, in a former Note, (See Note 'The Old and the New Testaments,' under Quest. iii.) that the name 'Testament' is a mistranslation of the original word which it is made to represent, and utterly inapplicable to everything which that word designates. But even if the name were allowable, it denotes the very thing which is denoted by the word 'Covenant.' Even Dr. Ridgeley, when contending for the propriety of the name, says, that it ought never to be employed to the exclusion of the word Covenant; that the

two names designate the same thing under different phases; and that when the one is used, the other is necessarily implied, See Sect. 'The meaning of the word 'Covenant',' under Quest. xxxi. What, then, can we understand by 'the Administration of the Covenant under the Testament,' but just 'the administration of the Covenant under the Covenant.' Such is an instance—and there are hundreds similar—of the gross confusion of language which results from the systematizing spirit of the scholastic theology. When viewed as exhibitions of the promise of eternal life—exhibitions based on sacrifice, and displaying the security, holiness, and grace of the promise through the blood of the great atonement—the age before and the age after Christ are called, in scripture, 'the Old and the New Covenant;' and when viewed as administrations of the promise, or as sytems of moral means for explaining and enforcing it,—when viewed, the one as administering the promise by types of the Saviour to come, and the other as administering it by declarations of his having actually appeared and accomplished his work,—they are called in scripture, 'the former and the latter age.' and in popular theology, are not inappropriately termed 'the Mosaic and the Christian Dispensations.'—ED.]

[NOTE 3 K. The Date of the Christian Dispensation.—The Jewish dispensation appears to have been abolished at our Lord's incarnation. 'When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.' Now 'the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.' The change of the economy is identified with the change of priesthood, or with the Redeemer's offering sacrifice. Even if, as some divines contend, our Lord's high priesthood did not begin till his ascension, yet his work as 'a priest' or sacrificer—all the work which fulfilled the types of the

Holy Place and the Court of the Tabernacle—was begun at his incarnation. His making atonement extended from his birth till his 'appearing in the presence of God for us.' It began with the first pain he felt, or the first humiliation he endured, and did not terminate till he 'entered the heavenly places,' and 'purified them with his own blood.' There was no pausing point at the resurrection,—none more proper than at his flight into Egypt, his baptism, his passion in the garden, or his yielding up the ghost on the cross: nothing farther than the extraneous attestation, on the part of the Father, and the evidence exhibited by his own display of power over death, that, as the atoning victim, 'he was the Son of God,' and possessed the energy and moral worth of the 'Eternal Spirit.' Either, therefore, the Jewish economy was abolished when Christ 'came into the world,' when his sacrifice began; or it was not abolished till he sat down at the right hand of God when his sacrifice was completed. The latter opinion, so far as I know, is adopted by no person; and the former one is the only alternative.

'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' The moral law was 'given.' or re-promulgated by Christ as well as by Moses, and existed in all its force before the ministry of either. 'Grace,' as regards the publication of the divine mercy, and 'truth,' as opposed to error, existed, in the same way, as certainly in the oracles of Moses as in those of the Redeemer. The Mosaic law was a pure, unequivocal, spiritual exhibition of exactly the doctrines of the gospel which are embodied in the discourses of Christ and the writings of his apostles. But the former exhibited them in shadow, while the latter exhibited them in substance. 'Truth' is opposed, in the divine word, not only to error, but also to uncertainty, anticipation, futurity, or type. Employed to distinguish the gospel from false doctrine, it is opposed to heresy or fable: but employed to distinguish the ministry of Christ from that of Moses, or the lessons

of the New Dispensation from the observances of the Old, it is opposed merely to the rites of the typical economy. These were 'given by Moses,' while the realities which they signified 'came by Jesus Christ.' 'Judgment,' in a similar manner, often means the typical dispensation. Now, when did Christ 'bring forth judgment unto truth?' When did he abolish the economy of types, and introduce the economy of realities? He himself answered the question when he talked with the woman of Samaria: 'Woman,' said he, 'the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth'—when they shall worship no longer through the carnal and typical medium of Mosaic rites, but with the spiritual feelings and immediate faith of reliance on a Messiah come, and 'sin-offering' abolished. The woman had been convinced of sin; and, adverting to the controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans, as to the acceptable place of seeking divine remission, she anxiously inquired whether she should make sin-offering at Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim But Jesus told her that the Messiah, whom all the sin-offerings typified, had already come, and—apparently in consequence of this—that the hour then was when true worshippers should neither attend typical places, nor practise typical observances, but simply exercise a spiritual and immediate faith on the Messiah. 'Such.' he added, 'the Father seeketh to worship him.' Thus both the Father's authority, and his, seem to have declared that then, while he stood by the well of Jacob, the dispensation of types had been for ever done away.

What but this can explain our Lord's doctrine on the subject of the Sabbath? When the Pharisees accused his disciples of profanation, for plucking ears of corn on that day, he replied, indeed, that their conduct was justifiable, both by the necessity of hunger, and by the approved example of David; but he added, as the announcement of at once a new doctrine, and the chief ground of their defence, 'The Son

of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.' Here was no obscure intimation that the economy with which the seventh day Sabbath stood connected was already superseded,—that, at all events, the pillars of that Sabbath had been overthrown, and the basis, or authority, on which they rested, merged in the supreme control of the founder of a new economy. He who had already appeared as 'Lord of all,' and had begun to 'make all things new,' was 'Lord also of the Sabbath;' and he could authorise an innovation on the sacredness of the seventh day, in traversing the cornfields, just as truly as on the sacredness of the water of purification at the marriage-feast in Cana. The Sabbath of the seventh day, the ceremony of ablution, and the presenting of sin-offerings at Jerusalem, were all identified with a dispensation which stood abolished in the eye of God the moment 'the Son of man' appeared.

Christ commanded a leper whom he had healed, to 'go and offer for his cleansing according to the law.' But 'according to the law,' no leper could be purified, till he was sprinkled seven times with water and atoning blood. Our Lord did that by a miracle, and through his own immediate authority, which the law pronounced impossible without the use and sanction of ceremonial rites. His very healing of the leper was tantamount to a declaration that he had abolished the Mosaic law, or, what was of equal import, that he personally disregarded it. He ordered the individual, therefore, to offer 'for a testimony unto them,'—to appear before the priests 'according to the law,' that they might see his healed condition to be a proof of the law's abolition,—an evidence that its observances were now proved to be unnecessary and superseded.

All the instances of Christ's apparent deference to the Mosaic ritual were similar. They either, like the present, evinced actual inattention to the provisions of the law; or, like the observance of the passover,

they exhibited him carefully supplanting a rite of the Old Testament, by a more simple one of the New; or, at the farthest, they showed him exposing the innovations of the rabbies, and rebuking the sacrilege of the people, in corrupting the typical exhibitions of divine truth, defacing the emblems which the Most High had set up of the great future work of expiation, and, in consequence, 'making the word of God of none effect.' His grand aim, in all his allusions to the law of Moses, was to show that its designs were fulfilled in his own ministry. His most terrible retort upon his opponents was, 'If you believed in Moses, ye would believe in me.' He constantly inculcated that, had they understood the observances for which they were so zealous, they would have placed their faith, and hope, and trust, directly and spiritually upon himself. His apostles, after his ascension, followed in the same course. They encountered the same description of opponents—the same fondness for a continued observance of Mosaic rites—the same anxiety to advocate the permanent obligation of the typical law; and they confronted all with the same arguments—treated all in the same method—and possibly in as many instances, showed an apparent, personal, approved deference to the customs which they combated. Just as truly, then, during the ministry of Christ, as during that of his apostles, the Mosaic dispensation was past and abolished.—ED.]

THE MEDIATOR OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

QUESTION XXXVI. Who is the Mediator of the covenant of grace?

ANSWER. The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fulness of time became man, and so was and continues to be God and Man in two entire distinct natures, and one Person for ever.

QUESTION XXXVII. How did Christ, being God, become Man?

ANSWER. Christ, the Son of God, became Man by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance, and born of her, yet without sin.

NEXT to the covenant of grace, and its various administrations, we have, in some following Answers, an account of the Mediator of the covenant. He is set forth in the glory of his Person, in the offices which he executes; and in the estate in which he either was or is, together with those accessions of glory with which he shall perform the last part of his work in the close of time. The first thing to be considered is the constitution of his person, as God-man, Mediator.

Christ the only Mediator

He is set forth as the only Mediator of the covenant of grace. How we are to understand his being Mediator, has been already considered. It was observed, that he did not make peace, by entreating that God would remit the debt, without giving that satisfaction which was necessary to be made for securing the glory of the divine justice. In this statement we militate against the Socinians, who suppose him to be styled a Mediator, only because he made known to the world those

new laws contained in the gospel, which we are obliged to obey as a condition of God's being reconciled to us; and gave us a pattern of obedience in his conduct; and confirmed his doctrine by his death; and then interceded with God, that on these terms he would accept us, without any regard to the glory of his justice, which he is no farther concerned about, than by prevailing that it would desist from the demands which it might have made, and so pardon sin without satisfaction. But this opinion is directly contrary to the whole tenor of scripture. According to what is there taught, 'he gave his life a ransom for many;' 'he made peace through the blood of his cross;'x and 'God brought him again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,' as 'the God of peace,' and, at the same time, appeared to be a God of infinite holiness and justice, and Christ a Mediator of satisfaction. This will be farther considered, however, when we speak concerning his priestly office.z

What we shall at present observe is, that he is styled the only Mediator. It is said, 'There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' On this subject we oppose the Papists, who greatly derogate from the glory of Christ, by pretending that the angels and glorified saints are mediators of intercession, and that they not only offer up supplications to God in the behalf of men on earth, but with them present their own merits; as though Christ's redemption and intercession had not been sufficient without them. Accordingly, a great part of the Papists' worship consists in desiring that these good offices may be performed by them on their behalf. This I cannot but conclude to be a breach of the first, or, at least, let them put never so fair colours upon it, of the second commandment. We shall farther consider it in that light in its proper place.

The scriptures they bring in defence of this practice are nothing to their purpose. For whenever an angel is said to intercede for men, as

when it is said, 'The angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah?' or to be the object of their prayers or supplications, as Jacob says, 'The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads,'c no other person is intended but Christ, 'the Angel of the covenant.' Another scripture which they bring to the same purpose, is that in which Moses says, 'Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants.' This they miserably pervert; for Moses desires, not that God would hear the prayers which these saints made to him in behalf of his church, but that he would remember the covenant which he made with them, and accomplish its promises, by bestowing the blessings which his people then stood in need of.

There are two other scriptures which are often cited by the Papists to this purpose, which, they think, can hardly be understood in any other sense. One is in Rev. 5:8, where it is said that 'the four beasts, and four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.' The other is in chap.8:3, 'And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne.' It must be allowed, that there are many passages in this book which are hard to be understood. But there are none contrary to the analogy of faith, or derogatory to the glory of Christ, as the sense the Papists give of these scriptures is. We must inquire, therefore, whether they may not be understood otherwise by us. It is said, indeed, 'the four beasts, and four and twenty elders, had golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints;' but it is not fully determined whether, by these 'beasts and elders,' are intended the inhabitants of heaven, or men on earth. If the description is only an emblematical representation of those prayers which are directed to God from the church in this

world, it is nothing to their purpose. But though we suppose that, by the beasts and elders who fell down before the Lamb, are meant the inhabitants of heaven, we are still not to understand that they are represented as praying for the saints on earth; for 'the golden vials full of odours,' are only an emblem of the prayers which are put up by the saints on earth, which God accepts of, or smells a sweet savour in, as perfumed with the odours of Christ's righteousness. This may be illustrated by those political emblems which are used in public solemnities; such as the coronation of kings, in which the regalia are carried by the prime ministers of state, not to signify that they have any branch of kingly dignity belonging to them, but to denote the honours and prerogatives of him who is the principal subject of the whole ceremony. So when the heavenly inhabitants are represented as having 'golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints,' the representation signifies only, that the prayers which are put up by God's people on earth, through the mediation of Christ, are graciously heard and answered by him. As to the other scripture in which it is said, 'Another angel stood at the altar, and there was given him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints,' it is generally understood, by those who do not adopt the absurd opinion of the Papists, as spoken of our Saviour; and then it makes nothing to their purpose, but rather militates against it. If it be objected to this sense of the text, that our Saviour cannot properly be called 'another angel,' and that the phrase must mean one of the created angels, the sense just given of the other scripture may be accommodated to it, and then the meaning is, this angel, or one of the angels, 'stood at the altar before the Lamb,' and, in an emblematical way, is set forth as having incense put into his hand, which he presents to him, not as offering it up himself, but as signifying that it was for the sake of Christ's merits that the prayers of his people on earth ascended with acceptance in the sight of God. It is as though he should say to Christ, "The incense is thine; thou

hast a right to the glory of it; and therefore let all know, that this is the only foundation of the church's hope, that their wants shall be supplied by thee." So that this does not give the least countenance to the Popish doctrine of there being other mediators between God and man besides our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of the Papists, indeed, are sensible that this opinion tends to detract from the glory of our great Mediator; and they therefore choose rather to assert that the saints and angels are mediators between Christ and men, so that we are through their means to have access to him, and by him to the Father. But as Christ not only condescended to take our nature upon him, and therein to procure redemption for us, but invited his people to 'come to him;' as it is 'through him we have an access unto the Father;' and as no mention is made of any by whom we have access to Christ, and our access to God is founded only in his blood; we have nothing else to do, but, by faith in what he has done and suffered, to draw nigh to God, as to a Father reconciled by this great and only Mediator.

Christ as Mediator is God

This Mediator is described, as to his Person, as God incarnate, or, as it is expressed, 'the eternal Son of God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, who became Man, and that, in the most proper sense, by assuming to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul,' which are the two constituent parts of man. Here we are to consider the Person assuming the human nature, and the nature assumed or united to the divine Person.

The Person assuming the human nature is styled 'the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father,' and, with respect to his personality, 'equal with him.' This is the same mode of speaking which was used by the Nicene Fathers, in defence of our Saviour's

divinity against the Arians. Having largely insisted on this in our defence of the 'doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity,'g and having also explained what we mean by Christ's Sonship, as referring to his person and character as Mediator, we shall add no more on the subject at present, but take it for granted, that our Saviour is, in the most proper sense, a divine Person, and shall consider him as assuming the human nature.

1. We observe, then, that it was the second Person in the Godhead who was incarnate, and not the Father or the Holy Ghost. This we affirm against the Sabellians, who deny the distinct personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and assert, that the Father, or the Holy Ghost, might as truly be said to have been incarnate as the Son; their personality, according to them, being not so distinct, that what is done by one divine Person might not be said to have been done by another.

2. It follows that the divine nature which belongs in common to the Father, Son, and Spirit, cannot be properly said to have been incarnate. It is true, we read, that 'God was manifest in the flesh;' and elsewhere, that 'in him,' namely in the human nature, 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead;'k whence some take occasion to conclude, that the human nature was united to the Godhead, or that the Godhead of Christ was said to be incarnate. But, if this be asserted, it must be with caution and a distinction. I cannot suppose, therefore, that the Godhead absolutely considered, was incarnate; but that it was so as including the idea of its subsisting in the Person of the Son. This is very well expressed, when we say that the human nature was united to the second Person in the Godhead, rather than to the Godhead itself.

3. Christ being farther considered as the eternal Son of God, it follows that he existed before his incarnation. This was largely insisted on, under a foregoing Answer, in defence of Christ's proper deity. In this we oppose not only the Socinians, who deny that he existed before he was conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin; but also the Arians, especially those of them who take occasion to explain, without disguise, or ambiguity of words, what they mean when they speak of him as being before time, which comes infinitely short of what is intended by his being styled God's eternal Son, and so existing with him before time. Thus we have an account of the Person assuming the human nature

Christ as Mediator is Man

We are now to consider the nature assumed, or united to the divine Person. This was a human nature, consisting of a true body, and a reasonable soul. Hence, as Christ is, in one nature, God equal with the Father; so, in the other, he is Man, made, in all the essential properties of the human nature, like unto us.

Here we may consider that as this is a matter of pure revelation, we have sufficient ground from scripture to assert, that our Saviour is both God and man. Many of the scriptures which were formerly referred to, to prove his deity, expressly attribute to him a human, as well as a divine nature, and speak of the same Person as both God and Man. God styles him, 'The man that is my Fellow.' He who is 'Jehovah, our righteousness,' is also described as 'a branch, raised unto David,'m that is, of the seed of David; or, as the apostle says, he who 'is over all, God blessed for ever, was of the fathers concerning the flesh,' or his human nature. Moreover, the same Person is styled 'The mighty God,' and yet 'a child born unto us, a Son given.'o He is called 'Immanuel, God with us,' and yet 'born of a Virgin.' 'The word

was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' 'He is the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord,' and yet 'was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh.' He is 'God manifest in the flesh.'r These and many other scriptures as plainly prove him to be Man, as they do that he is God. Indeed, the arguments taken from them to prove his humanity, are not so much contested as those which respect his proper deity. Hence, if these scriptures prove him to be God, they contain as strong and conclusive arguments to prove him to be Man; so that the mere mention of them is sufficient, especially when we consider, as it cannot be denied, that they all speak of the same Person.

When Christ is said to be both God and Man, the statement does not imply that there are two Persons in the Mediator. Accordingly it is said, in the Answer we are explaining, that though these natures are distinct, yet the Person who has them is but one. This is to be maintained against those who entertain favourable thoughts of the ancient heresy first broached by Nestorius, whose method of reasoning cannot be reconciled with the sense of those scriptures which plainly speak of the same Person as both God and Man, and attribute the same actions to him in different respects. These things are inconsistent with the notion that the Mediator is both a divine and a human Person. Nor can it be denied that it is a contradiction in terms, to say that two Persons can be so united, as to become one. It must be acknowledged, however, that this is one of the incomprehensible mysteries of our religion; and, when divines have attempted to explain some things relating to it, they have only given farther conviction, that there are some doctrines contained in scripture which we are bound to believe, while we are at a loss to determine how they are what they are asserted to be.

It may be objected, that we cannot conceive of a human nature, such as our Saviour's is, which has not its own personality; since there is

no parallel instance in any other men. This objection I take to be the principal thing which gave occasion to asserting, that he had a human Person, as well as a divine. The answer which I would give is, that though it is true that every man has a distinct subsistence of his own, without being united to any other person, yet we have no ground to conclude, that the human nature of Christ, even in its first formation, had any subsistence separate from the divine nature. Had it been first formed, and then united to the divine nature, it would have had a proper subsistence of its own; but since it was not, its personality, considered as united to the second Person in the Godhead, is contained therein, though its properties are infinitely distinct from it.

The Distinctness of Christ's two Natures

These two natures of Christ are distinct; united, but not confounded. This is asserted, in opposition to an old exploded heresy, which was maintained by some who, to avoid the error of Nestorius and his followers, went into the other extreme. They asserted that the divine and human nature of Christ were confounded or blended together, after the similitude of things which are mixed together in a natural or artificial way, whereby the composition is of a different nature from the parts of which it is compounded. They, in consequence, debase his Godhead, and advance his manhood; or rather, instead of supposing him to be both God and Man, they, in effect, say that he is neither God nor Man. The main foundation, as I apprehend, of this absurd and blasphemous notion, was that they could not conceive how he could have a divine and human understanding and will, without asserting, with Nestorius, that there were two Persons in the Mediator; whereby they split against one rock, while endeavouring to avoid another. To guard against both extremes, the Fathers, in the council of Chalcedon, explained the doctrine in words to this

purpose: 'That the two natures of Christ were indivisibly and inseparably united, without supposing that one was changed into the other, or confounded with it.'

We must consider, then, that though the two natures are united, yet each of them retains its respective properties, as much as the soul and body of man do, though united together. This is the best similitude by which the subject can be illustrated; though I do not suppose that, in all respects, it corresponds. Thus, in one nature, Christ had all the fulness of the Godhead, and nothing common with us, nothing finite, derived, or dependent, or in any other way defective. In his other nature, he was made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted. In this nature, he was born in time, and did not exist from eternity, and increased in knowledge and other endowments proper to manhood. In one nature, he had a comprehensive knowledge of all things; in the other, he knew nothing but by communication, or derivation, and with those other limitations to which finite wisdom is subject. In one nature, he had an infinite sovereign will; in the other, he had such a will as the creature has. Though this was not opposite to his divine will, yet its conformity to it was of the same kind with that which is in perfect creatures. Hence, though we do not say that his human will was the same as his divine, as to the essential properties of it; yet it may be said to be the same, in a moral sense, as conformed to it, in such a manner as the will of man is said to be subjected to the will of God. Had this been duly considered, persons would not have been so ready to adopt an error, so dangerous and blasphemous as that which we are opposing. And we have sufficient ground, from scripture, to distinguish between his divine and human understanding and will. It is said, in one place, speaking of his divine understanding, 'Lord, thou knowest all things;' and of his human, 'Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the Son.'y So of his

will, it is sometimes represented as truly divine, in the same sense as the Father's, as when it is said, 'As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will;' and elsewhere, 'If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us;'a and, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' And in other places, he is represented as having a human will, essentially distinct from the will of God; as when he says, 'Not my will, but thine, be done.'c

The Reality of Christ's Human Nature

The nature which was assumed by the Son of God, is farther described as truly and properly human. It was not an angelic nature. The apostle says, 'He took not on him the nature of angels,' in as much as he did not design to redeem the angels that fell; but 'he took on him' the nature of 'the seed of Abraham.' This nature is farther described, as consisting of a true body, and a reasonable soul.

1. Christ is described as having a true body. This is maintained against those who, in an early age of the church, denied that he had a real human nature. These, it is true, do not deny his deity; but they suppose that it was impossible for God to be united to human flesh, and therefore that he appeared only in the likeness of it. Just as some heathen writers represent their gods as appearing in human forms, that they might converse with men; so they suppose, that the Godhead of Christ appeared in a human form, without a real human nature. In this sense they understand that scripture, 'He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;'f as though, in that place, the similitude of a man were opposed to real humanity. Or, at least, they suppose, that he had no other human nature when he dwelt on earth, than what he had when he appeared to the church under the Old Testament dispensation, namely, to

Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and several others. They suppose that there was in this only the likeness of a human body, or an aerial one; which, according to some common modes of speaking, is called a Spirit. To gain countenance to their opinion, they bring some other scriptures; as when it is said, after his resurrection, that 'he appeared in another form unto two disciples, as they walked and went into the country.' So, when he appeared to Mary, it was in such a form that she 'knew not that it was Jesus,' but 'supposed him to be the gardener.'h Especially when it is said, in another scripture, that when his two disciples at Emmaus knew him, 'he vanished out of their sight,'k they understand this of his vanishing in the same sense as, according to the popular way of speaking, a spectrum is said to do.

But this opinion is so absurd, as well as contrary to scripture, that it only shows how far the wild and extravagant fancies of men may run, who are so hardy as to set aside plain scriptures, and take up with some few passages, without considering their scope and design, or their harmony with other scriptures. Indeed, there is scarcely any thing said concerning him in the New Testament but what confutes it. There we have an account of him, as being born, passing through all the ages of life, conversing familiarly with his people, eating and drinking with them, and, at last, dying on the cross. These things put this matter out of all manner of dispute. He also distinguishes himself from a spirit; for when the disciples were terrified at his standing unexpectedly in the midst of them, supposing that he had been a spirit, he satisfied them that they were mistaken, by saying, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.'

As to those scriptures in the Old Testament which speak of his appearing in a human form, assumed for that purpose, whether there was, in every one of these instances, a real human body that

appeared, though, in some of them, it is beyond dispute that there was, I will not pretend to determine. Yet it must be considered that his appearing in this way is never styled his incarnation, or becoming man; but was only an emblem or prelibation of it. Moreover, when it is said, in the scripture formerly quoted, that he was made 'in the likeness of men,' it does not follow that he was not, after his incarnation, a real man; for the likeness of man is often so understood in scripture, as when it is said, on occasion of the birth of Seth, that 'Adam begat a son in his own likeness.'n As to that other scripture in which Christ is said to have appeared in different forms, it is not to be supposed that there was a change in his human nature, but only a change in his countenance or external mien; or he appeared with other kind of garments, which rendered him not immediately known by them. And when, in the other scripture, it is said, 'he vanished out of their sight,' nothing is intended but an instantaneous withdrawing of himself; which, it may be, might contain something miraculous.

2. Christ is farther described as having taken to himself a reasonable soul, to which his body was united. This is maintained against the Arians, who deny that he had a human soul, concluding that the divine nature, such an one as they will allow him to have, was, as it were, a soul to his body. This opinion is founded partly on their misunderstanding the sense of those scriptures in which it is said, 'The Word was made flesh;' 'God was manifest in the flesh;'p 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;' and, 'Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,'r & c. But the principal argument by which this opinion is supported is, that, as they suppose, if he had had an human soul, distinct from his divine nature, he must have had two understandings and wills, namely, a divine and a human; and then it would have been possible for him to have had contrary ideas in his

mind, and determinations in his will, as man, to what he had as God, —which would infer a sort of confusion of thought, and irregularity of actions.

Now, as to the former argument relating to his assuming flesh, it is a very common thing in scripture, by a synecdoche, of the part for the whole, for 'flesh' to signify the whole man, consisting of soul and body. Of this we have many instances in scripture. It is said, for example, 'All flesh had corrupted his way,' that is, all men had corrupted their way; and the prophet speaking concerning the vanity of man, as mortal, says, 'All flesh is grass.'t—As to the other branch of their argument, we allow that Christ, as Man, had a distinct understanding and will from what he had as God, and that his human understanding was not equally perfect with his divine, neither had his human will the sovereignty and glory of his divine will. Should it be allowed, also, that if his human understanding and will had not always been under the influence and direction of his divine, he might have had contrary ideas and determinations, as man, to what he had as God; yet we cannot allow that the divine nature would so far suspend its direction and influence, that his human understanding should have contradictory ideas to his divine; so that the inconvenience should ensue of occasioning a confusion and disorder in his actions, or methods of human conduct. It was no disparagement to him, nor hinderance to his work, to suppose that his human soul was subject to some natural imperfections, which were inconsistent with the infinite perfection of his deity. It is sufficient, however, to assert that, as Man, he knew every thing which he was obliged to perform in a way of obedience, and consented to and delighted in every thing which was agreeable to his divine will. For this would render his obedience complete, even though we suppose that the nature in which he performed it was less perfect than that to which it was united. The Arian method of

reasoning, therefore, is not conclusive; and we must suppose that he had a human soul distinct from his divine nature. This is evident, because he could not perform obedience in the divine nature, his human soul being the only subject of obedience, and it is proper to the deity to be dispassionate. Hence, those sinless passions to which he was subject were seated in his soul, as united to the body. That he had such passions, is very plain from scripture; for he says, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' And there are various other passions besides sorrow which he was subject to, which, though free from sin, were altogether inconsistent with the infinite perfection of the divine nature.

The Incarnation of Christ

This human nature is said to have been conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

1. There was something in the formation of Christ's human nature in which he resembled the rest of mankind. He was not produced and brought into a state of manhood in an instant, or created out of the dust of the ground as Adam was, but was born, or as the apostle expresses it, 'made of a woman,' to denote his being formed out of her substance. Accordingly, he began his state of humiliation in infancy, that he might, in all respects, be made like unto those whom he came to redeem. Herein not only the promise made to our first parents, relating to his being the seed of the woman,y was fulfilled; but another express prediction by the prophet Isaiah, who says, 'Unto us a child is born.'

2. There was something peculiar and extraordinary in his formation, as he was an extraordinary Person, and to be engaged in a work peculiar to himself. He is said to have been born of a virgin, not

because, as some suppose, that that is a state of greater sanctity than any other condition of life, but, as was formerly observed, that he might be exempted from the guilt of Adam's first sin, which he would have been liable to, though sanctified from the womb, had his human nature been formed in an ordinary way. It was certainly necessary that his human nature, which was, in its formation, united to his divine Person, should be perfectly sinless; for it would have been a reproach cast on the Son of God, to have it said concerning him, that he was, in the nature which he assumed, estranged to and separate from God, as all mankind are who are born in an ordinary way. This was necessary, also, or his accomplishing the work of our redemption; for, as the apostle says, 'Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' Moreover, in order to his being born of a virgin, there was an extraordinary display of the power of God. Accordingly it is said, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.'c

His being born of a virgin, was an accomplishment of the prediction, 'The Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bare a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' This text being so convincing a proof of Christianity, and, as such, referred to in the New Testament,e the Jews and many of the modern Deists have endeavoured to weaken the force of it. We require, therefore, to illustrate and explain it, agreeably to the scope and design of the prophecy, contained in the context, which we shall endeavour to do, in the following paraphrase. Says God to the prophet, "Go to Ahaz, and bid him not be fainthearted, by reason of the threatened invasion by the confederate kings of Israel and of Syria; but let him ask a sign for the confirmation of his faith, that I may thereby assure him that they shall not be able to do him any hurt. But I know, beforehand, his unbelief, and the sullenness of his

temper, that he will refuse to ask a sign. Therefore, when thou goest to meet him, take thy young son, Shearjashub, in thine hand, or in thine arms, from whom thou mayest take occasion to deliver part of the message which I send thee with to him. Tell him, that though he refuse to ask a sign, 'nevertheless, the Lord himself shall give a sign,' to his people, whom thou shalt command to hear this message, as well as Ahaz, they being equally concerned in it. Let them know, that, though their obstinate and wicked king calls a compliance with my command a tempting of me, and therefore will not ask a sign, I will not give him any other sign than what the whole house of Israel shall behold, in future ages; which, though it cannot be properly called a prognostic sign, yet, when it comes to pass, will be a rememorative sign.g And it shall be a glorious one; for, 'behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and thou shalt call his name Immanuel.' When this wonderful thing shall happen a thing new and unheard of shall be 'created in the earth,' as is said elsewhere,i 'that a woman should compass a man.' Then the house of David shall understand the reason why I have not suffered these two kings to destroy Judah, so that it should be 'broken, that it be not a people,' as Ephraim shall 'within threescore and five years;' for then the Messiah could not come of the house of David. And what he shall do for them, when he comes, is the ground and reason of all the temporal deliverances which I work for them, and particularly of this from the intended invasion of the two confederate kings. Tell them, moreover, that as this shall be a rememorative sign, so I will give them to understand, at present, that they shall be delivered in a little time. For 'before this child,' which thou hast here brought with thee, 'shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good,' or shall know the difference between moral good and evil, that is, in two or three years' time, 'the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings;' or those two kings whom thou dreadest, shall be driven, by the king of Assyria, out of their own land. And in as much as my people may be afraid,

that before these two years expire they shall be brought into such straits, through famine or scarcity of provisions, as generally attend sieges, so that they shall want the necessaries of life; let them know that this child, meaning Shear-jashub, shall not want 'butter and honey,' that is, the best and most proper food for it, 'that he may know,' or rather until 'he know to refuse the evil and choose the good,' that is, till these two kings, Rezin and Pekah, be utterly destroyed."

3. Having thus considered our Saviour's being born of a virgin, there is one thing more to be observed under this Head, namely, that he was of her substance. This is particularly mentioned in the Answer, with a design to guard against an ancient heresy, maintained by the Gnostics in the second century, and defended by others in later ages. These supposed that our Saviour did not derive his human nature from the Virgin Mary; but that it was formed in heaven, and sent down from thence, and that the Virgin's womb is to be considered only as the first seat of its residence in this lower world. This opinion they found on those scriptures which speak of his 'coming down from heaven;' which they understand concerning his human nature. Yet nothing is intended by them but the manifestative presence of his divine nature; in which respect God is, in other scriptures, said to 'come down' into this lower world.n Another scripture, which they bring to the same purpose, is that in which, as they suppose, he denies his relation to his mother, when he says, 'Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' Here he does not deny his natural relation to them, but designs to show that his regard to persons in the exercise of his public ministry, was principally founded on their doing the will of his Father. The errorists in question farther suppose, that if his human nature had, in any respect, been derived from the substance of the Virgin, either

she must be concluded immaculate, as the Papists view her to be, or else he must have been born a sinner. This, however, has been already proved to be no just consequence; in as much as the formation of his human nature, though of the substance of the Virgin, was in an extraordinary and miraculous way, whereby he was exempted from the guilt of original sin.

There is another opinion maintained by some of the schoolmen, which, though it is not generally received, seems to me not altogether improbable. It is, that though Christ's human body was formed in the womb of the Virgin, and was a part of her substance, yet, as to the manner of its formation, it differed from that of all other human bodies; for while the matter of which they consist receives its form in a gradual way, so that they cannot, properly speaking, be styled human bodies till organized and fitted to have their souls united to them, the body of Christ, on the other hand, was, in its first formation, rendered fit to receive the soul, which was in an instant united to it, so that both soul and body, at the same time, without having any separate subsistence, were united to the divine nature. Though I think this account of the formation of Christ's human body most in harmony with the union of his soul and body with the divine nature in the very instant of its formation, and therefore cannot but conclude it a more probable conjecture than what is generally received; yet I do not lay it down as a necessary article of faith, nor would I be supposed to deny that the body of Christ grew in the womb like other human bodies after the soul is united to them, or to set aside the account the scripture gives of the Virgin's 'accomplishing the' full number of 'days, that she should be delivered.' Thus have we considered our Saviour, as having a true body and a reasonable soul, and both united to the divine nature, whereby he is, in this Answer, denominated God incarnate.

The Date and Duration of Christ's Incarnate State

Our Mediator is farther said to have been 'incarnate, in the fulness of time;' and it is added, 'he shall continue to be God and man for ever.'

1. Let us consider what is meant by Christ's becoming man in the fulness of time. The human nature could not be united to the divine from eternity; for it is inconsistent with its being a created nature, that it should exist from eternity. Yet he might, had it been so determined, have assumed this nature in the beginning of time, or immediately after the fall of man, who then stood in need of a mediator. But God, in his sovereign and wise providence, ordered it otherwise, and ordained that there should be a considerable distance of time between the fall of man, and Christ's incarnation in order to his recovery. The period fixed on, is called in scripture, 'the fulness of time,' that is, the time foretold by the prophets, and particularly Daniel;r whose prediction had an additional circumstance of time annexed to it, which gave occasion to the Jews to expect Christ's coming at the actual time when he became incarnate.

That there was an universal expectation of the Messiah at this time, appears from the disposition of many among them to adhere to any one, especially if he pretended that he was a prophet, or that he would make some change in their civil affairs. The Jewish historian tells us of many tumults and seditions which were in that age. Some of their ringleaders he styles magicians. And though he does not expressly say that persons pretending to be prophets assumed the character of Messiah; yet he observes, that the time in which they appeared occasioned their being viewed as such.t By this he means, that it being at that time that the Jews expected that the Messiah, their King, should come, they thought it a fit opportunity to make efforts to shake off the Roman yoke. And they were so far from

concealing the expectation they had of this, that it was well known by the heathen, who were not without jealousies concerning them, with respect to this matter. Hence, some celebrated writers among the latter observe, that it was generally received throughout the East, according to some ancient predictions, that at that time the Jews should obtain the empire. There are also several expressions, in scripture, which intimate as much. Thus Gamaliel speaks of one Theudas, 'who boasted himself to be somebody,' by which it is probable, he means the Messiah, 'to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves, who was slain.'x This some think to be the same person whom Josephus mentions, the name being the same; though others are rather inclined to think that it was another pretender to this character, from some critical remarks they make on the circumstance of time referred to by Gamaliel being different from that which is mentioned by Josephus. This, however, does not affect our argument; for it is plain, from this instance, that about that time the Jews were disposed to join themselves to any one who endeavoured to persuade them that he was the Messiah. This farther appears from the words of our Saviour, 'All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers;'z by which, doubtless, he means several who pretended to be the Messiah, in the age before he came. It is said elsewhere, a little before our Saviour's crucifixion, that 'they,' that is, the Jews generally, 'thought that the kingdom of God,' and consequently the Messiah whom they expected, 'should immediately appear.' Our Lord also foretells, that between that period and the destruction of Jerusalem, that is, before that age was at an end, 'many false Christs should arise,' and warns his followers not to adhere to them.b Moreover, had not the Jews expected that the Messiah would appear at that time, they would never have sent in so formal a manner, as they are said to have done, to inquire, whether John the Baptist, when he exercised his public ministry amongst them, was he. And when he had convinced them that he was not the

Messiah, but that our Saviour would soon appear publicly amongst them, who had the only right to this character, he found it no difficult matter to persuade them to believe it. Accordingly, 'Jerusalem, and all Judea,' that is, the people almost universally, attended on his ministry, and 'were baptized,' making a profession of their faith in the coming of the Messiah, and of their expectation of him, and willingness to adhere to him. And it was the report which 'the wise men who came from the east' had received from the Jews who were conversant with them, that this was the time that the Messiah should appear, which brought them to Jerusalem from their respective countries; for without this, the preternatural meteor or star which they saw, could not have given them a sufficient intimation concerning this matter, so as to induce them to come and pay their homage to him. And when they came, and inquired of Herod, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' how surprising soever it might be to that proud tyrant, to think that there was one born who, as he supposed, would stand in competition with him for the crown; yet it was no unexpected thing to the Sanhedrim, whose opinion in this matter he demanded, in an hypocritical manner. Hence, they said that he was to be born in Bethlehem, according to the prediction of the prophet Micah. But if they had not known that this was the time in which he was to be born, they would have replied, that it was an unseasonable question, and a vain thing, to ask where a person was to be born whose birth was not expected in that age. They might also have easily satisfied Herod, and removed the foundation of his jealousy and trouble, and thereby have prevented the inhuman barbarity committed on the infants of Bethlehem, if they had told him that the time spoken of by the prophet Daniel, in which the Messiah was to be born, was not yet come. But they knew otherwise; and in this respect, Christ might be said to be born 'in the fulness of time.'

We farther observe, that the coming of Christ was at that time when God had sufficiently tried the faith of the Old Testament church, in waiting for his coming, and thereby glorified his sovereignty, who hath the times and seasons of his bestowing all blessings in his own power.—Again, it was at that time when the measure of the iniquity of the world was abundantly filled, whereby his people might observe the deplorable state into which sin had brought mankind, and the utter impossibility of our recovery without a Mediator, and that the light of nature could not discover any method by which the redemption and salvation of man might be brought about.—Further, it was at that time when the Jewish church was at the lowest ebb. It was, therefore, the most seasonable time; and they were laid under the highest obligations to adore and magnify him. Their political state was broken, the sceptre had departed from Judah; and they were brought under the Roman yoke, which sat very uneasy upon them; nor could they ever expect to make that figure in the world which they once had done. Now, therefore, was the time for the Messiah to come, and erect his kingdom. Besides, they were given up to a very great degree of judicial blindness and hardness, and were disposed to make void the law of God by their traditions; so that religion among them was at a very low ebb. On this account, it was the fittest time for God to display his grace, in reviving his work, and preventing his cause and interest from wholly sinking in the world. This was the time in which the Son of God became Man.

2. Christ shall continue to be God and Man for ever. The union of these two natures is indissoluble. As to his divine nature, he is necessarily eternal and unchangeable; and the human nature shall continue for ever united to it, as the result of the divine purpose, in which God intends that some ends glorious to himself, honourable to the Mediator, and advantageous to his people, should be attained thereby.

If Christ had had a design to lay aside his human nature, he would have done so when he had finished in it his work of obedience and sufferings, and had thereby so far answered the end of his incarnation that nothing more was necessary for the purchase of redemption. But when he rose from the dead, as a conqueror over death and hell, and was declared to have accomplished the work he came into the world to perform, it is certain he did not lay it aside, but ascended visibly into heaven, and shall come again, in a visible manner, in that same nature, to judge the world at the last day.

Again, the eternity of Christ's human nature appears from the eternity of his mediatorial kingdom. Of this more shall be said under a following Answer, when we come to speak concerning the glory of Christ's kingly office. It appears, also, from the eternity of his intercession, which, as the apostle states, 'he ever liveth to make' for his people. This he does, by appearing in the human nature in the presence of God, in their behalf; so that he must for ever have a human nature.

Further, his saints shall abide for ever in heaven, and as the apostle says, 'shall ever be with the Lord.' Their happiness shall continue, both as to soul and body. And, with respect to their bodies, it is said, they shall be 'fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.'f From these things it follows that his glorious body, or his human nature, shall continue for ever united to his divine Person.

Finally, his retaining his human nature for ever, seems necessary, as it redounds to the glory of God. It is an eternal monument of his love to mankind, and an eternal means to draw forth their love to him, who procured those mansions of glory, which they shall for ever be possessed of, by what he did and suffered for them in that nature.

WHY THE MEDIATOR REQUIRED TO BE GOD AND MAN

QUESTION XXXVIII. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God?

ANSWER. It was requisite the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and so satisfy God's justice, procure his favour, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.

QUESTION XXXIX. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be Man?

ANSWER. It was requisite that the Mediator should be Man, that he might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer, and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.

QUESTION XL. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God and Man in one Person?

ANSWER. It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should himself be both God and Man, and this in one Person, that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us, as the works of the whole Person.

OUR Mediator having been considered as God and Man, in one Person, we have a farther account of the necessity of his being so.

Why the Mediator required to be God

It was necessary that he should be a divine Person, for several reasons here assigned, with others that may be added.

1. If he had not been God, he could not have come into the world, or been incarnate, and have had the guilt of our sins laid on him, with his own consent; for he could not have been a party in the everlasting covenant, in which this matter was stipulated between the Father and him. Had he not consented to be charged with the guilt of our sin, he could not have been punished for it; in as much as God cannot punish an innocent person. Moreover, if such an one be charged with this guilt, and consequently rendered the object of vindictive justice, as our Saviour is said to have been, in scripture, it must be with his own consent. Now the human nature could not consent to its own formation; and therefore it could not consent to bear our iniquities. To consent, supposes the person to be existent, which Christ, had he been only Man, would not have been before his incarnation. Hence, on that supposition, he could not have come into the world as a Surety for us, and so would not have been fit, in this respect, to have discharged the principal part of the work which he engaged in as Mediator.

2. There is another thing, mentioned in this Answer, which rendered it requisite that the Mediator should be God, namely, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath or God, and the power of death. It must be allowed that the weight of the wrath of God, due to our sin, was so great that no mere creature could, by his own strength, have subsisted under it. We will not deny that a mere creature, supposing him only innocent, but not

united to a divine Person, might have been borne up, under the greatest burden laid on him, by the extraordinary assistance of God, with whom all things are possible; or that God's giving a promise that he should not fail or be discouraged, is such a security as would effectually keep it from sinking. Yet, when we consider the human nature as united to the divine, we see an additional security that he should not sink under the infinite weight of the wrath of God, which lay upon him; for then it would have been said, that he who is a divine Person, miscarried in an important work which he undertook to perform in his human nature, which would have been a dishonour to him. So far this argument hath its proper force.

3. There is another reason, however, which more fully proves the necessity of the Mediator's being a divine Person, namely, that this might give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession, that so what he did might have a tendency to answer the valuable ends designed, namely, satisfying the justice of God, procuring his favour, and purchasing a peculiar people to himself. Had he been only man, what he did and suffered might, indeed, have been sinless, and perfect in its kind; yet it could not be of infinite value; for a finite creature, as such, cannot pay an infinite price, and thereby answer the demands of justice. Had nothing been demanded of him but a debt of obedience, which he was obliged to perform for himself as a creature, it would not, indeed, have been necessary that it should be of infinite worth and value, any more than that obedience which was due from our first parents, while in a state of innocency. But when it is considered as a price of redemption paid for us, and as designed to procure for us a right to the favour of God and eternal life, it must be of such a value, that the glory of the justice of God might be secured, which nothing less than an infinite price could do. Besides, the law of God must be not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable; and hence, the obedience which

was required, must not only be sinless, but have in it an infinite worth and value, that hereby, when in a way of intercession it is pleaded before God, it might be effectual to answer the ends designed. But of this description the obedience of Christ could not have been, had he not been an infinite Person, namely, God as well as Man.

4. Another reason assigned is, that he might give his Spirit to his people. It is necessary that redemption should be applied as well as purchased; and that the same Person, as a peculiar branch of glory due to him, should perform the one and the other. It was necessary also that, in the application of redemption, the Spirit should be glorified, that hereby he might appear to be a divine Person. And, as he acts herein in subserviency to the Mediator's glory, as has been before observed, he is said to be sent by him, which he could not have been, had not Christ had a divine nature, in which respect he was equal with him; nor could he be said to give that which the Spirit works, as he promised to do, when he told his disciples, 'If I depart, I will send him unto you.'h

5. It was necessary that Christ should be God, that he might conquer all our enemies, and so remove all things out of the way which tend to oppose his name, interest, and glory. These are sin, Satan, the world, and death. Sin, which is opposite to the holiness of God, is that which spirits, excites, and gives being to all the opposition which there is against him, either in earth or hell, and endeavours to eclipse his glory, control his sovereignty, and reflect dishonour on all his perfections. This must be subdued by Christ, so that 'it may no longer have dominion' over his people. In order to this, its condemning power must be taken away, by his making satisfaction for it, as our great High Priest; and also its enslaving power subdued by the efficacy of his grace, in the internal work of sanctification. Upon his

having obtained this victory over sin, Satan also is conquered when his prisoners are brought from under his power. He then finds himself for ever disappointed, and not able to detain those who were at first led captive by him, or to defeat the purpose of God relating to the salvation of his elect, or to boast as though he had wrested the sceptre out of his hand, or robbed him of one branch of his glory. Moreover, the world, which is reckoned among the number of God's enemies, must be conquered. It opposes his name and interest in an objective way; whence corrupt nature takes occasion either to abuse the various gifts and dispensations of providence, or, by contracting an intimacy with those who are enemies to God and religion, to become more like them. 'The friendship of the world,' says the apostle, 'is enmity with God.'k Now Christ must be God, that he may discover its snares, and enable his people to improve the good things of providence to his glory, and overrule the evil things of it for their good. As to death, which is reckoned among Christ's and his people's enemies, and which the apostle calls, 'the last enemy that is to be destroyed,' it is suffered to detain the bodies of believers as its prisoners, till Christ's second coming. Yet it must be destroyed, that so they may be made partakers of complete redemption; and the destruction of it is a part of the Mediator's work, as he raises up his people at the last day. Now, as all these victories over sin, Satan, the world, and death, require infinite power, so it is necessary that he who obtains them should be a divine Person.

6. It is necessary that the Mediator should be God, that he might bring his people to everlasting salvation, that is, first fit them for heaven, lead them in the way to it, and then receive them to it at last. For this reason, he is styled, 'The Author and Finisher of our faith;' and it is said, that as 'he began the good work, so he performs it,'n or carries it on to perfection. Grace is Christ's gift and work, as he purchased it by his blood, while on earth; and it is necessary that he

should apply it by his power. As Zerubbabel, who was a type of him, after he had laid the foundation-stone of the temple, at last 'brought forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it;' so Christ works all our works for us and in us, till he brings them to perfection, and 'presents his people unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.'p Now, this is certainly a divine work; and, consequently, he who performs it must be a divine Person.

7. It was necessary that our Mediator should be God, in as much as the everlasting happiness of his people consists in the enjoyment of him. He is not only the Author of their complete blessedness, but, as we may say, the matter of it. They are made happy, not only by him, but in him. Accordingly, heaven is described as a state in which they 'behold his glory,' and 'see him as he is.'r Since, then, he is the Fountain of blessedness, it is requisite that he should be God as well as Man.

Why the Mediator required to be Man

It was requisite that the Mediator should be Man. When we speak of the necessity of Christ's incarnation, we are not to understand that it was absolutely necessary, without supposing the divine will or purpose to redeem man. For as our redemption was not in itself necessary, but was so only as the result of God's purpose relating to it, so Christ's incarnation was necessary as a means to accomplish it. This is what divines generally call a conditional necessity. As Christ was ordained to be a Mediator between God and man, it was requisite that he should become Man. The reason assigned is, that he might perform obedience to the law. That obedience to the law was required, in order to his making satisfaction for sin, we shall have

occasion to consider, when we speak of his priestly office. All that need be observed under this Head is, that this obedience could not be performed by him in the divine nature; for in that nature he cannot be under any obligation to perform that which belongs only to those who are creatures, and, as such, subjects. Hence, if he be made under the law, he must have a nature fitted and disposed to yield obedience.

Some have inquired, whether it was possible for Christ to have answered this end, by taking any other nature into union with his divine Person; or, whether it might have been brought about by his taking on him the nature of angels. I shall not enter so far into this subject as to determine whether God might, had he pleased, have accepted of obedience in any other nature fitted for that purpose. But we have ground, from scripture, to conclude, that this was the only way which God had ordained for the redemption of man. Hence, though Christ might have performed obedience in some other finite nature, or might have taken the nature of angels, his doing so would not, in all respects, have answered those many great ends which were designed by his incarnation. And as this was the way in which God ordained that man should be redeemed, it was necessary that he should take the human nature into union with his divine. And in as much as he was to yield obedience to the same law which we had violated, it was necessary that he should, as the apostle expresses it, be 'made of a woman.' God had ordained, as an expedient most conducive to his own glory, that he who was to be our Redeemer should run the same race with us; and also that he should suffer what was due to us, as the consequence of our rebellion against him, that so, as 'the Captain of our salvation, he should be made perfect through sufferings.'u And in as much as sufferings were due to us in our bodies, it was necessary, God having so ordained it, that he should suffer in his body, as well as in his soul; and as death entered

into the world by sin, so God ordained that we should be redeemed from the power of the grave, by one who died for us. On these grounds, it was necessary that he should be man.

There are other ends mentioned in this Answer, which render it necessary that he should be man, namely, that he might advance our nature. It was a very great honour which that particular nature which he assumed was advanced to, that it was taken into union with his divine Person. Though it had no intrinsic dignity or glory, above what other intelligent, finite, sinless beings are capable of; yet it had a greater relative glory than any other creature had, or can have. This may be illustrated by a similitude taken from the body of man. How mean soever the body is in itself; yet its relation to the soul adds a degree of excellency to it, in a relative sense, greater than what belongs to any creature destitute of understanding. So the human nature of Christ, though it had not in itself a glory greater than what another finite creature might have been advanced to; yet, when considered as united to the divine nature, its glory, in a relative sense, may be said to be infinite. Now, as Christ's being truly and properly man, was a particular instance in him of the advancement of our nature to a greater degree of honour than what has been conferred on any other creature, this lays the highest obligation on us to admire and adore him, and should be an inducement to us not to debase, by the commission of those sins which are the greatest reproach unto it, that nature which God has, in this respect, delighted to honour.

Another consequence of Christ's incarnation, whereby it farther appears that it was requisite that he should be man, is, that in our nature he might make intercession for us. For understanding this, let it be considered that the divine nature cannot, properly speaking, be said to make intercession; since this includes worship, and argues

the Person who intercedes, to be dependent and indigent, which is inconsistent with the self-sufficiency and independency of the Godhead. Hence, had Christ been merely God, he could not have made intercession for us; and his making intercession is the necessary result of his incarnation.

It may be objected that as 'the Spirit' is said to 'make intercession for the saints according to the will of God,' though he has no human nature to make intercession in; so Christ might have made intercession for us, though he had not been incarnate. But when the Spirit is said to make intercession for us, the statement is not to be understood of his appearing in the presence of God, and so offering prayers or supplications to him in our behalf. It means only his enabling us to pray for ourselves; which is an effect of his power, working this grace in us. Hence, the apostle, speaking concerning the same thing, says elsewhere, 'God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father,'y that is, enabling us to cry, 'Abba, Father.' Such an intercession as this is not unbecoming a divine Person; and this is what is plainly the sense of those scriptures in which the Spirit is said to intercede for us. As for Christ's intercession, it consists in his praying for us, rather than in enabling us to pray; so that it was requisite that he should be man, in order to perform it.

As another objection, it is generally supposed that Christ made intercession for his people before his incarnation. It is concluded, for example, that he is intended by 'the angel of the Lord,' who is represented as pleading for Israel, 'O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and upon the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?' and also as pleading in their behalf against the accusations of Satan, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath

chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?'a Now, say the objectors, if he made intercession at that time, when he had no human nature, his incarnation was not necessary in order to his making it. But though we allow that Christ is often represented, in the Old Testament, as interceding for his people; yet the expressions which so represent him either are proleptical, and do not denote so much what Christ then did, as what he would do after he had assumed our nature; or they imply that the salvation of the church, under that dispensation, was owing to the intercession which Christ would make after his incarnation, as well as to that satisfaction which he would give to the justice of God in our nature. Hence, Christ, in those scriptures, is represented as procuring those blessings for his people, by what he would, in reality, do after his incarnation; the virtue of which is supposed to be extended to them at that time. He interceded for them, not formally, but virtually. His having done so, therefore, does not prove that his incarnation was not necessary for his making that intercession, which he ever lives to conduct in behalf of his church.

It is farther observed, that it was requisite that our Mediator should be Man, that he might have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities. The apostle says, 'He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities,' having been, 'in all points,' in his human nature, 'tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' As God, it is true, he has a perfect, namely, a divine knowledge of our infirmities, but not an experimental knowledge of them. In this respect, therefore, had he not been Man, he could not have been said to sympathize with us in them. Hence, his compassion towards us has this additional motive taken from his incarnation. It was in this respect that he had the passions of the human nature, and is induced, from what he once experienced, to help our infirmities, as being such as he himself condescended to bear.

It may be added, as a farther consequence of his incarnation, that we are made partakers of the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access, with boldness, to the throne of grace. The apostle gives us occasion to infer, from his being made of a woman, and made under the law, not only that 'he might redeem them that were under the law,' but that 'we might receive the adoption of sons;' and he encourages us, from hence, to 'come boldly to the throne of grace.'d As Christ's sonship, as Mediator, includes his incarnation, and was the ground and reason of the throne of grace being erected, to which we are invited to come; so, he being, in the same respect, constituted Heir of all things, believers, who are the sons of God in a lower sense, are styled, 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' He is the Head and Lord of this great family. He purchased an inheritance for them; and, as members of his family, they have a right to it in the virtue of his purchase. Hence, his incarnation, which was necessary in order to this, was the great foundation of our obtaining the privileges of God's adopted children, and of our access by him to the Father. We first come by faith to him who, if we may allude to Elihu's words, 'was formed out of the clay,' so that 'his terror shall not make us afraid, neither shall his hand be heavy upon us;' and, through him, we come to God, as to our reconciled Father.

Why the Mediator required to be God and Man in one Person

It was requisite that the Mediator should be God and man in one Person. Had his human nature been a distinct human person, the work of our redemption would have been brought about by two persons, which would each have had the character of Mediator; unless two persons could be so united as to constitute but one, which is no better than a contradiction.

It is farther observed, in the Answer under our present consideration, that there were works to be performed proper to each nature. In the human nature, he was to perform every thing which implied subjection, obedience, or suffering. And, though none of these could be performed by him, in his divine nature; yet an infinite worth, value, and dignity, was to be added to them, which was not so much the result of any thing done by him in that nature, as of the union of the human nature with it. On this account, the obedience he performed had, in a relative sense, the same value as if it had been performed in his divine nature. Hence, it is said, 'God purchased the church with his own blood.'

We may add, that as each nature was distinct, and their properties not in the least confounded, as was before observed; so we often read, in scripture, of distinct properties attributed to the same person which are opposed to each other, namely, mortality and immortality, weakness and omnipotence, dependence and independence, & c. But this could not, with any propriety of speaking, be applied to him, had he not been God and man in the same person. This is generally styled, by divines, 'a communication of properties.' We must observe, concerning it, that the properties of the one nature are not predicated of the other; as the Lutherans suppose, when they conclude that the human nature of Christ is omnipresent, and found upon that idea their doctrine of Consubstantiation. But we assert, that the properties of the one nature are predicated of the same person to whom the other nature belongs. Hence, when we say, that the Person who was God obeyed and suffered, or the Person who was man paid an infinite price to the justice of God, we are far from asserting that the Godhead of Christ obeyed, or the manhood merited.i This is the necessary result of his two natures being united in one Person. There are two things observed in illustrating this matter.

1. That the works of each nature must be accepted of God for us, as the works of the whole Person, or of the same Person. If the nature that obeyed and suffered had been a human person, his obedience and sufferings could not have been of infinite value, or accepted by God as a sufficient price of redemption. They could not have had this value reflected on them, had they not been the works of a divine Person; and those rays of divine glory which shone forth in his human nature, could have had no immediate relation to it, had it been a distinct Person from that of his Godhead.

2. It is farther observed, that those works which were performed by him in each nature, are to be relied on by us as the works of the whole Person. This reliance contains an instance of adoration, and supposes the Person who performs the works to be God, which he was not in his human nature. We are, therefore, to adore our Mediator, and rely on the works performed by him in his human nature, as he is God and man in one Person. As we have sufficient ground from scripture, to conclude that the Mediator is the object of divine adoration; so we are to depend on him, as a divine Person, for salvation, and our worship does not terminate on his human nature, but on his deity. But, if his human nature had been a distinct human person, we could not be said to adore him that died for us and rose again. On all these grounds, therefore, it is necessary that he should be not only God and Man, but that these two natures should be united in one Person.

THE TITLES AND OFFICES OF THE MEDIATOR

QUESTION XLI. Why was our Mediator called Jesus?

ANSWER. Our Mediator was called Jesus, because he saveth his people from their sins.

QUESTION XLII. Why was our Mediator called Christ?

ANSWER. Our Mediator was called Christ, because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure, and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King of his church, in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.

HAVING considered our Mediator as God and man, in one person, we are now to speak of him as having those glorious titles and characters attributed to him, which are expressive of his mediatorial work and dignity. He is variously denominated in scripture as Mediator. Sometimes he is called 'Lord;' at other times 'Jesus;'l elsewhere, 'The Lord Jesus;' also, 'The Lord Christ;'n and in other places, 'The Lord Jesus Christ.' He is called 'Lord,' to denote the infinite dignity of his person as God equal with the Father. This name, as was observed under a foregoing Answer,p is given him in the New Testament, in the same sense in which he is called 'Jehovah' in the Old. It is given him also to denote his divine sovereignty, as the Governor of the world and the church, and particularly as executing his kingly office as Mediator. In the two Answers, under our present consideration, he is farther described by his mediatorial characters, 'Jesus,' and 'Christ.'

The Meaning of the Name Jesus

Our Mediator is very often called Jesus in the New Testament. This name signifies 'a Saviour,' as was particularly intimated by the angel

who gave direction, before his birth, that he should be so called. He is styled not only our Saviour, but 'our salvation,' in the abstract. Thus the prophet, foretelling his incarnation, says, 'Behold, thy salvation cometh; his reward is with him, and his work before him;'r and when Simeon held him in his arms, 'He blessed God and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' He is a Saviour, as he brings about salvation for us, and we attain it by him; and he may be styled our salvation, as our eternal blessedness consists in the enjoyment of him. Salvation includes a preserving and delivering us from all evil; which some call the negative idea of it. It includes also a conferring on us of the greatest good; which is the positive idea of it. In saving us from evil, he is sometimes said to 'deliver us from this present evil world.'t Elsewhere we are said to be 'saved from wrath through him.' As all the deliverance we experience or hope for, is included in the word 'salvation,' so are all the spiritual blessings wherewith we are blessed in this or in a better world. On this account, he who is the purchaser and Author of these, is called Jesus.

1. Since Christ is called Jesus, let us be exhorted to take heed that we do not entertain any unworthy thoughts of him, or of that salvation which he has procured. Let us not suppose that the salvation is indefinite or indeterminate; or that he did not come into the world to save a certain number, who shall eventually obtain this blessing; or that he is the Redeemer, and consequently the Saviour, of many who shall finally perish, which is little better than a contradiction. Nor let us suppose that it is in the power of man to make his salvation of none effect. Whatever difficulties there may be in the way, he will certainly overcome them; otherwise he would be called Jesus, or a Saviour, to no purpose. Hence, they who suppose him to be the Saviour of all mankind, upon the uncertain condition that they improve their natural powers, or that they so use the liberty of their

will as to render his purpose relating to their salvation effectual, do not give him that glory which belongs to him as bearing the name of Jesus.

2. Let us take heed that we do not extenuate his salvation to our own discouragement; as though he were not able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, or did not come into the world to save the chief of sinners; or as though we had certain ground to conclude our case to be so deplorable that we are out of the reach of his salvation.

3. Let none presume, without ground, that he is their Saviour, or that they have an interest in him as such, while in an unconverted state; or vainly conclude, that they shall be saved by him, without faith in him, or subjection to him.

4. Let this name 'Jesus' tend to excite in us the greatest thankfulness, especially if we have experienced the beginning of the work of salvation; and let us encourage ourselves to hope, that having begun the good work in us, he will finish it, when he shall appear, a second time, without sin unto salvation.

The Meaning of the Name Christ

Our Mediator is called 'Christ,' or as it is generally expressed in the Old Testament, 'the Messiah.' This name signifies a person anointed. Thus it is said, 'We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ,' or as it is in the margin, 'the Anointed.' As anointing was made use of under the ceremonial law, in the public inauguration and investiture of prophets, priests, and kings, in their respective offices, they are, for that reason, called 'God's anointed.' Thus it is said, concerning the prophets, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.'y Kings are likewise so styled. Samuel

says, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.' These were often anointed, though not always.a The priests, however, were always anointed, when they entered on their office. The high priest is described, as he 'upon whose head the anointing oil was poured.' So we read of 'the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.' This was not an insignificant ceremony, or merely political, in which respect it is used in our day, in the inauguration of kings. But it was an ordinance to signify God's designation of persons to the office which they were to execute; and in, using it, they were to expect those qualifications which were necessary, and to depend upon him for them. It was more especially designed, however, to typify the solemn inauguration and investiture of our Saviour, in the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King of his church; and in allusion to it, he is called 'the Messiah,' or 'the Christ.' His anointing was not external, or visible, with material oil; but it signified, in a spiritual sense, his receiving a commission from the Father to execute the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. On this account he is styled, God's 'holy child Jesus, whom he had anointed.' This unction, as it was of a spiritual nature, so it was attended with greater circumstances of glory; and the offices he was appointed to execute, were more spiritual, extensive, and advantageous, than theirs who were his types. The psalmist says of him, 'God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows.'d He was anointed to execute his prophetic office, 'to preach the gospel to the poor.' He was anointed also to execute his priestly office. The prophet Daniel speaks of him, as 'finishing transgression, making an end of sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness,'f which he did as a Priest; and then he speaks of 'anointing' him, who was 'most holy,' as infinitely excelling all those who were anointed with holy oil. He is said to be anointed also to execute his kingly office. With respect to this, he is called the Lord's anointed; and God says,

concerning him, 'I have set,' or, as it is in the margin, 'anointed, my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' Now, there are three things which are more especially intended in this unction, which are particularly mentioned in this Answer.

1. His being set apart or separated from the rest of mankind, as the only Person who was designed to execute these offices, together with his public investiture in them. For rightly understanding this, let it be considered that there was an eternal designation of him by the Father to these offices. Thus the apostle speaks of him as one 'who was foreordained before the foundation of the world.' Some think that this eternal designation of him is intended also by that expression of the psalmist, 'I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;'i and that it is intended likewise by the expression, 'I was set up from everlasting.' This we may call his eternal inauguration, which was the foundation, ground, and reason of his incarnation, or of that inauguration or investiture which was visible to men in time.

The visible inauguration of Christ in time is the second thing to be considered, in his being set apart to execute these offices. When he came into the world, there was a glorious declaration given, both to angels and to men, that he was the Person upon whom God had conferred this honour. Accordingly, he as Mediator received glory from the angels, by a divine warrant. So some understand that scripture, 'When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.' Elsewhere, too, we readm of the angels being sent, as heralds, to make proclamation of this matter to men, at his coming into the world. And, when he entered on his public ministry, there was, immediately after his baptism, a divine declaration given, as a farther visible confirmation of his being set apart. 'The heavens were opened unto him, and he

saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' John the Baptist was immediately raised up, as a prophet, to signify to the world his being set apart to the mediatorial offices. This he did at the time when our Saviour entered on his public ministry. He speaks of him as 'preferred before himself;' not only as having a more excellent nature, but as being set apart to a higher office, than that to which he was called. Accordingly, he styles him, 'The Lamb of God;' intimating, that God had set him apart, as the great sacrifice which was to be offered for sin.o Soon after, he gives another testimony to this, together with a glorious, yet just, character of the Person who was invested with the mediatorial authority. He says, concerning him, 'A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.' These words are as if he had said, "I have not received this honour of being the Christ, and of doing the works which he does; but it is given him from heaven. I am not 'the bridegroom' of the church, but 'his friend,' who 'rejoice greatly, because of his voice.' 'What he hath seen and heard, that he testified.' And God hath sent him: 'whose word he speaketh.' 'For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him; the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.' He was, therefore, set apart by him, to perform the work of a Mediator, which belongeth not unto me."

2. Christ was furnished with authority, or had a commission given him, to perform the work he was engaged in, as Mediator. This was absolutely necessary. The apostle says, concerning the priesthood in general, 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God,' and authorized by him to perform it, 'as was Aaron; so also Christ glorified not himself, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee; and thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.' As it was reckoned an intrusion, and

no other than an act of profaneness, for any one to exercise a sacred office without a divine warrant, it was necessary that our Saviour should be furnished with one. The work he was to perform was glorious: the consequences of it were of the highest importance; and his services would not have been accepted, or availed to answer their great ends, had he not received a commission from the Father. That he came into the world with this commission and authority, derived from him, he constantly asserts and proves. He asserts it, when speaking concerning himself, he says, that 'God the Father had sealed him;'r and when he elsewhere says, 'I have power to lay down my life, and to take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father.' And he not only asserts but proves it. Every miracle which he wrought was a confirmation of it; and, in every one, a divine testimony was affixed to this commission. Accordingly he says, 'The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.'t And elsewhere, when he asserts his authority, and proves that 'the words which he spake, he spake not of himself;' he adds, 'the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.' He thus appeals to those miraculous works which were performed, either by himself, or by the Father. This he might well do, because the Father and he had the same divine power. And, by appealing to these, he intimates that the commission which he received from the Father was attested in this extraordinary manner.

3. Our Saviour's unction included an ability to execute those offices which he was engaged in as Mediator. We formerly observed, that when persons, under the ceremonial law, were anointed to execute the offices either of prophet, priest, or king, not only was their unction an ordinance, to signify that they had a divine warrant to execute them, but they were thereby given to expect those qualifications which were necessary to the discharge of them. God never calls to an office, but he qualifies for it. Thus our Saviour was

furnished with ability, as well as authority. This was more especially applicable to his human nature, in which he was to obey and suffer. As to his divine nature, it could not be the subject of a derived power, or of qualification conferred upon it. Now this ability, with which our Saviour was furnished as man, was that which rendered him fit to perform the work which he came into the world to do. As a Prophet, he was qualified to preach the gospel with greater wisdom and authority than all others, who ever were engaged in this work. His very enemies confessed, that 'never man spake like him.' He had continual assistance from God, which preserved him from all mistakes; so that what he delivered was infallibly true, and, as such, to be depended on. He was furnished also with zeal for the glory of God, yet such as was tempered with sympathy, meckness, and compassion towards his people,—with a holy courage, resolution, and fortitude which preserved him from fainting, or being discouraged under all his sufferings,—and with a constant disposition and inclination to refer all to the glory of the Father, and not to assume any branch of divine honour to his human nature. By this means, the whole discharge of his ministry was acceptable, both to God and to man.

The Offices of the Mediator

Having thus shown the reasons why our Saviour is called Christ, we are led to consider the offices which he was anointed to execute, on account of which he is styled, the Prophet, Priest, and King of his church. Here we shall premise some things in general concerning these three offices. Afterwards we shall treat of each of them, as they are described in the following Answers.

1. Concerning the number of the offices which he executes, they are three. Some have inquired, whether there are not more than three

executed by him; in as much as there are several characters and relations which Christ is described by, and is said to stand in to his people, besides those of Prophet, Priest, and King. Thus he is styled, 'the Head of the body, the church,' 'an Husband' to it,z and 'a Bridegroom;' and elsewhere he is said to perform the office of 'a Shepherd.' He styles himself, 'the good Shepherd;'b and he is called, 'the Captain of our salvation.' Many other characters also of a similar nature are given him. Some have hence taken occasion to think, that several of these contain ideas distinct from those of a Prophet, Priest, and King, and therefore that there are more offices than these executed by him. But all that needs be said is, that these, and other characters and relations which are ascribed to Christ in scripture, are all included in or reducible to one or other of these three offices. [See Note 3 L, page 494.] We have, therefore, no reason to conclude that he executes any other offices, distinct from them, as Mediator.

2. The condition of fallen man, the method in which God designed to bring him to salvation, and the adaptation of that method to the end intended, rendered it necessary that Christ should execute these three offices. We are all of us, by nature, ignorant of divine truth, and prejudiced against it. 'The natural man,' says the apostle, 'receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' It is necessary, therefore, that Christ should execute the office of a Prophet to lead us into all truth, and give us this spiritual discerning of it. Moreover, we are all 'guilty before God,'e and can by no means make atonement, give satisfaction to his justice, or procure a pardon; nor can we plead any thing done by us, as a ground of our receiving pardon. We need, therefore, that Christ should execute the office of a Priest, and so first make atonement, and then intercession, for us. Again, we are all, by nature, obstinate and rebellious, and exposed to many dangers and enemies who are too strong for us. It is necessary,

therefore, that Christ should execute the office of a King, to subdue our corruptions, and restrain and conquer our enemies.

The way in which God brings his people to salvation, also requires Christ's executing his threefold office. Salvation must be purchased, proclaimed, and applied. The first of these respects Christ's priestly office; the second, his prophetical; and the third, his kingly. Accordingly he is said to be 'made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;' and elsewhere he styles himself, 'The Way, the Truth, and the Life.'g Moreover, in the execution of these offices, and bringing us thereby to salvation, he deals with God and man in different respects; with God, more especially, as a Priest, in satisfying his justice, and procuring his favour. As the High Priest under the law, who was a type of Christ's priestly office, is said to have been 'ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;' so Christ, our great High Priest, by offering himself a sacrifice, performed that part of his ministry which pertained to God, in the behalf of men. He deals with God, also, by appearing in his presence, continually making intercession for them. On the other hand, he deals with men, as designing to bring them to God; and this he does more especially as a Prophet and a King.

3. These three offices, which Christ executes, are distinct, and therefore not to be confounded. This we maintain against Socinus and his followers. They speak of Christ, indeed, as a Prophet, Priest, and King; which they are obliged to do, because the words are so frequently mentioned in scripture. Yet the sense they give of them amounts to little more than an acknowledgment of his prophetic office. Even this, as they explain it, includes nothing more than what other prophets who went before him either were, or might have been, qualified to perform. For any one who is under divine inspiration

may infallibly declare the will of God, and give forth those laws by which God has ordained that his church should be governed; and our Saviour, according to them, does little more than this. They speak of him, indeed, as a Priest; but not as making satisfaction for our sins to the justice of God, nor as interceding in virtue thereof, but only as putting up prayers and supplications to him on our behalf, little different from those prayers and supplications which were put up by other prophets in behalf of the people.—Again, they speak of him as a King; but not as subduing our wills, or conquering our enemies by almighty power. Or, if they allow that he subdues us to himself as a King; yet, in their farther explanation of his doing so, they mean nothing by it but his gaining us over to his side by arguments, freeing us from our ignorance, and overcoming our prejudices against truth by a clear revelation of it. Or, if they speak of his conquering our enemies, they intend nothing by it but his guarding and defending his people, by furnishing them with arguments to resist their subtle attempts against them. Now, all these things are reducible to his prophetic office; so that, though they speak of him as executing three offices, it is no more than if they should assert that he executes only one. The most they intend is, that he is a Teacher sent from God, and consequently not much superior in excellency to Moses, who was a prophet raised up from among his brethren, and had the honourable character given him that he was 'faithful in all his house.' Yet the apostle proves, by what he says of our Lord Jesus, that 'he was counted worthy of more glory, as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house;' and he farther styles him a divine Person, when he says, 'he that built all things is God.'

4. These three offices which Christ executes are not to be divided, especially as they are executed in a way which is effectual to the salvation of those who are concerned in them. He may, indeed, in an objective way, reveal the will of God, or give laws to his church, as a

Prophet, without working savingly upon the understanding. He may also execute his kingly office, as a Judge, in pouring forth the vials of his wrath on his enemies, without subduing the stubbornness of their wills, or bringing them to the obedience of faith. Nevertheless, we must conclude that, wheresoever he executes these offices in a saving way, he executes them all. Hence, though the offices are distinguished, yet, in the execution of them, they are not divided. Thus, whosoever is so taught by him, as a Prophet, as to be made wise to salvation, is redeemed by his blood as a Priest, overcome by his power as a King, and brought into subjection to his will in all things. So to all for whom, as a Priest, he hath purchased peace, he will, in his own time, proclaim it as a Prophet; and enable them to believe in him, by making them willing in the day of his power.

5. He executes these offices in a twofold state; first, of humiliation, and then, of exaltation, with different circumstances agreeable to each. This twofold state will be considered in some following Answers. What we shall observe at present concerning it is, that that part of Christ's priestly office in which he made atonement for sin, was executed on earth in his state of humiliation; while the other part of it, consisting in his intercession, together with some branches of his prophetic and kingly office, were executed both in earth and heaven, though in a different manner, agreeable to those circumstances of glory in which he was and is.

[NOTE 3 L. The Number of Christ's Offices.—The classification of Christ's offices into three, may probably appear, on even slight reflection, to be altogether arbitrary. Mediator, Head, Surety, Redeemer, Paraclete, Pastor, are official names as surely given our Lord in scripture as Prophet, Priest. King. Nor is there any scriptural authority for comprehending these and other titles under three, rather than under any other number. The popular classification

claims no higher sanction than the authority of the schoolmen, and is designed solely to promote distinctness and comprehensiveness in our views of the mediatorial character. I have a strong impression, however, that it seriously confuses these views. Let one carefully examine either Dr. Ridgeley's exposition of the prophetic and the kingly offices, or that of any other approved orthodox divine; and he will find that what is said respecting either office may, in a great measure, be substituted for what is said respecting the other. The chief, if not the only, difference is, that more is said respecting Christ as a King, than respecting him as a Prophet. His prophetic office is discussed in terms, and exhibited in functions and results, which simply make it a part of his kingly office. The effect of discussing the two as if they were distinct, is the same upon our views of his character as King, as the effect of discussing his suretiship or redemptional work apart from his priesthood, would have upon our views of his character as Priest. His being a Surety or a Redeemer is no less included in his being a Priest, than his being a Prophet is included in his being a King.

The grand, and almost only, authority for our Lord's being called a Prophet is the passage: 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken,' Deut. 18:15. Now the distinctive character of Moses was that of a lawgiver and a ruler. As a lawgiver, he was distinguished from even such prophets as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha; and as both a lawgiver and a ruler, he was distinguished from all the prophets whose official work was simply to 'reveal or declare the will of God.' But Christ is 'a Prophet like unto him.' What follows but that, as a Prophet, he is the ruler and the lawgiver, or, in other words, the King of his people? Accordingly, the apostle Peter, in referring to Moses' prediction, quotes it as a proof that Christ shall reign at the right hand of power till he subdue all his enemies. 'Whom the heaven

must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.'

The only apparent scriptural reason which I am aware of having been assigned for regarding Christ's prophetic work as distinct from his kingship, is that, in some instances, the ancient prophets, like priests and kings, were anointed. This reason, however, is not valid, but rather operates against the opinion which it is designed to support, unless an instance could be adduced of the anointing of a prophet who was not a ruler or judge. If any individual was at the same time judge and prophet, and if he was anointed while all persons who were prophets only were not anointed, what are we to infer but that he received his anointing in connexion solely with his judgeship? Anointing appears to have been practised only as regarded either a ministration with God for man, or a ministration with man for God. A priest performed services toward God, and a king performed services toward man; the one conducted the affairs of the sanctuary, and the other conducted the affairs of the congregation; the former worked out reconciliation with God, and the latter controlled the enmity, and directed the obedience of men; and both were anointed as types of the great priest who is King of righteousness, and who 'sits a Priest upon his throne.' When Zechariah beheld our Lord in vision, or saw emblematic representations of his official character and work, there were exhibited to him 'two olive-trees by' the golden candlestick in the holy place, 'one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.' 'Then answered I,' says the prophet, 'What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? Then said he, These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth,'

Zech. 4:2, 11, 14. To explain further to him the import of his vision, he is told that there are two crowns, the silver and the golden, the priestly crown and the regal,—that these are put upon the head of Joshua, the high priest, the type of the Saviour,—that 'the man whose name is THE BRANCH shall sit and rule upon his throne, and shall be a priest upon his throne,' while 'the counsel of peace shall be between' his crowns, and his priesthood and kingship united in mutual subserviency and co-operation, Zech. 6:9–15. See also Heb. 7:1–3. 'The anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth,' are thus two; they both bear rule, the one in a priestly way and the other in a kingly; and they are united in the person of the Branch who is 'a priest upon his throne.' Yet John, who emphatically describes our Lord as 'the faithful and true Witness,' and dwells both in the use of that title and in the use of others, upon the work which is popularly ascribed to him as the prophet of his people, says respecting 'the two witnesses' of one of his visions, 'these are the two olive-trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.'

There is thus, I think, some direct scripture-authority for regarding our Lord's mediatorial offices as comprehended in two. This classification, at all events, will be found more conducive to clear, definite conceptions of his character and work than that which views his prophetic work apart from his kingship.—ED.]

CHRIST'S PROPHETIC OFFICE

QUESTION XLIII. How doth Christ execute the office of a Prophet?

ANSWER. Christ executeth the office of a Prophet, in his revealing to the church, in all ages, by his Spirit and Word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God, in all things concerning their edification and salvation.

The Order of Christ's Prophetic Office

BEFORE we consider the parts of Christ's prophetic office, and the manner of his executing it, we may observe the order in which it is mentioned, as set before his priestly and kingly offices. This may give us occasion to inquire whether it be executed before them.

1. If we consider the natural order of his executing his three offices, or the dependence of the execution of them, one on the other, it must be observed that he first executes his priestly office, and then his prophetic and kingly. Sinners must first be redeemed by his blood, before they can be brought to a saving knowledge of him, or an entire subjection to him. Hence, he first deals with God as a Priest, in our behalf, and thereby prepares the way of salvation, and lays the foundation of it in his oblation and intercession; and then, as a Prophet and King, he deals with men, and thereby brings them to God. So that, if the three offices were to be laid down in their natural order, we must say that Christ executes the office of a Priest, Prophet, and King.

2. If we consider the order in which our Saviour executed these offices, in the exercise of his public ministry, we may say, he first produced his commission, or proclaimed the end of his coming into the world, and proved himself to be the Messiah, and so discovered himself to his people, as the great Prophet of his church; and then, as a Priest, he laid down his life, as a sacrifice for sin; and next, as a King, he conquered his enemies, spoiled principalities and powers, and exerted the exceeding greatness of his power in the application

of redemption. It is in this respect that the offices of Christ are generally treated of; and so they are mentioned in the same order in which they are here laid down. His prophetic office, therefore, is first mentioned; and this is what we are now to consider.

Christ's Titles as a Prophet

We shall show how Christ is described, in scripture, as the Prophet of his church. There are many expressions whereby his prophetic office is set forth. He is styled, 'a Teacher come from God.' He calls himself our 'Master,'l or the Lord of our faith; and, as such; he is distinguished from all other teachers, some of whom affected very much to be called Rabbi, and would persuade the world, by an implicit faith, to believe whatever they said. But our Saviour advises his disciples to refuse that title; for, says he, 'one is your Master, even Christ.' Again, he is called, 'a Lawgiver,' or the one and only Lawgiver; and it is added, that he differs from all other lawgivers, in that 'he is able to save and to destroy.'n He is also called, 'the Angel, or Messenger of the covenant,' who reveals the covenant of grace to us, and brings the glad tidings, that God is in him, reconciling the world to himself. He is also called, 'the Apostle' as well as 'the High Priest of our profession;' because he was sent by God to publish peace, before he appointed others, who are called apostles, or inferior ministers to him, to pursue the same design. He is likewise styled, 'a Witness to the people,' their 'Leader and Commander;'p and he is farther described as 'a faithful Witness.' He is set forth also by several metaphorical expressions, which denote the execution of his prophetic office. Thus he is called, 'the Light which shineth in darkness.'r The prophet Isaiah likewise describes him, when he says, 'Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' He is likewise compared to the Sun, the fountain of light, and so called, 'the Sun of righteousness,' which was to 'arise with

healing in his wings.'t He is called also 'the bright and Morning Star.' By this, and many other expressions to the same purpose, the prophetic office of Christ is set forth in scripture.

Christ's Work as a Prophet

We shall now consider what Christ does in the execution of his prophetical office. He is said to reveal the will of God to his church.

1. How he was qualified for this work, which supposes him to have a perfect knowledge of the divine will. We formerly observed that the Socinians, agreeably to the low thoughts they have of him as a mere creature, suppose that he was unacquainted with the will of God till he entered on his public ministry; and that in order to his being instructed in it, he was, soon after his baptism, taken into heaven and there taught by the Father what he was to impart to mankind. This they suppose to be the meaning of those scriptures which speak of him as 'coming down from heaven,' or 'coming forth from the Father,' into the world, and of his 'speaking as the Father had taught him,' or 'what he had seen with his Father.'y. We showed the absurdity of this opinion elsewhere, when speaking in defence of our Saviour's deity, and considered that those scriptures which mention his coming down from heaven plainly refer to his incarnation, and that the mode of expression is the same as when God is said, in other scriptures, to come down into this world, by his manifestative presence, which is not inconsistent with his omnipresence. We considered also the groundlessness and absurdity of the conjecture as to Christ's being taken up into heaven soon after his baptism. All, therefore, that I shall add, at present, is, that those scriptures which speak of Christ's being taught the things which he was to impart to the church, as they do not overthrow the omniscience of his divine nature, so they give no countenance to the supposition that his

human nature was taken up into heaven to be taught the will of God. In this nature, indeed, he needed instruction, and had no knowledge but what he received by communication; and it is plainly said of him, that 'he increased in wisdom,' as he advanced in age. But the knowledge which he had, as Man, which was sufficient to furnish him for the execution of this office, proceeded from a twofold cause. It proceeded from the union of that nature with his divine Person, the result of which was his having all those perfections that belong to it, of which the knowledge of divine things is one; for it would have been a dishonour to him, as God, to be united to a nature that had the least blemish or defect, or was unqualified for the work which he was to perform in it. Besides this, our Saviour had an unction from the Holy Ghost; which, as was formerly observed, implies not only his receiving a commission, but, together therewith, all necessary qualifications to discharge the work he was engaged in, which include in them his knowing the whole will of God. Accordingly, it is said, 'God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him,'a that is, he gave it in a greater measure to him than he ever did to any other, as the work in which he was to engage required it.

2. Let us now consider what is the will of God which Christ reveals. This includes every thing which relates to our salvation, or which is necessary to be known and believed by us in order to it,—namely, that God had an eternal design to glorify his grace, in the recovery of a part of mankind from that guilt and misery in which they were involved, and in putting them into the possession of complete blessedness; and that, in order to this, each of the Persons in the Godhead designed to demonstrate his distinct personal glory, that, in this respect, they might receive adoration and praise from men,—the Father, as sending our Saviour to be a Redeemer,—the Son, as taking that character and work upon him,—and the Spirit, as applying the redemption purchased by him. Moreover, Christ was to make a

public proclamation that salvation was attainable, and that the way to attain it was by sinners coming to him as a Mediator, by whom they might have access to the Father. He was also to invite them to come to him by faith, as he often does in the gospel; he was to let them know, that this faith is the gift of God, and that they may expect to attain it in a constant attendance on the ordinances of his own appointment; and he was to encourage them to seek it in this way, by showing them that there are many great and precious promises, which are all put into his hand to apply and make good to his people. These and many other things, which contain the sum and substance of the gospel, are what we understand by the will of God, which Christ communicates, as a Prophet, to his church. It may be observed, too, that these doctrines are such as are matter of pure revelation, such as could not have been known without it, and such as are of the highest importance, and therefore worthy to be made known by so excellent a Person.

To whom Christ Ministers as a Prophet

We are now to consider the persons to whom Christ reveals the will of God, namely, the church. To them the lively oracles of God are committed; and they are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. As for 'the world,' which is sometimes contrasted to the church, it is said that 'by wisdom, it knew not God;' that is, not in the way in which he is revealed in the gospel. But the church, which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself, is said to be 'sanctified by the word.'c To them 'it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;' but to others 'it is not given.' The church, therefore, is the seat and the object of the execution of Christ's prophetic, as well as of his other offices. 'They are taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.'e

How Christ Ministers as a Prophet

We are now to consider the way and means by which Christ reveals the will of God to the church. There are two ways by which this is done.

1. Christ reveals the will of God objectively. This is an external method of instruction, the effect or consequence of which is our hearing of him by the hearing of the ear, or, as the apostle calls it, our 'having the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.' This instruction Christ is said to give by the word. He gave it, first, by publishing the glad tidings of salvation in his own Person. His doing this he mentions as one great end for which he was sent into the world. He says, 'I must preach the kingdom of God, for therefore am I sent.'g He, accordingly, styles himself 'the Light of the world;' and it is said that 'he was anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek, sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.'i When he is represented as complying with the call of God, and 'delighting to do his will,' he adds, 'I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.' And, as Christ preached the gospel in his own person; so, when he left the world, he gave commission to others to preach it, and his Spirit to instruct them what they should deliver, by whose inspiration his word was committed to writing, which is the fountain of all truth. By this means, the church attains, as at this day, the knowledge of the divine will.

2. Our Saviour reveals the will of God to his people, in a subjective way. This is internal; and he deals in it with their hearts, which he disposes and fits to receive the truth. Hereby he opens the eyes of the understanding to see a beauty and glory in the gospel, and inclines all the powers and faculties of the soul to be conformed to it. This he does more especially in those in whom he executes his prophetic office effectually unto salavion. His teaching in this way is styled, in this Answer, his executing his prophetic office by his Spirit; as distinguished from the execution of it by his word. We read sometimes, in scripture, of the Spirit's teaching us. Our Saviour tells his disciples, that 'he,' that is, the Spirit, 'would guide them into all truth;' and the apostle speaks of believers, as 'having their souls purified, in obeying the truth through the Spirit.'m At other times, we read of Christ's teaching by his Spirit. Now, there is no essential difference between Christ's teaching as God, and the Spirit's teaching; for the Divine glory of the Son and Spirit, to which this effect is attributed, is the same. Christ's teaching by his Spirit denotes only, as was observed under a foregoing Answer, the subserviency of the Spirit's acting herein, to Christ's executing this branch of his prophetic office, whereby he demonstrates his personal glory.

The Periods of Christ's Ministry as a Prophet

We are now to consider the various ages in which Christ is said to execute this office. That he did this after his incarnation, first, in his own Person, and then, by taking care that his gospel should be preached in all succeeding ages, until his second coming, has been already considered. We may observe also, that Christ executed his prophetic office before his incarnation. It is said, that, 'by his Spirit, he preached unto the spirits in prison,' that is, to the world before the flood, who are represented, in the words immediately following, as

disobedient, 'when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.' So that Noah, who was a prophet, was his inferior minister, raised up and spirited by him to preach to the world. His preaching is, on that account, called Christ's preaching; and herein, accordingly, he executed his prophetic office. He is said also to have given the law from mount Sinai. The apostle's words seem to intimate this, when he says, 'Whose voice shook the earth,'p that is, mount Sinai, which trembled when he gave the law from it. That this refers to our Saviour, appears from the words immediately foregoing, wherein it is said, 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,' namely Christ; 'for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth,' that is, from mount Sinai, or when he spake on earth, 'much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth,' & c. Moreover, that he executed his prophetic office before his incarnation, and thereby led his church into the knowledge of divine truth, is evident from the account we have, in scripture, of his appearing to them in the form of a man, or an angel. This he did more frequently before the word of God was committed to writing, and afterwards occasionally, in following ages. Thus he appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and sent him into Egypt to demand liberty for Israel. Afterwards, appearing in the pillar of the cloud and fire, he led them through the Red sea; and he is described as the Angel which was with Moses 'in the church in the wilderness, which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles.'r This is a farther proof, of what was formerly mentioned, that he gave the law from mount Sinai. And while they travelled through the wilderness, 'he led them about,' or went before them in the pillar of cloud, 'and instructed them.' Hence, all the knowledge of divine things which they attained was the result of the execution of his prophetic office to them. And when at any time they opposed Moses, his under minister, he appeared in Person and

vindicated him; as in the particular instance occasioned by Aaron and Miriam's speaking against him, wherein it is said, 'The Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and said, If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream; my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.'t This is a farther intimation that Christ then executed his prophetic office, by inspiring the prophets who were raised up at that time.

To conclude this Head, we may observe the difference between Christ's executing his prophetic office, before and after his incarnation. In the former, as was but now hinted, he occasionally assumed the likeness of the human nature, that he might the better converse with man, but was not really incarnate. In the latter, he delivered the mind and will of God, as dwelling in our nature. Before his incarnation, he discovered what was necessary to be known by the church at that time, and gave them those promises which related to the work of our redemption which was to be performed by him. But in the present execution of his prophetic office, he opens a more glorious scene, and represents all those promises as having their accomplishment in him, and displays the divine perfections, in bringing about our salvation, in their greatest beauty and lustre.

CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE

QUESTION XLIV. How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest?

ANSWER. Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in his once offering himself a sacrifice, without spot, to God, to be a reconciliation for the sins of his people, and in making continual intercession for them.

IN considering Christ's priestly office, as described in this Answer, we may observe the two great branches of it, namely, his offering himself a sacrifice, and his making intercession. There are several scriptures which expressly mention both. Thus he is said, 'through the eternal Spirit, to have offered himself, without spot, to God;' and then is described as having 'entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us.'y Elsewhere also the apostle states that he 'hath an unchangeable priesthood, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;' and that this is founded on his offering up himself, and 'making intercession for them.'

What it is to be a Priest

We may observe the reason of Christ being styled a Priest. This denomination was taken from those who exercised the priestly office under the ceremonial law, who were types of him as such. The office of the priesthood was executed by various persons, appointed to this service. A priest was a public minister, who was to serve at the altar, 'to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.' That these were offered in all the ages of the church, after the fall of man, appears from the sacrifice Abel offered. This the apostle calls an 'excellent' one; and he

says that Abel 'obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.'b It follows from this, that the ordinance which Abel observed in offering his sacrifice, was instituted by God. Yet it does not appear that there was, in that early age of the church, a set of men solemnly and publicly invested in this office. The heads of families are generally supposed to have been the public ministers in holy things, and particularly priests; though they do not appear to have been then so styled. In this state, matters continued till about the time God brought Israel out of Egypt, when, by his appointment, all the first-born of the children of Israel were consecrated to him. These officiated as priests during the small interval of time till the priesthood was settled in the tribe of Levi. On this occasion God says, 'I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel, instead of all the first-born, because all the first-born are mine; for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel.' When God gave the ceremonial law from mount Sinai, he appointed that tribe to minister as priests in holy things. Some of them had one part of the ministry of the sanctuary committed to them, and others another. The priesthood, or the charge of offering gifts and sacrifices, in particular, was more especially committed to the family of Aaron. Of this family the eldest son, in their respective generations, was generally advanced to the high priesthood; and other descendants from him were common priests, who acted under him, or were assistants to him in all the parts of his ministry, excepting that which respected his entering into the holy of holies. These were invested in their respective offices by unction; though the high priest's office and unction had some things peculiar, in which it exceeded theirs. And they were all types of Christ's priesthood; though the high priest was so in an eminent degree.

The Types of Christ's Priesthood

We shall now consider the priesthood of Christ, as typified under the ceremonial law; and that either by the service which was commonly performed by the high priest, and other priests under him, or as it was typified by Melchizedek, who is occasionally mentioned in scripture as shadowing forth Christ's priesthood in some particular instances which were not contained in other types.

I. We shall speak concerning the priests under the law, as types of Christ's priesthood, and particularly show wherein their priesthood agrees with or differs from his. We shall first show, in three particulars, wherein they agree.

1. 'Every high priest was taken from among men,' as the apostle observes, 'and was ordained for men in things pertaining to God.' We may add, that every high priest was taken from among his brethren, and so must be a member of that church in whose name he ministered, and of which he was the head by the dignity of his office. In this, he was a lively type of Christ, who, in order to his being an High Priest, became man, that he might perform this ministry for men in things pertaining to God. The validity of his office, it is true, or the efficacy of it to answer its designed end, arose from the dignity of his Person, as God; yet the matter of it, or the ministry he performed, required that he should be taken from among men, and have all the essential properties of the human nature. Hence, as the high priest was taken out of the church, or from among his brethren, and, by office, was their head; so Christ was a member of the church, and, as such, complied with those ordinances which God had instituted in it, and from the dignity of his Person and office, was its Head. As a member of it, he was exposed to the same temptations and miseries as they are, and so is able to sympathize with, and succour them under all their temptations;e and, as its Head, he

manages all affairs relating to it, and expects that all his people should be entirely subjected to him.

2. The matter of the priest's office, or the things which were offered by him, were, as was before observed, gifts and sacrifices for the remission of sins. This blessing could not be attained without shedding of blood. 'Without shedding of blood,' says the apostle, 'is no remission.' Hence, Christ was to redeem his people, and to procure forgiveness of sins and make atonement for them, by sacrifice, or by the shedding of blood.

3. After the high priest had offered sacrifices, there was another part of that ministry which was peculiar to himself, in which he was an eminent type of Christ. This he performed but once a-year, on the great day of expiation, when he went in to the holiest of all within the veil, with blood and incense. The blood he sprinkled on the mercy-seat over the ark, and caused the smoke of the incense to ascend and cover the mercy-seat; and thence he received an intimation from God, that the sacrifices which he had offered for the people were accepted. After this, he went out, and blessed them in the name of the Lord. Now, in all these services, he was a lively type of Christ's executing his priestly office. Christ first offered an acceptable sacrifice for us on earth; and then, as was typified by the priest's entering into the holy of holies, he entered into heaven to present his sacrifice before God, and to make intercession for us. As the consequence of this, he blesses his people, in turning them from all their iniquities, and in conferring all the other fruits and effects of his sacrifice upon them. Thus Christ's priesthood was shadowed forth by that ministry which was performed by the priests under the ceremonial law.

We shall now show, in six particulars, wherein the Levitical priests differed, in their priestly office and ministry, from Christ.

1. The priests under the law were mere men. But Christ, though truly man, was more than a man. Though he was made, in all the essential properties of the human nature, like unto us; yet he had a divine nature, in which he was equal with God. His ministry, therefore, could not but be infinitely more valuable than that of any who were types of him.

2. The priests under the law were of the tribe of Levi; and therefore theirs is called by the apostle, 'the Levitical priesthood.' But our Saviour, as man, was of the tribe of Judah; and therefore did not derive his priesthood from them by descent, as they did from one another.i

3. The sacrifices which were offered by the priests under the law, were no other than the blood of beasts, appointed for that purpose. But Christ offered his own blood.

4. The priests under the law were sinners. Accordingly, Aaron was obliged, 'to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's.' But Christ needed not to do this; for 'he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'m

5. The sacrifices offered by the priests under the law, could not expiate, or 'take away sins.' But Christ, by the offering which he made, 'for ever perfected them that are sanctified,' or made a full atonement for all sin. Now, as it is said that it was impossible for sin to be expiated by the sacrifices under the law, we are to inquire in what sense atonement was made, or could not be made, by them. If the sin was of such a nature as that it was punishable by human judicature, the making atonement by sacrifice, in many instances,

put a stop to prosecution, and took away the guilt which the person had contracted, as to any farther proceedings of men against him. Such a deliverance by sacrifice was an ordinance appointed by God, in which the offender had an external and visible recourse to the blood of Jesus, signified by the blood which he offered. The offering of sacrifice, too, is supposed to have been accompanied with repentance for the sin committed, which gave satisfaction to the church, as to what concerned the matter as offensive to them. They could then demand no more of the offender, in order to their declaring, that, so far as they were judges, his guilt was expiated by that which was signified by the sacrifice which he brought, and which was offered for him; and hence the crime which he committed was pardoned. There were some crimes, it is true, which were to be punished with death; and, in the case of these, the church was not to receive satisfaction by sacrifice, nor were proceedings against the guilty person to be stopped by that means. Among other crimes, that of wilful murder was one which admitted of no sacrifice. This I think to be the meaning of what the psalmist says, 'Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it,'o implying that the guilt of blood was such that he had, by contracting it, forfeited his life. For though no subject had power enough to take away his life, yet God might have set his face against him, and have cut him off, in a visible manner, from among his people, as he often did when crimes were not punished in a legal way. This punishment God graciously remitted, when he told him, by Nathan, that he had put away his sin, and that he should not die. And David, when he testifies his repentance in this psalm, would have offered sacrifice; but he finds that none was ordained for the sin he had committed. In other cases, indeed, the church was satisfied, excommunication or some other punishment was prevented, and the offender was taken into favour, by his offering sacrifice. On this account, his offering sacrifice is called making atonement for him. In other respects, however, it was

impossible to expiate sin thereby, so as to procure justification in the sight of God. Sacrifices could not expiate it as to what concerns the conscience. Accordingly, it is said, that 'these sacrifices could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.'q That guilt of sin which burdens the consciences of men, as having more immediately to do with God, was taken away only by Christ's sacrifice. On this account, the efficacy of that sacrifice far exceeds all the ends and designs of the sacrifices which were offered under the law. This farther appears from the fact that these sacrifices were to be repeated, there being a continual remembrance of sin; for the repetition supposes that sin was not hereby wholly expiated in the sight of God. In this respect also, they differ from the sacrifice which Christ offered; for that being effectual to take away sin, was offered but once.

6. The priests under the law were mortal, and therefore the priesthood was successive. But Christ, as he was not from them by a lineal descent, so he had no successor in his priesthood. In this respect the apostle compares him with them, when he says, 'They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.' Again, as the priesthood ceased, in particular persons, by death; so the high priesthood was sometimes taken away from those who were advanced to it, for some instances of mal-administration. Thus the high priesthood, for some time, descended in the line of Eleazar, the elder branch of Aaron's family; and afterwards during the reign of the judges, it was transferred to the younger branch of his family, namely, the descendants from Ithamar, in which line it was when Eli was high priest;t and afterwards, when his sons, by their vile behaviour, forfeited their right to the high priesthood, and God threatened that he would take it away from his family, and accordingly did so when Abiathar, in the

beginning of Solomon's reign, was thrust from the priesthood, it again descended, in Zadock, to the elder branch of Aaron's family. Again, the priesthood itself was not designed to continue for ever, but only during that dispensation; after which there was to be no altar, priests, or sacrifice. But Christ's priesthood, as it was unalienable, so it could never be forfeited by mal-administration, or descend to any other. Hence, he is said to be a 'Priest for ever,' which seems to be the meaning of that scripture in which his priesthood is considered as different from the Levitical. 'Those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever.'x This oath not only signifies the establishing of him in his priesthood, but it secured to him that he should never fall from it.

There are other things in which Christ's priesthood differs from that of the priests under the law. 'They entered into the holy places made with hands, but Christ into heaven itself.' Then it was only the high priest who was to enter into the holy of holies; but under the gospel, as the apostle observes, all believers, in virtue of Christ's sacrifice, are admitted into the holiest of all,—that is, they have access, through faith, into the presence of God, by the blood of Jesus. Under the law, too, there was a certain order of men who were priests, and yet all the people were not so; but under the gospel-dispensation, believers are styled, 'an holy and a royal priesthood,' and the sacrifices they offer up are 'spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'z

II. We shall now consider Christ's priesthood, as typified by Melchizedek. It is said, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine to Abraham, returning from the slaughter of the kings; and he was priest of the most high God, and he blessed him, &c. This is referred to, as tending to set forth Christ's priesthood:

'The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.'b The apostle refers to these scriptures, which are the only places of the Old Testament where this subject is mentioned, and applies them to Christ's priesthood as containing many things which were not typified by the Aaronic priesthood. It may be observed, that when the apostle enters on this subject, he premises this concerning it, that it contained a very great difficulty. 'Of whom, that is, Melchizedek, we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered,' that is, hard to be explained, so as to be fully understood. It will be no strange thing, therefore, if we cannot fully explain it, or if we assert some things concerning it which are only probable. Certainly this observation of the apostle should induce us to treat on this subject with the greatest humility and modesty. [See Note 3 M, page 540.] As to what we have to say concerning it, I hope we shall advance nothing contrary to the analogy of faith, how difficult soever some phrases, used in scripture relating to it, may seem to be. The method in which we shall proceed, shall be—first, to inquire who this Melchizedek was; and, secondly, how we have in him an eminent type of Christ's priesthood, in some things in which it was not shadowed forth by the Aaronic priesthood.

1. We shall inquire who this Melchizedek probably was. Here we pass by the conjecture of some who lived in an early age of Christianity, whom Epiphanius mentions, who supposed that he was the Holy Ghost. This appears to be a very absurd notion, for we never read, in scripture, of the Holy Ghost appearing in the form of a man, or of his performing any of those offices which belong to the Mediator. It is, therefore, as contrary to the tenor of scripture to call him the priest of the most high God, as it is to call the Father so. Yet Melchizedek is thus styled in the scripture we are explaining. I shall add no more, as to this ungrounded opinion; but proceed to consider some which are more commonly acquiesced in.

The Jews generally conclude that he was Shem, the son of Noah, as also do many other ancient and modern writers, who pay a deference to their authority and reasoning. The principal thing which induces them to be of this opinion is, because that it appears, from scripture-chronology, that Shem was living at the time when Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings.g They add, that Shem, having received the patriarchal benediction from his father, might truly be reckoned the greatest man in the church; and that he might be so reckoned both as a priest and a king, as Melchizedek is described to have been. But there are two very considerable objections against this opinion, which have weight enough in them, if not to overthrow it, at least to make it very doubtful. Shem's father, mother, and descent, together with the beginning of his life, and afterwards the end of it, were well known; the year when he was born, and the time that he lived being particularly mentioned in scripture. Hence, the apostle could not say concerning him, as he does concerning Melchizedek, that 'he was without father,' without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life;' meaning, as most expositors suppose, that he was so because these were not known or mentioned in scripture. Again, it is very plain, from scripture, that Shem's place of abode was not in the land of Canaan. Hence, he could not be said to be king of Salem, that is, as it is understood by the greatest number of expositors, king of Jerusalem. This was the seat of the posterity of Ham, one of Shem's brethren; and accordingly, from Canaan, his son, that land took its name. This evidently appears from what is said in Gen. 10:6–20, where the Jebusite, Amorite, Hivite, and other inhabitants of the land of Canaan, are said to be the descendants of Ham. For these reasons, Melchizedek does not appear to have been Shem.

There is one learned writer who conjectures that Melchizedek was Ham. This opinion agrees, indeed, very well with the place of his

residence. But there are other things which render it not in the least probable. The same thing may be observed of Ham, as was before of Shem, that he could not be said to be 'without father, without mother, without beginning of years, and end of life.' Besides, he had not received the patriarchal benediction from Noah; his posterity having had a curse entailed upon them, as it is said, 'Cursed be Canaan.'i On this account, some question whether Ham might be reckoned a member of the church, much more whether he deserved to be called a priest of the most high God, and King of righteousness. This author, indeed, supposes that Ham was not cursed by Noah, but only Canaan his son, and his posterity; and that, therefore, he might have been an excellent person, and deserved the character given of Melchizedek. But there are very few who will be convinced by this method of reasoning; so that we pass it over, and proceed to consider another opinion.

The greatest part of divines suppose, that it is not only the safest, but most probable way of solving this difficulty, to confess, that it is impossible to determine who Melchizedek was, and that the Holy Ghost has purposely concealed this matter from us, that he might be a more eminent type of Christ. They suppose him, therefore, to have been a certain unknown king aud priest, residing in Jerusalem, at the time when Abraham was met by him; and that this ought to put a full stop to all farther inquiries about him. On this account they allege it may well be said concerning him, that he was 'without father, without mother,' & c. that is, that these were not known; for what does not appear to be, is sometimes said, in scripture, not to be.

There is another opinion concerning him, which, though not so commonly received as the first and third above-mentioned, and though probably not unattended with some difficulties, very much deserves our consideration, namely, that Melchizedek was our Lord

Jesus Christ himself, assuming, at that time, the form of man, and personating a priest and a king, as he did on several occasions, designing thereby to prefigure his future incarnation. It is argued in defence of this opinion, that when the apostle describes him as king of Salem, he does not intend Jerusalem, or mean, that at that time he resided there. But his words, as he explains them in the immediately following context, imply that he was 'King of peace,' as this word Salem signifies. Accordingly, he is set forth by two of those glorious titles, which are given him elsewhere in scripture. 'He is called King of righteousness;' as it is said concerning him, 'A King shall reign and prosper, who is called, The Lord our righteousness;'m and he is called likewise, 'the Prince of peace.' What makes this opinion more probable, is, that it does not appear that Jerusalem was called Salem, which is alleged to be a contraction of the word Jerusalem, till some ages after this; for till David conquered it, it was commonly known by the name of Jebus.o—Again, the apostle's description of him as being 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life,' is applicable rather to a divine Person than to a mere man. As for the sense which is generally given of these words, namely, that he was 'without father,' &c. because no mention is made thereof in scripture, that is, in those two scriptures in the Old Testament in which he is spoken of; this seems more strained and forced than to understand them according to the proper sense of the words. Indeed, if this description imports nothing else but the silence of scripture on the subject of it, there are many other persons, as Job, Elijah, &c., who have as great a right to the character it describes as Melchizedek. Yet Melchizedek is thus described, as distinguished from all others. We may add, as a corroboration of this argument, that the apostle says that, in respect to his being 'without father,' &c. he was 'made like the Son of God,' that is, as is generally supposed, a type of him. Now, if his being without father, mother, descent, &c. in the common acceptation of

the words, be inconsistent with his being a type of Christ to the church in Abraham's time, that certainly cannot be the sense of it; for he was, without doubt, a type of Christ's priestly and kingly office to him and to the church in his days, as well as to those who lived in following ages. Now, that he could not be such a type to many who lived in that age, is evident; for they who lived in the place where he was born and died, knew his father, mother, descent, beginning, or end of life; so that he was no type of Christ's eternal priesthood to them. As for Abraham, though he might not know his father, mother, or descent, or the exact time when he was born, and so, in that respect, to him Melchizedek might in part be made like to the Son of God, as signifying that his priestly office was not derived by descent, as the Aaronic priesthood descended from parents to children; yet he could not be a type of the everlasting duration of Christ's priestly office, since he was no more without end of days, in the common sense in which that expression is taken, than Abraham or any other who lived with him, who could not be supposed to know the time or place of their death. And if, according to the common opinion, Melchizedek is said to be without father, mother, descent, &c. because there is no mention of these in scripture, he could not be a type to Abraham or any other before the word of God was committed to writing.—But there is another thing, which may be observed in the apostle's description of him, when he says, that 'he liveth,' and accordingly is opposed to those priests that die, by which he seems to be described as immortal, and so opposed to mortal men. It is not said, that he once lived, and that we have no mention of the time of his death; but 'he liveth.' This some conclude to be an ascription of that divine perfection to him, whereby the Most High is styled 'the living God;' or, as it is said in one of the following verses, 'He ever liveth,'q to denote his eternal priesthood; or, as he says elsewhere concerning himself, 'I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.'—What makes this opinion more probable, is

the consideration of the place where they who defend the other side of the question suppose he lived, and the people to whom he ministered as a priest; which seem not agreeable to the character given him, as the greatest priest on earth. The inhabitants of Jerusalem at that time were idolaters, or, at least, they had no relation to the church of God which was then seated in Abraham's family. When Abraham sojourned in Gerar, not many miles distant from it, in the south-west border of the land of Canaan, he says he thought surely the fear of God was not in this place; and it can hardly be supposed that Jebus, or Jerusalem, was much better. If the Canaanites had been members of the true church, Abraham would not have lived as a stranger and sojourner amongst them, not desirous to converse with them. Now since Jerusalem, or Salem, was inhabited by those who were not worshippers of the true God, how could Melchizedek be said to be their priest, or a minister in holy things to them? For, though an holy man may be a king over a wicked people, such an one cannot well be said to be a priest to those who desire not to be found in the exercise of God's true worship.—Again, it seems probable that Melchizedek was not a priest, or king, whose usual place of residence was Jerusalem, where he ministered and reigned, in as much as we do not read that Abraham, at any other time, conversed with him, or joined with him in worship, though the place where he sojourned was out a few miles distant from it. Now, we can hardly suppose that he would have neglected to do this, or that we should have had no account of any intercourse between these two men, who must be reckoned the greatest and best that lived on earth, besides that mentioned in the scripture we are now considering.—This may be farther argued, from the apostle's saying that Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and from his inferring thence that he was superior to him, in as much as 'the less is blessed of the better.'s There are but two senses in which a person is said to bless another. The one is, by praying for a blessing on him, or as

God's messenger signifying that God would bless him; and the other is, by conferring blessedness upon him, or making him blessed. Now, if Melchizedek had blessed Abraham only in the former sense, which he might have done had he been a mere man, the apostle could not have inferred thence his superiority to Abraham. The lowest of men may, in this sense, bless the greatest, that is, pray for a blessing on them, and God might employ such to declare to others that they are blessed; yet it would not follow that they are, on this account, greater than they. Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and therefore, as the apostle infers, was greater than he. He must, consequently, have blessed him, by making him blessed, or by conferring some of those blessings which he has to bestow as a divine Person, the Fountain of blessedness.

These are the most material arguments which are brought in defence of the opinion that Melchizedek was our blessed Lord. From them it seems probable that our Saviour, on the occasion in question, assumed the form of a Man, as he often did, and appeared to Abraham with the mien and likeness of a King and Priest. Just as he is said elsewhere to have appeared to Joshua, in the form of a warrior, with his sword drawn in his hand, and to have soon discovered to him who he was; so we may suppose, that, at this time, he appeared to Abraham as a King and a Priest, and discovered to him who he was, and the right he had to the spoils which had been gained. We may suppose, too, that he accepted the tithes of those spoils, partly to signify that tithing was to be the way in which the priesthood was to be supported in future ages, but principally to give a type of that divine homage which we owe to him, as the Priest and King of his people. I will not be too tenacious of this side of the question. Yet to me it seems the more probable; especially if what is objected against it does not weaken the force of the arguments brought to support it.

One objection against it is, that the place of Melchizedek's residence is said to be Salem, or Jerusalem, in the land of Canaan, where he was a king and priest. Now, say the objectors, this could not be said of our Lord Jesus Christ; for, as his kingdom was not of this world, so he never resided, or fixed his abode, in any part of it before his incarnation. It is true, they add, he sometimes appeared then in the form of a Man or an Angel, in order that he might occasionally converse with his people; yet he never continued long or dwelt amongst them, till he was made flesh; whereas, Melchizedek seems to be described as an inhabitant of the land of Canaan, dwelling in Salem. Now this objection takes some things for granted which will not readily be allowed by those who entertain the contrary way of thinking, namely, that Salem is the name of a place, and that there he resided. This, they might reply, is rather a character of his person; for, if Tzedek be a character of his person, as signifying righteousness, why should it be denied that Salem, from the Hebrew word Shalom, is also a glorious character, belonging to his person? This is the more apparent if we consider that the apostle explains both words in this sense, when he says, that by interpretation, they are, 'King of righteousness, and King of peace.' And if this be true, there is no force in the other part of the objection, as to his residing in any particular place before his incarnation.

It is farther objected, that our Saviour is said to be a Priest, 'after the order of Melchizedek,' and that 'after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest,'x meaning our Saviour; so that he cannot be the same person as Melchizedek. This objection is much more material than any other; and I am apt to think, determines the sentiments of many who adopt the commonly received opinion. But, as it ought to be considered whether the arguments in defence of the other side of the question be conclusive; so it may be replied to this objection, that Christ might be called a Priest after the order of

Melchizedek, though he were the person intended by him, in as much as, by his appearing in the form of a Priest and a King to Abraham, he afforded a type or figure of what he would really be and do after his incarnation, and also gave a specimen of his priestly and kingly office which he would afterwards execute. This might as well be said to be a type of his priesthood, as any of his appearances in the form of a man were typical of his incarnation. These divines generally call it a prelibation of his incarnation—a term which differs very little from the sense of the word type. As to its being said that 'another Priest ariseth after the similitude of Melchizedek,' though it may be reckoned a strong objection against our argument, yet let it be considered, that 'after the similitude of Melchizedek' imports the same thing as 'after the order of Melchizedek;' and so it signifies, that there is a similitude or likeness, between what he then appeared to be, and what he really was after his incarnation. As for his being called 'another priest,' this does not imply that he was a Priest different from Melchizedek, but from the priests under the law; for the apostle, as appears by the context, is comparing Christ's priesthood with the Aaronic. When Christ executed his priestly office after his incarnation, he might well be styled another Priest, that is, a Priest not descending from Aaron, but the anti-type of Melchizedek, as prefigured by the remarkable occurrence of his appearing to Abraham. [See Note 3 N, page 540.]

Thus concerning that difficult question, Who Melchizedek was? All that I shall add is, whether it were Christ himself or some other person, it is evident that there was in his character and ministration, a very eminent type of Christ's kingly and priestly office,—especially of his priestly, as containing several things which were not shadowed forth by the Aaronic priesthood. Though the Aaronic priesthood contained a type of Christ's making atonement, by shedding his blood; yet there was nothing in it which typified the glory of his

Person, his immortality and sinless perfection, the eternal duration of his priesthood, or his being immediately raised up by God to be the Priest of his people. Nor was there in the Aaronic priesthood a type of the kingly and priestly office of Christ, as belonging to the same Person; since the priests under the law were not kings, nor the kings priests. Moreover, Melchizedek's being represented as 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life,' plainly signifies, that the execution of his priestly office depended immediately on God, who raised him up as an extraordinary Person for this end, as well as that he remains a Priest for ever. Hence, if we take both types together, we have a very plain and clear representation of Christ's priestly office. [See Note 3 O, page 543.]

The Necessity of Satisfaction for Sin

We shall now consider the necessity of Christ's executing that part of his priestly office which consists in his making satisfaction to divine justice. [See Note 3 P, page 545.] This is generally denied by those who oppose his divinity; particularly the Socinians, who maintain that God pardons sin without satisfaction. Others, who do not altogether deny the satisfaction of Christ, suppose that God might have pardoned sin without it,—that, however, it was more expedient to make a demand of it than not, in as much as his honour, as the Governor of the world, is secured thereby,—that, therefore, his demanding satisfaction is the result of his will,—and that, accordingly, he might have required and accepted of a satisfaction fress valuable than what was given him by our Saviour. This opinion is equally to be opposed with the former, as derogatory to the glory of the divine perfections.

Now, when we assert the necessity of satisfaction, we mean, that God could not, in consistency with his holiness and justice, pardon sin without it; and that no satisfaction, short of that which Christ gave, is sufficient to answer the designed end, or worthy to be accepted by God, as a price of redemption. When we assert that satisfaction was necessary, moreover, we would be understood as intending the necessity of it in the same sense as that of forgiveness of sin, or of salvation; the necessity being conditional, or founded on the supposition that God designed to save sinners. This he might have refused to have done; and then there would have been no room for satisfaction to be given to his justice. But as God designed to be reconciled to his people, and to bring them to glory, we cannot but assert the necessity of satisfaction in order to the accomplishment of these ends. We shall now offer some proofs of this.

1. The necessity of satisfaction appears from the holiness of God. in as much as he is infinitely perfect, he cannot but will and love that which is most agreeable to his nature, and which contains the brightest display of his image, which consists in righteousness and true holiness. Accordingly, it is said, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.' From this it follows that he cannot but hate, and have an infinite aversion to, whatever is contrary to righteousness and true holiness. If his love of holiness be founded in the perfection of his nature, then his hatred of sin, which is opposite to it, must also be founded in that perfection. Accordingly, it is said, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity;'z and elsewhere, 'Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' Now, God's hating sin consists in his infinite opposition to it, and so it is natural to him; or in his will, to punish it; and, consequent on this, in his actual punishing of it. If the first of these be necessary, the others must be so likewise; or, if he be a holy God, he cannot but determine to punish sin, and afterwards to put his determination in execution.

Moreover, he is obliged to manifest his hatred of sin; otherwise he could not be glorified by his creatures, as an holy God. He cannot have the glory of any attribute ascribed to him, unless there be a visible display of it. Hence, he is obliged to demonstrate his hatred of sin, by punishing it. And, since this obligation arises from a necessity of nature, and not merely from an act of his will, it follows that he is obliged to punish all sin, even that which he designs to pardon. But this could not have been done without a demand of satisfaction to be given, by a surety, in the sinner's behalf; which plainly evinces the necessity of satisfaction.

2. This farther appears, from the punishment threatened by the law of God. This also is necessary. For understanding that it is so, let it be considered that God cannot but give a law to intelligent creatures, who, as such, are the subjects of moral government, and therefore under a natural obligation to yield obedience to him. But this they could not do, if the law were not given and promulgated.—Again, it was necessary for God to annex a threatening to his law; so that punishment would be due to those who violate it. By means of this threatening, obedience would be enforced; and that fear which is excited by it, would be an additional motive to obey. For without such a threatening, the sinner would be ready to conclude, that he might go on in his rebellion against God with impunity.—Moreover, if the law be violated, as it is by sin, the truth of God, as the result of the threatening annexed to it, obliges him to punish the violation of it, either in our own persons, or in the person of our surety; that so the honour of his law might be secured, which he is obliged to vindicate, as it contains a bright display of the glory of his perfections.

3. If God could, consistently with his own perfections, pardon sin without satisfaction, he would not have sent his well-beloved Son to

suffer for it. This plainly appears from his wisdom and goodness. It is not consistent with the glory of his wisdom for him to bring about a thing with so much difficulty, and with such displays of his vindictive justice, in punishing one who never offended him, if he could have answered the great end designed on easier terms, or have brought about the work of our salvation without it. Nor does it consist with his goodness to inflict punishment, where it is not absolutely necessary; for, agreeably to this perfection, he delights rather to extend compassion than to display his vindictive justice, if it might be avoided. Accordingly, he is described in scripture, speaking after the manner of men, as punishing sin with a kind of regret, or reluctance. Inflicting punishment is called 'his strange work.'c It is said also, that 'he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;' but, on the other hand, 'delighteth in mercy.'e Hence, if he could, consistently with his perfections, have pardoned sin without satisfaction, he would not have commanded the sword of his vindictive justice to 'awake against the man that is his fellow,' as an expedient to bring about an end which might have been attained without it. Moreover, if God could have pardoned sin without satisfaction, then his giving his own Son to perform it for us, would not have been such a wonderful instance of divine grace, as it is represented to be in scripture; for it would not have been the only expedient to bring about our salvation, if satisfaction were not absolutely necessary for this end.

The Nature of the Satisfaction Required

We are now to consider what kind of satisfaction God demanded for the expiating of sin. There are many who do not pretend, in all respects, to deny the necessity of satisfaction; but, when they explain what they mean by it, their opinion amounts to little more than a denial of it. Thus the heathen, who had learned by tradition that

sacrifices were to be offered to make atonement for sin, concluded that these were sufficient to satisfy for it, and thereby to deliver from its guilt. Some of the Jews, also, in a degenerate age of the church, seemed to have nothing else in view, and to have no regard to the spiritual meaning of the sacrifices, or their reference as types to Christ's satisfaction; for they rested in these sacrifices, supposing that the multitude of them was sufficient to satisfy for those vile abominations of which they were guilty. On this account, God expresses the greatest dislike of their sacrifices when he says, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.' Elsewhere he tells them, 'I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices.'h He does not mean that these were not instituted by him; but it is as if he had said, 'I did not hereby intend that they should be reckoned a sufficient price to satisfy my justice for sin.' To guard against the supposition that their sacrifices could serve this purpose, the apostle says, 'It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins; or they were far from being a sufficient price to satisfy God. Moreover, the Papists speak much of human satisfactions, consisting in various penances, fastings, leading a mortified life, parting with their estates, and submitting to voluntary poverty, with a design to make atonement for sin. The main foundation of this opinion, is their supposing, that whatever satisfaction God demands for sin is the result of his will, and that therefore he might accept of the smallest act of obedience and suffering as sufficient to compensate for it, because he has deemed it so. They, accordingly, distinguish between giving satisfaction to God, and to his justice. God, say they, may accept of, or be satisfied with, the smallest price, instead of that which is most valuable; whereas, nothing can, properly speaking, be said to satisfy

justice, but that which has in it a value in proportion to what is purchased by it. As to the former branch of this distinction, we deny that God can accept any thing as a price of redemption, but what has a tendency to secure the glory of his perfections; and we assert that nothing less than an infinite price can do this, and that, therefore, the distinction is vain, and nothing to their purpose. Or, if they suppose that God can be satisfied with what justice does not conclude sufficient, then their supposition is blasphemous, and derogatory to the divine perfections. We can allow of no satisfaction, but what tends to set forth the glory and fulfil the demands of divine justice. Accordingly, we are to consider, that the satisfaction which was demanded by the justice of God, for the expiation of sin, must contain two things.

1. It must be of infinite value, otherwise it would not be sufficient to compensate for the injuries offered to the divine name by sin. Sin is objectively infinite, and deserves a punishment proportioned to it; and hence, the price demanded to satisfy for it must be of corresponding value. The justice of God would cast the utmost contempt on any thing that falls short of this. The prophet represents a person as making a very large overture, which one would think sufficient if a finite price were so, when he speaks, in a beautiful climax or gradation, of coming before the Lord 'with burnt-offerings,' and these well-chosen, 'calves of a year old,' and a multitude of them. 'Will the Lord,' says he, 'be pleased with thousands of rams,' a price which very few were able to give, 'or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?' Here he offers more than it was possible to give. Then he ascends higher, and, if it were sufficient, would part with 'his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul.' All these are reckoned an inconsiderable price, not sufficient to procure the thing designed. Hence, he who offers it, is advised, instead of pretending to satisfy divine justice by a finite price, 'to

walk humbly with his God,' and, whatever obedience he is obliged to perform, not to have the vanity to think that it is a sufficient price to answer that end.

2. Satisfaction must bear some similitude or resemblance, as to the matter of it, to that debt which was due from those for whom it was to be given. Here we must consider what was the debt due from us, for which a demand of satisfaction was made. This was twofold. There was first a debt of perfect and sinless obedience, whereby the glory of God's sovereignty might be secured, and the honour of his law maintained. This debt it was morally impossible for man to pay after his fall; for it implies a contradiction to say that a fallen creature can yield sinless obedience. Yet it was demanded of us, though fallen; for the obligation could not be disannulled by our disability to perform it. There was next a debt of punishment, which we were liable to, in proportion to the demerit of sin, as the result of the condemning sentence of the law, which threatened death for every transgression and disobedience. Now, if satisfaction be made to the justice of God, it must have these ingredients in it.

As to the infinite value of the price which was given, it is contested by none but those who deny the divinity of Christ. The arguments which we have brought in defence of our Lord's true deity, and others by which we have proved the necessity that our Mediator should be God, render it less needful for us, at present, to enlarge on this subject. But there are many, who do not deny the necessity of an infinite satisfaction, who will not allow that it is necessary that there should be a resemblance between the debt contracted and satisfaction given.

By these, it is objected, that the least act of obedience, or one drop of Christ's blood, was a sufficient price to satisfy divine justice. In

defence of this opinion they argue, that these must be supposed to have had an infinite value; that nothing can be greater that what is infinite; and that, therefore, one act of obedience was sufficient to redeem the whole world of fallen men, or the whole number of fallen angels, if God had pleased to order it so. Now, we do not deny that the least act of obedience, or sufferings performed by our Saviour, would have been of infinite value, in as much as we do not conclude the infinity of obedience to consist in a multitude of acts, or in its being perfectly sinless. We do not deem his sufferings infinite, merely because they were exquisite, or greater than what mankind are generally liable to in this world, but because they were the obedience and sufferings of a divine Person; and according to the same method of reasoning, we admit that the least act of obedience and suffering, performed by him, would have been infinite. It does not follow, however, that this would have been a sufficient price of redemption; for the sufficiency of the price arises, not only from the infinite value of it, but from God's will to accept it; and he could not be willing to accept any price, but what had a tendency to illustrate and set forth the glory of his holiness as a sin-hating God,—of his sovereignty in the government of the world, in such a way, that the most fit means might be used to prevent the commission of sin,—and of his truth, in fulfilling the threatenings denounced, to which man was exposed by violating the law. Now, these ends could not be answered by one single instance of obedience or suffering; and therefore God could not deem them sufficient. It is plain, too, that he did not deem them sufficient; for, if he had, he would not have delivered our Saviour to suffer all that he did, concerning whom it is said, 'he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' Moreover, it was necessary that redemption should be brought about in such a way as would lay the sinner under the highest obligation to admire the love, both of the Father and the Son. Now, if Christ had performed only one act of obedience, or suffered in only the least

degree, such an instance of condescension, though infinite, would not have had so great a tendency to answer this end; nor could it have been said, as it is, with a great emphasis of expression, that 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'n

It is objected, by others, that Christ's active obedience was no part of the satisfaction which he gave for us, in as much as this was a debt due from him for himself, his human nature, in which alone he could yield obedience, being under a natural obligation to perform it; so that he could not be said to pay that debt for us, which was due for himself. As for his passive obedience, say the objectors, that, indeed, might be performed for us; because, being an innocent Person, he was not under any obligation to suffer, except by his own consent. But this, they contend, cannot be said of his active obedience. And they add, that, if he had performed active obedience for us, it would have exempted us from an obligation to yield obedience ourselves; and, consequently, this doctrine leads to licentiousness.—Now, we allow that Christ, as Man, was obliged to perform obedience, as a debt due from him as a creature, and that, therefore, now he is in heaven, he is under the same obligation; though this has no reference to the work of our redemption, which was finished before he went thither. We contend, however, that the obedience he performed before his death, might be deemed a part of that satisfaction which he gave to the justice of God for us. His being under the law, was the result of his own voluntary consent; in as much as his incarnation, which was necessary to his becoming a subject, was the result of the consent of his divine will. Now, if he came into the world, and thereby put himself into a capacity of yielding obedience by his own consent, which no other person ever did, then his obedience, which was the consequence of his doing so, might be said to be voluntary, and so deemed a part of the satisfaction which he gave to the justice

of God in our behalf.—Again, though we do not deny that Christ's active obedience was a debt due to God for himself, yet it does not follow that it may not be imputed to us, nor accepted for us; even as that perfect obedience which was to have been performed by Adam, according to the tenor of the first covenant, though it were to have been imputed to all his posterity, was, nevertheless, primarily due from him for himself.—As to that part of the objection in which it is supposed that Christ's obedience for us would exempt us from an obligation to yield obedience, it is generally brought by those who desire to render the doctrine we are maintaining odious, and take no notice of what we say in explaining our sense of it. In answer to it, let it be considered, that, when we say Christ obeyed for us, we do not suppose that he designed by his obedience to exempt us from any obligation to yield obedience to God's commanding will, but only to exempt us from performing it with the same view that he did. We are, by his having obeyed for us, excused, not from yielding obedience to God as a Sovereign, but from doing it with a view of meriting thereby, or making atonement for our defect of obedience, which was the result of our fallen state. Hence, we are to say, 'When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do,' without considering it as that righteousness by which we are to be justified in the sight of God. We understand our obligation to yield active obedience, in the same sense as we are obliged patiently to suffer whatever afflictions God is pleased to lay on us, from which we are not exempted by Christ's sufferings. The only difference between them is, that his sufferings are penal and satisfactory. He suffered for us, that, by his doing so, he might purchase for us eternal life, which is not the end of a believer's suffering. Why, then, may it not be allowed, that Christ might perform obedience for us, and we, at the same time, not be excused from it?

As to the sufferings of Christ, it is objected, by others, that the whole of his passive obedience was not demanded as a price of redemption for us, but only what he endured upon the cross, which was the greatest and most formidable part of his sufferings, and particularly those which he endured from the sixth to the ninth hour, while there was darkness over all the land, in which his soul was afflicted in so extraordinary a manner, that he cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'q As for his other sufferings, endured in the whole course of his life, the objectors allow that these were a convincing evidence of his love to us, and were designed as an example, to induce us to bear afflictions with patience. But they maintain that it was only his sufferings upon the cross which were satisfactory, and that the cross was the altar on which he offered himself for us; and they adduce in support of their opinion those scriptures which speak of our redemption and justification, as the effect of his crucifixion and death, rather than of his sufferings in life. Now, though redemption and salvation are attributed, in many scriptures, to Christ's death, or to his shedding his blood upon the cross for us; yet there is, in all of them, a figurative way of speaking, in which, by a synecdoche, a part is taken for the whole; so that his sufferings in life, though not particularly mentioned in them, are not excluded. There is one scripture, in which, by the same figurative way of speaking, our justification is ascribed to Christ's active obedience: 'By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.' Here, though his passive obedience is not mentioned, it is not excluded. So, when we read of Christ's sufferings on the cross as being a part of his satisfaction, we are not to suppose that his sufferings in life are excluded. The apostle plainly intimates as much, when he says, 'He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'s He humbled himself, not only in his death, but in all the sufferings he endured, in the whole course of his life. We must conclude, therefore, that what he endured in his infancy, and the

poverty, temptation, reproach, and contradiction of sinners against himself, and all the other miseries which he underwent during the whole course of his life, which were a part of the curse due to us for sin, were submitted to by him to expiate it, and consequently were a part of his satisfaction. As for the cross being styled, as it is, by some ancient and modern writers, the altar on which Christ offered himself, we think the notion little more than a strain of rhetoric. Or, if it be designed to illustrate the opinion we are now opposing, we deny that the cross ought to be called the altar. It is nowhere so styled in scripture, nor have we ground to conclude, that the altar on which the sacrifices under the law were offered, was a type of Christ's cross in particular. Indeed, we have a better explanation of the spiritual meaning of it, given by Christ himself, when he speaks of the altar, as 'sanctifying the gift;' alluding to its being said concerning it that it is 'most holy, and whatsoever toucheth it shall be holy.'u From this it is inferred, that the altar was more holy than the gift which was laid upon it; and it signifies that the altar on which Christ was offered added an excellency to his offering. Now, nothing could be said to do so, but his divine nature being personally united to his human, which rendered his sacrifice infinitely valuable. This is, therefore, the altar on which Christ was offered; or, at least, this is that which sanctified the offering, and not the cross on which he suffered. [See Note 3 Q, p. 546.]

The Reality of the Atonement

We shall now prove, that what Christ did and suffered, was with a design to give satisfaction to the justice of God, and that what he offered was a true and proper sacrifice for sin. All allow that Christ obeyed and suffered. Even the Socinians themselves will not deny that Christ suffered for us; for this is very plainly stated in scripture. But the main stress of the controversy lies in this,—Whether Christ

died merely for our good, that is, that we might be induced to believe the truth of the doctrines he delivered, as he confirmed them by shedding his blood, and that he might give us an example of patience and holy fortitude under the various evils we are exposed to, either in life or death? This is the sense in which they understand Christ's dying for us. But there is a great deal more intended by his dying for us: it is intended by it that he died in our room and stead, or that he bore that for us which the justice of God demanded, as a debt primarily due from us, and that he did so as an expedient for taking away the guilt of sin, and delivering us from his wrath to which we were liable.

This will appear, if we consider that he is for this reason styled our Redeemer, as having purchased us by his death, or delivered us, in a judicial way, out of the hand of vindictive justice. This is the most proper, if not the only sense of the word redemption. [See Note 3 R, page 547.] The Socinians, indeed, speak of Christ as a Redeemer; but they understand the word in a metaphorical sense, as importing his delivering us from some evils to which we were exposed, not by paying a price of redemption for us, but by revealing those laws or doctrines which had a tendency to reform the world, or laying down some rules to direct the conversation of mankind, and remove some prejudices they had entertained. Now we assert, that, as our Redeemer, he dealt with the justice of God; as offering himself a sacrifice for sin. This appears from those scriptures which speak of his 'soul,' as 'made an offering for sin,' or of his being 'set forth to be a propitiation, to declare the righteousness of God for the remission of sins.'z In this respect, he answered the types under the law, in which atonement is said to have been made by sacrifice; which, being an act of worship, was performed to God alone. By such sacrifices sin was typically expiated, and the sinner discharged from the guilt to which he was liable. Accordingly, Christ is said, as the antitype of

them, to have 'offered himself without spot to God,' when he shed his blood for us, or to have 'put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,' and to have 'given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.' Moreover, what he did and suffered is styled 'a ransom,' or price of redemption; and they who were concerned in it are said to be 'bought with a price.'b He says, concerning himself, that 'he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' We read, in scripture, of a person's paying a sum of money as 'a ransom for his life,' when it was forfeited by his having been the culpable occasion of the death of another;d and if such a consideration, when exacted as a price of redemption, be styled a ransom, a person's laying down his life for another, may, with equal propriety, be so called. Now, Christ is said, in many scriptures, to have done this for us; and on this account, he is styled our Redeemer.

It is objected, that we often read in scripture of redemption, when there was no price paid. Thus Israel is said to have been 'redeemed out of Egypt, and Babylon;'f and elsewhere, speaking of their deliverance out of captivity, God says, 'I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible;' yet there was no price of redemption paid for their deliverance out of either Egypt or Babylon, but it was by the immediate power of God. So Jacob, when he speaks of his deliverance from evil by the angel, styles it, his 'redemption from all evil.'h Now, say the objectors, though we allow that the Angel he there speaks of, was our Lord Jesus Christ; yet the deliverance he wrought for Jacob was not by paying a price for him, but by exerting his divine power. The objectors add that others are called redeemers, who have been God's ministers in delivering his people. Thus Moses is called 'a ruler and deliverer, by the hands of the angel which appeared to him in the bush;' where, they say, the word translated 'deliverer,'k ought to be rendered 'a redeemer.' On these various

grounds, they conclude that there may be redemption without satisfaction.—But this objection, how plausible soever it may seem to be, is not unanswerable. The reply which may be given to it is, that though deliverance from evil may be styled redemption, as it often is in scripture, the reason of its being so called, is the reference which it has to that ransom which Christ was, after his incarnation, to pay for his people. This was the foundation of all that discriminating grace which-God, in former ages, extended to his people. It was on account of this that he did not suffer them to perish in Egypt, or Babylon. Accordingly, their deliverance thence is called a redemption. We never find, however, that any deliverance which God wrought for his enemies who have no concern in Christ's redemption, is so called. As to Moses being styled, in the scripture referred to, 'a redeemer,' the deliverance he wrought for the Israelites, as an instrument made use of by the Angel that appeared to him, may, without any impropriety of expression, be called a redemption, and he a redeemer; in as much as that deliverance which Christ wrought by him, was founded on the purchase which he designed to pay, otherwise Moses would not have been so styled.

2. There are many scriptures which speak of Christ's obedience and sufferings having been in our room and stead, whereby he performed what was due from us to the justice of God, which is the proper notion of satisfaction. Thus we are to understand those expressions in which he is said to 'die for us.' 'In due time,' says the apostle, 'Christ died for the ungodly;' and 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' By these expressions, we are to understand that he endured those sufferings in life and death to which we were liable,—that he did so with a design to procure for us justification, reconciliation to God, and eternal salvation,—and that herein he was substituted in our room and stead, as well as died for our good.m—That Christ died in this sense, for his people, farther appears from

his being said in scripture, to bear their sins. 'Who his own self,' says the apostle, 'bare our sins in his own body on the tree.' And elsewhere it is said, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken.'o All these expressions plainly denote that he suffered that which was due to them, or that he died in their room and stead. Again, he is said to have died for them in a sense in which none but he ever died for another. Much more, therefore, must be understood by his death than his dying for the good of mankind. The apostle, speaking of this matter, opposes Christ's sufferings to his own, with respect to their end and design. He says, 'Was Paul crucified for you?' which is as if he had said, 'It is true, I have suffered many things for the church's advantage; yet it would be a vile thing for you to entertain even the least surmise that my sufferings were endured with the same view that Christ suffered; for he died as a sacrifice for sin, that he might give a price of redemption to the justice of God, which no one else ever did.'

It is objected to what has been said in proof of Christ's dying in our room and stead, from his having borne our iniquities, that the expressions which say that he did so, denote nothing else but his taking our iniquities away, which he might do, if he had not died in our room and stead. Thus, say the objectors, we have, in reference to the scripture which speaks of Christ's bearing our iniquities, an explanation which shows that nothing is intended by it but his taking away some afflictions to which we were liable; for, on occasion of his 'casting out devils, and healing all that were sick,' it is said that he did this, 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our

sicknesses,' which he might be said to do, without his dying to satisfy the justice of God for us in our room and stead. We reply, that there are two things to be considered in the death of Christ; which, though distinct, are not to be separated. One is, his bearing those griefs, sorrows, or punishments which were due to us for sin; the other is, his taking them away, as the effect and consequence of his having borne them or answered for them. Now, the design of the prophet Isaiah, in his fifty-third chapter, as appears by several expressions in it, is to show that Christ did both these. Accordingly, when he is said to have 'borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,' both these senses are to be applied to the words. Peter explains one of the senses when he says, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;'s and the evangelist, in the text under consideration, explains the words of the prophet in both senses, when he says, 'Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses,' that is, he submitted to give satisfaction for them, and, as the consequence of this, healed those diseases to which we were liable, as the fruit of sin. The objection, therefore, taken from this scripture against the doctrine we are maintaining, is of no force; for though Christ took away those miseries which were the effects and consequences of sin, it does not follow that he did not do this by making satisfaction for it.

It is further objected that there are texts which speak of Christ's dying for us, where, though this mode of speaking is used, different ends are said to be attained by his dying for us from that of his giving satisfaction to the justice of God. Thus it is said that 'he gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world,' 'that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,'u and that he might 'leave us an example that we should follow his steps.' It is also said, in order that he might acquire to himself some additional circumstances of glory, that 'he died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and

living.'y These and similar ends are said to be attained by Christ's death; and, it is alleged, they do not argue that he died in our stead, but only for our advantage. The objectors add, that others are represented as suffering for the church, as well as Christ, that is, for their good; and that there is no difference in the mode of speaking respecting them, from that in which Christ is said to die for us. Thus the apostle says, 'I rejoice in my sufferings for you;' and this he explains elsewhere, when he speaks of his being 'afflicted,' for the church's 'consolation and salvation.'a Now, we do not deny that there are other ends designed by Christ's sufferings and death, besides his giving satisfaction to divine justice. But these are the result and consequence of the latter. Hence, we must first consider him as dying in our stead, and then consider the fruits and effects which redound to our advantage. The one is so far from being inconsistent with the other, that it is necessary to it. In some of the scriptures just mentioned both of the ends are expressed, the former being the ground and reason of the latter. When, for example, it is said, 'He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world,' the meaning is, he first made satisfaction for sin, and then, as the consequence of this, in the application of redemption, he designed to deliver us from the evils we are exposed to in this world. When, again, the apostle speaks of 'Christ's purifying to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' he does not mention this as the chief, much less as the only design of his giving himself for his people; but he states that the design was, first, 'that he might redeem them from all iniquity,' namely, by giving a satisfaction to justice for them, and then that, having redeemed, he might purify them to himself. When, farther, it is said, 'He died, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living,' the meaning is, that he might purchase that dominion which he hath over them as Mediator, or that, having satisfied divine justice for them as a Priest, he might have dominion over them as a King. These two ends, then, are not inconsistent with

each other; and therefore the latter does not destroy the former. As for the scripture in which the apostle speaks of his sufferings for the church, or for their 'consolation and salvation,' we may observe that he does not say that he suffered for them, much less in their room and stead, or as a propitiation to make reconciliation, that he might promote their consolation and salvation, as Christ did. Still less is it said of any besides the Redeemer, that 'he gave his life a ransom for them.' This is an expression peculiar to himself, wherein his death is represented as a price of redemption for them.

3. That Christ died in our room and stead, and consequently designed by his death to give satisfaction to the justice of God for our sin, appears from the fact that his death was typified by the sacrifices under the ceremonial law. These, it is plain, were substituted in the room of the offender for whom they were offered. We read of 'the priest's laying his hands on the head of the sacrifice, and confessing over it the iniquities' of those for whom it was offered. On this account, it is said to 'have borne them;' and the consequence was the discharge of the offenders from the guilt which they had contracted. This is called, making atonement for sin. Now, that this was a type of Christ's making satisfaction for our sins by his death, is evident from the fact that the apostle, having spoken concerning this ceremonial ordinance, applies it to him. He says, 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;'d and elsewhere, when referring to 'the sacrifice of the Lord's passover,' as the paschal lamb was styled, he says, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.'f As such, Christ is said 'to be made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' And as they who were ordained to perform the service of making atonement are called priests, Christ, as typified by them, is so styled.

I am sensible it will be objected, that the sacrifices under the ceremonial law were not instituted with a design to typify Christ's death. This would hardly have been asserted by any, it being so contrary to the sense of many scriptures, had it not been thought necessary to support the cause which the objectors maintain. Having said something concerning it before, when considering the origin of the ceremonial law, I shall add only, that it is very absurd to suppose that God appointed sacrifices, not as types of Christ, but to prevent the Israelites from following the custom of the heathen, in sacrificing to their gods; that the heathen did not take their rites of sacrificing from the Jews, but the Jews from them; and that God, foreseeing that the Jews would be inclined to follow the heathens' example in this matter, indulged them in regard to it, and only made a change with respect to its object, in ordaining that, instead of offering sacrifice to idols, they should offer it to himself. This theory runs counter to all the methods of providence in the government of the church; which have been so far from giving occasion to it to symbolize with the religion of the heathen, in their external rites of worship, that God strictly forbade all commerce with them. Thus Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, an idolatrous country, to live in the land of Canaan; and there he was to be no other than a stranger, or sojourner, that he might not, by too great familiarity with the inhabitants, learn their ways. Afterwards, the Jews were prohibited from having any dealings with the Egyptians; not because civil commerce was unlawful, but lest intercourse with them should give occasion to the Jews to imitate them in their rites of worship. To prevent this intercourse, the multiplying of horses was forbidden.i On this account, the church says, 'We will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods;' that is, we will not do any thing which may be a temptation to us to join with the Egyptians, or other heathen nations, in their

idolatry. Certainly, therefore, God did not ordain sacrifices in compliance with the heathen, but to typify Christ's death.

We have thus endeavoured to prove that Christ gave satisfaction to the justice of God for sin, as he was a true and proper sacrifice for it. I might, for the farther strengthening of the argument, have proved, as respects the end of Christ's death assigned by the Socinians, namely, that he might confirm his doctrine, not that he might make atonement for sin, that death can hardly be reckoned an expedient to confirm any doctrine. There are many instances of persons having laid down their lives to confirm doctrines which were false. Nothing more is proved by a person's dying for a doctrine than that he himself believes it, or else is under the power of delusion or distraction. But a person's believing the doctrine he advances, is no evidence of its truth. Besides, our Saviour's doctrines were sufficiently confirmed by the miracles which he wrought for that end. Indeed, were this the only end of Christ's dying, I cannot see how it differs from the death of the apostles, and other martyrs for the sake of the gospel. Christ laid down his life, however, with other views, and for higher ends, than those for which any other person ever suffered. We may add, that if Christ died only to confirm his doctrine, or, as is farther alleged by those whom we oppose, that he might give us an example of submission to the divine will and patience in suffering, it would have been no manner of advantage to the Old Testament saints. Christ could not be an example to them; nor were the doctrines which it is pretended he suffered to confirm, such as were promulged in their time. On this supposition, therefore, Christ was no Saviour to them; nor could they reap any advantage by what he was to do and suffer; nor would they have been represented as desiring and hoping for his coming, or, as is said of Abraham, 'rejoicing to see his day;' and if we suppose that they were saved, it must have been without faith in him. They who adopt this method of

reasoning, not only militate against Christ being a proper sacrifice, but render his cross of none effect, at least to those who lived before his incarnation. They also exhibit his death, which was the greatest instance of love that could be expressed to the children of men, as not absolutely necessary to their salvation.

Before we close this Head, we shall consider an objection generally brought against the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, namely, that he did not undergo the punishment due for our sins, because he did not suffer eternally, and because his sufferings were not attended with the despair and some other circumstances of punishment to which sinners are liable in the other world. We answer, that the infinite value of Christ's sufferings did compensate for their not being eternal. Indeed, the eternity of sufferings is the result of their not being satisfactory; a consideration which cannot be applicable to those which Christ endured. As for despair, attended with impatience, and other sins committed by those that suffer eternal punishments, the former arise from the eternal duration of the punishments, the latter from corruption of nature, which, while complaining of the severity of his dispensations, refuses to subscribe to the justice of God.

We have thus considered Christ's death, as a true and proper sacrifice for sin. We might now take notice of an expression used in this Answer, and taken from the words of the apostle, that 'he once offered himself,' and that 'without spot, to God.'n This offering being sufficient to answer the end designed, there was no need of repeating it, or of his doing any thing else with the same view; the justice of God having declared itself fully satisfied when he was raised from the dead. But, having already considered the infinite value of what he did and suffered, and its efficacy to bring about the work of our redemption, whereby it appears to be more excellent than all the

sacrifices which were offered under the ceremonial law, I need not say any more on that subject. As we have also considered Christ as being sinless, and therefore offering himself as a Lamb, without spot and blemish, and how this was the necessary result of the extraordinary formation and union of the human nature with his divine Person, and the unction which he received from the Holy Ghost, I shall, at present, observe only what is said concerning his offering himself to God. This he is said, in the scripture just referred to, to have done 'through the eternal Spirit.' These words are commonly understood of his eternal Godhead, which added an infinite value to his sacrifice, or, like the altar, sanctified the gift; which is certainly a great truth. But it seems more agreeable to the most known sense of the word 'Spirit,' to understand them concerning his presenting himself, or making a tender of the service he performed, by the hand of the eternal Spirit unto God, as an acceptable sacrifice. The main difficulty in this scripture, however, is what is objected by the Socinians and others who deny his deity, namely, how he could be said to offer himself to God, since that is the same as to say that he offered himself to himself, he being, as we formerly proved, God equal with the Father. But there is no absurdity in this assertion, if it be understood concerning the service performed by him in his human nature. This service, though rendered worthy to be offered by virtue of the union of the human nature with his divine Person, yet, as to the act of worship involved in it, terminated on the Godhead, or tended to the securing of the glory of the perfections of that divine nature which is common to all the divine Persons. It is in this sense that some ancient writers are to be understood, when they say that Christ may be said to offer up himself to himself; that is, the service performed in the human nature was the thing offered, and the object of the service, to which all acts of worship are referred, was the divine nature, which belongs to himself as well as the Father.

The Extent of the Atonement

We shall now consider the persons for whom, as a Priest, Christ offered himself, and so enter on that subject which is so much controverted in the present age, namely, whether Christ died for all men, or only for the elect whom he designed to redeem and bring to salvation. Here we shall premise some thoughts.

1. It is generally taken for granted, by those who maintain either side of the question, that the saving effects of Christ's death do not redound to all men, or that Christ did not die, in this respect, for all the world. To assert this would be to argue that all men shall be saved; which every one supposes contrary to the whole tenor of scripture.

2. It is allowed, by those who deny the extent of Christ's death to all men, as to what concerns their salvation, that it may truly be said, that there are, as the consequence of Christ's death, some blessings redounding to the whole world, and more especially to those who sit under the sound of the gospel. It is owing to the death of Christ that the day of God's patience is lengthened out; that the preaching of the gospel is continued to those who are favoured with it; and that this is attended, in many, with restraining grace, and some instances of external reformation, which, though they may not issue in salvation, have a tendency to prevent a multitude of sins, and a greater degree of condemnation which would otherwise ensue. These may be called the remote or secondary ends of Christ's death. Though it was principally and immediately designed to redeem the elect, and to purchase all saving blessings for them, which shall be applied in his own time and way; yet others are, in consequence, made partakers of some blessings of common providence, so far as they are subservient to the salvation of those for whom he gave himself a ransom.

3. It is allowed on both sides, and especially by all who own the divinity and satisfaction of Christ, that his death was sufficient to redeem the whole world, had God designed that it should be a price for them. This is the result of the infinite value of it.

4. The main question before us, therefore, is, Whether God designed the salvation of all mankind by the death of Christ, or whether he accepted it as a price of redemption for all, so that it might be said, that he redeemed some who shall not be saved by him? This is affirmed by many who maintain universal redemption,—a doctrine which we must take leave to deny. They add, as an explanation of their opinion, that Christ died in order that he might put all men into a salvable state, or procure for them a possibility of salvation, so that many might obtain it, by a right improvement of his death, who shall fall short of it; and also that it is in their power to frustrate the ends of his death, and so render it ineffectual. This we judge not only to be an error, but such as is highly derogatory to the glory of God. We shall endeavour to make this appear, and shall endeavour also to establish the contrary doctrine, namely, that Christ died to purchase salvation for none but those who shall obtain it.

I. That Christ did not die equally and alike for all men, appears from those distinguishing characters which accompany salvation, and which are given to those for whom he died.

1. They are called his 'sheep.' 'I am the good Shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' This metaphor must certainly imply, that they for whom Christ died are distinguished from the world, as the objects of his immediate care and special gracious providence. There are also several things in the context, containing a farther description of the 'sheep' for whom he laid down his life, which cannot be applied to the whole world. Thus it is said, 'I know

my sheep, and am known of them,'p that is, with a knowledge of affection, as the word 'knowledge' is often used in scripture to mean, when applied to Christ or his people. Again, the sheep are described as those who shall certainly obtain salvation. Our Saviour says concerning them, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' But this privilege, without doubt, belongs not to the whole world. They are considered also as believers, in as much as faith is the necessary consequence of Christ's redemption, and accordingly are distinguished from the world, or that part of it which is left in unbelief and impenitency. Accordingly, Christ says, concerning those who rejected his Person and gospel, 'Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.'r

2. They for whom Christ died are called his 'friends,' and, as such, the objects of his highest love. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' They are farther described, in the following words, as expressing their love to him by 'doing whatsoever he commandeth them.' And, as he calls them 'friends,' so they are distinguished from 'servants,' or slaves, who, though they may be made partakers of common favours, yet are not made acquainted with his secrets. 'All things,' says he to them, 'that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.'t They are farther distinguished from the world, in as much as they are 'chosen' by Christ, 'and ordained that they should go, and bring forth fruit.' There are also several other privileges which accompany salvation, which are said to belong to these friends of Christ for whom he died.

It is objected, that what Christ here says, concerning his friends, is particularly directed to his disciples, with whom at that time he conversed; that he considers them as persons who had made a right

improvement of his redeeming love; and that, therefore, they were likely to reap the happy fruits and effects of that redemption which the whole world might be made partakers of if they would. We reply, that, whatever promises or privileges Christ's disciples were made partakers of, if these do not immediately respect their character as ministers, but as Christians, are equally to be applied to all believers. Now, that what Christ says to those whom he calls his friends is applicable to all believers, appears from their being described as 'abiding in him,' and 'bringing forth much fruit' under the powerful influence of his grace, 'without whom they can do nothing.' Moreover, when he speaks of the 'world's hating them, because they are not of the world,' and of 'the Comforter being sent to testify of him,' in order to the confirmation of their faith, he speaks of what belongs to all believers as such. Hence, all believers are as much described as Christ's friends for whom he laid down his life, as his disciples to whom he more immediately directed his discourse. As for the other part of the objection, namely, that the disciples had made a right improvement of Christ's redemption, the reply which may be given is, that none but Christ's friends can be said to have made a right improvement of redemption, and therefore none but such have any ground to conclude that Christ died for them. But this is not the temper and character of the greater part of mankind. Hence, Christ did not die for the whole world. It is very evident, also, from the character which Christ gives of those for whom he died, that either they are or shall be of enemies made friends to him.

3. They are called, the 'children of God that were scattered abroad, who should be gathered together in one,' as the consequence of his death. This gathering together in one seems to import the same thing as that which the apostle speaks of as a display of the grace of the gospel, and which he calls their 'being gathered together in Christ their Head.' One part of them he considers as already in heaven, and

the other part of them as on earth, in their way to it; and he speaks such things concerning them in the preceding and following context, as cannot be said of any but those who shall be saved. Now, if Christ designed by his death to purchase this special privilege for his children, certainly it cannot be supposed that he died for the whole world. Elsewhere, too, the apostle, speaking of 'the Captain of our salvation being made perfect through sufferings,'z considers his being so as a means for 'bringing many sons unto glory;' which is a peculiar privilege belonging to the heirs of salvation, and not to the whole world.

It will be objected, that nothing can be proved from the words of so vile a person as Caiaphas, who relates the words on which our present argument is founded; and that, therefore, though they are contained in scripture, they do not prove the truth of the doctrine which is pretended to be established by them. But though Caiaphas was one of the vilest men on earth, and either did not believe this prophecy himself, or, if he did, made a very bad use of it; yet this does not invalidate the prediction. For while wicked men may occasionally have some prophetic intimations concerning future events, as Balaam had, the instrument which the Spirit of God makes use of in discovering them to mankind, does not render them less certain, since the worst of men may be employed to impart the greatest truths. It is sufficient to our purpose, therefore, that it is said, in the words immediately foregoing, that 'being high priest that year, he prophesied;' for it was no uncommon thing for the high priest to have prophetic intimations from God to deliver to the people, whatever his personal character might be. Hence, we must consider this as a divine oracle, and therefore infallibly true.

It is objected again, that, even allowing that what is here predicted was true, yet the subject of the prediction respects the nation of the

Jews, concerning whom it cannot be said that every individual was in a state of salvation; so that it rather militates against, than proves the doctrine of particular redemption. But it is evident that, when it is said that 'Christ should die for that nation,' the meaning is, the children of God in that nation. The children of God who dwelt there, are opposed to his children who were scattered abroad. Hence, the meaning is, Christ died that they should not perish who have the temper and disposition of his children, wherever the place of their residence be.

4. They for whom Christ died are called his 'church,' of which he is 'the Head;' and 'the body,' of whom he is the Saviour;' and these he is said 'to have loved, and given himself for.'b Now, the church is distinguished from the world, as it is gathered out of it; the word 'church' being, in this place, taken in a very different sense from that in which it is understood in many other scriptures. The apostle does not mean merely a number of professing people, of whom some are sincere and others may be hypocrites, or of whom some shall be saved and others not; nor does he speak of those who are apparently in the way of salvation, as making a visible profession of the Christian religion. But he speaks of that church which is elsewhere called 'the spouse of Christ,' which is united to him by faith, and which shall in the end be eternally saved by him. This is very evident; for he speaks of them as 'sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word.' And, as to their future state, they are such as shall hereafter be 'presented to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.'d Now, as it was for these that Christ died, it cannot be reasonably concluded that he died equally and alike for all mankind. We may add, that they are called 'his people,' whom he designed 'to save from their sins;' and also 'a peculiar people,' who possess, and shall be known by the character of being 'zealous of good works.'f By his death, they are said not only to

be redeemed, so as to be put into the possession of the external privileges of the gospel, but 'redeemed from all iniquity,' and purified unto himself. Now, all these expressions certainly denote those distinguishing blessings which Christ, by his death, designed to purchase for those who are the objects of his redemption.

II. That Christ did not die equally and alike for all mankind, appears from the fact that his death was an instance of the highest love, and that they who are concerned in it are in a peculiar manner obliged to bless him for it as such. The apostle joins these ideas together, when he says, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' Elsewhere it is said, 'He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;'h and herein it is said that 'God commendeth his love towards us,' as that which is without a parallel. Besides, when the apostle speaks of the love of Christ expressed in his dying for men, he seems to distinguish it from that common love which is extended to all; he says, 'Christ died for us.' That we may understand what he means, we must consider to whom it was that this epistle was directed, namely, to such as were 'beloved of God, called to be saints.'k They are described also as persons who 'were justified by Christ's blood,' and who 'should be saved from wrath through him;' 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son,' and who 'should be saved by his life;' and who, as such, 'joyed in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by him had received the atonement.' Surely, then, they who were thus beloved by Christ, to whom he expressed his love by dying for them, must be distinguished from the world. Moreover, our Saviour speaks of this as far exceeding all that love which is in the breasts of men to one another: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.'m We have, therefore, no reason to suppose that he died equally and alike for all; for then there would be in his death an equal instance of love to the best and to the worst of men. Judas would have been as much beloved as Peter,—the Scribes

and Pharisees, Christ's avowed enemies and persecutors, as much beloved as his disciples and faithful followers,—if there be nothing discriminating in his dying love. We must conclude, therefore, that he died to procure some distinguishing blessings for a part of mankind, which all are not partakers of. And as this love is so great and discriminating, it is the subject of the eternal praise of glorified saints. The 'new song' which is sung to him, is a celebrating of his glory, as having 'redeemed those to God by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,' who were admitted into his immediate presence, as the objects of his distinguishing love. Certainly all this implies more than his purchasing the gospel-dispensation, or the discovery of the way of salvation to mankind, of whom the greater part neglect and despise it, and reap no saving advantage by it.

III. There are some circumstances attending the death of Christ, which argue that it was not designed for all the world. In particular, he died as a surety, or as one who undertook to pay that debt which the justice of God might have exacted of men in their own persons. This has already been proved; and what may be inferred from it is, that if Christ, by dying, paid this debt, and when he rose again from the dead, received a discharge from the hand of justice, then God will not exact the debt twice, so as to bring those under the condemning sentence of the law whom Christ by his death has delivered from it. But this certainly is a privilege which does not belong to the whole world. Moreover, some are not, and never shall be, justified or discharged for the sake of a ransom paid. It may be concluded, therefore, that it was not given for them.

IV. It farther appears that Christ did not die equally and alike for all men, from the fact that he designed to purchase that dominion over those for whom he died, or that propriety in them, which would be

the necessary result of his dying for them. As they are his trust and charge, given into his hand to be redeemed by his blood; and as, in that respect, he undertook to satisfy, and by his death did satisfy, the justice of God for them; so, as the result of this, he acquired a right to them, as Mediator, by redemption. Pursuant, also, to the eternal covenant between the Father and him, he obtained a right to bestow eternal life on all that were given to, and purchased by him. This tends to set forth the Father's glory, as he designed hereby to recover and bring back fallen creatures to himself; and it redounds to Christ's glory, as Mediator. Herein not only does he discover the infinite value of his obedience and sufferings, but all his redeemed ones are rendered the monuments of his love and grace, and shall for ever be employed in celebrating his praise. But certainly this is inconsistent with his death being ineffectual to answer this end; and consequently he died for none but those whom he will bring to glory, which he could not be said to have done, had he laid down his life for the whole world.

V. That Christ did not die, or pay a price of redemption for all the world, farther appears from the fact, that salvation, whether begun, carried on, or perfected, is represented, in scripture, as the application of it; and that all the graces which are wrought by the Spirit in believers, are described as its necessary result and consequence. This will appear, if we consider that, when Christ speaks of his Spirit as 'sent to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to guide' his people 'into all truth,' he says, 'He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.' The meaning is, that the Spirit should apply what Christ had purchased; whereby his glory, as our Redeemer, would be eminently illustrated. Elsewhere, also, when the apostle speaks of the Spirit's work of regeneration and sanctification, he considers it as the result of Christ's death. Accordingly, the Spirit is said to be 'shed on us

abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'p Again, when Christ is spoken of as 'redeeming them that were under the law,' their receiving 'the adoption of sons,' and all the privileges contained in it, are considered as the necessary consequence of his redeeming them. Moreover, Christ's being 'not spared, but delivered up' unto death for those who are described as chosen, called, justified, and such as shall be hereafter glorified, is assigned as a convincing evidence, that 'God will with him freely give them all things.'r Now this cannot, with the least shadow of reason, be applied to the whole world; so that Christ did not die for, or redeem, all mankind.

That the application of redemption may farther appear to be of equal extent with the purchase of it, we shall endeavour to prove that all those graces which believers are made partakers of here, as well as complete salvation which is the consummation of it hereafter, are the purchase of Christ's death. Here we principally oppose those who defend the doctrine of universal redemption, in that open and self-consistent way, which the Pelagians generally take. They suppose that faith, and repentance, and all other graces, are entirely in our own power; otherwise the conditionality of the gospel-covenant, as they rightly observe, could never be defended, and they, for whom Christ died, namely, all mankind, must necessarily repent and believe. In this manner a late writer argues, in consistency with his own scheme. Some others, however, who maintain the doctrine of universal redemption, and, at the same time, that of efficacious grace, pluck down with one hand what they build up with the other. It is the former of these principally that we are now to oppose, when we speak of the graces of the Spirit as purchased by Christ's blood. Now, in proof of our position, let it be observed that complete salvation is styled 'the purchased possession;'t that our 'deliverance from the wrath to come,' is not only inseparably connected with, but contained in it; and that both are considered as purchased by the

death of Christ. The apostle, speaking elsewhere of the church as arrived at its state of perfection in heaven, and of its being 'without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,' and 'without blemish,' that is, when its sanctification is brought to perfection, considers this as the accomplishment of the great end of Christ's 'giving himself for it,' or laying down his life to purchase it.x It follows, then, that all that grace, by which believers are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and which is the beginning of this salvation, is the purchase of Christ's blood. Accordingly, God is said to have 'blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places'—or, as it may be better rendered, 'in what concerns heavenly things'—'in Christ,' that is, for the sake of Christ's death, which purchased these blessings. Hence, faith and repentance, and all other graces, which are wrought in us in this world, are purchased by Christ's death. Accordingly, it is said, 'Unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ to believe,' as well as to exercise those graces which are necessary in those who are called 'to suffer for his sake.' Elsewhere also, God is said to have 'exalted Christ to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance,' as well as 'forgiveness of sins.'a Now, as his exaltation includes his resurrection from the dead, these words plainly argue that he died to give repentance, and consequently that this grace was purchased by him. Moreover, when our Saviour speaks of 'sending the Spirit, the Comforter, to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' which comprises the internal work of grace wrought by him, he considers this as the consequence of his leaving the world, after he had finished the work of redemption by his death, and so purchased this privilege for them.

VI. That Christ did not die for all mankind, appears from his not interceding for them. He says, 'I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine,' and not for his disciples alone, 'but for them also which should believe on him

through their word.' This farther appears from a believer's freedom from condemnation being founded on Christ's intercession, as well as his death and resurrection;d and from Christ being styled at the same time, 'an Advocate with the Father,' and a 'propitiation for our sins.' Our position may be farther argued, from the nature of Christ's intercession, which, as will be considered in its proper place,f consists in his presenting himself, in the merit of his death, on behalf of those for whom he suffered; as also from his being always heard in that which he pleads for. This argues that they shall be saved, otherwise it could not be supposed that he intercedes for their salvation. But this he cannot be said to do for all mankind, as appears by the event, in that all shall not be saved.

It is objected, that Christ prayed for his enemies; that his doing so was foretold concerning him by the prophet, who says, 'He made intercession for the transgressors;' and that this prophecy was accomplished at his crucifixion, when he said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'i Now, say the objectors, that which Christ here prayed for was forgiveness, which is a privilege connected with salvation; and he prayed for this in behalf of the multitude that crucified him. But, they add, it cannot reasonably be supposed that all these were saved; so that if Christ's death and intercession respect the same persons, and necessarily infer their salvation, it would follow that this rude and inhuman multitude were all saved, which they who deny universal redemption do not suppose. —In answer to this objection, some suppose that there is foundation for a distinction between those supplications which Christ, in his human nature, put up to God, as being bound by the moral law, in common with all mankind, to pray for his enemies, and his mediatorial prayer or intercession. In the former of these respects, he made prayer for his enemies; and his prayer for them, though it argued the greatness of his affection for them, yet did not necessarily

infer their salvation. In this manner, Stephen, when dying, is represented as praying for those who stoned him, when he said, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' In this manner, also, our Saviour prays for himself in the garden, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;'l whereby he signifies the formidableness of the death he was to undergo, and that his human nature could not but dread such a degree of suffering. This description of prayer they suppose to be different from his mediatorial intercession for his people; in which he represents the merit of his death, as what would effectually procure the blessings which it purchased. In this latter sense, he could not be said to pray for any of those who crucified him, who are excluded from salvation. But, as this reply to the objection has some difficulties attending it which render it less satisfactory, especially as it supposes that he was not heard in that which he prayed for, when he desired that God would 'forgive them,' I would choose to take another method in answering it, namely, that when Christ prays that God would 'forgive them,' he means that God would not immediately pour forth the vials of his wrath on that wicked generation as their crime deserved, but that they might still continue to be a people favoured with the means of grace. This he prays for, and he was answered. His intercession for them, though it had not an immediate respect to the salvation of all of them, had, notwithstanding, a subserviency to the gathering in of his elect amongst them, whose salvation was principally intended by this intercession, as it was for them that he shed his blood. Accordingly, I apprehend that his desire that God would 'forgive them,' implies the same thing as Moses' request in behalf of Israel did, when he said, 'Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt, until now.' Here 'to pardon' means nothing else but God's not punishing them as their sin deserved, in an immediate and exemplary way and manner.

VII. The doctrine of universal redemption has some absurd consequences attending it, not consistent with the divine perfections.

1. It would give occasion for Christ to be called the Saviour of those who shall not be eventually saved by him,—the Redeemer of many who are held in chains by the justice of God, and who receive no saving benefit by his redemption. It would give occasion also for Christ being said to express the highest instance of love, in dying for those who shall for ever be the objects of his hatred. But this implies a contradiction. What is it but to say, that he delivers those from the wrath to come, who are and shall be for ever children of wrath? Hence, we must either assert universal salvation, or deny universal redemption.

2. It also follows from the doctrine of universal redemption, that Christ satisfied the justice of God for all the sins of all men. To lay down a price of redemption is to discharge the whole debt, otherwise it would be to no purpose. Now, if he satisfied for all the sins of every man, he did this that no sin should be their ruin; and consequently he died to take away the guilt of final impenitency in those who shall perish. They have hence, by virtue of his death, a right to salvation, which they shall not obtain. It follows then, that, since he did not die for all the sins of all men, he did not, by his death, redeem all men.

3. If Christ died for all men, he intended hereby their salvation, or that they should live. But it is certain he did not intend the salvation of all men; for then his design must be frustrated, with respect to a part of those for whom he died; and to say this, is a reflection on his wisdom, as not adapting the means to the end. Moreover, the doctrine that he died for all men supposes that his attaining the end he designed by his death, depends on the will of man; and,

consequently, it subjects him to disappointment, and renders God's eternal purpose dependent on man's conduct.

4. Since God designed, by the death of Christ, to bring to himself a revenue of glory, in proportion to the infinite value of it, and Christ our great Mediator, was, as the prophet says, to have 'a portion with the great,' and to 'divide the spoil with the strong,' as the consequence of his 'pouring out his soul unto death;' it follows, that if all are not saved for whom Christ died, the Father and the Son would lose that glory which they designed to attain by the Redeemer's death, as the work would be left incomplete,—and also that a great part of mankind cannot take occasion, from Christ's redeeming them, to adore and magnify that grace which is displayed in his doing so, since it is not eventually conducive to their salvation.

Examination of Arguments for Universal Redemption

Having endeavoured to prove the doctrine of particular redemption, we shall now consider the arguments generally brought by those who defend the contrary scheme. They suppose that God designed, as the consequence of Christ's death, to save all mankind, on condition of their repenting and believing; and that this is according to the tenor of the gospel covenant, which is substituted in the room of that which was violated by man's apostacy from God, and by which sincere obedience comes in the room of that perfect obedience which was the condition of the first covenant. This they call man's being brought in to a salvable state by Christ's death; so that, according to them, Christ rendered salvation possible, while faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, render it certain. So far as concerns the design of God in sending Christ to redeem the world, they suppose that God determined to put man into such a state that all may be saved if they will. As to the event, namely, man's complying with the

condition, they who defend universal redemption are divided in their sentiments. Some suppose that Christ purchased faith and repentance for a certain number of mankind, namely, those who shall repent and believe, and that, in consequence, he will work those graces in them, while others who had not these graces purchased for them shall perish, though Christ has redeemed them. These suppose that redemption is both universal and particular, in different respects; universal, in that all who sit under the sound of the gospel have a conditional grant of grace contained in it, whereby they are put into a salvable state, or possibility of attaining salvation; and particular, with respect to those who shall repent and believe, and so attain salvation. In this sense they apply that scripture in which God is said to be 'the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.' This some call a middle way, between the Pelagian and Calvinistic methods of reasoning about this subject. It appears, however, to be inconsistent with itself; in as much as they who adopt it are forced sometimes to decline what they have been contending for on one side, when pressed with some arguments brought in defence of the other. We shall therefore pass it over, and consider the self-consistent scheme in which universal redemption is maintained.

The sum of all their statements, who defend the doctrine of universal redemption in the Pelagian way, is this, that Christ died, not to purchase salvation absolutely for any, but to make way for God's entering into a new or gospel covenant with men, in which salvation is promised on condition of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, which they suppose to be in the power of those who have the gospel. That the heathen may not be excluded, they say that though it cannot be styled a gospel covenant to them, there are abatements made as to what concerns faith founded on divine relation, and that the only condition which entitles them to salvation is their yielding sincere obedience to the law of nature, in proportion to their light. They add,

that this gospel covenant must be conditional, otherwise it could not be called 'a covenant,' as wanting an essential ingredient contained in every covenant; and that the conditions of it must be in our own power, otherwise the overture of salvation, depending on the performance of them, would be illusory; and it could not be called a covenant of grace, in as much as there can be no grace, or favour, in promising a blessing upon impossible conditions; nor could it be styled a better covenant than that which God entered into with our first parents, in which the conditions were in their own power; nor could it be an expedient to repair the ruins of the fall, or bring man, in any sense, into a salvable state. Hence, say they, the doctrine of particular redemption is not only followed by many absurd consequences which detract from the glory of the gospel, but is contrary to the holiness, wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, and so derogates as much from the divine perfections as any thing which is argued in defence of universal redemption can be pretended to do. To sum up the argument, there is an appeal to scripture, as giving countenance, in a multitude of instances, to the doctrine of universal redemption. This is the substance of all that is said in defence of that doctrine. We shall now, in opposition to it, take leave to make some observations.

It is taken for granted, but not sufficiently proved, that Christ died to purchase the covenant of grace. But if, as was formerly observed, the difference between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace be only circumstantial, the death of Christ is included among the conditions of this covenant; and if so, the covenant itself could not be the purchase of his death. But if, by Christ's purchasing the covenant of grace, they mean only his purchasing the graces given in the covenant, we are far from denying it, though they generally do. What we are principally to oppose, therefore, is their sense of the conditionality of the covenant of grace, and of its being essential to a

covenant to be conditional, namely, to depend on uncertain conditions, in our power to perform, it being, as they suppose, left to the freedom of our own will to comply with or reject them, and thereby to establish or disannul the covenant. But we have elsewhere proved that the word 'covenant' is often used in scripture, without the idea of a condition annexed to it, and have considered also in what respects those ideas contained in a conditional covenant between man and man, are to be excluded when we speak of a covenant between God and man.s We have likewise endeavoured, in maintaining the doctrine of election, to defend the absoluteness of God's will, and have showed in what sense we are to understand those scriptures which are laid down in a conditional form. Now, as these matters may, with a little variation, be applied to our present argument, we shall, to avoid repetition, say nothing farther in answer to the part of the argument we are now considering, but only that it implies God to be, in many respects, like ourselves, and supposes that it is in our power to frustrate the design of the death of Christ, and render that which was the highest display of divine grace ineffectual, and so prevent his having that glory which he designed to bring to his own name thereby.

It is further argued, that as the covenant of grace is a better covenant than that which God made with man in innocency, so the conditions of it must be in our own power, otherwise God, by insisting on the performance of what is impossible, subverts the design of the gospel, and the covenant ceases to be a covenant of grace. But though we freely own that the covenant of grace is, in many respects, better than that which God entered into with man in innocency, and that it would not be so were it impossible for those who are concerned in it to attain the blessings promised to the heirs of salvation; yet we cannot allow that it must necessarily be conditional, in the sense in which some understand the word, much less that either the

conditions of it are in our own power, or the design of the gospel must be subverted. The fact that God requires faith and all other graces in the covenant dispensation, and that he has connected them with salvation, does not overthrow the grace of the covenant, but rather establishes it; for, by the faithfulness of God, and the intercession of Christ, grace and salvation are not only purchased for, but promised and secured to all who are redeemed, and shall certainly be applied to them. The circumstance, too, that the graces of the Spirit are not in our own power, is so far from overthrowing the design of the gospel, that it tends to advance the glory of it; as God hereby takes occasion to set forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in making his people meet for glory, and bringing them at last to possess it. Moreover, though it is not possible for all to attain salvation, this fact should be no discouragement to any one to attend on those means of grace under which we are to hope for the saving effects of Christ's death, whereby we may conclude that eternal life is purchased for us, and we shall at last be brought to it.

It is further alleged, that the covenant of grace was designed to repair the ruins of the fall, or that God intended by it to bring man into a salvable state. But we are never told, in scripture, that what was lost by our apostacy from God, is to be compensated by the extent of grace and salvation to all mankind; and the design of the gospel is not to discover this to the world, but that the exceeding riches of divine grace should be 'made known on the vessels of mercy, before prepared unto glory.' This is, as some express it, the plank which remains after the shipwreck,x or the great foundation of our hope and possibility of escaping everlasting destruction; and it is a much better ground of security, than to lay the whole stress of our salvation on the best improvements of corrupt nature, or those endeavours which we are to use to improve the liberty of our will in order to our escaping ruin, without dependence on the divine assistance, which is

the method that they take to attain salvation, who thus defend the doctrine of universal redemption. As for our being brought into a salvable state by the death of Christ, the gospel nowhere gives all mankind ground to expect salvation, but only those who have the marks and characters of Christ's redeemed ones. Nor are these brought by his death to a mere possibility of attaining it; but the scripture represents them as having 'the earnest' or 'first fruits' of it, and speaks of 'Christ in them' as 'the hope of glory.' They are said also to be 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son,'z which is more than their having a mere possibility of salvation, as the result and consequence of Christ's death.

We are next to consider the allegation that the doctrine of particular redemption is derogatory to the divine perfections, and that many absurd consequences attend it. It is very common, in all methods of reasoning, and particularly in defending or opposing the doctrine of universal redemption, for persons to endeavour to make it appear, that the scheme of doctrine which they oppose is chargeable with absurdities; and, as we have taken the same method in opposing universal redemption, it may reasonably be expected that the doctrine of particular redemption should have many absurd consequences charged upon it. To this charge we shall endeavour to reply, that it may be discerned whether the charge be just or not.

The doctrine of particular redemption is supposed then, to be inconsistent with the goodness of God, as it renders salvation impossible to the greater part of mankind, and their state irretrievable by any means which can be used, and so has a tendency to lead them to despair. Now, it must be owned that they for whom Christ did not die cannot be saved, and that, had God described any persons by name, or given some visible character by which it might be certainly concluded that they were not redeemed, it would follow

that their state would be desperate. But this is not his usual method of dealing with mankind. He might, indeed, have done it; and then such would have been thereby excluded from the means of grace, and not encouraged to attend them. But he has, in wisdom and sovereignty, concealed from the world the event of things, with respect to the individuals who were redeemed. There is hence a vast difference between men's concluding that a part of the world are excluded from redemption, and that they themselves are included in that number. We have no warrant to say the latter concerning either ourselves or any others, especially so long as we are under the means of grace. There is, indeed, one character of persons in the gospel which gives ground to conclude that Christ did not die for them; and that is what respects those who had committed the unpardonable sin. I shall not, at present, enter into the dispute whether that sin can now be committed or not, since we may have occasion to insist on the subject under another Head. But there seems to be sufficient ground to determine, either that this cannot be certainly known, since the extraordinary gift of discerning of spirits is now ceased; or, at least, that it cannot be applied to any who attend on the means of grace with a desire of receiving spiritual advantage thereby. Again, if Christ's not dying for the whole world be a means to lead men to despair, as salvation is hereby rendered impossible, this consequence may, with equal evidence, be deduced from the supposition that all mankind shall not be saved, which they who defend universal redemption pretend not to deny. But will any one say, that this supposition leads men to despair? Or ought it to be reckoned a reflection on the divine goodness, that so many are left to perish in their fallen state by the judicial hand of God, which might have applied salvation to all, as well as purchased it for all mankind?

The doctrine of particular redemption is farther supposed to be inconsistent with the preaching of the gospel, which is generally

styled a door of hope. The doctrine, it is said, is such that the dispensation that we are under cannot be called a day of grace; and it renders all the overtures of salvation made to sinners illusory, and contains a reflection, not only on the grace of God, but on his holiness. In order to our replying to this, something must be premised to explain what we mean by a day of grace, and the hope of the gospel which accompanies it. Now, by calling the state of things under which we live 'a day of grace,' we do not mean a dispensation in which all men might repent and believe, and so obtain salvation by their own power, without the special influences of the Holy Ghost, for this would be to ascribe that to man which is peculiar to God; nor do we mean that God will give special grace to all who sit under the sound of the gospel, for this is contrary to common observation and experience, since many make a profession of religion who are destitute of saving grace. As for the hope of the gospel, or that door of hope which is opened in it to sinners, we cannot understand any thing else by it, but that all without distinction are commanded and encouraged to wait on God in his instituted means of grace, while the event must be left to him who gives or withholds success to them as he pleases. All have this encouragement, that, peradventure, they may obtain grace, under the means of grace; nor is the encouragement inconsistent with these means being styled a door of hope. God is not obliged to grant sinners a greater degree of hope than this, to encourage them to wait on him in his ordinances; though, indeed, there is a farther motive to induce us, namely, that this is the ordinary way in which he works grace. Or, if God is pleased to give us desires after the efficacy of his grace, or any degree of conviction of sin and misery, this is still a farther ground of hope, though it falls short of that grace of hope which accompanies salvation.—As to the preaching of the gospel, and its overtures of salvation to all, being, on the supposition of Christ's not dying for all men, alleged to be illusory, and repugnant to the holiness of God, we

do not deny that, in preaching the gospel, Christ is offered to the chief of sinners, or that the proclamation of grace is made public to all, without distinction. This, however, will not overthrow the doctrine of particular redemption, if we rightly consider what is done in offering Christ to sinners. Let it be observed, then, that God has given us no warrant to enter into his secret determinations respecting the event of things, or to give any persons ground to conclude that they are redeemed, and have a warrant to apply to themselves the promise of salvation, or any blessings which accompany it, while in an unconverted state. Ministers are not to address their discourses to a mixed multitude of professing Christians, in such a way as if they knew that they were all effectually called and chosen of God. Our Saviour compares them to 'the faithful and wise steward,' whose business it is 'to give to all their portion of meat in due season.' They are, therefore, consistently with what is contained in scripture, to tell their hearers that salvation is purchased for a part of mankind, that they know not but they may be of the number, and that therefore they must be importunate with God for that grace which will be an evidence to them that they are so. Again, Christ's being offered to sinners, in the preaching of the gospel, is his being set forth therein as a most desirable object, altogether lovely, worthy to be embraced and submitted to; and not only so, but that he will certainly save all whom he effectually calls, in as much as he has purchased salvation for them. Further, the preaching of the gospel includes an informing of sinners, that it is their indispensable duty and interest to believe in Christ, and that, as a means to this, they are commanded and encouraged to wait on him for that grace which can enable them to believe. Also as a farther encouragement, the gospel lets them know that there is a certain connection between grace and salvation; so that none who are enabled by faith to come to Christ, shall be cast out and rejected by him. This is the preaching and the hope of the gospel; and in this

sense, the overtures of salvation are made. But this is not in the least inconsistent with the doctrine of particular redemption.b

It is objected, however, that though this be such a method of preaching the gospel as is consistent with the doctrine of special redemption; yet there is another way of preaching it which is more agreeable to the express words of scripture, and founded on the doctrine of universal redemption. Sinners, say the objectors, ought to be told, that the great God, in the most affectionate manner, expostulates with them, to persuade them to accept of life and salvation, when he represents himself as 'having no pleasure in the death of the wicked,' and with an earnestness of expression, says, 'Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' The design of the gospel, they add, is to let the world know that God's dealings with mankind, in general, are full of goodness; he would not have any perish, and therefore has sent his Son to redeem them all, and in consequence, pleads with them to turn to him, that they may reap the benefits purchased. But whatever be the sense of the expostulatory expressions which we frequently meet with in scripture, we must not suppose that they imply, that the saving grace of repentance is in our own power; for that is contrary, not only to the sense of many other scriptures, but to the experience of every true penitent, whose language is like that of Ephraim, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.'d Nor must we conclude, that God designs to save those who shall not be saved; for then he could not say, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' If these ideas, as unworthy of God, be abstracted from the sense of such scriptures, we may understand them in a way which is consistent, not only with the divine perfections, but with the doctrine of particular redemption. That this may appear, let it be considered that while it is a very common thing in scripture for God to condescend to use human modes of speaking, and those, in particular, by which various

passions are set forth, we must not conclude that these passions are in God, as they are in men. Such expostulations, when used by us, signify that we earnestly desire the good of others, and are often warning them of their danger; but that all is to no purpose, they being obstinately set on their own ruin, which we can by no means prevent; it being either out of our power to help them, or our rendering them help being inconsistent with our honour. This draws forth such expostulations from men. But the weakness implied in them, is by no means to be applied to God. It cannot be said to be out of his power to give grace to impenitent sinners; nor, in case he has so determined, will it tend to his dishonour to bestow it. But that we may understand the sense of these scriptures, we shall offer some particular observations.

'Life' and 'death,' in scripture, are often used to signify the external dispensations of providence, as to what concerns the good or evil which God would bring on his people. Thus it is said, 'See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.' Here 'life' is explained, in the following words, as signifying their being 'multiplied and blessed in the land, whither they were to go to possess it.' When God advises them, in a following verse, 'to choose life,' the consequence is, that 'both they and their seed should live, that they might dwell in the land which the Lord sware to their fathers to give them.' Elsewhere, when God says, by the prophet Jeremiah, 'I set before you the way of life, and the way of death,'g he immediately explains the language as proclaiming an expedient for their escaping temporal judgments. 'He that abideth in the city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans, shall live.' I cannot but see reason to conclude, that many other expressions of a similar nature, in which God promises life, or threatens death to the house of Israel, by the prophets, who often warned them of their being carried

into captivity, and dying in their enemies' land, have a more immediate respect to their temporal prosperity or adversity. That proverbial expression which the Israelites are represented as making use of, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,' seems to intimate no more than this: 'Our fathers have sinned, and thereby deserved that the nation should be ruined by being carried captive, and we must suffer for their sins.' In answer, God tells them that the proverb should not be used by them, but that the evil should be brought on them for their own iniquities, or prevented by their reformation, namely, by forsaking their idolatry, whoredom, violence, oppression, and other abominations. He then adds, The soul that sinneth, it shall die;i that is, "If you continue to commit those vile enormities, you shall be followed with all those judgments which shall tend to your utter ruin; but 'if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.' " If this be the sense of these and similar texts, then it was not wholly out of their own power thus to turn to God, how much soever that special grace which accompanies salvation be out of our power. It is one thing to say that man cannot work a principle of grace in himself, or do that by his own power which is the special gift and work of the Spirit of God, and, as the consequence thereof, have ground to expect eternal salvation; and another thing to say that he cannot abstain from some gross enormities, as an expedient to prevent desolating judgments. It may, however, not be allowed that this is the sense of all those scriptures which promise or threaten 'life' or 'death;' and I do not pretend peremptorily to assert that it is. Let me add, therefore, that if, in the scriptures referred to, spiritual and eternal blessings be included in the word 'life,' and the contrary in the word 'death,' we may account for the sense of them without supposing that God designs what shall never come to pass, namely, the universal salvation of mankind, though a part of them shall not be saved. We may do this by

considering desire in God as signifying the effects of desire in men. Thus, his not desiring a thing, denotes it not to be the object of desire. Accordingly, his not desiring the death of sinners, implies that they ought to endeavour to avoid it as the most formidable evil. On the other hand, his taking pleasure in a thing, as he does in the salvation of his people, signifies not only his intending to save them, but the inexpressible happiness which they shall attain by their salvation. Moreover, his exhorting them, as an expedient to attain this privilege, 'to turn,' signifies the inseparable connection between salvation and repentance, or that turning to God, though it is God's gift, is, notwithstanding, our act and our indispensable duty. If, then, the scriptures in question be understood in either of the two senses we have mentioned, they are far from giving countenance to the doctrine of universal redemption.

There is another absurd consequence charged upon the doctrine of special redemption, namely, that it is inconsistent with our being exhorted and encouraged to repent and believe 'for the remission of sins,' or 'to the saving of the soul,' as scripture gives all men a warrant to do.' Since all are commanded to exercise these graces, and to expect salvation as connected there with, the doctrine of particular redemption, as a late writer insinuates, puts us under a necessity of believing a lie. He adds, that if the condition annexed to the promise of salvation be impossible, and known to be so, it gives no encouragement to set about it; and that if he who promises knows it to be so, he promises nothing, because his promise respects that which a person cannot obtain, or be the better for, whereby he is deluded, and a cheat put upon him, by pretending kindness in making the promise, and intending no such thing.n Thus that author represents the doctrine of particular redemption as containing the most blasphemous consequences which words can express. He must, therefore, have been very sure that his argument was unanswerably

just; though, I hope, we shall be able to make it appear that it is far from being so. That we may do this, let it be considered that we are to distinguish between a person's being bound to believe in Christ, and to believe that Christ died for him. The first act of faith does not contain a person's being persuaded that Christ died for him, but that he is the object of faith, as he is represented to be in scripture. Accordingly, it supposes that we are convinced that Christ is the Messiah, that he purchased salvation for all who shall attain it, and is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, and also that it is our duty and interest to come to him. Moreover, as saving faith is not in our own power, but the work and gift of divine grace, we are encouraged to wait on God in his ordinances, and with fervent prayer to beseech him that he would work this grace in us; acknowledging that, if he should deny us this blessing, there is no unrighteousness in him. We are also to continue waiting on him, and using all those means which are in our power, though they cannot attain their end without his blessing. And when he is pleased to work this grace in us, we shall be enabled to put forth another act of faith, which is properly saving, and is intended by that scripture which speaks of 'believing to the saving of the soul.' This consists in receiving him, and resting on him for salvation, hoping that he has died for us, in as much as he has given us that temper and disposition of soul which is included in the character given of those for whom Christ died. Again, we must farther distinguish between God's commanding all who sit under the sound of the gospel to believe in Christ, and his giving them ground to expect salvation before they believe in him. Faith and repentance may be asserted to be duties incumbent on all, and demanded of them; while, at the same time, it does not follow that all are given to expect salvation upon the mere declaration that they are so. Accordingly, the command and encouragement are to be considered in this order,— first, as they respect our obligation to believe, and then, as they

respect our hope of salvation. Now, neither the former nor the latter of these does in the least infer that God intended to save all mankind, or give those ground to expect salvation who do not believe in Christ. Further, as to what is suggested concerning salvation being promised on such conditions as are known both by God and man to be impossible, the only answer which need be given is, that though 'with men this is impossible, yet with God all things are possible.' In the sense of faith and repentance evincing our right to claim an interest in Christ and that salvation which is purchased by him, we do not, as was formerly observed, oppose their being called conditions of salvation, by those who are tenacious of that mode of speaking;p nor do we call them impossible conditions, any otherwise than as they are so without the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit. Now, we cannot think that our asserting that it is impossible that all mankind should thus repent and believe, is a doctrine contrary to scripture; for scripture gives us ground to conclude that all men shall not be saved, and consequently that all shall not 'believe to the saving of the soul.' But when we consider the impossibility of all men repenting and believing, we do not make that supposition of God having given all mankind ground to expect saving faith, upon which the blasphemous suggestion relating to his deluding men is founded. It is enough for us to say, that God has not told any one who attends on his ordinances in hope of obtaining this grace, that he will not give him faith. More than this needs not be desired by persons to induce them to perform this duty, while praying and waiting for the happy event, namely, our obtaining saving graces, and so being enabled to conclude that Christ has died for us.

If all the absurdities already mentioned will not overthrow the doctrine of particular redemption, there is another argument which they who oppose it conclude to be unanswerable, namely, that it does not conduce so much to advance the grace of God, as to assert that

Christ died for all men, in as much as more are included herein as the objects of divine favour, so that God is more glorified. But it does not tend to advance the divine perfections, to suppose that God designed to save any who shall perish; for that, as was formerly considered, would be to argue that the purpose of God, with respect to the salvation of many, is frustrated. Besides, the display of the glory of divine grace on which the stress of the argument is laid, does not so much consist in the extent of favour with respect to a greater number of persons, as it does in its being free and undeserved; and in its tending, for this reason, to lay the highest obligation on those who are concerned in it. This is the most known sense of the word 'grace.' But as it will be objected, that this is only a criticism respecting the sense of a word, we remark, farther, that if the grace or goodness of God be more magnified by universal than by particular redemption, as including more who are the objects of redemption, the same reasoning would hold good, were it attempted to be proved that there must be an universal salvation of mankind. On the principle assumed, this would be a greater display of divine goodness, than for God to save only a few; and it would be yet more eminently displayed, had he saved not only all mankind, but fallen angels. Shall the goodness of God be pretended to be reflected on, because he does not extend it to all who might have been its objects had he pleased? Has he not a right to do what he will with his own? And may not his favour be communicated in a discriminating way, whereby it will be more advanced and adored, by those who are the objects of it, without our taking occasion to reply against him, or say 'what dost thou?' We may add, that they who make use of this reasoning, ought to consider that it does not militate more against our doctrine than against that which they maintain, namely, that God hath put all mankind into a salvable state, or that Christ, by his death, procured a possibility of salvation for all. According to their argument this is not so great a display of the divine goodness, as if

God had actually saved all mankind, which he might have done; for he might have given repentance and remission of sins to all, as well as sent his Son to die for all. On the principle of this argument, therefore, universal redemption cannot be defended, without asserting universal salvation.

Having thus examined those absurdities which are pretended to be fastened on the doctrine of particular redemption, we proceed to consider the last and principal argument which is usually brought against it. This is, that the doctrine is contrary to the express words of scripture. Some speak with as much assurance as if there were not one word in scripture, intimating that our Lord died only for a few, or only for the elect. Others, however, own that there are some scriptures which assert particular redemption; but assert that these are but few, and that the doctrine of universal redemption must be acquiesced in, as being maintained by a far greater number of scriptures, But, it is not the number of scriptures, brought in defence of their side of the question, which will give any great advantage to the cause they maintain, unless it could be made appear that they are understood in the true and genuine sense in which the Holy Ghost intended them. We shall, therefore, inquire into the sense of them, and endeavour to prove that it does not overthrow the doctrine we have been maintaining, how much soever the mode of expression may seem to oppose it. In order to this, we shall first consider in what sense 'all,' 'all men,' 'the world,' 'all the world,' and similar words, are understood in scripture, as well as in common modes of speaking, in those matters which do not immediately relate to the subject of universal redemption; and then we may, without much difficulty, apply such limitations as we shall find to the same phrases as they occur in those scriptures which are brought for the proof of universal redemption. Here we are to inquire into the meaning of those words which seem to denote the universality of the subject

spoken of, in various instances which have no immediate reference to the doctrine of redemption.

As to the word 'all,' it is certain that it is often used when every individual is not intended by it. Thus we read that 'all the cattle of Egypt died,' when the plague of murrain was inflicted on the beasts; though, in the following words, it is said that 'none of the cattle of the children of Israel died;' and though it appears also, that none of the Egyptians' cattle died save those 'in the field.'s It is plain that there was a great number of cattle which died not, which were reserved to be cut off by a following plague, namely, that of hail. Moreover, it is said that the 'hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field;'u yet we read of the locusts 'eating the residue of that which escaped, which remained unto them from the hail.' Again, we read that 'all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears,'y of which Aaron made the calf which they worshipped; though it is not probable that all wore ear-rings; and it is certain that all did not join with those who committed the idolatry. The apostle intimates as much, when he speaks of 'some of them as being idolaters, who sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.' Some conclude also, that those of the tribe of Levi, who 'gathered themselves unto Moses,' and joined with him in executing the vengeance of God on the idolaters, are said to be 'on the Lord's side,' not merely because they repented of their idolatry, but because they did not join with the rest in it. If this be the sense of the text, yet it does not appear that they were all exempted from the charge of idolatry, though it is said that 'all the sons of Levi were gathered to him.' For we read of every man's slaying his brother and his companion;a and it is said, on this occasion, that they did not know their fathers, nor their children, that is, they did not spare them; so that some of the tribe of Levi, as well as the other tribes, joined in the idolatry, though they were all gathered to Moses, as being on the

Lord's side. Again, where the prophet speaks concerning 'God's destroying Syria, and making Nineveh desolate,' we read that 'all the beasts of the nations shall lodge in the upper lintels of it.' By this language he means that those beasts which generally lodge in the wilderness, or in places remote from cities, such as the cormorant and bittern, & c., should take up their residence in those places which were formerly inhabited by the Ninevites; so that 'all the beasts' cannot be supposed to signify all that were in all parts of the world. Again, the prophet Isaiah, when speaking of the multitude who should 'come to the mountain of the Lord's house,' which he expresses by 'all nations coming unto it,' explains 'all nations coming to it,' to mean, that 'many people should say, Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.'d The prophet Micah, also, referring to the same thing, says, 'Many nations shall say, Let us go up to it;' as uttering a prediction of what was to be fulfilled in the gospel-day, in those who, out of various nations, adhered to the true religion. Again, it is said, that 'the fame of David went out into all lands;'f which cannot be meant of those lands which were far remote, but of those that were round about Judea. Moreover, it is said, that 'Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to John, and were baptized of him;' which cannot be understood in any other sense, but that a great number of them went out to him for that purpose. When, again, it is said, that 'all the people held John as a prophet,'h it is not to be supposed that the Scribes and Pharisees, and many others who cast contempt on him, held him to be so, but that there were a great many who so esteemed him. Likewise, when our Saviour says, 'Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake,' it is certain that those who embraced Christianity are to be excluded from the number of those who hated them. Again, when it is said, that 'there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews out of every nation under heaven,'k it is not to be supposed that there were Jews residing in every nation, who resorted to Jerusalem. Referring to this

text, a learned writer puts this question, Were there any who resorted thither from England or Scotland? Again, we read, that John's disciples came to him, complaining that Jesus baptized, 'and all men came to him;'m by which nothing more is to be understood than that many among the Jews attended on his ministry, and were by far the smaller part of that nation. From these and many other scriptures which might be brought to the same purpose, it appears that the word 'all,' sometimes denotes not every individual, but a part of mankind.

Let us now consider the sense in which we are to understand 'the world,' or 'all the world.' It will appear, that only a small part of the world is, in many scriptures, meant by these phrases. Thus the Pharisees said, on occasion of a number of the Jews following our Saviour, 'The world is gone after him.' How small a part of the world was the Jewish nation! and how small a part of the Jewish nation attended on our Saviour's ministry! Yet this is called 'the world.' Again, it is said, 'There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed;'o by which nothing more is meant than those countries which were subjected to the Roman empire. Further, it is said, 'These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also;' which cannot be meant to refer to any other parts of the world than those in which the apostles had exercised their ministry. Again, when the apostle tells the Romans that 'their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world,'q he means only those other churches that were planted in several parts of the world. Moreover, it is said, that 'Agabus signified, by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world;' by which nothing is meant but all adjacent countries. In the same sense is the passage to be understood, 'All countries came into Egypt to buy corn, because the famine was so sore in all lands,'s that is, in the parts adjacent to Egypt. Thus we

have sufficient ground to conclude, that 'all men,' 'the world,' and 'all the world,' are often taken for a small part of mankind.

That we may be a little more particular in considering the various limitations these words are subject to in scripture, as well as in our common modes of speaking, let it be observed, that sometimes nothing is intended by 'all men,' but all sorts of men, without distinction of sex, nation, estate, quality, and condition of men in the world. Thus the apostle says, 'I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.' This he immediately explains as including men of all ranks and characters: 'To the Jews, I became a Jew;' to them that were under the law, as under the law; to them that were without law, as without law; to the weak, I became weak; I became all things to all men, that by any means I might gain some.'—Again, sometimes the word 'all' or 'the world,' is taken for the Gentiles, in opposition to the Jews. Thus the apostle says, 'Now if the fall of them,' that is, the Jews, 'be the riches of the world,' that is, of the Gentiles, as he explains it in the following words, 'and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?'u He says also, 'God hath concluded all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all.'—Further, 'the world' is sometimes taken for those who do not believe, in opposition to the church. Thus it is said, 'All the world wondered after the beast, and they worshipped the dragon.'y This is explained by the context, where it is said that 'all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life.' In another passage, it is said, 'We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness,'a or, as some render it, 'in the wicked one,' as being subject to Satan; but the church is exempted from that charge, notwithstanding the universality of the expression. —Again, sometimes the word 'all' is limited by the nature of the thing spoken of, which is very easy to be understood, though not expressed. Thus the apostle exhorts 'servants to be obedient unto

their own masters; and to please them well in all things;'c which must certainly be understood as meaning all things just, and not contrary to the laws of God or the civil laws of the land in which they live.—Further, the word 'all' is often used, not only in scripture, but in our common modes of speaking, to signify those only who are the objects of that thing which is said to be done for them; and then the emphasis is laid on the action, or the person who performs it. When we say, for example, that all malefactors under a sentence of death are to be pardoned by the king, we mean nothing else but that all who are pardoned receive their pardon from him. Or when we say that virtue renders all men happy, and vice miserable, we mean that all who are virtuous are happy, and all who are vicious miserable; not that virtue, abstracted from the exercise of it, makes any happy, or vice miserable. In this case, the word 'all' is taken, not for every individual person, but for those only who are either good or bad. Now this corresponds with the scripture-mode of speaking; as when it is said, 'Drowsiness shall clothe a man,' or every man, 'with rags,' or, sloth reduces all to poverty,—not all mankind, but all who are addicted to this vice. Moreover, it is said, 'The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.'e This is not to be understood, as if God kept all mankind from falling, or raised every individual person who is bowed down, so as not to suffer him to sink under his burden; but it means that all who are upheld, or raised up, when bowed down, are made partakers of this privilege by the Lord alone.

Having shown in what sense the words 'all' and 'all the world,' are frequently used in scripture, when not applied to the doctrine of redemption, we shall now consider the application of them to it, whereby it may appear, that those scriptures which are generally brought in defence of the doctrine of universal redemption, do not

tend to support it, or to overthrow the contrary doctrine which we are maintaining.

The first scripture which is often referred to for that purpose, is 1 John 2:2, in which it is said, concerning our Saviour, that 'he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' For understanding this, we must consider that it is more than probable that the apostle writes this epistle to the converted Jews, scattered through various countries in Asia, as Peter is said to do, and James.g For this reason they are called 'general epistles,' as likewise this of John is; in as much as they are not addressed to particular churches among the Gentiles, converted to the faith, as most of the apostle Paul's are. Now, it is plain, that in the scripture just mentioned, when these believing Jews are given to understand that Christ is 'a propitiation for their sins, and not for theirs only, but for the sins of the whole world,' the meaning is, not for their sins only who were Jews, but for the sins of the believing Gentiles, or those who were converted by the ministry of the apostle Paul, who is called 'the apostle of the Gentiles.' This has been already shown to be the meaning of the word 'world,' in many scriptures. Hence, the sense is, that the saving effects of Christ's death redound to all who believe, throughout the world, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Another scripture generally brought to prove universal redemption, is Heb. 2:9, 'That he,' namely Christ, 'by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.' For understanding this statement, we must have recourse to the words immediately following, which are plainly an illustration of it. They for whom Christ tasted death, are styled 'many sons,' who are to be 'brought to glory.' In order to this, 'Christ, the Captain of their salvation, was made perfect through sufferings.' This is said as an explanation of his being 'crowned with glory and honour, for the suffering of death;' and it plainly proves

that it was for these only that he tasted death, and that by 'every man' for whom he tasted it, is meant every one of his sons, or of those who are described as 'sanctified,' 'whom he is not ashamed to call brethren,' and who are farther styled, 'the children which God had given him.'i As this sense of the words, then, is so agreeable to the context, which asserts the doctrine of particular redemption, it cannot reasonably be supposed that they are to be understood in a sense which has a tendency to overthrow that doctrine, or to prove that Christ died equally and alike for all men.

Another scripture brought for the same purpose, is 1 Cor. 15:22, 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' But the apostle is not speaking directly concerning redemption in this text, but concerning the resurrection of the dead; and, if it be understood of a glorious resurrection to eternal life, no one can suppose that every individual of mankind shall be made partaker of this blessing. This is obvious also, from what is said in the verse immediately following, where they who are said to be 'made alive in Christ,' are described as persons in whom he has a special propriety, 'Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.' The meaning, therefore, is only this, that all of those who shall be raised up in glory, shall obtain this privilege by Christ, whose resurrection was the first-fruits of it. I am sensible that the reason of quoting this scripture to prove universal redemption, is principally the opposition which there seems to be between the death of all mankind in Adam, and the life which is obtained by Christ. It is hence supposed that the happiness which we enjoy by him, is of equal extent with the misery we sustained by the fall of Adam. But if this were the sense of the text, it must prove an universal salvation, and not merely the possibility of it; for the apostle is speaking of a privilege which should be conferred in the end of time, and not of that which we enjoy under the gospel-dispensation. Accordingly, the passage does

not in the least answer the end for which the advocates of universal redemption quote it.

The next scripture by which it is supposed that universal redemption may be defended, is Rom. 5:18, 'As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.' For understanding this scripture, let it be considered that the blessing which is said to extend to 'all,' is no less than justification of life, and not merely a possibility of attaining salvation. In the foregoing verse, they who are interested in this privilege, are said to 'receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness,' and to 'reign in life by Jesus Christ.' Now, certainly this privilege is too great to be applied to the whole world. Indeed that which the apostle, in this verse, considers as being 'upon all men unto justification of life,' he explains when he says, 'Many shall be made righteous.' Hence 'the free gift, which came upon all men unto justification,' means nothing else but that a select number, who are said to be many, or the whole multitude of those who do or shall believe, shall be made righteous.

It may be objected to this sense of the text, that there is an opposition between that 'judgment which came by the offence of one,' that is Adam, 'upon all men, unto condemnation,' and that 'righteousness, which came upon all men, unto justification;' and that, therefore, 'all men' must be taken in the same sense in both parts of the verse, and consequently must be extended to all the world. But it is not necessary, or reasonable, to suppose that these terms of opposition have any respect to the universal extent of condemnation and justification. The apostle's design is, not to compare the number of those who shall be justified with that of those who were condemned by the fall of Adam, but to compare the two heads together, Adam and Christ, and to show that, as we are liable

to condemnation by the one, so we obtain the gift of righteousness by the other. This is plainly the apostle's method of reasoning, agreeable to the whole scope of the chapter, as may easily be observed by those who compare these words with several foregoing verses.

There is another scripture brought to prove universal redemption, 'The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.' It is supposed that the apostle is here proving that all mankind are dead in sin; that the medium by which he proves it is, Christ's dying for all men, so that the remedy is as extensive as the disease; and that, therefore, the passage is an undeniable proof of universal redemption. But this is not a true representation of the apostle's reasoning; for he designs to prove, not that all were dead in sin, but that they were dead to it. That this may appear, let us consider the connection of this text with what goes before. The apostle speaks of them, in the foregoing verses, as having assurance of their future salvation, as 'groaning to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven,' and as having 'the first-fruits of the Spirit;' and he says that the apostles were 'made manifest in their consciences,' that is, they had something in their own consciences which evinced the success of their ministry to them, on which account they 'had occasion to glory on their behalf.' All these expressions denote them to have been in a converted state. The apostle adds, 'Whether we be beside ourselves, or whether we be sober,'l that is, whether we have a greater or less degree of fervency in preaching the gospel, 'it is for God,' that is, for his glory, 'and for your cause; for the love of Christ,' that is, either his love to us, or our love to him, 'constraineth us' to this, 'because we thus judge, that if one,' namely, Christ, 'died for all,' that is, for you all, 'then were all dead,' or you all 'are dead,' that is, not dead in sin, but made partakers of that communion which believers have with Christ in his death, whereby they are said to be dead to sin and to the world; and

the result is, that they are obliged 'to live not unto themselves, but to Christ.' This interpretation seems more agreeable to the design of the apostle, than to suppose that he intends only to prove the fall of man from his being recovered by Christ. There is no appearance of any similar argument in any other part of the apostle's writings; but our being dead to sin, as the consequence of Christ's death, is what he often mentions, and, indeed, it seems to be one of his peculiar phrases. Thus he speaks of believers, as being 'dead to sin,' and 'dead with Christ.'n Elsewhere also he says, 'Ye are dead;' that is, you have communion with Christ in his death, or are dead unto sin. He speaks likewise of their being 'dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world;'p that is, if you have communion with Christ in his death, you are obliged not to observe the ceremonial law, which is called 'the rudiments of the world.' In several other places, he speaks of believers being crucified, dead, buried, and risen from the dead, as having communion with Christ in his death and resurrection, or being made partakers of those benefits which he procured thereby. If, then, this be the apostle's frequent mode of speaking, why may we not suppose, that, in the passage under present consideration, he argues, that because 'Christ died for them all, they were,' or they are 'all dead,' and that, being thus dead, they are obliged, as he observes, 'not to live to themselves, but to Christ, that died for them,' and thereby procured this privilege of which they are made partakers? If this sense of the text be but allowed to be equally probable with the other, it will so far weaken the force of the argument we have been considering, that it will not appear, from this scripture, that Christ died for all men.

Universal redemption is attempted to be proved from John 3:16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' But, if we understand 'the world' as taken for the Gentiles, as it

often is in scripture, the sense of the text seems to be such as is not inconsistent with special redemption, namely, that the love of God, which was expressed in sending his Son to die for those whom he designed to redeem, is of a much larger extent, as to the objects of it, than it was in former ages; for it includes not only those who believe among the Jews, but whosoever believes in him, throughout the world. Not that their believing in him is the foundation, or cause, but the effect of his love, and is to be considered as the character of the persons, who are the objects of that love. In this sense, also, we are to understand another scripture, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' that is, of all those, throughout the world, whose sins are expiated by his death.

The doctrine of universal redemption is farther maintained, from our Saviour's words in John 6:33, 'The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world;' which are explained in ver. 51, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' But it does not appear that Christ here means that his death was a price of redemption paid for all mankind. He speaks of the application of redemption, which is expressed by his giving life; and not merely of his procuring a possibility of its being attained. They to whom he gives this privilege, are described as applying it to themselves by faith; which is, doubtless, the meaning of that metaphorical expression in which persons are said to 'eat of this bread,' or 'his flesh.' Hence, the meaning of this scripture is, that the death of Christ is appointed as the great means whereby all men, throughout the world, who apply it by faith, should attain eternal life. But this cannot be said of all without exception; so that it does not appear from this text, that Christ's death was designed to procure life for the whole world.

There is another scripture, brought to the same purpose, in Matt. 18:11, 'The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.' They who adduce the text suppose that it means all who were lost; and they infer that, as the whole world was brought into a lost state by the fall, Christ came to save them. The whole stress of this argument is laid on the sense they give of the Greek word which we render, 'that which was lost,' whereby they understand every one that was lost. All that it denotes, however, is, that salvation supposes those who have an interest in it to have been in a lost state. Indeed, the text does not seem immediately to respect the purchase of redemption or salvation, by Christ's shedding his blood as a Priest, but the application of it, in effectually calling and thereby saving lost sinners. This is immediately afterwards illustrated by the parable of the lost sheep, which the shepherd brings back to the fold. On this account he says, 'It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.' This farther appears from our Saviour, on occasion of his converting Zaccheus, and telling him that 'salvation was come to his house,' having used the same mode of speaking, with the addition that 'he came to seek, as well as to save't them. It also agrees well with the prediction relating to Christ's executing his prophetic office, in the salvation of his people, as being their Shepherd; in which he is represented as saying, 'I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away; and I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.' Moreover, the parable of the lost sheep which Christ recovered, appears, by its connection with the preceding verses, to have a particular respect to those 'little' or humble 'ones' who believe in him, who went astray by reason of some offences which were cast in their way. Hence, when he had denounced a threatening against those who should offend any of them, and had cautioned the world that they should not do this by despising them,x he supposes this treatment would cause some of them to go astray, and then adds,

that one of his ends of coming into the world, was to seek, to save, and to recover them.

Universal redemption is farther argued from the universality of divine grace. Accordingly, that text is often referred to, 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men.' But this seems very remote from the sense of the Holy Ghost, in these words. By 'the grace of God' is meant the gospel, which brings the glad tidings of salvation; and its 'appearing to all men,' signifies its being preached to the Gentiles. Or, suppose that by 'the grace of God,' we understand the display of his grace in the work of redemption, it is not said that it was designed for or applied to all men, but only that the publication of it is more general than it had formerly been. When the apostle afterwards speaks more particularly concerning redemption, he alters his mode of expression, and considers it with its just limitation, with respect to its objects. 'He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'z

We shall add but one scripture more, which is brought in defence of universal redemption. It is that in which the apostle speaks of God as 'the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.' Here universal redemption is not asserted in the same sense in which the advocates of that doctrine maintain it, namely, that God hath brought all men into a salvable state, so that they may be saved if they will. But the meaning is, that 'God is the Saviour of all men,' that is, his common bounty extends itself to all, as the psalmist observes, 'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;'b but that he is more 'especially' the Saviour of 'them that believe,' in as much as they are interested in the special benefits purchased by his redemption, and are said to be 'saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.'

There are several other scriptures brought to prove universal redemption, as when it is said, 'God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;' and, 'The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.'e But as these have been already considered, we shall pass them over at present. There are also some scriptures whence it is argued that Christ died for all, because he died for some who shall perish. Thus the apostle speaks of some 'false teachers, who denied the Lord that bought them;'g again he says, 'Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died;' and he speaks of a person who 'counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.'i But these, and some other scriptures to the same purpose, we reserve to be considered in a following Answer, in which the doctrine of the saints' perseverance is defended.

We have thus treated of the first branch of Christ's priestly office, consisting in his offering himself a sacrifice, without spot to God; and have spoken of the persons for whom this was done. We should now proceed to consider the second branch of his priestly office, consisting in his making continual intercession for those for whom he offered up himself. But, this being particularly insisted on in a following Answer, we shall pass it over at present, and proceed to consider the execution of his kingly office.

[NOTE 3 M. The Difficulty connected with the Doctrines which relate to the Order of Christ's Priesthood.—The apostle does not say, as Dr. Ridgeley implies, that the doctrines which relate to the order of Christ's priesthood, are in themselves difficult to be explained. He, on the contrary, classes them with all the doctrines of revelation which are only a degree more difficult than 'the first principles of the oracles of God.' The difficulty of which he speaks arose, in no degree from the doctrines themselves, but altogether from the stupidity,

inaptitude, disinclination to learn, and immaturity in knowledge, of the Hebrews to whom he wrote. They were 'dull of hearing;' so that he could with difficulty utter sounds so loud as should penetrate their ears: they were 'such as had need of milk and not of strong meat;' so that he felt difficulty to attempt to feed them with any, but the most elementary truths of revelation: they were unskilful in the word of righteousness; so that he could not easily convey to them lessons which belonged to persons who had had 'their senses exercised' to discriminate, and had attained in a measure 'the assurance of the riches of understanding.' Exactly the difficulty which he encountered in explaining to the Hebrews the order of Christ's priesthood, would have confronted him in explaining to them the greater portion of the doctrines of the new economy. We are not, therefore, to infer from what he says that there is a greater hinderance in the way of our understanding how Christ is a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, than there is in the way of our understanding how he makes intercession, how he rules his people, or how, in general, he conducts his mediatorial administration.—ED.]

[NOTE 3 N. Melchizedek was not Christ.—The only arguments of apparent weight which Dr. Ridgeley adduces in support of the opinion that Melchizedek was Christ, are his titles, his having been without father, mother, descent, beginning of days or end of life, and its having been 'witnessed of him that he liveth.' But these arguments lose all plausibility the moment we look at the fact that he is spoken of not personally, but officially,—not absolutely, but as a Priest. The scriptures say not a word respecting him except in his official or priestly capacity. Even our Lord, as incarnate and as enthroned at the right hand of the divine Majesty, when called 'a priest after the order of Melchizedek,' is spoken of strictly as a priest, to the exclusion of all other views of his person or character. Some things

are said of him—particularly that he was without genealogy or pedigree—which are expressly explained to refer to him only as priest. View him as the King of his people, as the Messiah promised to the Old Testament church, and you see his pedigree, according to the flesh, minutely recorded by inspiration, and carefully traced to David and to Isaac; and only when you view him as a priest, as unconnected with the tribe of Levi, as unenrolled in the records of the current priesthood of the Old Testament church, do you find him to have been 'without genealogy.' So it is with Melchizedek. Had information of every description been furnished us respecting him either personally, or as king of Salem, or in any other capacity than that of priest, it would have failed to throw one ray of light on that phasis of character in regard to which Christ is after his order.

As a priest, then, and only as a priest, was Melchizedek 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.' In his priestly office, he stood alone, unconnected with either a predecessor or a successor. His priesthood was not transmitted to him from a former officiate; it did not rest on ancestral connexion with any party who had formerly held it; it was not vindicated by appeal to any genealogical record; it was not held by a tenure of transference from one officiate to another; it began and was conducted throughout in ministrations performed only by himself. He was the only priest of the dispensation to which he belonged. His business was to officiate, not for the children of Ham, not for the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, not for his own political subjects or the members of his patriarchal family, but for Abraham, the friend of God, and not even for him as a private individual, but only as 'the father of the faithful,' the typical head of all who believe in the promised seed, the Saviour of the world. He is noticed as a priest, or is called so, in no other connexion, with no other allusion, with reference to no other act, than as officiating once for Abraham.

We are not directly told even of his having offered sacrifice: we are told only of his having once taken tithes of Abraham, and having once blessed him in the name of the Most High. But as tithes were the award of officiating as a sacrificer, and as a priestly benediction could not be pronounced except as the result of making atonement, we infer that he did offer sacrifice. This, however, he appears to have done only once. Officiating for Abraham as the typical representative of spiritual Israel, he did not need to minister for him often, or even twice. All the purposes of his peculiar priesthood were accomplished on the single occasion narrated in scripture, when he met the father of the faithful returning from the slaughter of the kings, 'and blessed him that had the promises.' He thus had 'neither beginning of days nor end of life, but abideth a priest continually.' He was a priest before any work of the dispensation to which he belonged was performed; he continued to be a priest after all that work was completed; and consequently it is witnessed concerning him as a priest 'that he liveth.' Dr. Ridgeley's arguments, then,—founded on his supposed eternity—assume utterly mistaken views of his character; they look away from him as a priest, and contemplate him in his abstract or personal capacity; and the moment they are tested by an appeal to what Melchizedek was officially—to what he was in the only sense in which the scriptures describe him—they prove to be inconclusive and unmeaning. Let us now glance at two or three arguments opposed to Dr. Ridgeley's position.

1. That Melchizedek was not Christ, appears from the fact that manhood is essential to the priestly character. 'Every High Priest is taken from among men,' Heb. 5:1. 'Wherefore in all things it behoved Christ to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people,' Heb. 2:17. This language unequivocally teaches that every priest is a man—that the Son of God

could become a priest only by assuming human nature. Nor must the priest who acts morally for mankind, have merely such a semblance of manhood as may simply he visible to spectators: he must be 'compassed with infirmity,' (Heb. 5:3.) subjected to trials which will produce in him experimental sympathy with his suffering constituents, (Heb. 2:18.) and placed in such an obediential relation to the divine law that he shall be 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,' Heb. 7:26. Now, experience of pain, compassment with infirmity, and subordination to the divine law, are compatible only with real manhood. To say, then, that Christ personally officiated as a priest to Abraham, or that he and Melchizedek were the same person, is just to affirm that he had then as truly assumed human nature as he afterwards did at the commencement of the Christian dispensation.

Strangely enough, Dr. Ridgeley appears willing to adopt this inference. In discussing the present question, indeed, he uses no stronger language than 'the appearances of Christ in the form of a man,' and even that phrase he employs only once; but, in a former part of his work, when treating of the reality of Christ's human nature, (See under Quest. xxxvi.) he says, respecting his visible appearances under the Old Testament dispensation, 'Whether there was, in every one of those instances, a real human body that appeared, though in some of them it is beyond dispute that there was, I will not pretend to determine.' As he offers no proof of this extraordinary position, I cannot imagine to what he refers as placing the matter 'beyond dispute,' or even as rendering it in any degree plausible, except perhaps the events of our Lord's appearing, along with two created angels, to Abraham, on the eve of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But it is quite a sufficient refutation of any inferences which might be drawn from a hasty or superficial view of these events, to remark that if they prove the presence of 'a real

human body' on the part of our Lord, they also prove the presence of real human bodies on the part of the created angels. Explain the phenomena of our Lord's preincarnate appearances how we may, our business is to attend, as to both the objects and the date of his assuming 'a real human body,' to the explicit statements of scripture. Now, what statements can be more explicit than those which describe his manhood to be of 'the seed of David,' which declare it to have been 'conceived of a Virgin,' and 'born of woman,' which connect the assumption of it with a design to offer sacrifice, to destroy death and him that had the power of it, to endure all the sinless infirmities of our nature and become perfect through sufferings, and which identify the date of our Lord's appearing in it with 'the fulness of time,' with the tested and confessed inefficiency of the rites of the ceremonial law, with the setting up of the spiritual and enduring ordinances of the Christian dispensation? Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:31; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3; 1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14, 17, 18, 10; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 10:5–7; Isa. 9:6, 7. It follows, then, that Christ did not assume manhood previous to the Christian era; and that, as he then wanted this essential requisite to the priestly character, he was not the person who, under the name of Melchizedek, officiated for Abraham.

2. That Melchizedek was not Christ, appears from the fact that our Lord, previous to his incarnation, had not the materials of atonement and intercession. 'Every High Priest,' says Paul, 'is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this priest also,' the Lord Jesus Christ, 'have somewhat to offer,' Heb. 8:3. The word 'man' in our authorized version of this text is supplementary; and evidently ought to be 'high priest.' The word τουτον in the clause, ὀθεν αναγκαιον εχειν τι και τουτον ὸ προσενεγκη, can take only the word αρχιερεα in the first verse as its antecedent. Paul says this for the express purpose of showing that Christ, as our high priest, has,

and necessarily must have had, the materials of atonement and intercession. Nor might these materials be only such as were of a shadowy or prefigurative nature: they were, as the scope of the apostle's argument demonstrates, the materials of that atonement which was made once for all on account of sin, and of that intercession which is conducted in 'the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man,' (Verse 2.) and which ever prevails with God for his people. This atonement, this intercession, are Christ's priestly work; they are embodied in every idea which the scriptures exhibit of his priestly ministrations; and both rest on his incarnation, on the union of the divine and the human natures in his mediatorial person, on his having 'appeared once for all in the end of the world'—in the end of the Mosaic dispensation—'to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' What follows, then, but that he was not Melchizedek,—the person who externally officiated as a priest to the father of the faithful?

3. That Melchizedek was not Christ, appears from the fact that our Lord's call to his priestly office was not given him till his incarnation. 'No man,' says the apostle, 'taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee; as be saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,' Heb. 5:4–6. This is the only call which the word of God represents our Lord to have received. Nor indeed could the call have been otherwise then unique and once for all; for 'the word of the oath,' with which it was accompanied, 'consecrated him for evermore,' Heb. 7:27. It was with this oath that he was 'made a priest,'—(Heb. 7:20, 21.) an oath which could not be revoked,—a communication of which Jehovah could not repent,—an instrument of consecration which could not be employed more than once. Now, though 'the word of the oath,' was, as regarded

the divine purpose, spoken in eternity; though it was also, as a matter of revelation, recorded by inspiration in the writings of David; yet, as constituting Christ's call to the priestly office—as the instrument with which he was 'made a priest'—it was 'since the law,' (Heb. 7:28.) or at the period of the abolition of the Mosaic dispensation. As Christ, then, did not till that period receive his call to be a priest—in other words, as he was not till then consecrated to minister or act as a priest—he and Melchizedek could not have been the same person.

4. That Melchizedek was not Christ, appears from the fact that all priestly ministrations prior to the Christian era contemplated our Lord's priestly work as future. Aaron and his successors were special and divinely appointed types of Christ's priestly character. They and their services were 'shadows of good things to come.' Both they and the persons for whom they ministered, believed on scriptural grounds that the priest was yet to 'arise' whose character they typified. All the acts of their priesthood, all the moral lessons of their services, all the institutions of the economy under which they served, looked forward to an efficient high priest for men under the name of 'he that cometh.' Is it to be thought, then, that, after all, the whole pre-figuration was a post figuration,—that, notwithstanding the pervading and essential idea of things to come,' Christ had previously made priestly appearances, and had actually performed priestly work? Yet he must have made these appearances, be must have performed that work, he must have been, not so much 'he who cometh,' as he who had come, if Melchizedek and he were the same person.

Besides, the ministrations of Melchizedek himself were of a typical or prefigurative character, and, in consequence, could not be the ministrations of our Lord. They were of the same 'carnal' or

'shadowy' nature as those of either the patriarchal or the Levitical priests. As regarded the 'gifts or the offerings of thanksgiving, they consisted in 'bringing forth bread and wine;' and as regarded sacrifice, they may be inferred, from unity of character, from the circumstances of the age, from the relative position of Melchizedek and Abraham, and from the asserted and admitted absence of all moral sacrifice previous to 'the offering of the body of Jesus once for all,' to have consisted in the religious slaying of a lamb or of some other of the inferior animals. Ministrations of such a character, no matter who performed them, were essentially or necessarily prefigurative,—quite as much so as those of Abel, Noah, or Aaron. Are we to believe, then, that, while they were types of Christ's work, they were a part of that work itself,—that, while only prefigurations of his priestly performances, they were actually his own performances as priest? Yet this palpable contradiction is, in effect, the same thing as to say that Melchizedek was Christ. Nor will the acerbity of the contradiction be sweetened by alleging, as Dr. Ridgeley does, that the appearances of Christ under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations were 'prelibations' of his incarnation, and that prelibation and type or prefiguration are words of similar import. Christ's preincarnate appearances were good things present —not 'shadows of good things to come;' they were immediate and effective manifestations of divine agency, adapted to the existing condition of the church; they were not institutions set up by God or acts performed by man solely to carry the church's faith forward to savings and doings of the Messiah yet future, but were direct ministrations of the Son of God himself, as immediately fitted to the circumstances of the patriarchal and Mosaic ages, as those of the period of his humiliation were to the circumstances of his redemptional ministry. So far, too, as there was a human form in his preincarnate appearances, it was a form only, and not a real human nature; and it seemed to hold just such a relation to the reality of his

future manhood, as the cloud of glory, or Schechinah, held to the display in his mediatorial person of 'the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Such were the appearances of the Son of God which scholastic writers call 'prelibations.' But who—if he reflect on their nature, or even glance at their moral grandeur—will venture to think of them as types, or as possessed in any sense of typical import? Types, as compared with what they prefigured, were all 'shadows,' 'weak and unprofitable things,' 'carnal ordinances,' 'beggarly elements,' things which 'waxed old and were ready to vanish away.' But all the Son of God's appearances, all his ministrations, all his acts, whether in what are called his 'prelibations' or in any of his preincarnate agency whatever, were truly and necessarily divine. What follows, then, but that he and Melchizedek were not the same person?

5. That Melchizedek was not Christ, appears from the fact that they are described as different persons. 'It is yet far more evident,' says Paul, 'that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest,' Heb. 7:15. Dr. Ridgeley confesses that this text bears strongly against his theory; but tries to show that it calls Christ 'another priest' as distinguished, not from Melchizedek, but from the priests of the order of Aaron. It is evident, however, that Christ is 'another priest' as distinguished from all priests whatever, and in particular, from all whom the apostle had mentioned, Melchizedek as well as the Levites. As another priest, he is said to 'arise,'—phraseology which implies that his appearance in the priestly character was new, or had been hitherto unknown. Melchizedek had already appeared as a priest; the Levites had long ministered at the altar; and now there 'arose' a new and 'another priest,' different in nature from the latter, and 'made after the similitude' of the former.

The word rendered 'similitude,' (ὁμοιοτης,) means a model as distinguished from a copy, a pattern as distinguished from an imitation, or any object of resemblance as distinguished from the object which resembles it. Paul elsewhere uses it to denote similitude between Christ and his people in subjection to suffering. 'We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tried after the similitude of us, (καθ' ὁμοιοτητα,) yet without sin,' Heb. 4:15. Just as, in his exposure to pain, he bore our image; so, in his sustaining the priestly character, did he bear the image of Melchizedek. The same relation exists between him and us in regard to mode of suffering, as that which existed between him and Melchizedek in respect to the order of priesthood. Hence, if his being a priest after the similitude of Melchizedek, means that he was Melchizedek himself: his having been, as a sufferer, after the similitude of men, must mean that Christ and mankind are the same—that Jesus and men are names of interchangeable import. Such an inference is as unavoidable as it is absurd, and exposes the utter tallacy of the notion whence it is deduced. Christ, as a sufferer, having been tried after the similitude of men, proves that he and any mere man are different and distinct beings; and his having, as a priest, been made after the similitude of Melchizedek, proves in the same way, that he and the king of Salem could not have been the same person. Christ was 'another' priest who arose after his order.

Again, Melchizedek is said to have been 'made like unto the Son of God,'—language which equally proves that he could not himself have been the Saviour, Heb. 7:3. The verb translated 'made like unto,' (αφομοιοω,) refers, like the noun rendered 'similitude,' to one object as the model, pattern, or exemplar of another. The leading sense of it, however, is likeness, or resemblance in the way of imitation or comparison. As it occurs in this text, indeed, it is intensitive, having

in composition with it a particle which adds to its strength; yet, as to its radical signification, it is of the same import as when it occurs in its simple form. Let us look, then, at some of the passages in which it is found, and see how it will there bear the meaning of identification. 'And he said. Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, and with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed.' 'Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house upon a rock.' 'Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented?' Mark 4:30, 31; Matt. 7:24; Matt. 11:16, 17. After reading these passages, is it still thought that Melchizedek's having been 'made like unto the Son of God,' means that he was the Son of God? If so, we must, on the same grounds, believe such remarkable doctrines as these:—the kingdom of God is a grain of mustard seed; the man who does Christ's sayings is an architect who builds his houses on good foundations; the whole adult population of Judea who lived during the period of our Lord's public ministry, were children who amused themselves in the market-places, and piped and chanted to their playmates.—ED].

[Note 3 O. The Peculiarities of Melchizedek's Order of Priesthood.—The distinguishing properties of Melchizedek's order of priesthood, those in which it differed from the Aaronic order, and peculiarly typified or exhibited the priestly character of Christ, are deserving of special notice; and as they are only hinted at by Dr. Ridgeley, they may profitably form the subject of a short note. They appear to me to be chiefly five,—perfection, supremacy, perpetuity, intransferableness, and the mutual subserviency of kingly and priestly functions.

1. One peculiarity of Melchizedek's order of priesthood is perfection. Melchizedek 'blessed him that had the promises;' he officiated for Abraham as 'the father of the faithful,' or as the typical representative of all the redeemed; and he ministered on his behalf only once, or 'once for all.' There are three proofs that Abraham as a public head was his only constituent. The first is the passage, 'He received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises; and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the greater,' Heb. 7:6, 7. Why should the patriarch, in reference to his transaction with Melchizedek, be so pointedly called 'he that had the promises,' unless he sustained in that transaction, not a personal or private capacity, not a capacity in common with any other individuals, but the peculiar character of 'the father of the faithful?' Besides, as the economical representative of all the Israelites, and the typical representative of all the redeemed, he was the greatest human personage known to the Jewish church. 'Art thou greater than our father Abraham?' asked the Jews of Christ, 'Whom makest thou thyself to be?' Yet Paul asserts him to have been inferior to Melchizedek; for 'without all contradiction,' says he, 'the less is blessed of the greater.' But had Abraham been only one of many for whom Melchizedek ministered, or had he been blessed by him in his personal or private capacity, he could claim to be a patriarchal priest as truly as he, and he would, at the same time, have been superior to him as the holder of the promises. It follows, then, that as in receiving the blessing, he was less than Melchizedek, he must have stood in the capacity of the only constituent, and the representative of Israel. The second proof of this point is the passage, 'As I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.' Here, Abraham is distinctly asserted to have acted with Melchizedek, in a capacity which made all Levi, and by parity of reason, all the tribes and generations of Israel, participants in his conduct. Melchizedek

officiated for the patriarch, not as an individual, but as representing all who were 'in his loins.' The third proof is the title given to Melchizedek, 'the priest of the Most High God.' There is an emphasis in this title which implies him to have differed as much from every priest of his day, and every priest who preceded him, as from the priests of the order of Aaron. Now, in what could any emphatic difference consist, except in his officiating for Abraham as the representative of all Israel? If he be viewed as simply the priest of a tribe of people or a district of country, he differed nothing from an ordinary patriarchal priest, or from any one of the numerous priests who preceded the institution of the Aaronic order. As 'priest of the Most High God,' too, he was 'without father, without mother, without descent,' he stood alone in his priesthood, he did not receive it from a predecessor, he was of another class, or of another order from the patriarchal priests; and he must consequently have received a special or peculiar call to the office which he filled, for 'no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron,' Heb. 5:4. Not only his emphatic title, therefore, but his peculiar and distinguishing call, prove him to have officiated in a far other manner, and a far higher sense, than any patriarchal priest, or officiate for a tribe or for private individuals. From this consideration, then, as well as from those formerly stated, it follows that he ministered for Abraham in the latter's public capacity, of 'the father of the faithful.'

Now, as Abraham's character in the transaction was altogether typical, and had reference neither to his own personal conduct nor to that of the multitude whom he represented, but only to the relation in which they stood to the covenant of promise or the dispensation of mercy, there was no occasion for more than one priestly ministration. We accordingly read of Melchizedek officiating only once. He appears to have made an expiatory offering for Abraham,

just as he brought forth to him bread and wine 'once for all.' Abraham, as 'he who had the promises,' was 'blessed' effectively and definitively by 'the priest of the Most High God,' when he was blessed 'once.' In his relation to the divine covenant, the covenant of peace and mercy, or rather as representing that relation on the part of all who are his children by faith, he needed to enjoy only one priestly ministration. All the work of Melchizedek's 'blessing' him was accomplished in one performance. Hence the perfection of his order of priesthood.

How beautiful a type is here of the uniqueness and efficiency of the priestly work of our Lord! He officiates in reality just in that relation in which Melchizedek officiated by prefiguration. Melchizedek ministered by a symbol for 'him who had the promises:' Christ ministered by the sacrifice of himself for all on whom the promises take effect. Melchizedek by one act 'blessed' the typical representative of the faithful: Christ 'by one offering, hath perfected for ever those for whom he made atonement,' Heb. 10:14. 'But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,' Heb 9:27, 28. 'For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens: Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself,' Heb. 7:26, 27.

2. Another peculiarity of Melchizedek's order of priesthood is supremacy. 'Consider,' says the apostle, 'how great this priest was to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tithe of the spoils,' Heb. 7:4. Aaronic priests, in connection with receiving a right to exact tithes, were raised to a far loftier and more sacred position than the

Israelites of the other tribes, or than even the unpriested families of the Levites. Their investment with the right occasioned a murmuring among all the other classes of the people, Numb. 16:1–50. As tithe-holders they had a claim, in the divine name, upon the acknowledged inferiority of all their brethren; and were entitled to regard any neglect or invasion of their right as a display of irreligion and rebelliousness against God. Mal. 3:8–10; Neh. 13:10–12. Their dignity, however, was subject to important limitations. Any one of their number held it only in common with all the individuals of a large body of fellow-officiates; he had no claim upon any of his sacerdotal brethren; he could not exact tithes except during the very brief period of his dispensation when he was in office; he had no superiority over any of the generations who preceded or followed him, or even over any of his cotemporaries till he was of a mature and qualifying age. Melchizedek, on the other hand, had a claim of superiority over all Israel of every generation, over all the classes and generations of the Aaronic priests, and even over the patriarch Abraham, the father of many nations, in whom, through his seed, all the families of the earth should be blessed. 'How great, then, was this priest!' He who had the promises, whom Jews and believing Gentiles esteem the greatest of the redeemed, and along with him, all his natural and spiritual posterity, as well as a divinely commissioned race of priests, rendered him subjection, and rendered it while they viewed him solely in his official priestly capacity.

How expressive a type was Melchizedek's position of the supreme priesthood, the paramount priestly dignity and authority of our Lord! He receives from the whole body of the redeemed, from all the tribes and generations of the saved, from the genuine worshippers of God under every dispensation from the beginning till the end of time, that subjection in reality or in individual moral obedience which Melchizedek received only in type or in Abraham's payment of tithes.

All the Aaronic and the patriarchal priests renounce their faded glories under the blaze of his priestly supremacy. The whole multitude of the saved in heaven and in earth give him tithes of all, the homage of every affection, and the obedience of every faculty as 'the apostle and high priest of their profession.' All have him as 'an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for them entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,' Heb. 6:19, 20. 'To him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.' 'Thy people shall be a free-will offering in the day of thy power. Thy progeny, in the glorious sanctuary, shall be more than the dew in the womb of the morning. For Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever according to the order Melchizedek.'

3. A third peculiarity of Melchizedek's order of priesthood is intransferableness. Not only did the Levitical priests receive their office from predecessors, and transfer it to successors; but they shared it with a numerous company of fellow-officiates. Even the high priest could perform his functions only with the help of a large officiating body of inferior priests. The Aaronic priesthood, not only in itself, but in each of its ministrations, was completed in its design or made effective or significant in the attainment of its purposes, only by passing from hand to hand, and bringing into requisition 'many priests.' Melchizedek, on the contrary, had no predecessor, no successor, no fellow-officiate. He was the only priest of his dispensation, and performed all its work by his individual unaided ministrations.

Christ, in the same manner, 'because he continueth ever, hath an intransferable priesthood,' Heb. 7:24, απαραβατον ἱερωσυνην. 'Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is

the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory,' Zech. 6:12, 13. He is the 'one Mediator between God and man.' His priestly dispensation rests exclusively in his hands, and can never communicate either its duties or its honours to another. He is the only officiate by whom men have access to God, the only offerer of a true atonement, the only possessor of the really priestly name, or the truly priestly glory. There remaineth no other sacrifice for sin than that which he offered once for all. 'Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,' Heb. 10:26; Acts 4:12.

4. A fourth peculiarity of Melchizedek's order of priesthood is perpetuity. The Aaronic priests were 'not suffered to continue by reason of death,' Heb. 7:23. Even during the brief period of their lifetime, they were not allowed to be priests except while in the vigour of their years. No Levite could be a priest till he was twenty-five years of age, or continue to hold the office after he was fifty, Numb. 8:24, 25. Every Aaronic or patriarchal priest sustained his official character and exerted his official influence, during only a detached and unimportant section of the dispensation under which he ministered. Melchizedek, however, 'abode a priest continually.' 'He had neither beginning of days, nor end of life.' His priestly character was sustained during the whole of the dispensation to which he belonged, and his priestly influence was exerted on all its interests. When 'he who held the promises' required to have a priestly ministration on his behalf as the typical representative of the faithful, he found Melchizedek abroad as 'the priest of the Most High God;' and when he had been so 'blessed' as not to need further benediction, he continued to see Melchizedek in the same character in which he originally met him.

Christ, in the same manner, is the high priest of his people, the true and only priest of the most high God, throughout the whole dispensation under which he ministers; and he makes his priestly influence to be felt on all its interests, and on all the persons who participate in its blessings. The whole multitude of the saved will eventually be found to have obtained 'redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' The results of his one offering for sin were virtually laid open to man in the first promise, and will continue to be exhibited for the acceptance of the guilty and helpless till the end of time. Having, as the great High Priest who entered once into the holiest of all, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, he must needs reign in the influence of his priesthood till every believing sinner be pardoned and made a new creature, and all the designs of the dispensation of mercy to man be accomplished. 'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,' Heb. 7:25. 'Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle,'—arrayed in the robes of his priestly office, and displaying the insignia of his priestly power and glory,—he says, 'I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of the invisible world and of death,' Rev. 1:13, 18.

5. A fifth peculiarity of Melchizedek's order of priesthood is the mutual subserviency of priestly and kingly functions. The Levitical priests had neither interest nor influence additional to what was priestly in any of their ministrations. They acted, in all their official conduct, with simply the feelings and the views of priests. Melchizedek, on the contrary, was actuated by the strong and modifying motives, not only of a king, but of a king of righteousness and a king of peace. When, in discharge of his priestly functions, he said, 'Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven

and earth,' he added, from the promptings of his kingly character, 'And blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand,' Gen. 14:19, 20. As a king of righteousness, he was interested in the patriarch's triumph over heathen invaders and spoilers; as a king of peace, he was interested in the recovered and secured tranquillity of the patriarch's family and allies; and, both as a king of righteousness and a king of peace—concerned for the suppression of all wrong and turbulence, and careful for the administrative establishment of rectitude and happiness—he was interested in the patriarch's reception of all the well-being which could accrue from his own benediction and ministration as 'the priest of the most high God.' Though his priestly and his kingly offices were distinct, yet the functions of the former were strongly and benignly affected by the principles and predilections of the latter.

But how obscure, in this particular, is the type compared to the antitype! Christ wears 'the two crowns,' the silver mitre and the golden diadem; 'he sits and rules upon his throne;' 'he is a priest upon his throne;' and 'the counsel of peace is between them both,' Zech. 6:11–13. While displayed to his people as a prosperous king who executes justice and judgment, he is, at the same time, exhibited to them as 'the Lord their righteousness,' for whose sake God acknowledges them for his own, and is just while he justifies them from their iniquity. They regard him, not only as swaying over them a sceptre of purity, but also as performing priestly ministrations by which they will be purified by the washing of water with the word, and eventually cleansed from spot and blemish and every such thing. The same persons who are reconciled by his priesthood, are governed by his kingship. They are simultaneously the subjects of his regal administration, and in the course of realizing the results of his intercession. While his kingly government is stamped with rectitude,

and displays divine love of holiness and hatred of iniquity, he, at the same time, receives, as the High Priest of his people, that rich and odoriferous unction of the Spirit which is poured upon his head, and flows to the skirts of his garment, and imparts life and elasticity, strength and gladness, to all the members of his body. 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,' Jer. 23:5, 6. 'Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' Isa. 32:1, 2.—ED.]

[NOTE 3 P. Satisfying Divine Justice.—Dr. Ridgeley, in common with many theological writers, currently speaks of 'satisfaction to divine justice,' 'satisfying the justice of God.' We would here once for all submit a few remarks on these and kindred phrases.

The idea directly suggested by the words 'satisfying divine justice,' is far from what Dr. Ridgeley, or any other orthodox writer, intends them to convey. Satisfaction, literally understood, is just that notion of atonement which tends more than any other to produce wrong conceptions of the divine character, or to lead the mind into Socinianism. Vindication of the moral government of God, the magnifying of the divine law and the making of it honourable, the setting forth of Christ as a propitiatory to declare God's method of justification, that he is just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus, the exhibition of the entire moral glory of God in saving sinners, the glory alike of his equity, his mercy, his holiness, his love, —this, and not the offering of satisfaction to one perfection of Deity,

is properly the grand result of the work of atonement. All God's attributes were concerned to bring man salvation. His equity as truly as his compassion,—his righteousness as truly as his mercy,—his justice as truly as his love, formed, revealed, and executed the plan of redemption. 'Mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other; truth sprang out of the earth, righteousness looked down from heaven, and justice went before God's face, to set us in the way of his steps.'

What we usually mean by 'the satisfying of divine justice,' is complying with the penal demands, or vindicating the moral authority, of the divine law. Christ dealt directly with the law of God, and through this with his justice. He was 'made under the law,' he endured the 'curse of the law,' he 'became the end of the law,' he 'magnified the law, and made it honourable.' Whatever duties the law enjoined, he performed; whatever curses it denounced, he endured; and whatever claims it possessed on the people for whom he became surety, he discharged. He thus restored its insulted honour, and vindicated its divine authority, demonstrating all its enactments to be 'holy, just, and good.' But this 'magnifying of the law' had an influence no more on the divine justice than on the divine mercy. The design was as much to reconcile God's compassion as to reconcile his equity to the pardoning of sinners. Till our Lord's sacrifice was offered, the mercy of the Most High was as incompetent to give acceptance to the guilty, as his justice was incompetent to remit their condemnation; and now, when the sacrifice has been made, his justice as truly takes away penalty, as his mercy bestows all blessings. God thinks it unjust to exact twice the same punishment for the same offence; and having seen executed on his well-beloved Son all the punishment due to such of mankind as believe the gospel, he does not and cannot execute it on their own persons. His justice, therefore, goes before him to set us in the way of his steps, just at the

same moment, and for the same reason, that his mercy and his truth meet together to bestow the blessings of his favour and fulfil the promises of his covenant. In approaching him through Christ, we confide in his entire character,—we see his whole nature to be love,—we rejoice equally in all his perfections.

Persons often talk of human sufferings as a satisfying of divine justice. So far as they think correctly, they ought rather to say that human sufferings all accord with divine equity. God has no enjoyment, and expresses no satisfaction, in the miseries even of the ungodly. 'He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?' 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.' The distresses of the ungodly are joint messengers of mercy with the appeals and invitations of the gospel, and are often blessed, in co-operation with the latter, for accomplishing the most beneficial designs of the divine love. Manasseh was 'taken among the thorns, and when he was in affliction, he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers; and he then knew that the Lord he was God.' Even the eternal sufferings of the finally condemned, while awarded in equity, and essential to the discountenancing of sin, are inflicted from beneficence to the subjects in general of God's moral government, and exert a benign influence on all God's moral creatures. Who will say that the very condemned themselves would not work out a greater and more terrible creation of torment if left to the free indulgence of their own depraved pleasure, than when permanently subjected to the restraints of the divine anger? So far from seeking satisfaction in punishing the wicked, the Most High directly indulges and promotes his benevolence. 'He cannot look on sin,' just because

sin is the invariable and necessary cause of misery; and he maintains the dominion and enforces the practice of holiness, just because holiness is the essential and only source of real happiness. Now, every suffering which he inflicts in the present life is fitted to prevent the increase, to diminish the amount, or to destroy the influence of sin; and every punishment which he awards to the incorrigible is fitted to recommend holiness to the pure and the stable. Whatever he does to the wicked is, in this world, adapted to lead themselves to salvation; and, in the world hereafter, intended to prevent the creation of new causes of torment among the fallen, and to confirm the saved and the unfallen in the practice of all excellence, and the possession of all beatitude. In all his works, among all orders of his creatures, 'God is love.' 'He doth not afflict willingly'—or from his heart—'nor grieve the children of men.' He chastens his people, 'not for his own pleasure, but for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness.' Whether dealing with the righteous or with the wicked, he seeks at no time the satisfying of any severe principle in his own nature, but always indulges love, displays benevolence, and promotes the holy design of his government of blessedness toward his creatures.

God's justice is simply his equity. As a just judge, he has no austereness, but merely awards what is right; as a just lawgiver, he has no severity, but merely commands what is morally good; as a just king, he has no arbitrariness, but merely exacts what is due, and promotes what is benign. When he is just, he expects reverence; when he is merciful, he expects gratitude; and when either justice or mercy is displayed, he is glorified. But all his perfections have their glory or their satisfaction solely from himself. Nothing in man can either 'move his mercy' to bestow pardon, or dissuade his justice from doing what is equitable. He has accepted Christ as the Surety of believers; and simply because he is just, he absolves them from the

penalties of his law. He, in the same way, can, in virtue of Christ's sacrifice, save the ungodly without making a compromise with sin; and simply because he is merciful, he is reconciled to his people, 'not imputing to them their trespasses.' But he was as truly infinite in both justice and mercy from eternity as at the present moment; he was neither 'moved to mercy,' nor induced to abate justice, by even the atoning sufferings of the Saviour; and greatly less is he incited either to cherish one perfection, or withhold the manifestation of another, by the deeds or distresses of his creatures. He is in his own nature, and ever was, and ever will be, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.'—ED.]

[NOTE 3 Q. The Altar on which Christ was offered.—Various cogent arguments might be advanced against both the opinion which Dr. Ridgeley rejects, and the opinion which he espouses, respecting the altar on which Christ was offered. Instead of stating these, I shall offer a remark or two on Dr. Ridgeley's only argument in favour of his opinion, and assign some reasons—if the idea of an altar is at all to be entertained—for associating it with the entire scene of our Lord's expiatory sufferings, or simply with the earth.

The passage, 'Whether is greater the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift,' speaks, not of sacrifices, but of gifts,—things essentially different. Sacrifices were immolated animals; but gifts were offerings of oil and wine, flour and similar substances. The victims used in sacrifice were 'sanctified,' or set apart, when they were brought to the door of the tabernacle; but the vegetable materials employed in gifts were 'sanctified,' or set apart, only when laid upon the altar. Hence, the assertion, 'the altar sanctifieth,' devoteth or consecrateth 'the

gift.' As regarded sacrifice, however, the altar did not sanctify it, but, on the contrary, it sanctified the altar. 'And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin-offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy,' Exod. 29:36, 37. Thus, in regard to sacrifices, the altar itself required to be sanctified,—sanctified seven days,—and sanctified with the blood of an expiatory victim.

The altar, then—if we are at all to conceive of one in reference to the offering of Christ—was such as required to be expiated. Now, the scene of our Lord's humiliation, or the earth, as such, on which he suffered, lay, in common with man, under the divine malediction. 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee,' Gen. 3:17, 18. Defiled by man's iniquity, and the scene of his rebellion, it bore marks of God's displeasure, or of the withdrawment of his complacency. It hence could be the scene from which 'truth should spring,' or a befitting altar for the offering of Christ and the invoking of the divine complacency, only by being specially consecrated or set apart. Now, an adequate cleansing of it was effected at the moment of our Lord's incarnation. It was sanctified by his mere presence, and became an appropriate altar simply by his making it the scene of his manifestation in the flesh.

Again, the altar was such as to be suited to the various nature and entire infliction of the expiatory sufferings which Christ endured. These sufferings, as Dr. Ridgeley has shown, were not only those of his death or final passion, but all which he experienced; and, identified with his entire humiliation, they extended from his assumption of our nature to his triumph over death and the grave.

They included, not only the temporary desertion of the divine complacency, and the endurance of death, but previous protracted exposure to sorrow, privation and pain from men, from devils, and from the perturbed physical condition of the very world in which he tabernacled. What scene, then, was adapted to the endurance of them, or on what scene or altar were they actually undergone, except the surface, the bosom of the earth?

Further, the altar was such as, in its relative position to heaven, corresponded with the relative position of the Jewish altar to the sanctuary. The Holiest of all was the type of heaven, or of the place in which Christ intercedes; the Holy Place was the type of the church in the present state, or of believers as chosen out of the world and consecrated to God; and the court of the tabernacle was a type of the world as placed under a dispensation of respite and mercy, or of the condition in which men are previous to the expiatory remission of their sins. The high priest, on the great day of atonement, first slew the sacrificial victims in the court of the Tabernacle, and next went up, through the Holy Place, into the Holiest of all, there to appear before the Shechinah; and he thus represented God's spiritual Israel receiving the benefits of atonement under the dispensation of mercy, and then passing through the condition of fellowship with God on earth, to 'sit down together with Christ in the heavenly places.' There was hence an exact correspondence between the three apartments of the Temple on the one hand, and the native earth, the church in the world, and the heavenly sanctuary, on the other. Now, Christ, in connexion with his work of atonement, dealt with each of the three states. He first, as on an altar, sacrificed himself on earth; he next sojourned forty days exclusively with his disciples, and unsubjected to any penalties; and he finally entered the true heavenlies, there to perform whatever was prefigured by the Jewish high priest's appearance in the Holiest of all. From these considerations it seems

evident that, it any thing whatever was designed to correspond in the way of antitype to the altar on which the Jewish sacrifices were offered, it was simply the earth as such, or the aggregate scene of our Lord's entire humiliation.—ED.]

[NOTE 3 R. Christ's Purchase.—In this place, Dr. Ridgeley, with probably one abatement, very justly and luminously defines Christ's act of purchase or redemption. Had he, instead of the phrase 'out of the hand of vindictive justice,' used the phrase 'from the curse of the law,' or from the legal dominion or condemning power of sin, his definition would have at once accorded exactly with the language of scripture, (See Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18.) and expressed more clearly the idea which he intended to convey. But such as it is, I would take occasion from it to call attention to his current phraseology, in both the preceding and the subsequent part of his work, on the subject of Christ's purchase. Were we to frame, from what he has written, an answer to the question, 'What did Christ purchase?' we should be constrained to make it include almost, if not absolutely, everything connected with the dispensation of divine mercy. He currently talks of the purchase of salvation, the purchase of eternal life, the purchase of spiritual blessings, and even the purchase of redemption itself. He is countenanced, indeed, in such phraseology, not only by multitudes of theological writers, but also by the Westminster standards; but he is not, on that account, necessarily correct, and, if wrong, stands in just the more need of being subjected to scripture.

'The redemption purchased by Christ,' or the purchase of an act of purchase, is language, to say the least of it, so unmeaning, that one wonders at its having ever been used. This phrase, and 'the purchase of salvation,' 'the purchase of grace,' as well as all homologous phrases which Dr. Ridgeley currently employs, suggest ideas quite

foreign to his definition of redemption. What Christ, according to that definition, redeemed or purchased was his people; and 'the way' in which he purchased them was 'judicial.' Now, how emphatically different, how almost antithetic, are the ideas of purchasing salvation and of purchasing souls! To the phrase buying or ransoming souls, we can attach notions, not only luminous in themselves, but blended in their radiance with correct views of all the leading truths of revelation; but to the phrase buying or ransoming grace, blessings or salvation, we cannot, without first neutralizing the proper force of the words, attach any definite and just notions whatever. Not only so, but we are in danger,—inexperienced Christians at least are,—of attaching to the latter phrase, ideas utterly inconsistent with a view of the spontaneity of the divine love and mercy, and the true character of Christ's atonement as not offering an equivalent for blessings, but 'magnifying the divine law, and making it honourable,' bearing away the penalty of man's transgressions, and rendering it consistent with justice and holiness that believing sinners should be saved. Dr. Ridgeley, in a previous part of his work, (See Sect. 'The Reason of Salvation,' under Quest. xxx.,) exhibits the spontaneity of the divine mercy, in terms which, if borne in mind, would have led him to qualify his current phraseology. He says, 'The only moving cause, or reason, why God bestows this great salvation, or why he has designed to bring any of the sons of men to it, is his mere love and mercy. Salvation, whether considered in its rise in God's eternal purpose, or in the execution of it in the work of conversion and sanctification, as well as in the completing of it in glorification, is ascribed to the sovereign grace and mercy of God.' This statement is made, indeed, with the design of showing that the divine mercy cannot be moved or merited by man; but it equally shows that the mercy is in its own nature spontaneous. The whole work of Christ, all his acts of mediation, even his coming to perform redemption or pay the price or ransom which he laid down, originated in mercy, and

was a display of saving love. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' John 3:16. 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,' 1 John 4:10. Christ's work did not move the divine love; but the divine love moved the work of Christ. God's 'unspeakable gift,' his unutterable bountifulness, that active and all-pervading beneficence of his, whence proceed the blessings with which he enriches the world and blesses the redeemed, was displayed, not as the purchase of Christ's mediation, but as the motive of his advent and the reason of all his mediatorial work. What the Redeemer did, was not to pay an equivalent for blessings, but to 'commend God's love to the guilty,' to 'glorify' the divine 'name upon the earth,' to become 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' to redeem his people from the tyrant dominion of sin, to 'lead captivity captive, and receive gifts for men.'

Of the very numerous texts which speak of God or of Christ purchasing, buying, ransoming or redeeming, all, with just one exception, appear to preserve perfect sameness or equivalency of language as to the objects of purchase. The solitary instance to which I refer, is not a real but only an apparent discrepancy, 'He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased,' Psal. 78:54. Here purchasing, by a figure of speech not infrequent in scripture, is put for conquest or deliverance by power. What is spoken of is an act of 'the Lord's right hand,' and consequently an act altogether different in nature from those displays of his moral glory, or interpositions of his love and mercy, which, in other texts, are denominated his purchase. All the passages, then, which speak of the purchase of God or of Christ in the

moral sense, all those in particular, which speak of the Mediator's purchase in executing the scheme of redemption, are of one scope and one phraseology as to the objects of purchase. In all of them, the Redeemer is represented as buying, purchasing, ransoming, redeeming souls, his people, his congregation, his church. 'Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased.' 'Ye are an holy nation, a purchased people.' 'Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.' 'The Holy Spirit of promise is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession,' Psal. 74:2; 2 Pet. 2:9; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:14. 'Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.' 'Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.' 'Even denying the Lord that bought them.' 'These were bought from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb,' 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 14:4. 'The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.' 'He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come.' 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave.' 'The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him,' Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6; Isa. 35:10; Hos. 13:14; Jer. 31:11. The examples of the sense of the word 'redeem,' are too numerous to be quoted; but they may be seen by turning to the following passages, Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rev. 5:9; Luke 1:68; Luke 24:21; Psal. 103:4; 34:22; 49:8; 31:5; 74:2; 107:2; 130:8; Jer. 15:21; Hos. 13:14; Gal. 4:5; Tit. 2:14; Isa. 43:1; 44:22, 23; 52:3; 63:9; Lam. 3:58—and they will be found on examination to be quite as uniform as the examples of 'buying,' 'purchasing,' and 'ransoming,' and it possible, more stringent, and more exclusive of every signification, but the all-pervading one of purchasing, not blessings, not grace, not eternal life, not salvation, not any exercise or movement of God's love, but souls, the people of Christ, the church of the saved. Much will be gained, then, and nothing lost, to correct views of the divine character and the dispensation of mercy, by following this uniform

usage of scripture language, and rejecting Dr. Ridgeley's current phraseology, as to the objects of Christ's purchase.

CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE

QUESTION XLV. How doth Christ execute the office of a King?

ANSWER. Christ executeth the office of a King, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them, in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their own good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest who know not God, and obey not the gospel.

The meaning of the word King

A KING is a person advanced to the highest dignity. In this sense the word is used in scripture, and in our common acceptation of it, as applied to men. More particularly, it denotes his having dominion over subjects. It is therefore a relative term; and the exercise of his dominion is confined within certain limits. But, as it is applied to God, it denotes universal dominion. The psalmist says, 'God is the King of all the earth.' In this respect it properly denotes a divine perfection. That which we are led to consider, in this Answer, is, how Christ is more especially styled a King, as Mediator. Divines generally distinguish his kingdom into that which is natural, and that which is mediatorial. The former is founded in his deity, and not received by commission from the Father; in which respect he would have been the Governor of the world, as the Father is, though man had not fallen and there had been no need of a Mediator. The latter is

what we are more especially to consider, namely, his mediatoral kingdom. This the psalmist intends when he represents the Father as saying, 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.'n

The method in which we shall speak concerning Christ's kingly office, shall be to show who are the subjects of it; the manner of his governing them; and the various ages in which his government is or shall be exercised, together with the different circumstances relating to its administration.

The Subjects of Christ's Government

As to the subjects governed by Christ, they are either his people, or his enemies. The former are, indeed, by nature, enemies to his government, and unwilling to subject themselves to him; but they are made willing in the day of his power, are pleased with his government, and made partakers of its advantages. The latter, that is, his enemies, are forced to bow down before him, as subdued by him, though not to him. Hence, with respect to his people and his enemies, he exercises his government various ways. This leads us to consider the manner in which Christ exercises his kingly government.

Christ's Government over his People

We shall first consider Christ's government with respect to his people. This government is either external and visible, or internal and spiritual. In the latter view of it, he exerts divine power, and brings men into a state of grace and salvation. The church is eminently the seat of this government. But as this will be farther noticed under a following Answer, we shall, at present, only consider them as owning his government, by professing their subjection to him, and thereby separating themselves from the world. Christ

governs them, as is observed in this Answer, by giving them officers, laws, and censures, and many other privileges, which the members of the visible church are made partakers of, and of which more shall be said in its proper place. What we shall principally consider, at present, is Christ's exercising his spiritual and powerful government over his elect, in those things which more immediately concern their salvation.

1. Here we may observe their character and temper, before they are brought, in a saving way, into Christ's kingdom. There is no difference between them and the rest of the world, who are the subjects of Satan's kingdom. Their hearts are, by nature, full of enmity and rebellion against him; and they are suffered sometimes to run great lengths in opposing his government; and their lives discover a fixed resolution not to submit to him, whatever be the consequence. 'Other lords,' says the church, 'have dominion over them.' 'They serve divers lusts and pleasures;'q 'they walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;' and some of them have reason to style themselves, as the apostle Paul says he was before his conversion, the chief of sinners.s Sometimes, indeed, they meet with some checks and rebukes of conscience, which, for a while, put them to a stand; and they seem inclinable to submit to Christ, being afraid of his vengeance, or their own consciences suggesting the reasonableness of submitting to him. This issues in some hasty resolutions, arising from the terror of their own thoughts, or the prospect of some advantage which will accrue to them, whereby their condition may be rendered better than what they, at present, apprehend it to be. This again extorts from them a degree of compliance with the gospel-overture; especially if Christ would stoop to those terms which corrupt nature is willing to conform itself to, or make those abatements which would be

consistent with their serving God and Mammon. In this case, they are like the person whom our Saviour mentions, who being called, replies, 'I go, Sir, and went not.' Sometimes they promise that they will submit hereafter, if they may but be indulged in their course of life for the present, and, like Felix, would attend to these matters at a more convenient season. Or they are like him who is represented as desiring our Saviour that he might 'first go and bury his father;'u by which we are not to understand his performing that debt which the law of nature obliged him to perform to a deceased parent, which might have been soon discharged, and been no hinderance to his following Christ, but his being desirous to be excused from following him till his father was dead, and this with a design to gain time, or to ward off present convictions, his domestic affairs inclining him not immediately to subject himself to Christ, or to take up his lot with him, or to forsake all and follow him, though he was not insensible that this was his duty. This is the temper and character of persons before they are effectually persuaded to submit to Christ's government. The consequence often is their not only losing these convictions, but returning with stronger resolutions to their former course, and adding greater degrees of rebellion to their iniquity.

2. There are several methods used by Christ, to bring sinners into subjection to him; some of which are principally objective, and, though not in themselves sufficient, yet, necessary to answer this end. First, he gives them to understand that there is an inevitable necessity of perishing, if they persist in their rebellion against him. Our Saviour says, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Elsewhere, it is said, 'Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?'y It is said also that 'those his enemies that would not that he should reign over them, shall be brought forth, and slain before him.' This is not only considered in a general way, as what other sinners are given to expect, but is impressed on the conscience,

and particularly applied to the individual himself, whereby he is convinced that his present course is not only dangerous but destructive, and is filled with that distress and concern of soul which is the beginning of that work of grace which shall afterwards be brought to perfection.—Again, Christ holds forth his golden sceptre, and makes a proclamation to sinners to return and submit to him, and, at the same time, expresses his willingness to receive all who by faith close with the gospel-overture, and cast themselves at his foot with sincere repentance. Thus he says, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' How vile soever they have been, their unworthiness shall not be a bar to hinder his acceptance of them. He also shows them their obligations to obey and submit to him, as their rightful Lord and Sovereign, who claims divine worship from them,b and what unanswerable engagements they are laid under to render it, from all that he did and suffered in life and death, whereby he not only expressed the highest love, but purchased to himself a peculiar people, who must own him as their King, if they expect to reap the blessed fruits and effects of his purchase as a Priest.—Further, he represents to them the vast advantages which will attend their subjection to his government. Not only shall they obtain a full and free pardon of all their past crimes, and be taken into favour as much as though they had never forfeited it; but he will confer on them all those graces which accompany salvation, and advance them to the highest honour. On this account they are said to be made 'kings and priests unto God.' Yea, he will grant them 'to sit with him in his throne;'d not as sharing any part of his mediatorial glory, but as being near to him that sits on the throne, and having all those tokens of his regard to them which are agreeable to their condition or to the relation they stand in to him as subjects. He presents to their view all the promises of the covenant of grace, which are in his hand to accomplish, and gives them ground to expect all the blessings he hath purchased, assures them that he will admit them to the most

delightful and intimate communion with himself here, that he 'will keep them from falling,' and, in the end, 'present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.' As for their past follies, ingratitude, and rebellion against him, he tells them, that these shall be passed over, and not laid to their charge;f and that how expedient soever it may be for him to bring them to their remembrance, to humble them, and enhance their love and gratitude to him, he will, notwithstanding, forgive them.—Again, he gives them to understand what duties he expects from them, and what are the laws which all his subjects are obliged to obey. Accordingly, he will not give forth any dispensation or allowance to sin, which is a returning again to folly; nor will he suffer them to make their own will the rule of their actions, or to live as they list, or to give way to carnal security, negligence, or indifference, in his service. But they must be always pressing forwards, running the race he has set before them with diligence and industry, that they 'be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises,' and not only so, but 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'h They must also have a zeal for his honour, as those who appear to be in good earnest, and prefer his interest to their own; and this must be tempered with meekness, lest, while they seem to be espousing his cause, they give ground to conclude that the indulging of their irregular passions is what they principally design. As for the obedience he demands of them, it must be universal, with their whole heart, and to the utmost of their power. Hence, if the duty enjoined be difficult, they must not say, as some of his followers did, 'This is an hard saying, who can hear it?' but rather, in this case, depend on his grace for strength to enable them to perform it. And, as they are to obey his commanding will, so he tells them they must submit to his providential will, and therein glorify his sovereignty, and reckon every thing good which he does, in as much as it proceeds from a wise and gracious hand, and is rendered subservient to

answer the best ends, for his glory and their advantage. Moreover, he tells them, that whatever obedience they may be enabled to perform, they must ascribe the glory of it, not to themselves, but to him, as he is the Author and Finisher of faith, and works in them all those graces which he requires of them. When they have thus engaged in his service, and their faces are turned heavenward, he obliges them never to think of returning to their former state and company, or subject themselves to the tyranny they are delivered from. As the angel ordered Lot, when he had escaped out of Sodom, not so much as to look back, as one that had a hankering mind to what he had left behind him; or as the Israelites sinned who longed for the onions and garlick and flesh-pots of Egypt, when they were on their journey towards the good land which God had promised them; so Christ expects that all his subjects should not only obey him, but that they should do so with unfainting perseverance, as 'not being of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.'

We have thus sketched the present obligations and future advantages, together with the duties which Christ's subjects are engaged to perform; or the laws of his kingdom, which he makes known to them, before they are brought into subjection to him. We may now add, that he presents to them not only the bright, but the dark side of the cloud, and sets before them the many difficulties and troubles they are likely to meet with in this world, in common with the rest of his subjects, that they may not hereafter be under any temptation to complain as if they were disappointed, when things go otherwise than they were given to expect. As, with one hand, he represents to their view the crown of life; so, with the other, he holds forth the cross, which they must take up, and follow him, if they would be his disciples. He does not conceal from them the evils they are likely to meet with from the world; but tells them plainly, that

they must expect to be 'hated of all men for his name's sake,'m and be willing to part with all things for him, especially if standing in competition with him; so that he who loveth father or mother, son, or daughter, yea, his own life, more than him, is not worthy of him. He tells them that self-denial must be their daily exercise, that no idol of jealousy must be set up in their hearts, no secret or darling lust indulged, as being not only contrary to the temper and disposition of his subjects, and a dishonour to their character, but inconsistent with that supreme love which is due to him alone. He also warns them not to hold any confederacy with his enemies, strictly forbids them to make any covenant with death and hell, and requires that all former covenants therewith should be disannulled and broken, as containing a tacit denial of their allegiance to him.

These are the methods which Christ uses, in an objective way, to bring his people into his kingdom. But they are not regarded by the greater part of those who sit under the sound of the gospel; nor, indeed, are they effectual to answer this end in any, till he is pleased to incline and enable them, by his power, to submit to him. He must first conquer them, before they will obey. Before this, they had no more than an external overture, or representation of things, in which he dealt with them as intelligent creatures, in order to their becoming his subjects out of choice, as having the strongest motives and inducements to become such. But his conquering them is an internal work upon the heart, whereby every thing which hindered their compliance is removed, and they are drawn by that power without which 'no man can come unto him.' Their hearts are broken, their wills renewed, and all the powers and faculties of their souls inclined to subscribe to his government, as King of saints.

3. This leads us to consider how persons first express their willingness to be Christ's subjects, what engagements they lay

themselves under, and what consequent course they pursue. They cast themselves at his feet with the greatest humility and reverence, being sensible of their own vileness and ingratitude, and, at the same time, are greatly affected with his clemency and grace who, notwithstanding their unworthiness, invites them to come to him. This they do, not as desiring to capitulate or stand upon terms with him; but they are willing that he should make his own terms, like one who sends a blank paper to his victorious prince, that he may write upon it what he pleases, and expresses his willingness to subscribe it. This may be illustrated by the incident of Benhadad's servants. When his army was entirely ruined, and he no longer able to make resistance against Ahab, they presented themselves before him 'with sackcloth on their loins, and ropes on their head,' in token of the greatest humility, together with an implicit acknowledgment of what they had deserved; and without the usual method of entering into treaties of peace, the only message they delivered was, 'Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee let me live.' Thus the humble returning sinner implores forgiveness, and a right to his life, as an act of grace, at the hand of Christ, who has been represented to him, in the gospel, as a merciful King, and ready to receive returning sinners. This subjection to Christ is attended with the greatest love to and desire after him. These they express to his person and his service, being constrained by that love and compassion which he hath showed to them, and by those just ideas which they are now brought to entertain concerning every thing which belongs to his kingdom and interest.—Again, they consent to be the Lord's by a solemn act of self-dedication or surrender of themselves and all they have to him, as seeing themselves obliged so to do; and they desire to be his, to all intents and purposes, his entirely and for ever.—Further, as there are many difficult duties incumbent on Christ's subjects, and many blessings which they hope to receive, they express their entire dependence on him for grace, to enable them to behave themselves

agreeably to the obligations they are under, that they may not turn aside from him, or deal treacherously with him, as being unsteadfast in his covenant. They also rely on his faithfulness for the accomplishment of all the promises which afford matter of relief and encouragement to them; and their doing so is accompanied with a fixed purpose or resolution to wait on him, in all his ordinances, as means appointed by him, in which they hope to obtain those blessings they stand in need of. Moreover, this is done with a solemn withdrawing themselves from, and renouncing and testifying their abhorrence of, those to whom they were formerly in subjection, whose interest is contrary to and subversive of Christ's government. These they count to be their greatest, yea, their only enemies; and they proclaim open war against them, and that with a fixed resolution, by the grace of God, to pursue it to the utmost,—like the courageous soldier, who, having drawn his sword, throws away the scabbard, as one who will not leave off fighting till he has gained a complete victory. Their resolution, too, is increased by that hatred which they entertain against sin, and is exercised in proportion to it. The enemies against whom they engage are the world, the flesh, and the devil; and the motives which induce them are, that these are enemies to Christ, and stand in the way of his salvation. Now, that they may manage this warfare with success, they take to themselves 'the whole armour of God,' described by the apostle, which is both offensive and defensive. They also consider themselves obliged to shun all treaties or proposals made to them to turn them aside from Christ, and to avoid every thing which may prove a snare or temptation to them, or tend to Christ's dishonour.

We may add, that the subject of Christ's government has a due sense of his obligation to endeavour to deliver others from their servitude to sin and Satan, to encourage those who are almost persuaded to submit to Christ, and to strengthen the hands of those who have

already entered into his service, and who are engaged with him in the same warfare against his enemies, and pursuing the same design conducive to his glory. The methods he takes, in order to this end, are truly warrantable, and becoming the servants of Christ. He is not like the Scribes and Pharisees, who were very zealous to gain proselytes to their interest, when they had done which, 'they made them twofold more the children of hell than themselves.' But he makes it his business to convince those with whom he converses, that they are subject to the greatest tyranny of those who intend nothing but their ruin, that they serve those who have no right to their service, and, that the only way to obtain liberty is to enter into Christ's service, and then they will be 'free indeed.'s Moreover, he endeavours to remove the prejudices, and answer all objections which Satan usually brings, or furnishes his subjects with, against Christ and his government. If they say, with the daughters of Jerusalem, 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved?' he has many things to say in his commendation. As the church is brought in using various metaphorical expressions to set forth his glory, so he joins with her in ascribing that comprehensive character to him which contains the sum of all that words can express: 'He is altogether lovely; this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.' This is the way in which Christ's subjects engage against and oppose Satan's kingdom.

But let it be observed, that the opposition is mutual. When persons are delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into Christ's kingdom, they are not to expect to be wholly free from the assaults of their spiritual enemies. These often gain great advantages against them, from the remains of corrupt nature in the best of men. The devil is represented, by the apostle, as 'a roaring lion who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' Sometimes he gives disturbance to Christ's subjects, by inclining men to exercise their

persecuting rage and fury against the church, designing hereby to work upon their fear. At other times, he endeavours, as it were, by methods of bribery, to engage unstable persons in his interest, by the overture of secular advantage; or else, to discourage some, by pretending that religion is a melancholy thing, and that they who embrace it are likely to strive against the stream, and meet with nothing but what will make them uneasy in the world. The opposition thus directed against Christ's kingdom, often proves very discouraging to his subjects.—But there are attempts of another nature often used to amuse, discourage, and destroy their peace, by taxing them with hypocrisy, and pretending that all their hope of an interest in Christ's favour and protection is but a delusion, and that it had been better for them not to have given in their names to him, as the only consequence will be the enhancing of their condemnation. If the providences of God be dark and afflictive, Satan endeavours to suggest to them hard thoughts of Christ, and to make them question his goodness and faithfulness, and to say, with the psalmist, 'Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.'x And, when God is pleased, at any time, for wise ends, to deny them his comforting presence, the enemy is ready to persuade them, as the psalmist represents some as saying, that 'there is no help for them in God.' These methods are often used by the enemies of Christ's kingdom, to weaken the hands of his subjects; whereby the exercise of their graces is often interrupted, and they are hurried into many sins, through the violence of temptation. They shall not, however, wholly revolt. Grace may be foiled, and weakened; but it shall not be utterly extinguished. Though they be guilty of many failures and miscarriages, which discover them to be in an imperfect state; yet they are preserved from relapsing into their former state. Not only so, but they are often enabled to prevail against their spiritual enemies. In this the concern of Christ for their good eminently discovers itself. And, if the advantage gained against them

be occasioned by their going in the way of temptation, or not being on their guard, or not using those means which might prevent their being overcome, it is overruled by Christ to humble them and make them more watchful for the future. Or if God has left them to themselves, that he may show them the sin and folly of their self-confidence, or reliance on their own strength, their fall will be a means to induce them to be more dependent on him for the future, as well as importunate with him, by faith and prayer, for that grace which is sufficient to prevent their total and final apostacy, as well as to recover them from their present backslidings. These many weaknesses and defects which give them so much uneasiness, will also induce them to sympathize with others in a similar condition; and the various methods which Christ takes for their recovery, will render them skilful in directing others how to escape or disentangle themselves from the snare in which they have been taken, and which has given them so much uneasiness.

We might here have enlarged on that particular branch of the subject which respects the warfare that is to be carried on by every one who enlists himself under Christ's banner, and owns him to be his rightful Lord and sovereign. This occupies a very considerable part of the Christian life. He is said 'to wrestle not' only 'against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,' and 'against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Elsewhere, too, we read of 'the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.'a But as this will be considered under a following Answer, in which we shall be led to speak of the imperfection of sanctification in believers, together with the reasons of it, we pass it over at present.

4. Let us now consider how Christ deals with his subjects after he has brought them into his kingdom, and inclined and enabled them to

submit to his government. This is expressed in the Answer we are explaining, in several particulars.—First, he rewards their obedience. This supposes that he requires that they should obey him, and that their obedience should be constant and universal, otherwise they deserve not the character of subjects. As to Christ's regard to this obedience, though men in rendering it are not profitable to God, as they are to themselves or to one another, yet it shall not go unrewarded. The blessings which Christ confers on them are sometimes styled a reward; in as much as there is a certain connection between their duty and interest, or their obeying and being made blessed. This blessedness is properly the reward of what Christ has done; though his people esteem it as an act of the highest favour. In this sense he rewards their obedience; and that either by increasing their graces, and establishing their comforts here, or by bringing them to perfection hereafter.—But as their obedience is, at present, very imperfect, which tends very much to their reproach, and affords matter of daily humiliation before God, it is added, in the Answer we are considering, that Christ corrects them for their sins. This is truly one of the advantages of his government. Though it is certain that afflictions, absolutely considered, are not to be desired; yet as they are sometimes needful, and conducive to our spiritual advantage, they are included in the gracious dispensation of Christ's government, as 'by these things men live.'c How much soever nature dreads them, yet Christ's people consider them as designed for their good; and they, therefore, not only submit to them, but conclude that in afflicting them, he deals well with them. As we are far from blaming the skilful surgeon, who sets a bone that is out of joint, or cuts off a limb when the amputation of it is necessary to save our lives, though neither of these can be done without great pain; so, when God visits our transgressions with the rod, and our iniquities with stripes, we reckon that he deals with us as a merciful and gracious Sovereign, and not as an enemy, his design being to heal our

backslidings, and prevent a worse evil from ensuing.—Further, Christ preserves and supports his subjects under all their temptations and sufferings. There are two sorts of temptations mentioned in scripture. One sort are those which are merely providential, and which are designed as trials of faith and patience. 'My brethren, count it all joy,' says the apostle James, 'when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.' The apostle Paul also, speaking of the persecutions which he met with from the Jews, calls them 'temptations.'e But, besides these, there are other temptations which arise from sin, Satan, and the world, whereby endeavours are used more directly to draw Christ's subjects from their allegiance to him. Thus it is said, 'Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed;' and elsewhere, 'They that will be rich,' that is, who take indirect means to attain that end, or who make it the grand design of life, 'fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.'g The devil, also, who has a great hand in managing these temptations, and solicits us to comply with them, is, for that reason, called, by way of eminence, 'the tempter.' In both these respects, believers are exposed to great danger, by reason of temptations, and need either to be preserved from, or supported under them, that they may not prove their ruin. Now, Christ thus preserves and supports them, in managing the affairs of his kingdom of grace for their advantage; and herein that promise is fulfilled to them, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'i—Again, Christ powerfully orders all things for his own glory, and his people's good. All things are said to 'work together for good;' and in their doing so, his wisdom, as well as his goodness, is illustrated. Sometimes, indeed, his people cannot see from the beginning of an

afflictive providence to the end of it, or what advantage God designs by it; and in such a case we may apply to them those words of our Saviour to Peter, though spoken with another view, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' This will eminently appear, when they shall see how every step which Christ has taken in the management of his government, has had a subserviency to promote their spiritual advantage here, and their everlasting salvation hereafter.

Christ's Government toward his Enemies

Having considered how Christ executes his kingly office, more especially towards his people, who are his faithful subjects, we are now to speak concerning the exercise of his kingly government towards his enemies. He is not their King, as was formerly observed, by consent, or voluntary subjection to him; nor do they desire to own his authority, or yield obedience to his laws. Yet they are, notwithstanding, to be reckoned the subjects of his government.

1. This government is exercised in setting bounds to their power and malice, so that they cannot do what they would against his cause and interest in the world. How far soever he may suffer them to proceed to the disadvantage of his people; yet he is able to crush them in a moment. And when he sees their rage, and how they set themselves against him with their combined force and insult, as if they had brought their designs to bear, and could not doubt the success of them, he tells them plainly, that 'they imagine a vain thing,' and that 'he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.' The reason is very obvious; it is, that God is greater than man. Though it would be a dishonour to him to say, that he is the author of sin, yet it redounds to his glory that he sets bounds and limits to it, and overrules it by his wisdom to his own glory.

Accordingly, it is said, 'Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'n

2. Christ has exercised his kingly government in gaining a victory over his enemies. This he did, when 'he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.' It was done by him, indeed, when he was in the lowest depths of his sufferings, and in a more eminent degree exercised his priestly office; yet, in some respects, he is said, at that time, to have exercised his kingly power, and that in a very triumphant manner, as is here expressed. Elsewhere also he is said, 'through death, to have destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Hereby he purchased those restraints which the powers of darkness were brought under more than they were before. Satan's chain was hereby shortened, and his subjects delivered out of his hand, being ransomed by the blood of Christ. As the consequence, they were afterwards persuaded to withdraw their necks from that yoke which they were formerly under, by the power of that grace which attended the preaching of the gospel, whereby they were subjected to Christ's government. Moreover, our Saviour tells his people, that he had 'overcome the world;'p not only because he had, in his own Person, escaped its pollution, and not been entangled in its snares, nor hindered in the work he was engaged in, by the afflictions and injurious treatment which he met with from it; but because he had procured for them those victories over it whereby they shall be made 'more than conquerors through him that loved them.'

3. Christ's kingly government is, and shall hereafter more eminently be, exercised towards his enemies, in punishing them for all their rebellions against him. There are reserves of vengeance laid up in store, and more vials of wrath, which shall be poured forth on Satan, and all the powers of darkness. This they are not without some

terrible apprehensions of, from the knowledge they have of God, as a just judge. Hence, they are said to 'believe and tremble.' As to all his other enemies, he will 'break them with a rod of iron; he will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel,'r or bring them forth, and slay them before him.

The Periods of Christ's Government

Having shown how Christ's kingly government is exercised toward his people and his enemies, we are led to consider the various seasons, or ages, in which it has been, or shall be exercised, together with the different circumstances relating to its administration in these ages. As soon as man fell, and thereby stood in need of a mediator to recover him, Christ was revealed as one who had undertaken his recovery, and as a victorious King, who should break and destroy that power which had brought him into subjection. Now, there are various periods, or seasons, in which he has executed his kingly office, or shall continue so to do.

1. He did this before his incarnation, during which time his government, as to its effects, was visible, as extended to all those who were saved under the Old Testament dispensation. They were subdued and defended by his divine power then exerted on their behalf, as well as discharged from condemnation, by virtue of the sacrifice which, in the fulness of time, he was to offer for them. We have already shown how he executed his prophetic office during this interval. Now we must consider him as exercising his kingly office. The majestic way in which he delivered the law from mount Sinai, was a glorious display of it; and the theocracy which the Israelites were under, which is described in scripture as a government distinct from all others, and excelling them in glory, and the subserviency of it to their salvation, was a farther evidence that he was their King.

This he evinced, at one time, by his appearing to Joshua, as 'the Captain of the Lord's hosts.' At another time it was represented in an emblematic way, when he was seen by the prophet Isaiah, as 'sitting upon a throne, and his train filling the temple.' In the book of Psalms, he is frequently acknowledged by the church as their 'King.' There it is said concerning him, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.'u In many other places, he is described as 'the King, the Lord of hosts,' not only as predicting the future exercise of his government, but as denoting what he was at that time. It was also said concerning him, 'Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?' And when God declares that he had advanced him to his mediatorial dignity, and 'set him on his holy hill of Zion,' 'the kings and judges of the earth' are exhorted to 'serve him with fear,' and, in token of their willingness to be his subjects, 'to kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and they perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.'y

2. After his incarnation, when he first came into the world, he was publicly owned, by the wise men who came from the east, as one who 'was born King of the Jews;' and the gifts which they presented to him of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the best presents which their country afforded, were designed to signify that homage which was due to him, as one whom God had appointed to be the King of his church, though his external mien and the circumstances of his birth contained no visible marks of regal dignity. While he conversed with his people, in the exercise of his public ministry, he gave them frequent intimations of his kingly character. He described the nature of his kingdom as spiritual, and not of this world; and, when one of his followers addressed him as 'the Son of God, and the King of Israel,' so far from reproving him, as ascribing to him a glory which did not belong to him, he not only commends his faith as expressed in the confession, but gives him to understand that he should have a

greater evidence of the truth of his kingly dignity, when 'he should see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon him.'a In the close of his life, also, when he entered into Jerusalem, with a design to give himself up to the rage and fury of his enemies, providence, as it were, extorted a confession of his regal dignity, from the unstable multitude, and, at the same time, designed to fulfil what was foretold by the prophet Zechariah, when he says, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout. O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.' Their saying, 'Hosanna: blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord,'c was the result of a present conviction of this matter, though it did not long abide, and, by their uttering it, they were, as it were, condemned out of their own mouths. Again, when Pilate asked him, in plain terms, 'Art thou the King of the Jews?' he publicly professed himself to be so. He gave him to understand, however, that 'his kingdom was not of this world;' and on this account, the apostle says, that 'before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession,' and he styles him, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'

3. Christ still executes his kingly office in that glorified state in which he now is. This the apostle intimates, in an allusion to the custom of kings in their solemn triumphs over their enemies. As these threw medals amongst the people to perpetuate the remembrance of their victories, and bestowed donatives, or peculiar marks of favour, on occasion of their triumphs; so, says the apostle, 'Christ ascended up on high,' having 'led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' There are undeniable proofs of his regal dignity in this exalted state, in the blessings which his church, in this world, receives as the result of it, as well as in the honours which are paid him by the inhabitants of heaven. The Socinians, indeed, will not allow that he executed his

kingly office on earth. But their opinion is contrary to the account we have of his executing it in his humble state, as above-mentioned. We must suppose, therefore, that, when Christ entered into his glory, he did not begin to reign; though, from that time, he has exercised his government in a different manner. On this account, the gospel-dispensation which ensued, is called, by way of eminence, 'his kingdom;' and, because this dispensation began upon his ascension into heaven, it is sometimes called, in the New Testament, 'the kingdom of heaven.' I need not add much concerning the present exercise of his kingly government, as the greater part of what has been said under this Answer has a particular reference to it. It was after his ascension into heaven that the gospel church was established, which is sometimes called his visible kingdom. Then it was that the laws and ordinances by which it was to be governed were made known to it; together with the peculiar privileges which were then bestowed upon it, as the effects of Christ's royal bounty. Then the Spirit was sent, and, by his assistance, the gospel was preached to all nations, saving grace plentifully bestowed on multitudes, who were enabled to subject themselves to Christ, as King of saints. In this manner, the Saviour has hitherto exercised his kingly government, and will do until his second coming.

The Millennial Reign of Christ

Here we shall take occasion to consider what is advanced by several concerning Christ's reigning a thousand years on earth, which, they suppose, will intervene between the present administration of the affairs of his kingdom, and the saints reigning with him in heaven for ever. This opinion has not only the countenance of many ancient writers, who have defended it; but it seems to be founded on several scriptures. Hence, we shall be led, in considering this subject, rather to inquire into the true sense of those scriptures which speak of

Christ's reigning on earth, than to deny that he will, in any sense, reign therein in a way circumstantially different from that in which he now administers the affairs of his kingdom. Here we shall consider what is advanced concerning this matter, by some who assert many things relating to it, which stand in need of stronger arguments to defend them than have hitherto been brought; and then we shall consider how far we have ground from scripture to say, that Christ shall reign on earth, and all his saints who shall live in it with him, and what we may conclude to be the true sense of those scriptures which are brought in defence of Christ's personal reign.

The opinions of those who treat on this subject are so different, that to treat distinctly of them all, would be too great a diversion from my general design. The diversity of these opinions also renders it more difficult to lay down the state of the question in a few words. However, I shall briefly attempt this. And, that we may proceed with greater clearness, I shall consider what is asserted by several writers, concerning Christ's personal reign on earth, which shall be in the latter end of the world, and is to continue, from the time that it commences, a thousand years.

Some have supposed that this reign of a thousand years includes the whole compass of time in which Christ shall judge the world. This is called, indeed, in scripture, 'a day;' but it cannot reasonably be supposed that it shall extend to no more than the space of twenty-four hours. They suppose, therefore, that it shall extend to the space of a thousand years. This opinion they found partly on that scripture, 'A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past;' and more especially on the apostle's words, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'g This passage they apply, in particular, to the day of judgment, which is spoken of in the verse immediately preceding. As we have ground to believe,

too, that the judgment shall take place on earth, and that, when Christ judges the world, it may be truly said he exercises his kingly office in a most glorious manner, they conclude that this reign of a thousand years includes all the time which he will occupy in judging the world. But, even in this matter, all do not agree in their sentiments. Some think that, in this judicial process, none are to be judged but the saints, who, being acquitted by him, are said to reign with him; that, in order to this, they shall be raised from the dead, which they suppose to be meant by 'the first resurrection;' and that the rest of mankind shall not be raised till the thousand years are finished. But this opinion seems not agreeable to the account we have elsewhere in scripture of Christ's raising the dead, coming to judgment, and determining the state, both of the righteous and the wicked, as what is to be done in or near the same time, each of these being distinct branches of the same solemnity. What makes the opinion still more probable is, that, in the same scripture in which we have an account of the reign of a thousand years, it immediately follows that, when these years shall be expired, Satan will be loosed out of his prison, and suffered 'to deceive the nations;' and then we read of other enemies which the church shall have, concerning whom it is said, that 'they shall be gathered together to battle,' and that they went 'up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.' Now all this is said to be done between the end of the reign of a thousand years, and the general judgment, when 'the dead, small and great, shall be raised, the books opened, and all judged out of those things that are written therein, according to their works.' Hence, this opinion, as to the reign of a thousand years, including the time in which Christ shall appear in this world to judge his saints, does not seem to be the sense of that scripture on which the opinion is supposed to be founded.'i

The more common opinion, which is defended by several ancient and modern Chiliasts, or Millenarians, as they are generally called, is that our Lord Jesus Christ shall, some time in the last days, before he comes to the final judgment, appear in this world, in his human nature, and dwell and reign among its inhabitants, in such a way, as may render it a kind of middle state between that which the church is now in, and heaven,—more glorious than the former, and yet very much inferior to the latter. They suppose that there are several things which shall go immediately before it, as tending to usher in the glory of that kingdom. One of these things is the conversion of the Jews, which is to be effected at once. In order to this, some conclude that the dispensation of miracles shall be revived; which they argue from the fact, that all the remarkable changes which have been made in the affairs of the church, have been introduced by miracles. The Jews, also, more than any other nation in the world, have been desirous of a conviction by such a method as this. Moreover, it is supposed, that, at the same time, those scriptures which foretell a greater fulness of the Gentiles, or the conversion of many who still remain in the darkness of heathenism, shall have their accomplishment in an eminent degree; that this shall also proceed from, and be attended with, a greater degree of the effusion of the Spirit; that the consequence will be a more glorious light shining throughout the world, than has ever been; and that these two, the Jews and the Gentiles, shall be joined together in one body, under Christ, their visible and glorious Head. Moreover, some suppose that Jerusalem, and the countries round about it, shall be the principal seat of this kingdom, to which these new converts shall repair; so that, as there the glorious scene of the gospel was first opened, there also the glory of Christ's personal reign shall begin. Others add, that, at this time, the temple at Jerusalem shall be built, which shall far exceed in glory that which was built by Solomon, and that the New Jerusalem shall be also built and adorned in a magnificent way,

agreeable to what is said of it in scripture, which they understand in a literal sense. In this I must take leave to differ from them; though not in what was just now hinted, concerning the conversion of the Jews, and the fulness of the Gentiles, going before it.

Though some suppose that the general conflagration, spoken of by the apostle Peter, shall be after this reign of a thousand years, which is certainly the more probable opinion; yet others have concluded that it shall be before it, and that 'the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,' which believers, 'according to God's promise, look for,' shall arise out of the ruins of the old. This is the opinion of a late writer,m who advances many things concerning the antediluvian world, as well as concerning this new one, with an elegancy of style which is very entertaining, and who, in many instances, runs counter to the sentiments of all that went before him, and produces a work than which a more ingenious romance is hardly extant. But as, for the most part, he brings in scripture to give countenance to what he advances, and lays down a peculiar scheme concerning the millennium, I cannot wholly pass it over. He supposes that the reign of Christ on earth shall be ushered in by a general conflagration, in which all the inhabitants must necessarily be consumed, and the world reduced into a second chaos by fire. And, as his master Des Cartes describes the form of the world when first created, and how the various particles of matter were disposed, in order to its being brought to that perfection to which it afterwards arrived; so he describes the form to which the world shall be reduced by this conflagration, out of which the new world shall be framed. Having done this, and being at a loss to find out inhabitants for it, he supposes that the dead shall be raised. To this part of his theory, he applies what is said in scripture concerning 'the first resurrection;' and then, he says, the reign of a thousand years begins. But he is much more at a loss, as might easily be supposed, to account for Gog

and Magog, the enemies of the church, which shall give it great disturbance at the close of this period. As he cannot easily suppose them to be raised from the dead for this end, he fancies that they shall spring out of the earth; and this supposition so much embarrasses his scheme, that, whatsoever scriptures he brings in its defence, it must be esteemed, by impartial judges, to be attended with the greatest absurdities.

There are others who suppose, that the general conflagration shall not be till the end of the thousand years' reign; and who, nevertheless, conclude that the dead shall be raised, more particularly those who are designed to reign with Christ. With respect to this, the sentiments of persons are somewhat different. Some suppose that none shall be raised, at this time, but those who have suffered martyrdom for Christ's sake; and that this is the meaning of that expression, 'I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and they lived and reigned a thousand years.' Others suppose, that because many who have not suffered death for Christ's sake have, in other respects, passed through an equal number of persecutions and reproaches in life, and were ready to suffer martyrdom, had they been called to it, are not excluded; that, therefore, all the saints shall be raised from the dead, as the apostle says, 'The dead in Christ shall rise first,'o that is, a thousand years before the wicked; that this event is intended by what is styled 'the first resurrection;' and that the saints shall not rise to be received immediately into heaven, but shall be first openly acknowledged, and acquitted by Christ, the Judge of all, and then reign with him on earth throughout the whole period of the thousand years.

Others suppose that, during the thousand years' reign, the public ordinances of God's worship, namely, the preaching of the word, the

administration of the sacraments, and the present order and discipline of churches, shall entirely cease. To this opinion they accommodate the sense of some scriptures; for example, that in which it is said, concerning the New Jerusalem, that 'there was no temple therein,' that 'the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it;' and that in which the apostle says, that the church, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, was to 'show the Lord's death till he come.'q They suppose the meaning of the latter scripture to be that the church was to observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper till he shall come to reign upon earth, and no longer.

There are some who entertain very carnal notions of the saints' reigning with Christ, inconsistent with perfect holiness; and who speak of pleasures they shall then enjoy which are more agreeable to Mahomet's paradise than to the life of saints admitted to those privileges which they suppose them to be partakers of. Some proceed yet further in their wild and ungrounded fancies, and think that a small number of the wicked shall be left in the world to be, as it were, slaves to the saints. But all these notions are inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's kingdom. Such extremes many who have defended Christ's personal reign on earth, have unwarily run into; among whom are some ancient writers, who have led the way to others, who speak of it as the generally received opinion of the Fathers in the three first centuries. These Fathers, however, are not much to be depended on, as to the sense they give of scripture, any more than those who have lived in later ages; especially in those things which they advance that seem to be inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's kingdom. But if their general account of the thousand years' reign appear to be contrary to scripture, what they farther say concerning it, as well as others who improve upon their scheme, is much more remote from it, when they speak of the building of Jerusalem, of that being the principal seat of Christ's

reign, and of several things of such a nature and containing so great a reproach on Christ's kingdom, that I forbear to mention them, while I suppose that there are very few who will think them consistent with the character of saints. These things gave disgust to Augustin, who, at first, adhered to their opinion, but afterwards was justly prejudiced against it.s

We have thus given a brief account of the different sentiments of many who treat in their writings of Christ's personal reign. Some are maintained by persons of great worth and judgment, and seem more agreeable to the sense of those scriptures which are brought to defend them, than others. These ought to be farther considered, that it may appear whether they are just or not. As for those which can hardly be called any other than romantic, and have little more to support them than the ungrounded conjectures of those who advance them, and are so far from agreeing with the general scope and design of scripture, that they contain a reflection on the methods of Christ's government, rather than an expedient to advance it, they carry in themselves their own confutation, and nothing farther needs be said in opposition to them. Before we proceed to consider how far Christ's reign on earth may be defended, and in what other respects several things which are asserted relating to some circumstances which they suppose will attend it, do not seem to be sufficiently founded on scripture, we shall take leave to premise some things, in general, relating to the method in which this subject ought to be managed.

So far as scripture plainly gives countenance to the doctrine in general, that the administration of Christ's government, in this world, shall be attended with great glory, and shall abundantly tend to the advantage of his church, it is a subject of too great importance to be passed over with neglect, as if we had no manner of concern in it, or as if it were a matter of mere speculation; for certainly all

scripture is written for our learning, and ought to be studied and improved by us, to the glory of God, and our own edification. As to those texts which speak of Christ's government as exercised in this world, not only do they contain matters awful and sublime, but our having just ideas of these will be a direction to our faith, when we pray for the farther advancement of Christ's kingdom, as we are bound daily to do. We must take heed, however, that we do not give too great scope to our fancy, by framing imaginary schemes of our own, and then bringing in scripture, not without some violence offered to the sense of it, to give countenance to them. Nor ought we to acquiesce in such a sense of scripture, brought to support this doctrine, as is evidently contrary to other scriptures, or to the nature and spirituality of Christ's government. We must also take it for granted, that some of those scriptures which relate to this matter are hard to be understood, and that, therefore, a humble modesty becomes us in treating it, rather than to censure those who differ from us, as if they had departed from that faith which is founded on the most obvious and plain sense of scripture, especially if they maintain nothing which is derogatory to the glory of Christ. This rule we shall endeavour to observe, in what remains to be considered on this subject.

As most allow that there is a sense in which Christ's kingdom shall be attended with greater circumstances of glory than it is at present, we shall proceed to show how it shall be advanced, in this lower world, beyond what it is at present; and we shall show this in a way which agrees very well with the sense of several scriptures relating to the subject, without going into some extremes which many have run into who plead for Christ's personal reign on earth in a way in which it cannot easily be defended. We freely own, as what we think agreeable to scripture, that as Christ has, in all ages, displayed his glory as King of the church, so we have ground to conclude, from

scripture, that the administration of his government in this world, before his coming to judgment, will be attended with greater magnificence, more visible marks of glory, and various occurrences of providence, which shall tend to the welfare and happiness of his church, in a greater degree than has been beheld or experienced by it, since it was planted by the ministry of the apostles after his ascension into heaven. This we think to be the sense, in general, of those scriptures, both in the Old and in the New Testament, which speak of the latter-day glory. Some of the prophets seem to look farther than the first preaching of the gospel, and the glorious display of Christ's government which attended it. These were, in part, an accomplishment of some of their predictions, but they were not wholly so; for there are some expressions made use of by them which seem as yet not to have had their accomplishment. Of the former kind are the expressions of the prophet Isaiah, when he speaks of 'the glory of the Lord, as arising,' and being 'seen upon' the church, and of the 'Gentiles coming to this light,' and 'kings to the brightness of it;' and many other things to the same purpose, which denote the glorious privileges that the gospel-church should enjoy. Though these, in a spiritual sense, may, in a great measure, be supposed to be already accomplished; yet there are other things which he foretells concerning the church which do not yet appear to have had their accomplishment. He says, for example. 'Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night,' as denoting the church's being perfectly free from all those afflictive dispensations of providence which should tend to hinder the preaching and success of the gospel. He says, also, 'Violence shall be no more heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders;'x by which he intends the church's perfect freedom from all persecution. He says farther, 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.' This is so far

from having been yet accomplished, that it seems to refer to the same thing which is mentioned concerning the New Jerusalem,z and almost expressed in the same words: which, if it be not a metaphorical description of the heavenly state, has a peculiar reference to the latter-day glory. The prophet again adds, 'Thy people shall be all righteous,' denoting that holiness should almost universally obtain in the world, as much as iniquity has abounded in it,—an event which does not appear to have yet taken place. Again, when the prophet Micah speaks of 'the mountain of the house of the Lord being established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills,' and says, that 'people should flow unto it,' though this, and some other things which he there mentions, may refer to the first preaching of the gospel, and the success of it; yet the words which follow cannot be so understood: 'They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; and nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid.'b This prophecy, so far as it may be taken otherwise than in a spiritual sense, seems to imply a greater degree of peace and tranquillity than the gospel-church has hitherto enjoyed. Hence, when he says that this shall be 'in the last days,' we have reason to conclude that he does not mean merely the last or gospel-dispensation, which commenced on our Saviour's ascension into heaven, but the last period of that dispensation, or the time which we are now considering. As to the account we have of this period in the New Testament, especially in many places in the Book of Revelation, which speak of 'the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ,' and of his 'taking to himself his great power and reigning,'d and of the thousand years' reign; whatever be the sense of these passages, as to some circumstances of glory which shall attend this administration of the affairs of his kingdom, they certainly have not yet had their

accomplishment; and they, therefore, lead us to expect that Christ's kingdom shall be attended with greater degrees of glory redounding to himself, which we call the latter-day glory.

When this period of greater glory shall arrive, many privileges will redound to the church. As Christ is said to reign on earth, so the saints are represented as reigning with him. They say, 'Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth;' and elsewhere, when the apostle speaks of Christ's reigning 'a thousand years,' he adds, that 'they shall reign with him.'g This cannot be understood in any other sense than that of a spiritual reign, agreeably to the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world. We have, hence, sufficient ground to conclude, that, when these prophecies shall have their accomplishment, the interest of Christ shall be the prevailing interest in the world, which it has never yet been in all respects; so that godliness shall be as much and as universally valued and esteemed, as it has hitherto been decried, and it shall be reckoned as great an honour to be a Christian, as it has, in the most degenerate age of the church, been matter of reproach. We may add, that the church shall have a perfect freedom from persecution in all parts of the world; that a greater glory shall be put on the ordinances; and that more success shall attend them than has hitherto been experienced. In short, there shall be, as it were, an universal spread of religion and holiness to the Lord, throughout the world. When this glorious dispensation shall commence, we have sufficient ground to conclude, that, the anti-christian powers having been wholly subdued, the Jews shall be converted. This may be inferred from the order in which this event is foretold in the book of Revelation. The fall and utter ruin of Babylon are first predicted. Afterwards we read of 'the marriage of the Lamb being come,'i of 'his wife having made herself ready,' and of others, who are styled 'blessed,' being 'called to the marriage-supper.' This, as an ingenious

and learned writer observes,l seems to be a prediction of the call of the Jews, and of the saints and faithful, namely, the gospel-church, who were converted before this time, being, together with the Jews, made partakers of the spiritual privileges of Christ's kingdom, and so invited to the marriage-supper. Accordingly, by 'the Lamb's wife,' is intended the converted Jews, who are considered as espoused to him. As their being 'ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God,' occasioned their being rejected; so, when they are converted, and their new espousals are celebrated, it is particularly observed that this righteousness shall be their greatest glory, the robe that they shall be adorned with. Hence, when the bride is said to have made herself ready, it is added, 'To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'n This prophecy, being placed immediately before the account of the thousand years' reign, gives ground to conclude that the conversion of the Jews shall be before it, or an introduction to it.

I am sensible there are some who question whether those prophecies, especially such as are found in the Old Testament, which foretell the conversion of the Jews, had not their full accomplishment in the beginning of the gospel-state, when many churches were gathered out of the Jews, and some of the apostles were sent to exercise their ministry in those parts of the world where the greatest number of them resided; on which account Peter is called the apostle of the Jews, for 'God wrought effectually in him to the apostleship of the circumcision,' and he, together with James and John, directed their inspired epistles to them in particular. But we reply, that there are some scriptures in the New Testament relating to this matter, which do not seem as yet to have been accomplished, but which respect this glorious dispensation, in which there shall be,

as it were, an universal conversion of them in the latter-day. Thus the apostle says, 'If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?'q And he adds, 'I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved.' This seems, as yet, not to have been accomplished. As to those scriptures in the Old Testament which predict many things in favour of the Jewish nation, though I will not deny that many of them had their accomplishment, either in their return from the Babylonish captivity, or in those who were converted in the beginning of the gospel-dispensation, yet I cannot think that they all had. The prophet Hosea seems to foretell some things which are yet to come, when he speaks of them as being 'many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.'s This seems to point at the condition in which they now are. But he adds, 'Afterwards the children of Israel shall seek the Lord their God, and David their King,' that is, Christ, 'and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.' This seems to intend their conversion, which is yet expected. Thus far our faith, as to this matter, may be said to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. But, if we pretend to determine the way and manner in which this shall be done, we must have recourse to uncertain conjectures, instead of solid arguments. The learned writer whom I formerly mentioned, gives his opinion about it; which I will not pretend to disprove, though the ingenuity of it is more to be valued than its convincing evidence. He supposes it shall be somewhat like the conversion of the apostle Paul, by Christ's appearing with a glorious light on earth, and then retiring again to heaven. But in the particular circumstance of providence which related to Paul's conversion, Chris seems to have had another end to answer, namely, the qualifying of him for the apostleship by the

extraordinary sight of him; and the accommodating of this matter as an argument that the Jews shall be converted in a similar manner, proves nothing at all. The best way, therefore, is to leave this among the secrets which belong not to us to inquire after.u

To what we have said concerning the conversion of the Jews, as what is expected to go immediately before those glorious times which we are speaking of, we may add, that there shall be a greater spread of the gospel through the dark parts of the earth. Accordingly, the scripture which was just referred to, concerning 'the Gentiles coming to the light' of this glorious morning, or 'the forces of the Gentiles' coming unto the church, shall have a fuller accomplishment than hitherto it has had; as also another scripture, in which the prophet says, that 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'y We will not deny that this had, in part, an accomplishment, when the gospel was preached by the apostles. Indeed, the prophet intimates that these things should come to pass when 'a rod should come forth out of the stem of Jesse,' that is, after Christ's incarnation, who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh. Hence, I cannot but think that the words, 'in that day,' which we often meet with in scripture,a signify the whole gospel-dispensation, from the beginning of it to its consummation in Christ's coming to judgment; and then we may look for some things which the prophet here foretells, as what should come to pass in one part of it, and other things in another. As to the knowledge of Christ being so extensive that it is said to 'cover the earth,' or Christ's being elsewhere said to be 'a light to the Gentiles,' though the expressions denote the first success of the gospel in the conversion of the Gentiles, they do not argue that the texts in which they occur shall not have a farther accomplishment, when those other things shall come to pass which the prophet mentions in the foregoing verses, under the metaphor of 'the wolf dwelling with the lamb,' & c. and

other things which relate to a more peaceable state of the church than it has hitherto experienced. It thus seems sufficiently evident, that, when this happy time shall come, the interest of Christ shall be the prevailing interest in the world, and that the glory of his kingdom shall be more eminently displayed than at present it is. In these respects, we are far from denying the reign of Christ in this world, for we think it plainly contained in scripture. There are, however, in the scheme of many who maintain this doctrine, several things which we do not think sufficiently founded in scripture.

We cannot see sufficient reason to conclude that, when Christ is said eminently to reign in the earth, he shall appear visibly, or, as they call it, personally, in his human nature. If they intended nothing else, by Christ's appearing visibly, or personally, but his farther evincing his mediatorial glory in the effects of his power and grace which his church shall experience, as it does now, though in a less degree, or if they should say that some greater circumstances of glory will then attend his reign, their opinion would not be in the least denied. But more than this we cannot allow. For the presence of Christ's human nature on earth would not contribute so much to the church's spiritual edification and happiness, as his presence by the powerful influence of his Holy Spirit would do. This is sufficiently evident; for when he dwelt on earth, immediately after his incarnation, his ministry was not attended with that success which might have been expected; which gave him occasion to complain, as the prophet represents him to do, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, Israel is not gathered.' Upon this, he is, as it were, comforted with the thought, that, notwithstanding, he should 'be glorious in the eyes of the Lord,' that is, accepted of, and afterwards glorified by him; and that he should be 'given for a light to the Gentiles,' that is, that the gospel should be preached to all nations, and that then greater success should attend it. Now this is

owing to Christ's presence by his Spirit; so that, if that be poured forth in a more plentiful degree on his church, it will contribute more to the increase of its graces and spiritual comforts, than his presence, in his human nature, could do without it. It cannot be argued, therefore, that Christ's presence, in such a way, is absolutely necessary to the flourishing state of the church, to that degree in which it is expected in the latter-day. The presence of his human nature on earth, it is true, was absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of redemption, or for purchasing his people to himself by his death; but his presence in heaven, appearing as an Advocate for them, and, in consequence, sending down his Spirit to work all grace in their souls, is, in its kind, also necessary. This our Saviour intimates to his disciples, immediately before his ascension into heaven, when he says, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.'c Now, if there are some peculiar advantages redounding to the church from Christ's continuance in heaven, as well as his ascending up into it, it is not reasonable to suppose that the church's happiness, as to their spiritual concerns, should arise so much from his coming thence into this world, as it does from those continued powerful influences of the Holy Spirit which are said to depend upon, and be the consequence of, his sitting at the right hand of God in heaven.—Again, if he should appear on earth in his human nature, he must either divest himself of that celestial glory which he is there clothed with, agreeably to the heavenly state, or his people, with whom he is supposed to reign, must have such a change made in their nature that their bodies will be rendered celestial, and their souls enlarged in proportion to the heavenly state; otherwise they would not be fit to converse with him, in an immediate way, by reason of the present frailty of their nature. Of this we have various instances in scripture. When Moses saw God's 'back-parts,' that is, some extraordinary emblematical display of his glory, God tells him, 'Thou canst not see my face; for there

shall no man see me and live;' and it follows, that while this glory passed by him, 'God put him in a cleft of the rock, and covered him with his hand;' and he assigns as a reason for this, that his face should not be seen. Moses could not, because of the imperfection of the present state, behold the extraordinary emblematic displays of the divine glory, without the frame of nature being broken. On this account, Augustin says, understanding the words in this sense, 'Lord, let me die, that I may see thee.'e When, likewise, Christ appeared, in the glory of his human nature, to the apostle Paul at his conversion, Paul 'fell to the earth, trembling and astonished,' not being able to converse with him. Afterwards, too, when the same apostle was caught up into 'the third heaven,' and had a view of its glory, this was greater than his frail nature could bear, and he says that 'whether he was in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell.'g John, the beloved disciple, also, who conversed familiarly with him when in his humbled state, and 'leaned on his breast at supper,' when Christ appeared to him in a glorious emblematical way after his ascension, says, 'When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.'i And the apostle Paul says, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him' so 'no more,' that is, whilst we are in this world, in as much as we are incapable of conversing with him in his glorified human nature. He says, likewise, 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;'l that is, man in the present state cannot enjoy those privileges which are reserved for him in heaven, which include a conversing with Christ in his human nature, as well as with others who are inhabitants of heaven.—Further, if we suppose that Christ will reign personally on earth, it must be farther inquired, whether they who reign with him during this period of time shall die or not. If not, their being exempt from death seems contrary to the fixed laws of nature, and also to the present state as mortal, and as opposed to a state of immortality and eternal life. But if they shall die, then they must necessarily lose one great advantage which they

now enjoy in dying, namely, 'being with Christ;' for when they die, they must, in some respect, be said to depart from Christ; and, whatever advantage the presence of the human nature of Christ is of to the inhabitants of heaven, that they must be supposed to be deprived of, whilst he is reigning on earth. These, and other things to the same purpose, are consequences of Christ's personal reign in his human nature on earth, on account of which we cannot acquiesce in the opinion.

There is another thing which we cannot approve of, in the fore-mentioned scheme relating to Christ's thousand years' reign on earth,—the assertion of several things concerning the conversion of the Jews, which seem contrary to the analogy of faith. We have already taken it for granted that the Jews shall be converted when this glorious reign begins, or immediately before it. But there are several things added to this which, we think, there is no ground from scripture to maintain. It is asserted, for example, that, after the Jews are converted, they shall continue a distinct body of people, governed by their own laws, as they were before Christ's incarnation. But we rather conclude, that they shall be joined to and become one body with the Christian church, all marks of distinction being laid aside; and shall be grafted into the same olive-tree, that is, into Christ; for certainly the middle wall of partition, which was taken away by Christ, shall never be set up again. This seems to be intended by our Saviour's words, 'There shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.'o—But besides this, there are several objectionable things asserted concerning the Jews' rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, and concerning that city being the principal seat of Christ's reign, where the saints shall reside and reign with him. Now, the temple was designed as a place of worship only during the dispensation before Christ's incarnation, and was, in some respects, a type of his dwelling among us in our nature. The temple-service, too, as it is now

abolished, so it shall continue to be till the end of the world; and then, what occasion will there be for a temple to be built? As for Jerusalem being rebuilt, or the land of Judea being the principal seat of Christ's kingdom on earth, we humbly conceive the supposition to be ungrounded, or to be based on a mistaken view of the sense of some scriptures in the Old Testament which were literally fulfilled in the building of Jerusalem after the Babylonish captivity, and which have no reference to any thing now to come. As for the land of Canaan, though it had a glory put on it some ages before our Saviour's incarnation, as being the scene of many wonderful dispensations of providence in favour of that people, while they remained distinct from all other nations in the world; yet we cannot conclude that it shall be a distinct place of residence for them when, being converted, they are joined to the Christian church. The land of Canaan will be no more accounted of, than any other part of the world. Considering also the smallness of the place, we cannot think it sufficient to contain the great number of those who, together with the Jews, shall be the happy subjects of Christ's kingdom.

There is another thing in which we cannot agree with some who treat of Christ's reign on earth, namely, their supposing that the saints who are to reign with him, are to be in a sinless state, little short of the heavenly. On this point, it is true, they are much divided in their sentiments. But some assert, that the saints shall be free from all the remains of corruption. Indeed, their argument leads them to this, if we consider the saints as raised from the dead, and their souls brought back from heaven, on their entering which they were perfectly freed from sin. It follows from this opinion that there will be no room for the mortification of sin, striving against it, or resisting those temptations which we are now liable to from it. This we cannot believe to be a privilege which any have ground to expect while in this world. Indeed, those graces whereby we subdue our

corruptions or strive against temptations, are peculiarly adapted to the present state, in opposition to the heavenly. Moreover, when some say that the reign shall be such that the saints shall be free from all manner of trouble, internal or external, personal or relative, at least so long as Satan is bound, that is, to the end of these thousand years; they appear to assert more than Christ has given his people ground to expect. He tells them, that, 'in the world they shall have,' at least, some degree of 'tribulation;' and that for a perfect freedom from it, they must wait till they come to heaven.

We cannot think, moreover, as some do, that, during the thousand years' reign, the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments shall cease, and that all other laws and ordinances which Christ has ordained for gathering and building up particular churches, for bringing in his elect, and for propagating his name and interest in the world, shall be discontinued, as if there would be no occasion for them. This is what we think altogether ungrounded; for we cannot but suppose that, as soon as the whole number of the election of grace are brought in, and thereby the end and design of the preaching the gospel is answered, or when Christ can say, 'Here am I, and all that thou hast given me,' he will present them to the Father, and so receive his militant church into a triumphant state in heaven. Indeed, it seems a very weak foundation on which this part of their scheme depends, when they say that those texts which speak of Christ's 'being with' his ministers 'to the end of the world,' and of his death being in the Lord's Supper commemorated 'till he come,'r relate to the coming of Christ in the millennium. This seems a very strained and forced sense of these passages. As for the scripture in which it is said that 'the New Jerusalem had no temple,' and that it had 'no need of the sun, nor the moon, for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb was the light thereof,' this must not be brought to prove that the ordinances of divine worship shall cease

during the thousand years' reign, unless it can first be made to appear that the New Jerusalem has reference to the subject. Some, on the contrary, think that the Holy Ghost is here describing the heavenly state; and their opinion agrees well with the connection of the passage with what is mentioned in the preceding chapter. Now, if this sense of the passage be admitted, the glory which the church shall then arrive to, is such as shall be after the final judgment; so that the passage is a description of the glorious state of Christ's kingdom in heaven, rather than on earth.

We have thus shown what we think to be the general design of those scriptures which speak of Christ's reigning in or over the earth, and of the happy state of the church at that time. We have also endeavoured to prove, that several additional circumstances, which some suppose will attend it, are not sufficiently founded in scripture, and seem, in some respects, inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, as well as with the ground we have to expect that the present mode of administration and its laws and ordinances shall continue as long as the world endures. We shall now consider the sense which the millenarians give of some scriptures on which the main stress of their argument depends, together with the inconclusiveness of their reasoning from them, and also in what sense we apprehend those scriptures are to be understood.

As to their view of 'the first resurrection,' they found it on that scripture, 'Blessed and holy is he that hath a part in the first resurrection. On such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.' A learned and judicious writeru supposes that the first resurrection shall be only of the martyrs; that it is to be understood in a literal sense; that it shall open the scene of Christ's thousand years' reign; that the second resurrection shall be at the close of that

reign, when the whole world shall be raised from the dead; and that then shall follow the final judgment. But he differs from many of the ancient and modern millenarians in saying that he dares not so much as imagine that Christ shall visibly converse with men on earth; for his kingdom ever hath been, and shall be, of such a nature that his throne and kingly residence are in heaven. He says also that, though the deceased martyrs shall re-assume their bodies and reign, yet it shall be in heaven; while the saints who shall be then living, and have not worshipped the beast, nor his image, nor received his mark, shall reign on earth; for he supposes the scripture which relates to this matter to contain a vision of two distinct things,—one respecting those who 'were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,' and who lived and reigned with Christ, but not on earth,—the other respecting those who, though they had not suffered, had 'not worshipped the beast, nor his image,' and who also reigned during this thousand years, not in heaven, but on earth. These are considered as in their way to heaven; the other, as received into the heavenly country, as a peculiar prerogative conferred upon them, in reward of their martyrdom. He supposes that this first resurrection is not opposed to any article of faith, and that it may be as well defended, in a literal sense, as the resurrection we read of in Matt. 27:52, 53, in which 'the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of their graves, after Christ's resurrection.' With a becoming modesty, he cites Augustin's words to the effect, that if nothing more were meant by the doctrine of the first resurrection than that the delights of Christ's kingdom are spiritual, the opinion would be tolerable, and was once entertained by that Father. He thus says as much as can be said in defence of this opinion; and nothing is wanting to support his argument, but sufficient evidence that the text must necessarily be taken in a literal sense. But when others proceed much farther, and conclude that Christ shall appear visibly on earth, and that the design of the first resurrection is, that they who shall be

raised from the dead should live on earth, we see far less reason to believe this to be the sense of the passage in which the first resurrection is mentioned, and accordingly shall take leave to consider what may be said in opposition to it.

Now, if the saints shall be raised, their bodies must either be corruptible and mortal, or incorruptible and immortal. To suppose that they shall be raised corruptible and mortal, and consequently liable to the other infirmities of life, is to suppose their resurrection to be of the same kind with that of Lazarus and others who were raised by our Saviour. But this is so unaccordant with the character of saints, raised from the dead to reign with Christ, that it is not generally asserted by those who treat on this subject. The saints must hence be raised incorruptible and immortal. If so, it follows, that this world will not be a place fit for their abode; for they shall be raised with celestial bodies, and so fitted to inhabit the heavenly mansions. Nor will those accommodations, which this earth affords, the food it produces, or those other conveniences which we enjoy in it, by the blessing of providence, be suitable to persons who are raised up in a state of perfection, as they must be supposed to be, or, as the apostle styles it, 'raised in glory.' Besides, as they will be appointed to live and converse with men in this world, I cannot see how there can be any conversation between them and others who continue to live in this world, and who are not, like them, raised from the dead, but retain their present mortal frame. If their 'vile bodies,' as the apostle says concerning the bodies of the saints, shall, when raised from the dead, 'be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body,' how can weak frail creatures intimately converse with them? It may be said, indeed, that they shall be raised only with such a glory as shall defer their transformation into the likeness of Christ's present body, till they are translated to heaven, as was true with respect to our Saviour's human nature after his resurrection. But though this is possible, it

seems not to accord with the account we have of the circumstances of glory with which the saints shall be raised from the dead. But what seems to make the opinion as to a literal first resurrection more improbable, is, that it is inconsistent with that state of blessedness into which the saints have been admitted, namely, in their souls, wherein they have been in the immediate vision and fruition of God. They are as travellers arrived at their journey's end, and wanting nothing to complete their blessedness but their resurrection, and now they are supposed to be raised from the dead. Yet their blessedness is diminished by their being appointed to live in this world, and, as we may say, to leave that better country in which they have been, to re-assume the character and condition of pilgrims and sojourners upon earth. It will be objected, that we may as reasonably suppose that these saints shall be raised in circumstances fit to converse with the rest of the world, as any who have been raised from the dead have formerly been. I cannot deny that this is possible; yet it does not seem probable, in as much as they shall not be raised from the dead for the same end and design that others have been, that the power of God might be illustrated, or some contested truth confirmed, but that some special honour or privilege might be conferred on them, as the reward of their former sufferings. Moreover, what valuable end is answered by their change of condition, which might, in some measure, tend to justify the assertion as to a first resurrection? Must they live here, that they might perform an extraordinary ministry, to promote the edification of their mortal brethren, whom they found living upon earth? This was not absolutely necessary; for God has appointed other ways for the edification of his church. And, if he did not think fit, before, to send down ministers from heaven to preach the gospel to them, but ordained the common method of preaching it by others less qualified for this work, who are subject to like infirmities with those to whom they preach; why should we suppose such an alteration in the

method of divine providence on this particular occasion? If we suppose, too, that they shall continue on earth till Christ's appearing to judgment, then it must be argued that they were sent hither not only to be helpers of the faith of others who live here, but to be exposed, in common with them, to a second warfare upon earth,—not, indeed, with flesh and blood, but with those who are represented, in the same chapter in which the first resurrection and the thousand years' reign are mentioned, as 'compassing the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city;' and therefore they are called back from a triumphant to a militant state. It may be said, indeed, that they shall be admitted into heaven before this battle begin; but that can hardly be supposed. For if God send them to be companions with his mortal saints, in their prosperous state, will he call them away when the time of their greatest danger approaches, in which their presence might be of the greatest service to their brethren who are left to struggle with these difficulties? Upon the whole, therefore, we cannot suppose that any shall, in a literal sense, be raised from the dead, till this glorious though spiritual reign of Christ shall be at an end, and the day of judgment draws nigh. This opinion agrees with the general scope of all those scriptures which speak of the resurrection and final judgment.

It will be objected that the scripture elsewhere intimates that there shall be two resurrections; for the apostle says that 'the dead in Christ shall rise first.' Why, then, it will be asked, may not this first resurrection be understood in the same sense with that mentioned in Rev. 20 which has been already considered? Now, we do not deny that the resurrection of which the apostle speaks must be taken in a literal sense; but let it be observed, that, in connexion with it, he does not mention anything of the thousand years' reign, but speaks of the day of judgment, when 'Christ shall descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel.' With this the glory of that

day shall begin; and then the dead shall be raised, in which the saints and faithful shall have the pre-eminence. They shall 'rise first,' that is, before others,—mentioned in the following verse, 'that are alive, who shall be caught up with them in the clouds.' They shall rise also before the wicked shall be raised, to the end that, when Christ appears, 'they,' as it is said elsewhere, 'may appear with him in glory,' and that they may bear a part in the solemnity of that day, and be happy in his presence, when others are raised to 'shame and everlasting contempt,' and filled with the utmost confusion and distress. [See Note 3 S, page 577.] Moreover, the resurrection, or the raising first, of those that died in Christ, is not particularly applied to those who suffered martyrdom for him; much less is there any account of its being a thousand years before the general resurrection. It may, therefore, very well be understood of a resurrection a very short time before it; and consequently gives no countenance to the opinion which has been already considered concerning this resurrection, as going before the reign of Christ on earth.

There is another scripture brought in defence of another part of the millenarians' scheme. It is that in which the apostle speaks of the creatures' present bondage, and future deliverance, and of their 'waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies.' This, they suppose, will have its accomplishment when this reign of Christ begins. But I cannot think that the apostle, in that scripture, intends anything else, but that the whole creation is liable, at present, to the curse consequent upon man's fall; and that the deliverance he speaks of shall be at the general resurrection, when the saints shall be raised immortal and incorruptible, which is what they now wait and hope for.

We have thus considered the sense which is given of some scriptures, by those who understand the reign of Christ on earth as attended

with various circumstances which we cannot readily allow of. We have shown that some of those texts which are usually brought to support that particular scheme, have reference to the return of the Jews from captivity; that others which predict their building of Jerusalem, and the temple there,c and the setting up of their civil and religious polity, had their accomplishment after their return from the Babylonish captivity; and that those which seem to look farther, and respect some privileges which they shall enjoy in the last days, will be fulfilled when they are converted to Christianity, and made partakers of many spiritual privileges, in common with the gospel-church. I now need mention only two scriptures more, which we understand in a sense very different from what some do, who treat of Christ's reign on earth. One of these scriptures is 2 Pet. 3:10–13; and the other is Rev. 20:4, 5.

A few millenarians, as was formerly observed, who give a scope to their wit and fancy beyond all the bounds of modesty, and do not consider the absurdities which will follow from their opinion, have maintained that there shall be a general conflagration immediately before Christ's reign on earth begins. The scripture they bring for that purpose, is that in which the apostle says, 'The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' This scripture, it must be confessed, is hard to be understood. We are far from thinking, as some do, that it is only a metaphorical description of some remarkable providences, tending to the ruin of Christ's enemies, and the advantage of his people. Certainly the words are to be taken in a literal sense; for the apostle had been speaking, in the foregoing verses, 'of the old world,' which, 'being over-flown with water, perished.' This is, without doubt, to be taken in a literal sense;

and now he speaks, as some call it, of a second deluge, which shall be, not by water, but by fire, 'in which the heavens and the earth shall pass away,' or be 'dissolved,' that is, changed as to their form, though not annihilated. By 'the heavens and the earth,' the learned Mede well understands that part of the frame of nature which was subjected to the curse, or is inhabited by Christ's enemies. This includes the earth, water, and air, but not the heavenly bodies, which are not only at a vast distance from it, but, in comparison to which, it is little more than a point in magnitude. Mede also, notwithstanding some peculiarities held by him, as formerly mentioned, relating to the millennium, justly observes that this conflagration shall not be till the end of the world, and consequently shall be immediately before the day of judgment. Indeed, the apostle intimates as much, when he speaks of this awful providence as 'reserved to the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men.' The main difficulty to be accounted for, is, what is meant by 'the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,' which are appointed as an habitation for the righteous. Concerning these, if I may be allowed to give my opinion, with that humility and modesty which the difficulty of the subject calls for, I cannot think that there is any absurdity in supposing that the apostle means by them that, in consequence of a change of their form, they shall be an apartment of heaven in which, together with those other parts of the frame of nature which are designed to be the seat of the blessed, the saints shall dwell and reign with Christ for ever.

We shall now consider the sense which may be given of what we read in the twentieth chapter of Revelation concerning 'the first resurrection,' when the martyrs are said to live at the beginning of the thousand years' reign, and the rest of the dead not to live, till these thousand years are finished. On this passage the stress of the whole controversy principally depends. Now, I cannot but adhere to

their opinion who think that the words are to be understood in a metaphorical sense; and then they who were 'beheaded for the witness of Jesus,' that is, the martyrs, shall live when Christ's spiritual reign begins, that is, the cause for which they suffered martyrdom shall be revived. This is supposed to have been in a languishing and dying condition during the reign of Antichrist; and, towards the close of that reign, to have been at the lowest ebb, and, as it were, dead. I say, this shall be revived; these martyrs shall, as it were, live again,—not in their own persons, but in their successors, who espouse the same cause. Before this, the enemies of Christ and his gospel persecuted and trampled on his cause, insulted the memory of those that had suffered for it; but afterwards, when it is said, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen,' Christ's cause revives, and that which was victorious over it dies, and shall not rise again, or be in any capacity to give disturbance to the church, till the thousand years are finished, and Satan is loosed again out of prison, to give life and spirit to it. We then read of a new war begun, a fresh battle fought, 'the nations deceived, the camp of the saints compassed about;' and this will continue till Christ shall come, and put an end to it at the day of judgment, when the devil shall be 'cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.' In this sense some, not without ground, understand the account which is given of the 'slaying' and rising' of 'the witnesses,'g as signifying that the gospel, which before had been persecuted, and the preaching of it prohibited, shall then prevail without restraint. The witnesses' 'death,' denotes their being silenced; their 'rising' and 'standing upon their feet,' their having liberty again to preach. Why, then, may we not understand the resurrection, in the chapter we are now considering, in the same metaphorical sense? To understand it so, agrees very well with the sense of the sixth verse; in which it is said concerning those who 'have a part in the first resurrection,' that is, the saints, who live and reign with Christ, 'on such this second death hath no power,' that is, whatever the enemies of the church

may attempt against them, after the thousand years' reign, shall be to no purpose, for they shall not prevail—the saints' cause shall never die again. Or, if it be applied to their persons, the meaning is, that they shall not die eternally. Eternal death is a punishment to be inflicted on their enemies, who shall 'be cast into the lake of fire,' which is expressly called 'the second death.' But these, as is stated in Rev. 2:11, shall not be hurt of it, that is, not exposed to it. As they have lived with Christ, in a spiritual sense, on earth; so they shall live with him for ever in heaven. We are, in giving this sense of the text, under a kind of necessity to recede from the literal sense of it, because we cannot altogether reconcile that to the analogy of faith. Nor will it seem strange to any who consider the mystical or allegorical style in which the book of Revelation is written, that this text should be understood metaphorically. Besides, to understand it so is not unaccordant with what we find in many other scriptures. These speak of the church's deliverance from its troubles, under the metaphor of 'a resurrection;' and of the destruction of its enemies, under the metaphor of 'death.' Thus the Babylonish captivity, and Israel's deliverance from it, are described, the former by a metaphor taken from a 'valley full of dry bones,' the latter by another taken from their being 'raised out of their graves, living and standing on their feet an exceeding great army.' We read also of God's extending mercy to those who were before bondmen, and not forsaking them in their bondage, giving them an opportunity to set up the temple and worship of God.k This is called, 'giving them a reviving.' The prophet Jeremiah, also, speaking concerning the captivity, says, 'He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old;' and the prophet Isaiah speaks concerning their return from captivity, as a resurrection from the dead, 'Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise; awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust.'m Many other scriptures might be cited out of the writings of the prophets, to justify this metaphorical sense of the words 'death' and 'resurrection,'

and also some out of the New Testament. Of the latter I need refer to only one, which has a particular reference to the subject under consideration; it is that in which the apostle says, that 'the receiving of them,' that is, the receiving of the church of the Jews when converted, 'shall be life from the dead.' We conclude, therefore, that scripture gives countenance to the revival or prosperity of the church being called 'a resurrection.' On the other hand, we might refer to some scriptures which speak of the ruin of the church's enemies, under the metaphor of a state of death. Thus, 'They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.'o Again, the prophet, in a very beautiful manner, describes the utter destruction of the Chaldeans, the church's enemies, by whom they had been carried captive; and he carries on the metaphor, taken from persons departed out of this world, saying, in particular, concerning the king of Babylon, 'Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.'q This signifies the political death of that empire, and the utter inability which followed of their giving disturbance to the church of God, as they had formerly done. These, and many other scriptures of a similar nature, may in some measure justify the sense we have given of the scripture before-mentioned, relating to the death and resurrection of Christ's cause for which his martyrs suffered, and the death of the antichristian cause which followed.

We have thus considered the opinion concerning Christ's reign on earth, and what may be probably supposed to be the sense of those scriptures which are brought in its defence. We have not entered into the particular consideration of what is said concerning the time, or the number of years, which this glorious dispensation shall continue. We read, indeed, of Christ's 'reigning a thousand years.' But by this

we are not to understand the eternal exercise of his government; for, not only is it said to be 'on earth,' but the period is considered as one which shall have an end. That excellent Father whom I formerly mentioned did not duly consider this, when he reckoned the eternal exercise of Christ's government a probable sense of the thousand years. He produces, indeed, that scripture to justify his sense of the words in which it is said, 'God hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations,' by which we are to understand that God will establish his covenant with his people, and make good its promises throughout all the ages of eternity. But though this sufficiently proves that a thousand years may be taken for eternity, agreeably to the sense of scripture; it is plain from the context, that it is not to be so understood in Rev. 20. As to the other sense he gives of the thousand years, namely, that they may be understood as containing a great but indeterminate number of years, in the latter part of the last thousand which the world shall continue, so that, by a figurative way of speaking, a part of a thousand years may be called a thousand years;t I will not pretend to argue against it, or to say that those divines are in the wrong who suppose that a thousand years is put for a great number of years, and that it does not belong to us to say how many. Whether we are to acquiesce in this, or in the literal sense of the words, I will not determine; only we must conclude, as we have scripture-ground for it, that the thousand years shall end a little before Christ's coming to judgment; during which short interval, it is said, 'Satan will be loosed a little season,' and make some fresh efforts against the church, till he, and those that are spirited and excited by him to give disturbance to it, perish in the attempt, and are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. This is all that I shall say concerning the time appointed for this glorious reign, our principal design being to speak concerning the advantages which the church shall enjoy under it.

We have endeavoured to avoid two extremes. One of these is run into by those who do not put a just difference between the millennial reign and the heavenly state. The other extreme we have not yet mentioned. It is one which several modern writers have gone into, who suppose that the thousand years' reign is long since past; that the binding of Satan consisted only in some degrees of restraint laid on him; that the reign itself included only some advantages, comparatively small, which the church enjoyed at the time; that the thousand years began in Constantine's time, when the empire became Christian, about the year of our Lord 300; and that they ended about the year 1300, when the church met with some new difficulties from the eastern parts of the world, which they suppose to be intended by Gog and Magog. But we cannot see sufficient reason to adhere to this opinion; because the state of the church, when Satan is said to be bound a thousand years, is represented as attended with a greater degree of spiritual glory, holiness, purity of doctrine, and many other blessings attending the preaching of the gospel, than we are given to understand by any history it has yet enjoyed.

As to the general method in which we have insisted on this difficult subject, I hope we have not maintained any thing which is derogatory to the glory of Christ's kingdom, or which has a tendency to detract from the real advantage of the saints. Do they on the other side of the question, speak of his reigning? So do we. They, indeed, consider Christ as reigning in his human nature, and conversing in it with his saints; which opinion we cannot give into, for reasons already mentioned. But it is not inconsistent with the glory of Christ to assert, as we have done, that he shall reign spiritually; for the consequence shall be, not the external pomp and grandeur of his subjects, but their being adorned with purity and universal holiness, and enjoying as much peace as they have reason to expect in any

condition short of heaven. Moreover, we have not advanced any thing which has a tendency to detract from the spiritual blessings and advantages of Christ's kingdom, which the saints shall enjoy in this happy period of time. If, however, it be said that there are some advantages which the contrary scheme of doctrine supposes the saints shall enjoy on earth, beyond what we think we have ground to expect from scripture; we need only remark that their not enjoying them here will be fully compensated with a greater degree of glory which they shall have when they reign with Christ in heaven.

The Eternity of Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom

We are now led to consider the eternity of Christ's mediatorial kingdom. Concerning this it is said, 'He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' As he is described, by the apostle, as 'a Priest for ever,'y and as 'ever living to make intercession for those that come unto God by him;' so he shall exercise his kingly office for ever, not according to the present method of its administration, but in a way adapted to that glorified state in which his subjects shall be in another world.

There is, indeed, a scripture which seems to assert the contrary, and which the Socinians give a very perverse sense of, as if it were inconsistent with his proper deity. They suppose, that, as he was constituted a divine Person, or had the honour of a God, or King, conferred on him when he ascended into heaven, as the reward of the faithful discharge of his ministry on earth; so this was designed to continue no longer than to the end of the world, when he is to be set on a level with other inhabitants of heaven, and 'be subject to the Father,' when 'God shall be all in all.' This they suppose to be the meaning of the apostle's words in 1 Cor. 15:24, 25, 28, 'Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even

the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; and, when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.' It must be acknowledged that this is one of those things, in Paul's epistles, which are hard to be understood; yet I humbly conceive that we may give a sense of it, very remote from that just mentioned, which is subversive of his Godhead, and of the eternity of his kingdom.—Let it be considered, then, that when the apostle speaks of the 'end coming, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father;' by 'the kingdom,' we may, without the least strain on the sense of the text, understand his material kingdom, or the subjects of his kingdom. This agrees very well with the sense of the word, both in scripture and in common modes of speaking; as when we call the inhabitants of a city, 'the city,' or the subjects of a kingdom, 'the kingdom.' Taking the words in this sense, we must suppose that the subjects of Christ's kingdom are his trust and charge, and that he is to deliver them up to the Father at last, as persons whom he has governed in such a way that the great ends of his exercising his kingly office have been fully answered, as to what concerns his government in this world. This is no improbable sense of Christ's delivering up the kingdom to the Father. But it may be taken also in another sense,—for the form of Christ's kingdom, or the present mode of government, exercised towards those who are in an imperfect state. This shall 'be delivered up,' that is, he shall cease to govern his people in such a way as he now does. It does not follow, however, that he shall not continue to govern them in a way adapted to the heavenly state. And when it is said that 'he shall put down all rule, and all authority and power,' the meaning is, that all civil and ecclesiastical government, as it is now exercised in the world or the church, shall be put down as useless, or disagreeable to the heavenly state. But it does not follow, that he shall lay aside his own authority

and power.—Again, when it is said that 'he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet,' the words imply, not that he shall not reign afterwards, but that he shall not cease to reign till then. This is the sense of the parallel scripture in which it is said, 'Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'b These words do not denote that he shall, after his enemies are made his footstool, sit no longer at God's right hand, as advanced there to the highest honour. It is very evident, from several scriptures, as well as from our common mode of speaking, that the word 'until' does not always signify the cessation of what is said to be done before, but only the continuance of it till that time, as well as afterwards. Thus it is said, 'Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us;' by which we are to understand, not that, when God extends mercy, the eyes of his people cease to wait upon him, but that we will not leave off waiting upon him, until we have received the mercies we hope for, and that afterwards we will continue to wait for those mercies which we shall farther stand in need of. Job also says, 'Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.'d This does not imply that he would retain his integrity no longer than he lived. If, then, the word 'until' be frequently used in this sense, there is no ground to suppose that, when it is said 'Christ shall reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, the words denote that he shall not reign to eternity, or any longer than 'till all things be subdued unto him.' Indeed, they rather argue, that he shall reign for ever, than that he shall cease to reign; for when all enemies are removed out of the way, and his right to govern is no longer contested by them, shall he then cease to exercise that sovereign dominion which he has over all things?—The main difficulty, however, and the greatest stress of the argument brought against the eternity of Christ's kingdom, are found in what the apostle farther adds in the twenty-eighth verse of this chapter, that 'when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son

also himself be subject unto him, that God may be all in all.' Here it is said, indeed, that the Son shall be 'subject to the Father,' that is, as man; but can any one suppose that the Son is not now subject to the Father? And when it is added, 'God shall be all in all,' is it to be supposed that he is not now so? If to suppose this would be far from being the true meaning of the words, then the sense which the Socinians give of them is not just. We are to understand them thus, that 'in the end,' when all the designs of Christ's administering his mediatorial government in this world are answered, and the present form or method of administration shall cease, it shall appear that the whole plan of that administration had the most direct tendency to promote the Father's glory, or to answer those most valuable ends for which the mediatorial kingdom was erected; and that, by this means, it will more eminently appear than ever before, that his work is from God, and worthy of him. If the Son's kingdom had not been subjected or subservient to the Father's glory, the subjects of it would not be 'delivered up,' or presented to the Father as the Mediator's trust and charge committed to him; and, if God had not been 'all in all,' or the administration of Christ's kingdom had not, in all its branches, been the effect of divine power, it would not have so glorious and successful an issue, as it will appear to have in the great day. This I take to be the plain sense of this scripture. Nor can it reasonably be denied to be so, if we consider that it is very agreeable to our common mode of speaking, to say that a thing is, when it appears to be what it is. Suppose, for example, that a king has gained a victory over his enemies, or quelled some civil broils or tumults in his kingdom, he may say, 'Now I am king,' that is, 'I appear to be so,' or 'my establishment in the kingdom seems less precarious.' We have an instance of the same mode of speaking in scripture, when David says, on occasion of bringing the affairs of his kingdom to a settled state, after Absalom's rebellion, 'Do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?' that is, 'I appear to be so, since that which tended

to unhinge or give disturbance to my government, is removed out of the way.' Moreover, that things are said to be, when they appear to be, is agreeable to the mode of speaking used by the Israelites, when on their receiving in answer to Elijah's prayer the fullest conviction that the Lord was God, by an extraordinary display of his glory in working a miracle to confute their idolatry, they fell on their faces, and said, 'The Lord he is God,' that is, 'He now appears to be so, by those extraordinary effects of his power which we have beheld.' If, then, this is no uncommon mode of speaking, why may we not apply it to the text which we are now endeavouring to explain? We may hence conclude, that the sense just given of the Son's being subject to the Father, and God's being all in all, contains nothing absurd, or contrary to the scripture way of speaking; and that therefore, the eternity of Christ's kingdom is not overthrown by the text in question. As Christ's kingly government is now exercised in a way agreeable to the present condition of his church; so it shall be exercised in a glorious manner, suited to the heavenly state, when all his saints and subjects shall be brought thither.

We have thus considered Christ, as executing his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and we now proceed to speak concerning the twofold state in which they have been, are, or shall be, executed by him. The former of these states is that of his humiliation.

[NOTE 3 S. The First Resurrection.—The notion that the dead in Christ shall be raised before the wicked has no countenance from 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. Paul is speaking of the order or precedence of a resurrection, not in reference to another or second resurrection, but in reference to the ascent of the redeemed to meet the Lord. As in his extended view of the resurrection, in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, so here he does not so much as glance at the peculiar phases of the event as it respects the wicked, his sole

object being to explain the glory and blessedness of its nature and results in the experience of the redeemed. He speaks here, indeed, of two classes of persons; but these are deceased believers, and believers who shall be alive, or shall not have seen death, at Christ's coming. Now, what he states is, that, in the first place, the former of these classes shall be raised from the dead; and that, in the next place, they and surviving believers 'shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.'

The notion of a twofold resurrection, or of that of the righteous preceding that of the wicked, appears to be not only uncountenanced by scripture, but inconsistent with several explicit texts. 'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt,' Dan. 12:2. 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works,' Rev. 20:12, 13. 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left,' Matt. 25:31–33. Mankind shall thus rise, and even appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, in a promiscuous multitude; and only as a result of the final judgment shall they be separated into two great classes, the saved and the condemned, the righteous at Christ's right hand and the wicked at his left. Not a first and a second resurrection, then, but the process of an adjudication conducted among all, both small and great, shall

declare or elicit one class to be 'accursed,' and another class to be 'blessed.'—ED.]

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION IN HIS BIRTH, AND IN HIS LIFE ON EARTH

QUESTION XLVI. What was the estate of Christ's humiliation?

ANSWER. The estate of Christ's humiliation was, that low condition, wherein he, for our sakes, emptying himself of his glory, took upon him the form of a servant, in his conception and birth, life, death, and, after his death, until his resurrection.

QUESTION XLVII. How did Christ humble himself in his conception and birth?

ANSWER. Christ humbled himself in his conception, in that being, from all eternity, the Son of God, in the bosom of the Father, he was pleased, in the fulness of time, to become the Son of man, made of a woman of low estate, and to be born of her; with divers circumstances of more than ordinary abasement.

QUESTION XLVIII. How did Christ humble himself in his life?

ANSWER. Christ humbled himself in his life by subjecting himself to the law, which he perfectly fulfilled, and by conflicting with the indignities of the world, temptations of Satan, and infirmities in his flesh; whether common to the nature of man, or particularly accompanying that his low condition.

In what sense Christ humbled himself

IN considering Christ's low and humble state while he was in this world, we may observe that it is styled, his 'emptying himself of his glory,' when 'he took on him the form of a servant.' Thus the apostle

expresses it, in Phil. 2:7; for so the words which we render, 'he made himself of no reputation,' are to be understood. [See Note 3 T, page 593.] Now, as his incarnation is so expressed, we must, before we proceed farther on this subject, inquire how his emptying himself of his glory was consistent with his Godhead; whether he might be said, in taking our nature, to empty or humble himself; and whether his incarnation may, properly speaking, be called a part of his humiliation?

There is a sense in which he may be said to humble himself in his divine nature; as when we read of 'God's humbling himself, to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth.' This is so far from being a dishonour to him, that it is expressive of his glory; for it argues that there is an infinite distance between him and the creature. In this sense, the second Person in the Godhead might be said to humble himself in assuming the human nature, and thereby, as it were, casting a veil over his glory. This is such a sense of Christ's humiliation as denotes infinite condescension, but no diminution or loss of divine glory. It cannot, however, be styled, his emptying himself of glory, or humbling himself in that sense in which the apostle uses the phrase. That Christ's incarnation was the highest instance of condescension cannot be denied; and, if nothing more be intended than this, when persons speak of Christ's humbling himself in his incarnation, or taking our nature into union with his divine, we are far from denying it. But we are now speaking, not of Christ's humbling himself in a relative sense as God, but of his being in a state of humiliation, as God-man, Mediator. In this sense, the act of incarnation, or taking the human nature into union with his divine Person, cannot, properly speaking, be styled a branch of his mediatorial humiliation; for that which tends to constitute the Person of the Mediator, cannot be said to belong to him as Mediator. For understanding this matter, let the following points be observed.

1. The Person of Christ is to be considered in two different respects, namely, as God, and as Mediator. In the former sense, he was, from eternity, a divine Person, and would have been so if he had not been Mediator. But when we speak of his Person, as Mediator, we always consider him as God-man.

2. Every mediatorial act, according to the most proper and literal sense of it, supposes the constitution of his Person as God-man Mediator; and consequently, it supposes him to be incarnate. This is evident from the fact that what he did on earth was performed by him in obedience to the Father, and as having received a commission from him, which could not be performed any otherwise than in his human nature.

3. Christ could not be said to assume the human nature into union with his divine Person, as God-man, for that implies a contradiction in terms; nor could it be said that, before his doing so, he performed any act of obedience to the law, for that supposes the human nature to be assumed, and therefore is consequent on his incarnation.

4. We may farther distinguish between the act of incarnation, or taking the human nature into union with his divine Person; and the state in which he was afterwards. The former was an instance of divine condescension; the latter, in the most proper sense, was a branch of his mediatorial humiliation. This leads us to consider the various instances in which Christ is said, in some following Answers, to have humbled himself, namely, in his birth, life, death, and after his death.

Christ's Humiliation in his Birth

Christ humbled himself in his birth, in various respects.

1. He did so by submitting to be in a state of infancy, in common with all who come into the world. This is the most inactive state of life; one in which we are under a natural incapacity of enjoying God or conversing with him, or of being of any other use than objectively to men. For the new-born infant is destitute, at least, of the regular exercise of thought; and is also exposed to various evils which attend its infantile state; sensible of much pain and uneasiness, which renders it the object of compassion; and knows not what is the secret cause of this, or how to seek redress. This stage of life our Saviour passed through; and in doing so, he discovered a great degree of humiliation. We have no reason to think, with the Papists, that, during his infancy, he had the perfect exercise of his reasoning powers, as if he had been in a state of manhood; nor do we suppose that the contrary would have been a dishonour to him. For, if it were in no respect unbecoming the divine nature to continue its union with his body, when the body was separate from his soul, and therefore in a state of the greatest inactivity, it could be no dishonour for it to be united to his human nature, though we suppose it to have been during his infancy, in that state in which other infants are, as having the powers and faculties of the soul not deduced into act, as they afterwards are. We hence can reckon the popish opinion no other than a groundless and unnecessary conjecture; and cannot but admire this instance of his humiliation, while he was an infant. Indeed, as he came to redeem infants as well as others, it was becoming the wisdom and goodness of God that he should be like them, in most other respects, except in their being born guilty of Adam's sin. If his passing through the other ages of life was designed for our advantage, as he was in doing so like unto us, and, as the apostle says, able to sympathize with us in the various miseries which attend them; so his passing through a state of infancy affords a similar argument for that peculiar compassion which he has for infants, under those evils to which they are liable.

What we have here asserted against those who think it a dishonour to him, to suppose that, during his infancy, he was liable to any imperfection as to knowledge, is not to be reckoned a groundless conjecture, without sufficient reason to support it. For it is expressly said in scripture, that he 'increased in wisdom,' as well as 'stature.' We suppose, therefore, that Christ's humiliation began in those natural infirmities to which he was liable, and which are inseparable from a state of infancy.

2. Another branch of Christ's humiliation, respecting his birth, was that he should be born of a woman of very low degree in the world, rather than of one whose circumstances and character were superior to those of all others, and called for a corresponding degree of respect from them. The blessed virgin was, indeed, in a spiritual sense, honoured and favoured above all women, as the salutation given her by the angel imports: 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.' Yet it is plain she was far from being honourable in the opinion of the world. She was of the seed of David, it is true, which was a princely line. But the sceptre was now departed from it. Hence, when our Saviour is said to have had 'the throne of his father David'n given him by God, it is certain he had it not from his parents in a political sense. It is called, indeed, 'the throne of David,' in reference to the promise made to David, that one should descend from him whom God would 'set on his throne, whose kingdom he would establish for ever.' What relates to the establishment of David's kingdom, and the eternity of it, certainly looks farther than the reign of Solomon, or the succession of kings who were of that line; so that David's kingdom continuing for ever, denotes the perpetuity of it in Christ's being set, in a spiritual sense, on his throne. This seems to be the meaning of the angel's words, 'He shall sit on the throne of his father David.' He had not, indeed, a right to David's crown by natural descent from him, as

that seems contrary to what was foretold of him. For though it is said that 'a rod shall come of the stem of Jesse, and a branch grow out of his roots, which plainly refers to our Saviour, as being of the seed of David; yet it is as plainly intimated that he was not to inherit the crown of David, in a political sense, by right of natural descent from him, in as much as it is said, 'He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.'q

We may add, that his mother's condition in the world appears to have been very low, in as much as she was treated with an uncommon degree of neglect. It is particularly remarked, with a view to set forth our Saviour's humiliation in his birth, that 'she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapt him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.' There was no room, because his mother was poor, and therefore was treated with neglect. Better accommodations were reserved for others, who, at that time, in which there was great resort to Bethlehem, were better able to satisfy the mercenary demands of those at whose house they lodged.

As for Joseph, his reputed father, he was not one of the great men of this world, but lived by his industry, his occupation being that of a carpenter. This was sometimes objected against our Saviour by his enemies, who did not consider that the mean condition of his parents was a part of that state of humiliation which he was to pass through, in discharging the work for which he came into the world. It plainly discovered that he cast the utmost contempt on all the external pomp and grandeur of the world, and thought no honours worthy of his receiving, but such as were of a spiritual nature.

3. There is another circumstance of humiliation, found in the places of our Saviour's birth and residence. He was born in Bethlehem, a

city which, though once esteemed honourable when David dwelt there, yet, at this time, was reckoned by the Jews as not one of the principal cities of Judah. The prophet Micah styles it, 'little among the thousands of Judah.' But as for Nazareth, the place of his abode, it was despised, even to a proverb; so much so that the Jews reckoned that nothing good or great could come out of it. Nathanael expresses their common opinion, when he says, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?'u His being of this place was afterwards turned against him, as an argument that he was no prophet. The Jews said, concerning not this place alone indeed, but concerning the whole country in which it was, namely, Galilee, 'Out of it ariseth no prophet.' Moreover, it is expressly intimated as a design of providence, that his being of Nazareth should be a part of his humiliation; for it is said, 'He dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.'y By this we are not to understand that any of the prophets foretold in express words that he should be called a Nazarene, as having particular reference to the place where he lived. But the meaning is, that as the prophets with one consent spake of him as being in a most low and humble state, so this was a particular instance of his being so; and in that respect, what was spoken by them concerning his state of humiliation, in various instances was fulfilled in this.

Christ's Humiliation throughout his Life

Christ's state of humiliation appeared throughout his whole life, in several instances.

1. It appeared in his subjecting himself to the law. Accordingly, he was under an obligation to yield obedience to God in every thing which was required of him, during the whole course of his life. This,

indeed, was the necessary result of his incarnation; so that he no sooner became man, than he was under a law which no creature is or can be exempted from. Yet his being under it was founded on his own consent, in as much as he consented to be incarnate, which was certainly an instance of infinite condescension; and his being, in pursuance of his consent, actually made under the law, was a branch of his mediatorial humiliation.

He was made under the law, that is, he was obliged to obey its precepts. Not only had this respect to the moral law, which, as to some of its precepts, the best of creatures are under a natural obligation to yield obedience to; but there were also several positive laws to which, in common with those he came to redeem, he submitted to yield obedience. This obligation he perfectly fulfilled, as is observed in what he says to John the Baptist, 'Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' This is as if he had, 'It becometh me, in common with all mankind, to yield perfect obedience to the law.' Elsewhere, too, he speaks of himself as having come into the world 'to fulfil the law.'b We may observe, moreover, that it was not one single act, but a course of obedience, which he performed, during his whole life; or, as it is expressed in this Answer, 'he perfectly fulfilled the law.' This accords with that sinless perfection which is ascribed to him in scripture.

Again, he was made under the law, that is, he was subject to the curse of it which was due to us for sin. This is called by divines the maledictory part of the law. Now, it is said, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' As he obeyed what the law enjoined, so he suffered what it threatened as a punishment due to us for sin.

2. Our Saviour conflicted with the indignities of the world. When he was an infant, 'Herod sought his life:' and, had not his 'parents been warned by God' to flee into another country, he would have been slain, as well as the children that were barbarously murdered in Bethlehem. But he was most persecuted, and met with the greatest indignities, after he appeared publicly in the world. Before that time, till he was about thirty years of age, it might be reckoned a part of his humiliation, that he was not much known in the world, and that he was, at least, during a considerable part of the time, dependent on and subject to his parents. It is true, he did not meet with much opposition from the Jews, so long as they were in expectation that he would appear as an earthly monarch, and deliver them from the Roman yoke. But when their expectation of this was frustrated, and they saw nothing in him but what was suitable to his state of humiliation, they were offended; and from that time the greatest injuries and indignites were offered to him. This will appear if we consider some particulars in their treatment of him.

They did not own his glory as the Son of God; nor did they see and adore his deity that was united to the human nature, when, being made flesh, he dwelt among us. Accordingly, it is observed, that though 'the world was made by him, the world knew him not;' or, as the apostle says concerning him,—for so the words may be rendered, —'Whom none of the princes of this world knew.'f They knew him not nor owned him to be the Lord of glory; and as they knew him not, so they desired not to know him. Hence, the prophet says, 'We hid as it were our faces from him.'—Again, they questioned his mission, and denied him to be the Christ, though this truth had been confirmed by so many incontestable miracles. This is that unbelief which the Jews are so often charged with. Thus when they come to him, and tell him, 'How long dost thou make us to doubt? tell us plainly, whether thou be the Christ or no?' he replies, 'I told you and

ye believed not;' and he appeals to 'the works which he did in his Father's name,'h which, one would think, were a sufficient evidence of his claims. Still they were obstinate and hardened in unbelief.—Not only so, but they reproached him, as though he wrought miracles by the power of the devil. This was the most malicious and groundless slander that could be invented; as though Satan's kingdom had been 'divided against itself,' or as though he would empower a person to work miracles, as a means to promote the interest of God, and thereby to weaken his own, as our Saviour justly replies to that charge. Indeed, they knew, in their own consciences, that this was a false accusation; and in making it, they sinned against the greatest light, and fullest conviction. This occasioned him to denounce that terrible and awful threatening against them, that this 'sin should never be forgiven them, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.'—Further, they reproached him as to his moral character, for no other reason but because he conversed in a free and friendly manner with his people, and went about doing them good. If he, at any time, accepted of the least common offices of kindness, or conversed with sinful men with a design to promote their spiritual advantage, they reviled him for it. Accordingly, he says, 'The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.'k—It was also a matter of common discourse amongst them, that he was a deceiver of the people; though the evidence of truth shone like a sunbeam in every thing which he said and did. Thus it is said, 'There was much murmuring among the people concerning him; for some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.'—Sometimes, too, they were uneasy at his presence, and desirous to be rid of him and his ministry. Thus the Gergesenes, because they had suffered a little damage in the loss of their swine, unanimously 'besought him to depart out of their coasts.'m They knew not their own privilege, but were weary of him who was a

public and universal blessing to the world.—Moreover, many refused to give him entertainment in their houses, or to treat him with that civility which a common traveller expects. This occasioned him to complain, that 'the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.'—Finally, they at times, even before his last sufferings and crucifixion, attempted to take away his life: and, in doing so, they expressed the greatest degree of ingratitude and hatred of him. Their attempts, indeed, were to no purpose, because his hour was not yet come. Thus, when he had asserted his divine glory, they not only charged him with blasphemy, but 'took up stones to stone him.'o Even his fellow-citizens, among whom he had been brought up, and to whom he usually read and expounded the scripture 'on the Sabbath days,' not only 'thrust him out of the city,' but 'led him to the brow of an hill,' designing to put him to death by casting him down from it; but 'he passed through the midst of them,' and, for the present, escaped their bloody design. This was a more aggravated crime, as it was committed by those who were under peculiar obligations to him.' He thus 'endured,' not only, as the apostle says, 'the contradiction of sinners against himself,'q but the most ungrateful and injurious treatment from those to whom he had been so great a friend, and whose ingratitude enhanced his sufferings. We see then, that, during his whole life, he might be said to have been as the prophet styles him, 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.'

3. Christ humbled himself, in being subject to those sinless infirmities which were either common to the human nature, or particularly accompanying that low condition in which he was. Some of those afflictions which he endured took their rise from the sin or misery of others. Thus he is said to have been 'afflicted in all the affliction of his people;' which was an instance of that great sympathy and compassion which he bare towards them. Sometimes

he was grieved for the degeneracy and apostacy of the Jewish nation, and for the contempt they cast on the gospel, whereby his ministry, though discharged with the greatest faithfulness, was, through the unbelief of those among whom he exercised it, without its desired success. Accordingly, he is represented by the prophet as complaining, 'I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain.'t And, when he had almost finished his ministry among them, and looked upon Jerusalem as a self-ruined people, 'he beheld the city and wept over it.' Besides, he was sometimes grieved for the remains of corruption, and the breakings forth of it in those whom he loved in a distinguishing manner. Thus he was sometimes afflicted in his own spirit, by reason of the hardness of the heart of his disciples, and the various instances of their unbelief. These afflictions, more especially, might be called relative, as the occasion of them was seated in others. But there were many afflictions which he endured which were more especially personal; such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, weariness in travelling to and fro in the discharge of his public ministry, and that poverty and want of the common necessaries of life which he submitted to whose divine bounty supplies the wants of all creatures. These and many other sufferings he endured in life, were agreeable to that state of humiliation in which he was during its whole course.

Christ's Humiliation in Temptations

Our Saviour conflicted with the temptations of Satan. It is said, 'He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;' and, 'He suffered being tempted.'y We are not to understand, by his being, in all points, tempted like as we are, that he had any temptations arising in his own soul, as we have from the corruption of our nature; for this would have been inconsistent with his perfect holiness. What the apostle says concerning us, that 'every man is tempted when he is

drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,' is by no means applicable to him. Yet that he was tempted by Satan is very evident from scripture. Some think that Satan was let loose upon him, and suffered to express his utmost malice against him, and to practise all those usual methods whereby he endeavours to ensnare mankind, in two remarkable seasons of his life, namely, in his entrance on his public ministry, and immediately before his last sufferings. The former none deny; the latter some think we have ground to conclude from his own words, in which he says, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.'a Here it seems that, by 'the prince of this world,' he means the devil; for he is so called elsewhere, as well as 'the god of this world,'c and 'the prince of the power of the air.' If this be the sense of our Saviour's words, 'The prince of this world cometh,' it is as if he had said, 'I expect that, together with my other sufferings, I shall be exposed to the last and most violent efforts which Satan will make. As he assaulted me when I entered on my public ministry, so he will do it now when I am about to close my work on earth. Then he endeavoured to ensnare me with his wiles; now he will endeavour to make me uneasy with his fiery darts.' This was, as it were, 'the hour' of the powers of darkness; and we may suppose that, if they were suffered, they would attempt to discourage our Saviour, by representing to him the formidableness of the death of the cross, the insupportableness of the wrath of God due to sin, and how much it was his interest to take some method to save himself from those evils which were impending. Accordingly, we may suppose that our Saviour apprehends the tempter as coming. But we may observe he says, 'He hath nothing in me,' that is, 'No corrupt nature which shall make me receptive of any impressions arising from his temptations. His fiery darts, though pointed and directed against me, shall be as darts shot against a rock, into which they cannot enter, but are immediately repelled.' Some think, however, that, by 'the prince of this world,' our Saviour does not mean the

devil, any otherwise than as he instigated his persecutors to accuse, condemn, and crucify him; and that this view of the phrase is most agreeable to the words immediately preceding, 'Hereafter I will not talk much with you,' which are as if he had said, 'I have not much time to converse with you; for he who will betray me, and those who are sent to apprehend me, are ready to come. I must, in a very little time, be accused and tried, and, in consequence, condemned, though they will find nothing in me worthy of death.' As it is questioned whether this sense of the text be not as probable as that which we have mentioned, so that the case before us cannot be reckoned an instance of Christ's temptation more immediately from Satan, we shall pass it over, and proceed to consider that conflict which, without doubt, he underwent with the devil, in his entrance on his public ministry.

This we read of in Matt. 4:1–11. and Luke 4:1–13. As there is a small difference between these two Evangelists, in the account they give of this matter, whence the enemies of divine revelation take occasion to reproach it as if it were inconsistent with itself, we shall briefly consider and vindicate it from this calumny. We may observe that Matthew says, 'When he had fasted forty days, the tempter came to him;' whereas Luke says, 'He was forty days tempted of the devil;' and Mark speaks to the same purpose. Matthew seems to speak of his temptations as at the end of the forty days. The other two Evangelists intimate that he was tempted, more or less, during all the forty days. There is no contradiction between these two accounts. Luke only adds a circumstance which Matthew omits, namely, that Satan assaulted him with various temptations during all the time he was in the wilderness; those which are recorded by both the Evangelists having been towards the end of the forty days. Again, Matthew, speaking concerning the first of these temptations, introduces the devil as saying to our Saviour, 'If thou be the Son of

God, command that these stones be made bread.' Luke, on the other hand, speaks but of one stone: 'Command that this stone be made bread.' This seeming contradiction may easily be reconciled, by considering that by these 'stones' in Matthew, may be meant 'one of these stones.' This is a very common Hebraism. It is said, for example, that 'Jonah was gone down to the sides of the ship,'f that is, one of the sides; and elsewhere it is said that, when Christ was upon the cross, 'the thieves' who were crucified with him reviled him, which Luke explains, when he says, 'One of the malefactors railed on him.'h So, in this temptation, Satan pointing at some large stone, tempted Christ to turn it into bread; and Matthew intends no more, when he says, 'Command that these stones be made bread,' than 'Command that one of them be made bread.' Again, we observe a difference in the account given by Matthew, from that given by Luke, respecting the order of the temptations. Matthew speaks of Satan's tempting him 'to fall down and worship him,' as the third and last temptation, which, it is more than probable, it was; but Luke, inverting the order, lays down this temptation in the second place. There is, however, no contradiction between the two; for the credit of an historian is not weakened, provided he relate matters of fact, though he does not, in every circumstance, observe the order in which things were done, especially when nothing material depends upon his doing so. On the whole, therefore, the difference between the account of the two Evangelists is so inconsiderable, that it is needless to say anything farther on the subject. We shall proceed, then, to consider Christ's temptation, as we find it there recorded.

We may observe the time in which he was exposed to the temptation. This was immediately after his baptism, when he entered on his public ministry. He had just received a glorious testimony, by a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' and it is added, 'Then was he led into the wilderness, to be

tempted of the devil;' or, as Mark farther explains it, 'Immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.'k From this we may take occasion to infer, that God's children have reason to expect, in conformity to Christ their Head, that, after extraordinary manifestations of divine love, they may sometimes meet with great temptations; so that, as grace is excited by the one, it may be exercised, tried, and the truth of it more plainly evinced by the other. Indeed, there is in us a particular reason for it, which was not applicable to our Saviour; namely, that, after great honours conferred upon us, when God is pleased to manifest himself to us, we may be kept, as the apostle says concerning himself on a similar occasion, from being 'exalted above measure.' We may observe, also, how Satan shows his malice and envy against God's people; so that, when they are raised nearest to heaven, he will use his utmost endeavours to bring them down to hell. Hereby he shows his opposition to God, by attempting to rob him of that glory which he designs to bring to himself by these extraordinary manifestations; as well as to rob his people of the blessed fruits and effects of these manifestations, by doing which he thinks to counteract what God is doing for them. Again, as our Saviour was tempted just before his entrance on his public ministry, we learn that, when God designs that his people shall engage in any great, useful, and difficult work, they are likely to meet with great temptations. These God suffers, that he may put them upon being on their watch, and fortify them against many other temptations which they may expect to meet with in the performance of their work. Many instances of this we have in scripture. When Moses, in particular, was called to go into the land of Egypt, and when the prophet Jeremiah was sent to 'a people whose faces he was afraid of,'n Satan suggested several unwarrantable excuses, to discourage them from undertaking the work to which they were called.

The next thing to be observed, is the place in which Christ was exposed to these conflicts with the tempter, namely, the wilderness. It is not our business to inquire what wilderness it was, whether one of the smaller wildernesses in the land of Judea, or the great wilderness on the other side of Jordan, since scripture is silent on the subject. The latter, indeed, seems more probable; as there are higher mountains in it than in the other, and we read that that wilderness in which Christ was tempted, had in it an exceeding high mountain whence the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. There was in that wilderness mount Nebo, from the top of which Moses took a view of the whole land of Canaan. But, passing by the consideration of the particular wilderness, in which Christ was tempted, we shall observe only that the place which providence designed for this conflict was a wilderness. One reason for selecting such a place was that Christ might fast during the time of his being there, that being a place destitute of necessary food. This was ordered by providence, not only as a particular instance of his humiliation, but that Satan might take occasion to suit one of his temptations to his condition, as being an hungered. Another reason was, that being separate from all his friends and acquaintance, he might be neither helped nor hindered by them; so that Satan might have the greatest advantage he could desire against him, as solitude is a state most adapted to temptations; and consequently that Christ's affliction, and the victory he should obtain, should be more remarkable. As no one was with him to offer him any assistance; so none could take occasion to claim a part in his triumph over the adversary. As to what is said, in the text, concerning his being 'led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted,' we humbly conceive that it is the Holy Spirit who is there intended, as the words seem to import. It would not be so proper to say, He was led by the impure spirit, the devil, to be tempted of the devil. Besides, Luke says, that, 'being full of the Holy Ghost, he was led by the Spirit,' that is, the

Holy Ghost, with whom he was filled, 'into the wilderness.' Moreover, it does not seem agreeable to the holiness of Christ, to suppose that he went into the wilderness at the motion and instigation of the devil; for that would have been an unjustifiable action. We may lawfully go in the way of temptation when providence leads us there; but it is not lawful for us to go within the verge of Satan's temptations by his own instigation. This seems farther probable from its being said, that, 'after the devil was departed from him, he returned in,' or by, 'the power of the Spirit into Galilee.'p If he returned by the power of the Holy Spirit out of the wilderness, have we not equal ground to conclude that he was led by him into it at first? It may be said, indeed, that he did not go into the wilderness by the instigation of the devil, but was carried thither with violence by him. But though this would clear our Saviour from the guilt of going by the devil's persuasion in the way of temptation; yet we can hardly allow that God would suffer the devil to have so much power over Christ's body, as to carry him whither he pleased by a violent motion. It may be replied, that the devil might as well be said to carry him into the wilderness, as to take him up into the holy city, and set him upon a pinnacle of the temple, by a violent motion. In this sense some understand that passage in the second temptation in which it is said that the devil did so. What answer may be given to this, will appear from what may farther be said, when we speak of this temptation in particular.

We shall now consider the three temptations, mentioned in this scripture, to which he was exposed. Looking at them in a general way, we may observe that the two first were very subtle; so much so that some would hardly have discerned wherein the sin lay, had he complied with them. This, however, will be considered under a following Head. We need only remark, at present, that herein he acted like a deceiver, and appeared to be, as he is elsewhere called,

'the old serpent.' In the third temptation, when he tempted our Saviour to fall down and worship him, he openly discovered his own vileness, and blasphemously usurped that glory which is due to God alone.—Again, in these temptations he insinuates that some advantage would accrue to our Saviour from his compliance with them. Generally, when he tempts us, also, he makes an overture of some advantage which we shall gain by our compliance. The advantage he proposed by the first temptation, was that Christ, by complying with it, might prevent his starving with hunger. By the second, he proposed that he might gain popular applause, by casting himself down from the temple among the people who were walking near it, that they might admire him for the wonderful action. In both these temptations, also, he urges him to give a proof of his being the Son of God, by which means his doctrine might be more readily received. In the third temptation, indeed, the advantage is altogether carnal, and such as, had Satan considered the holiness of the Person he was speaking to, and his contempt of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, he might easily have supposed that our Saviour would have despised the overture, as well as abhorred the action.—Farther, we may observe that, in the second temptation, the devil refers to a promise contained in scripture, and so puts Christ upon that which carries in it the appearance of duty, namely, his depending upon the divine protection, in expectation that God would give his angels charge over him. But he quotes the scripture fallaciously, by leaving out a very material thing contained in it, 'He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways;' whereby it is implied, that none have a right to depend on the divine protection, but they who are in the way of duty, which Christ would not have been had he complied with this temptation.—Another thing we observe is, that our Saviour not only refused to comply with the temptation, in all these three instances, but he assigned a reason of his refusal, whereby it appears that he acted with judgment. Hereby

we are instructed not only to refuse to comply with Satan's temptations, but to be able to give a reason of our refusal.— Moreover, as our Saviour answers all the temptations, by referring to scripture, which he adhered to as a rule to direct his conduct, and as by this course he expressed the greatest deference to it; so he teaches us to do the same, as the psalmist says, 'By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.'s It is by 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,' that we 'quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.'

We shall now proceed to consider the three temptations in particular, together with our Saviour's answer to each of them. We shall do this in the order in which they are related by the evangelist Matthew.

The first temptation was, that he would prove his being the Son of God, by commanding stones to be made bread. The subtilty of this temptation consists in its seeming to be not only lawful but necessary for Christ, on some occasions, to give a proof that he was the Son of God; his working of miracles being the way by which this was to be done. Nor would it seem, to some, unlawful for him to work a miracle by turning stones into bread; for we read among other miracles, of his multiplying the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude. Why, then, it might be asked, may he not produce bread, in a miraculous manner, as well now, as at any other time? Again, Satan puts him upon working this miracle, from a principle of self-preservation, which is a duty founded in the law of nature, to supply himself with necessary food, being an hungered; and, if it was lawful for him to produce bread to feed others, was it not lawful to do the same for his own subsistence, especially as he was in a place in which food was not to be obtained by any other means? He pretends, moreover, to have a great concern for our Saviour's welfare, that so he might not

perish with hunger. He thought to gain an advantage over him, by a pretence of friendship, as he often does in those temptations he offers to us, to promote our own welfare by unlawful means.

Let us now consider wherein the snare lay, which our Saviour was thoroughly apprized of; and in what respects he would have sinned, had he complied with the temptation. We remark, then, that it was not lawful for him to work a miracle to gratify the devil. A particular reason for this is, that his doing it would have been contrary to the general end and design of his working miracles, which was only for the advantage of his people, who are the proper subjects of conviction by them. For him to work them with any other design, would have been to prostitute a sacred ordinance, or to apply it to a person to whom it did not belong. When the woman of Canaan came to him, beseeching him to work a miracle, in casting the devil out of her daughter, she being not a member of the Jewish church nor one of 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' our Saviour tells her that it was 'not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs,' and that he was not 'sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' that is, he was to work miracles for the conviction of those only who were the proper subjects of conviction. Nor, doubtless, would he have wrought the miracle at her request, had she not been a proper subject of conviction; which she was, as an elect person, though not by nature an Israelite. Now, to apply this to our present purpose, the devil was not a subject of conviction, and therefore Christ was not obliged to prove himself the Son of God to him; for which reason he would have sinned, had he complied with his temptation. But had it been otherwise, it does not seem necessary, at this time, for him to prove himself to be the Son of God; for his being so had but a little before been sufficiently attested by a voice from heaven; so that to work a miracle to confirm it at present, would argue a kind of disbelief of that testimony. Again, for Christ to work a miracle for his

own subsistence, seems unaccordant with the main design of his working miracles, which, as was before hinted, was his people's conviction that he was the Messiah. Accordingly, it does not sufficiently appear that he ever provided for the necessities of himself or his family in such a way.y But suppose he had at any time subsisted himself by working a miracle, it would have argued a distrust of the providence of God to have supplied his hunger, at present, in that way; as if God, who had hitherto preserved him without food, could not have continued to do so, as long as he was in the wilderness. It would also have been contrary to one design of his being led thither by the Spirit; which was, that he might humble himself by fasting, as well as conflict with Satan's temptations.

Let us now consider Christ's answer to the first temptation that was offered by the devil. This is contained in verse 4, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The scripture here referred to, is Deut. 8:3, where we have the very same words; which, as they are applied by our Saviour to repel this temptation, imply that man has a better life to secure, than that which is maintained by bread, namely, the life of the soul. Accordingly, it is said, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' If we understand the passage in this sense, it is as if he had said, 'If I comply with this temptation, I should sin against my own soul; and, by using unlawful means to support my natural life, should lose that spiritual life, which consists in the divine favour.' Or rather, the meaning of the passage is, that it is by the word of God's power that our lives are upheld. Now, though this power is ordinarily exerted in the use of means, by applying the proper food which God gives us; yet it can sustain us without it, when we are called, in an extraordinary manner by him, to depend upon it, and have ground to conclude, as our Saviour now had, that our dependence shall not be in vain. Christ

had depended upon it, for almost forty days, since he first was brought into the wilderness; and he therefore concluded, that it was his duty to exercise the same dependence so long as he was there.

The second temptation was that in which Satan endeavoured to persuade him to cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple, expecting that God would preserve him safe from danger. He pretended that 'God would give his angels charge concerning him, and that in their hands they should bear him up, lest at any time he should dash his foot against a stone.' This was a snare laid by the subtle adversary for his life. In this as well as in the former temptation, he solicited him to distrust the providence of God; and our Saviour's reply contains an intimation of his firm resolution to depend upon it, for his farther preservation, though without the necessary food of life. Now Satan tempts him, since he is resolved to depend on the power and providence of God, to do this in an unlawful way; which is no other than a presuming on the divine protection without a sufficient warrant. He tempts him, also, to the sin of self-murder, which would be the consequence of his presumption. For, if providence did not preserve him, which he had not sufficient ground to conclude that it would, when engaged in an unlawful action, such as throwing himself down from the temple would have been, his doing this would certainly have proved his death. The tempter had it in view, also, to put a stop to the work of our redemption, and defeat the great design of Christ's coming into the world. For if Christ had died in this way, by his own hands, he would have contracted guilt, and brought a dishonour to the divine name, rather than have given satisfaction to divine justice, and finished the work he was sent into the world to perform. Moreover, Satan tempts him to a vain-glorious and fruitless action, which was far from answering any valuable end. His throwing himself down from the top of the temple, among the people who were gathered

together in that public place of resort, might, it is true, have amused them when they saw a person flying through the air. But it would not have been an expedient to confirm their faith; for there was no explicit appeal to such a miracle for the confirmation of any contested doctrine, so that it would have contradicted the general design of his working miracles, and in that respect been unlawful. Had he been, indeed, at this time, at the bottom of the temple, disputing with the Jews about his mission, and offering to confirm it by such a miracle as they should choose; and, had they insisted on it, that he should go up to the top of the temple, and cast himself down amongst them, and signified that this miracle should decide the controversy for their conviction, I do not apprehend that it would have been unlawful for him to have done it; nor would it have been an act of presumption for him to expect divine protection in so doing. But the case was otherwise at present. The devil, who was assaulting him in the wilderness, as was formerly observed, was no proper subject of conviction; and none of his people were present, to desire that this miracle should be wrought in order that they might believe.

Having thus considered the matter of the second temptation in general, it may not be amiss for us to inquire into the meaning of those words which are generally considered as preparatory to it: 'The devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.' The most common opinion of those who give their sense of this scripture, is that the devil had power over the body of Christ, to carry it from place to place. This they reckon not to be an improbable supposition, from the account which some give, who write on the subject of witchcraft, of persons being so carried by him in a preternatural way. These relations, however, have not much weight; and many persons of judgment question their truth. But whether they be true or false, they make nothing for the purpose for

which they are brought. We do not question that the devil, by divine permission, might carry persons, by a violent motion, from place to place; but whether our Saviour was carried by him from the wilderness to the top of the temple, is the question to be debated. They who suppose this to have been really done, either think that Christ went there together with, and at the instigation of the devil, without any thing preternatural in his being conveyed thither by him; or that the devil carried him thither from the wilderness through the air. The latter is the more commonly received opinion. But we cannot see sufficient reason to acquiesce in either of them. As to the former opinion, I cannot think it lawful for our Saviour to go from the wilderness to the temple at the instigation of the devil; for that would be to go in the way of temptation, without a divine warrant. Had the Spirit of God carried him thither, and encouraged him to throw himself down thence, it would have been his duty to do it, as much as it was to abide in the wilderness, being led thither by the Holy Spirit. But as it would have been unlawful for him to come into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil; so it would have been no less unlawful to go thence to the temple at his desire. Moreover, it may be greatly questioned, whether our Saviour was fit to take so long a journey, as from the wilderness to the temple, after he had fasted forty days, and, it may be, his strength impaired. Indeed, when we read of his return out of the wilderness into his own country, it was by the power of the Spirit, which supplied he want of strength for so great a journey. Hence, as his coming thither was by the Spirit, so his safe conduct back was by the same Spirit. Nor can we suppose that he went out of the wilderness till the Spirit carried him out into his own country: so that it does not appear that he went to the temple by the solicitation of the devil, to be tempted by him there, and afterwards returned to the wilderness to submit to his last temptation. While we reject this opinion, we cannot altogether adopt the other, which, as was formerly observed, is the most common,

namely, that the devil was permitted to carry our Saviour through the air, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple. This, it is said, seems, for various reasons, to be the more direct and literal sense of the words of the evangelist, relating to the matter. But the pinnacle of the temple, upon which the devil is supposed to have set our Saviour, was, as some writers observe, the sharp point, or apex, or extremity of a cone, on which it was not possible for the smallest bird to perch; so that a man could not stand upon it, and consequently Christ could not be said to be set upon it. To this it is generally replied, that by his being set on a pinnacle of the temple, is meant his being set upon one of the battlements, near one of the spires of the temple, on which men may conveniently stand. Here it is supposed the devil placed our Saviour, and then tempted him to cast himself down. But suppose this to be sufficient to account for those words which speak of Christ's being set on a pinnacle of the temple, and so to enervate the force of the preceding reasoning, let it be farther considered, that it does not seem probable that the devil should have so much power over our Saviour as to carry him from place to place at his will. But if it be replied to this, that it contains no absurdity for God to suffer it, and that it was not any moral evil in Christ to be thus carried, who must be supposed to have been altogether passive in the matter, let it be farther considered that, if the devil really carried him through the air, from the wilderness to the temple, he could not well have done so in an invisible way. To suppose that he could is contrary to the nature of things; for even the motion of a bird, which is a far less creature, through the air, if it be in the day-time, is not invisible. Now, if this preternatural motion of our Saviour's body through the air was visible, how comes it to pass that no notice was taken of it by the Jews, especially as it would have been as remarkable an occurrence as his flying from a pinnacle of the temple to the ground? Some of them, doubtless, would have been amused at it; and probably it would have given them occasion to them to have

said something concerning this preternatural event. Others, it may be, would have reproached him for it; and from his flying by the power of the devil, would have taken occasion to say, that his other miracles were wrought by the same power, which would have given plausibility to their objection when they said, 'He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.' It may be farther objected, that the devil might carry him to the top of the temple by night, and so his motion through the air not be observed. But this seems very improbable; for then he must have continued there all night, till the people were gathered together next day on the plain at the foot of it, otherwise his casting himself down would not have answered the end designed, there being none of the Jews present to observe the miracle; and so the devil might have spared the pains of carrying him to a pinnacle of the temple, and might have as well tempted him to have cast himself down from a precipice in the wilderness. We own, notwithstanding, that it might be replied to this, that the devil might raise a thick fog in the air in the day-time, so that the people could not see him conveyed from the wilderness to the temple. But, though this was possible, it does not seem probable, especially when we consider the other reasons brought against this supposition in general. We must have recourse, therefore, to some other sense in which this scripture is to be understood. Some suppose that the event occurred only in vision, and that Christ continued all the while in the wilderness. This opinion accounts, in some measure, for several difficulties which would arise from the supposition of the devil's having power over him to carry him from place to place; and it agrees with the other scriptures which speak of his being tempted forty days in the wilderness. Yet the opinion does not appear very probable, as it supposes the devil to have had a greater power over Christ's imagination than can readily be allowed. It seems also to contain an absurdity; for Christ could not be said to work a miracle by throwing himself from a pinnacle of the temple, if he were all the

while standing in the wilderness; and what proof would that have been of his being the Son of God? It may be objected, that many things are said by the prophets to be done in vision, which could not well be said to be done otherwise. Thus, the prophet Ezekiel, when he was among the captives in Babylon, is said to have been 'taken by a lock of his head, and, by the Spirit, lifted up between the earth and the heaven, and brought in the visions of God to Jerusalem;' the meaning of which is, that he had an impression to this effect made on his imagination, not much unlike a dream, which inclined him, at the same time, to think himself carried to Jerusalem, and to behold the idolatry which was practised there. But this was a divine impression upon the soul of the prophet; and we are not inclined to think that, because God has sometimes appeared in vision to his people, the devil was suffered to do so with respect to our Saviour, or to have power over his imagination to give it that disturbance which would be the result. There is another sense, then, a little different from this, in which we cannot but acquiesce, though not without great deference to those who are otherwise minded, namely, that the devil had neither power over Christ's body, nor actually carried him from the wilderness to a pinnacle in the temple, on the one hand; nor had he power to give disturbance to his imagination, on the other; but that he tempted him, or endeavoured to persuade him to go with him to Jerusalem, which is called the Holy City, and then to go up to the top of the temple, and so cast himself down among the people. The principal objection brought against this sense of the words is taken from its being contrary to the literal or grammatical sense of them, in as much as the devil is said 'to have taken him up into the Holy City, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple;' words which seem to imply more than merely his discoursing with him of going thither, and casting himself down thence. The only answer which needs be given to this objection is, that, as what is done in vision is represented in scripture as if it had been actually done, why may we

not suppose that what is offered in conversation may be represented as if it had been actually done, especially considering that what was only discoursed of between persons, is sometimes said to be done? Thus, when the chief butler reports the conversation which he and the chief baker had with Joseph in the prison, he represents Joseph as doing what he only spake of, when he says, 'Me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.' There is, therefore, no absurdity in supposing that the devil's 'carrying' our Saviour 'to Jerusalem,' and 'setting him on a pinnacle of the temple,' denotes nothing else but his tempting him to go thither. If we understand the passage in this sense, the temptation is not less subtle or pernicious in its design, nor our Saviour's answer less apposite and to the purpose, than if we suppose the devil to have had power to carry him thither.

We shall now consider Christ's answer to the temptation. This is contained in the words, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' Here he refers to the words of Moses, which, though they more immediately relate to the people's 'murmuring,' and questioning whether 'God was among them or not,'f on which account the name of the place was called Massah; yet, as there are various ways of tempting God, this might well be applied by our Saviour to his own case, in answer to Satan's temptation. Thus understood, they are as if he had said, 'I will not tempt the Lord my God, by desiring a farther proof of my sonship, which has so lately been attested by a voice from heaven;' or rather, 'I will not tempt him, so as to expect his protection, when engaged, according to thy desire, in an unlawful action.'

The third and last temptation, which was the most audacious, vile, and blasphemous of all, is narrated in verses 8, 9, in which Satan makes to him an overture of 'the kingdoms of the world, and the glory thereof,' provided 'he would fall down and worship him.' Here

we may observe something preparatory to the temptation. It is said, 'The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.' Whether this was actually done, or he only tempted him to go up into an high mountain, which was more convenient for this purpose, I will not peremptorily determine. There are not so many difficulties attending the supposition that it was actually done, as there were in the former temptation. If it be concluded that it was actually done, it is very much to be doubted whether there was any mountain so high that he might thence have a prospect of the kingdoms of the world; or, if there was an exceeding high mountain in the wilderness where Christ was tempted, yet, if we consider the nature of vision, there are two things which would hinder a person's seeing the kingdoms of the world, though it were from the highest mountain. One of these is the convexity or unevenness of the surface of the earth. This would hinder the strongest eye from seeing many kingdoms of the world. Besides, the sight would be hindered by other mountains intervening. The other circumstance is, that if there were several kingdoms or countries which might be beheld from the top of an exceeding high mountain, the organ of sight is too weak to reach many miles. Hence, when Moses was commanded by God to go up to the top of mount Pisgah to take a view of the whole land of Canaan, it is generally thought that there was something miraculous in his strengthening his sight to see to the utmost bounds of the land. Accordingly it is said that 'the Lord showed him all the land.' But this can hardly be applicable to the case before us, relating to the devil's showing our Saviour all the kingdoms of the world. The best and most common sense, therefore, is that he made a representation of the kingdoms and glories of the world in the air, and presented them to our Saviour's view in a moment; and a mountain was more convenient for this purpose than if he had done it in a valley. This seems to be the most probable sense of the text.

We shall now consider the temptation itself. This is mentioned in ver. 9, 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' The evangelist Luke adds, as a farther illustration of this temptation, something which is omitted by Matthew, namely, that 'the power' of conferring a right to the kingdoms of the world, was 'delivered unto him,' and that 'to whomsoever he will, he gives it.' In this temptation, we may observe the abominable pride and insolence of the devil, and his appearing to be the father of lies. Nothing could be more false than for him to assert that the world was given him to dispose of as he pleased. Whatever hand he may have in disposing of it among his subjects, by divine permission, he has no right to do this; so that in his claiming to have such a right we may observe his proud and blasphemous insinuation, in pretending to have a grant from God to dispose of that which he reserves in his own hand, to give as he pleases. Again, all that he pretends to give our Saviour, is 'the kingdoms of the world;' and, he proposes that, in exchange for them, he must quit his right to that better world which he had by inheritance a right to, and a power to dispose of, which the devil has not. Further, he pretends to give our Saviour nothing but what, as God and Mediator, he had a right to. This Satan maliciously questions, when, by the overture he makes of the kingdoms, he insinuates that he must be beholden to him for them. Moreover, he makes his proposal, as an expedient for him to arrive at glory and honour in an easier way, than to attain it by sufferings. The temptation is as if he had said, 'Thou expectest a kingdom beyond this world, but there are many troubles which lie in the way to it. Now, by following my advice, and complying with this temptation, thou mayest avoid those sufferings, and enter into the present possession of the kingdoms and glories of this world.' By offering these kingdoms and the glory of them, it is probable, he makes him an overture of the whole Roman empire. But this our Saviour despises, for he offered it who had no right to give it; and the terms,

on which the overture was made, were very dishonourable; and the honour itself was such as he did not value, for his kingdom was not of this world. If he had aimed at earthly grandeur, he might easily have attained it; for we read, that on one occasion, not only might he have been made a king, but the people intended to come and 'make him so by force.' On that occasion, he discovered the little value he had for this honour, by his retiring from them into 'a mountain himself alone,' rather choosing to continue in the low state which he designed to submit to in this world, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Such was the overture made by Satan to our Saviour; and the condition on which he made it, was that he 'should fall down and worship him.' Here we may observe his pride, in pretending to have a right to divine honour, and how he attempts to usurp the throne of God, and that to such a degree that no one must expect favours from him, without giving him that honour which is due to God alone. Again, he boldly and blasphemously tempts Christ to abandon and withdraw himself from his allegiance to God, and, at the same time, to deny his own deity as the object of worship, and thereby to cast away that crown of glory which he has by nature, and to put it on the head of his avowed enemy.

Having thus glanced at Christ's third and last temptation, we may now consider his reply to it, together with the repulse given to the adversary, and the victory obtained over him, who hereupon 'departed from him.' Here we may observe that he again makes use of scripture, referring to what is said therein, in different words, though the sense is the same, 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and to him shalt thou cleave.' This is a duty founded not only in scripture, but in the law of nature, and may be proved from the perfections of God, and our relation to him as creatures. Further, our Saviour detests the temptation with the greatest abhorrence, can no longer bear to converse with the blasphemer, and therefore says,

'Get thee hence, Satan.' He commands him to be gone; and Satan immediately leaves him, being, as it were, driven away by his almighty power. This is more than we can do; yet, in a similar case, we ought, as the apostle did, to 'beseech the Lord that he might depart from us,'l or to use our Saviour's words on another occasion, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.' Thus Christ's temptations, though very grievous and afflictive, were not only surmounted, but the adversary that assaulted him, was overcome by him, in his own person.

From what has been said concerning Christ's temptations, we infer the desperate and unparalleled boldness of Satan. Though he knew well enough that Christ was the Son of God, and therefore able not only to resist but to destroy him; yet he ventured thus to assault him, though, at other times, he appeared to be afraid of him, and said, 'Art thou come to destroy us before the time?' and elsewhere, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time?'n Besides, he knew that, by tempting Christ, his own guilt and misery would be increased. But what will not malice, and a deep-rooted hatred of God and godliness, prompt persons to! The attempt was certainly most unfeasible, as well as prejudicial to himself. Did Satan suppose that he should gain a victory over him? Could he think, that he who was God as well as man, was not more than a match for him? It may be, he might hope, that though the human nature of Christ was united to the divine, yet it might be left to itself; and then he thought it more possible to gain some advantages against it. But this was a groundless supposition, and altogether unbecoming the relation which there is between the two natures. It was impossible also that Christ should be overcome—in as much as he was filled with the Holy Ghost from his conception—and the unction which he had received from the Holy Ghost, would have effectually secured him from falling. Whether the devil knew this or not, he did not consider it; and therefore his attempt against

our Saviour, was an act of the most stupendous folly in him, who is described as the old serpent for his great subtilty. Again, from Christ's temptation we may infer the greatness of his sufferings. It could not but be grievous to him to be insulted, attacked, and the utmost endeavours used to turn him aside from his allegiance to God, by the worst of his enemies. As Satan's temptations are not the smallest part of the affliction of Christ's people; so they cannot be reckoned to have been the smallest part of his own. Yet the issue of them was glorious to himself, and shameful to the enemy that attacked him. This affords encouragement to believers, under the various temptations they are exposed to. They are not, indeed, to think it strange that they are tempted, in as much as, in their being so, they are conformed to Jesus Christ, the Captain of their salvation; but they may, from Christ's temptation, be instructed that it is not a sin to be tempted, though it is a sin to comply with Satan's temptations; and therefore they have no ground to conclude, as many do, that they are not God's children, because they are tempted. Moreover, they may hope, not only to be made partakers of Christ's victory, as the fruits and effects of it redound to the salvation of his people, but to receive help and succour from him when they are tempted. He who 'suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted.'

[NOTE 3 T. Christ's 'Emptying Himself.'—Paul does not say, as Dr. Ridgeley represents him, 'Christ emptied himself of his glory,' but simply, 'he emptied himself,' ἐαυτον εκενωσε. From the structure of the apostle's sentence, it seems clear that this clause states in general terms what the remaining clauses mention in detail. Hence, Christ's 'emptying himself' consisted, not in laying aside his glory, but in his taking upon himself the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man,' Ἑαυτον εκενωσε, μορφην δουλου λαβων, εν ὁμοιωματι ανθρωπων γενομενος και

σχηματι εὑρεθεις ὡς ανθρωπος. His glory was essential and unchangeable. In respect to everything which he was in his preincarnate state,—everything which he is in his divine nature,—he is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Even in his deepest humiliation, while incarnate on earth, his very disciples, dim though their views were of his character, and obscure their conceptions of his majesty, 'beheld in him the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,' John 1:14. Very incautious and unwarrantable language is often used on the subject of the divine glory of Christ in connexion with his incarnation,—language which is more suited to the Arian creed than the orthodox, and which ought to be carefully avoided, as tending to mar our ideas of our Lord's essential deity.—ED.]

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION IN AND AFTER HIS DEATH

QUESTION XLIX. How did Christ humble himself in his death?

ANSWER. Christ humbled himself in his death, in that having been betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, scorned and rejected by the world, condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors, having also conflicted with the terrors of death, and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God's wrath, he laid down his life an offering for sin, enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross.

QUESTION L. Wherein consisted Christ's humiliation after his death?

ANSWER. Christ's humiliation after his death, consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death, till the third day, which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, 'He descended into hell.'

Christ's Humiliation immediately before and in his Death

IN considering the subject of these Answers, we are led to take a view of our Saviour, in the last stage of life, exposed to those sufferings which went more immediately before, or attended his death.

1. Let us consider him in his sufferings in the garden, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. He desired his disciples, not only as an act of their sympathy with and regard to him in his agony, that they would tarry at a small distance from him, while he went a little farther and prayed, as one who tasted more of the bitterness of that cup which he was to drink, than he had done before; but he pressed this upon them, as what was necessary to their own advantage, when he said, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' But they seemed very little concerned, either for his distress, or for their own impending danger; for, when he returned, he found them asleep, and upbraided them for it. 'What,' said he, 'could ye not watch with me one hour?'q Afterwards, too, though he had given them this kind and gentle reproof for their unaccountable stupidity, and had repeated his charge that they should watch and pray; yet, when he came a second time, he found them asleep again. Now it was, doubtless, an addition to his afflictions, that they who were under the highest obligations to him, should be so little concerned for him.

2. He was next betrayed by Judas, a pretended friend; and his being so added to his affliction. His being betrayed does not argue any unwillingness in him to suffer, as is evident from his own words, some time before, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?' as also from his going up to Jerusalem with that design, knowing that his hour was at hand. How easily might he have declined this journey, had he been unwilling to suffer? And, if he thought it his duty to be at Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover—which was not absolutely necessary, as all were not obliged to go thither at that feast—he might, notwithstanding, had he been unwilling to suffer, have gone thither privately. Instead of doing so, however, he made a more public entrance into it than was usual, riding in triumph, and accepting the loud acclamations and hosannas of the multitude; which, any one might suppose, would draw forth the envy of his inveterate enemies, and sharpen their malice against him, and thereby hasten the execution of their bloody design.—Again, that he did not suffer unwillingly, appears from the fact, that, when the band of officers, being led by Judas, was sent to apprehend him, 'he asked them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth; Jesus saith unto them, I am he.' Upon this, we are told, 'they went backward, and fell to the ground,'t and gave him an opportunity to make his escape, had he intended to decline these last sufferings. But he not only delivered himself into their hands, but prohibited the overture of a rescue which Peter attempted in his favour. As to his being betrayed into the hands of his enemies, by one of his disciples, this is often mentioned as a very considerable part of his sufferings. The price which the traitor demanded, or which was the most that they would give him for the barbarous and inhuman action, was thirty pieces of silver.x This was foretold by the prophet, and is represented as an instance of the highest contempt which could be cast upon our Lord. He calls it 'a goodly price that I was prized at of them.' It was the price of 'a servant,' or slave, when

'pushed by an ox, so that he died.'z This circumstance shows how little he was valued by those who were under the highest obligations to him. And providence permitted his betrayer to be a part of his sufferings, that we may learn from it, that hypocrites sometimes mix themselves with his faithful servants, and that, notwithstanding the mask or disguise of religion which they affect, their hypocrisy will, one time or other, be made manifest. This was a wound given, not by an open enemy, but by a pretended friend, and therefore was the more grievous. It might also give occasion to some to cast a reproach on his followers—for what will not malice sometimes suggest? as if they were all like Judas, and as if their pretence to religion were no other than hypocrisy.

3. Another part of Christ's humiliation consisted in his being forsaken by his disciples. We read that, when he was apprehended, 'all the disciples forsook him and fled.'

From this fact we may learn how unable the best of God's people are to exercise that holy courage and fortitude which is necessary in trying dispensations of providence, especially when destitute of extraordinary assistance from the Spirit of God. Moreover, the event was ordered by providence in order to enhance Christ's sufferings. In these none stood with him to comfort or strengthen him. The apostle Paul says concerning himself, 'At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me,'—a circumstance which could not be otherwise than very afflictive. But there was a farther design of providence in permitting the disciples to forsake Christ, namely, that they might not suffer with him. Accordingly, it is observed by one of the evangelists, that when our Saviour was apprehended by the officers, he desired leave of them that his disciples might 'go their way.'c If they had been apprehended, they might perhaps have been accused, condemned, and crucified with him; which might have

given occasion to some to suppose that they bore a part in the purchase of our redemption, which belonged to him alone. It is hence said concerning him, 'I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me.'

4. Another part of Christ's sufferings was, that he was disowned and denied by Peter; for this would give occasion to some to think that, while he was insulted and persecuted by his enemies, he was not worthy to be acknowledged by his friends. In the account which the evangelist gives of this matter, we may observe that Peter was not at this time in the way of his duty. Though, probably, it was love to our Saviour, and a desire to see the issue of his trial, which occasioned his going into the high priest's palace; yet he had no call to go thither at present. It was a running into the midst of danger; especially considering that our Saviour, as stated in the scripture just referred to, had got leave for his disciples to withdraw. Peter ought therefore to have withdrawn; for, as we are not to decline sufferings when called to bear them, so we are not, without a sufficient warrant, to rush into them, or to go, as he did, in the way of temptation.—Again, it was not shame only which induced him to deny our Saviour, but fear. For, it is probable, he might be informed that the high priest had asked Christ concerning his disciples, as well as his doctrine; so that he might think that, by owning him and his doctrine, he might be exposed to suffer with him. But this, notwithstanding his self-confident resolution a little before, when he said, 'Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee,'f he was now afraid to do.—Farther, he was not only accosted by the damsel, who told him that he was 'with Jesus of Galilee;' but he was attacked by 'one of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off,' who said, 'Did I not see thee in the garden with him?' This still increased his fear; for that person not only appeared as a witness against him, and charged him with having been with Christ in the

garden, but also intimated that he attempted to rescue him, and that by force of arms. His having done this might, as he apprehended, render him obnoxious to the lash of the law, as endeavouring to make a riot, for which he concluded that he was liable to suffer punishment. The circumstance, too, that the person whose ear he cut off was the high priest's kinsman, would lay him still more open to the high priest's resentment. Thus Peter, through the weakness of his faith, and the prevalence of his fear, denied our Saviour. His denying him, moreover, was thrice repeated, with curses and execrations annexed to it; which still increased his guilt, and tended to expose religion, as well as to cast a reproach on our Saviour, who was then bearing his testimony to the truth.

5. Another part of Christ's humiliation consisted in his being scorned and rejected by the world,—scorned as if he had been inferior to them. Accordingly he is represented by the psalmist as saying, 'I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.' This was doubtless a malicious design to bring his doctrine into contempt, and to fill the minds of men with prejudice against it, and make them ashamed to own it. Our Saviour puts these together, when he speaks of persons being 'ashamed of him, and of his words.'i They had often rejected him by their unbelief; and their crime in doing so was the greater that they were under the greatest obligations to the contrary. How often did he invite them in the most affectionate manner to come to him, annexing to his invitation a promise of eternal life! Yet we find that he had reason to complain as he does, 'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.'

Here we may observe the different temper of the Jews before he appeared publicly among them, from what it was afterwards. When John the Baptist, his forerunner, told them that he would shortly be

made manifest to Israel, multitudes flocked to his ministry, counted him as a great prophet, and rejoiced in his light for a season, and at the same time were baptized, and professed their willingness to yield obedience to Christ. But all this was upon a groundless supposition that he would appear as an earthly monarch, erect a temporal kingdom, bring all other powers into subjection to it, and so deliver them from the Roman yoke, and advance them to great honours in the world. But when they saw it otherwise, and that he appeared in a low humbled state, and professed that his kingdom was not of this world, and showed that his subjects must seek for a glory which lies beyond it, and which cannot be beheld but by faith, and must, in the expectation of it, take up their cross and follow him, immediately they were offended. Accordingly, the prophet foretells that he should be 'for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel;' and the psalmist styles him, 'the stone which the builders refused;'m both of which predictions are applied to Christ by the apostle Peter. This was foretold also by Simeon, when our Saviour was in his infancy: 'Behold,' said he, 'this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against.'o The offence taken at him is intimated also to have been almost universal, as appeared from the small number who adhered to him when he was on earth. This gave him occasion to say, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.'

Such was the treatment he met with throughout the whole course of his ministry, when they loaded him with the most injurious reproaches. But, immediately before his death, they filled up the measure of their iniquity, by reproaching him to the utmost. Then, it is observed, they blasphemed him and cast contempt on him, with respect to all those offices which he executes as Mediator. As to his prophetic office, with what abominable profaneness did they speak of the sacred gift of prophecy, which their fathers always counted a

peculiar glory, which was conferred upon some of them, and by which they were honoured above all other nations in the world! What contempt did they cast on him who had sufficiently proved himself to be greater than all other prophets, when, as is related concerning them, 'they smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee!' They expressed their blasphemy also in contemning his priestly office, when they said, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save;'r and likewise, in contemning his kingly office, when, in derision, they put on him 'a scarlet robe, platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand, and bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!' They expressed the greatest contempt of him also, by preferring to him a vile and notorious criminal, who was a robber and a murderer. Accordingly, as the prophet says, 'He was numbered with the transgressors,' as if he had been the greatest of them; though he had 'done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.'t Hence, the apostle tells them, 'Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you.' When Pilate made an overture to release him, 'they cried, with one consent, Not this man, but Barabbas.'x

From the treatment which Christ received we may learn that the best of men are not to expect to pass through the world without reproach or contempt, how exact, innocent, or blameless soever their conversation be. Again, we are not to judge of persons or things, especially in matters of religion, merely by the opinion of the world concerning them; since it is no uncommon thing for religion itself to be held in contempt, as well as those who adhere to it. Moreover, we ought not to have respect to the praise or esteem of men, as a motive to induce us to choose and adhere to the way of God and godliness. Our Saviour says, 'I receive not honour from men,' that is, I value it not, so as to regulate my conversation thereby; and then he adds,

'How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?'z Further, let us not think the worse of Christ or his gospel that they are reproached; but rather, as the apostle advises, 'let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach,' and not only be content to bear it, but count it our honour; as he says elsewhere concerning himself, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'b Again, let us take heed that, while we seem to honour Christ by our profession, and testify our abhorrence of the contempt which was cast on him by his enemies, we do not reproach him by our practice. Let us beware of doing so, either by sinning presumptuously, which is called 'a reproaching of the Lord,' or by not reproving those who blaspheme and revile him, and bearing our testimony against them; for, by not doing this, we shall partake with them in their crime.

6. Our Saviour was condemned by Pilate. The former indignities offered him were without any pretence or form of law; but now he is set before a court of judicature, and there tried, and sentence passed immediately before his crucifixion. In this they had no regard to the exercise of justice, or desire to proceed in a legal way with any good and honourable design. They wished simply to prevent the inconvenience which would have arisen from their putting him to death in a riotous and tumultuous manner, without the form of a trial. This they had, in some particular instances, at other times, designed or attempted to do; but they thought it not a safe way of proceeding; for they might afterwards have been called to an account for it by the civil magistrate, as the town-clerk says, on occasion of the tumult at Ephesus, 'We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar.' Accordingly, our Saviour having been apprehended, was brought before Pilate, the Roman governor; and there were the chief priests and elders met together, as his accusers

and prosecutors; and the whole process was the most notorious instance of injustice which ever was practised in any court of judicature in the world. Whatever pretence of law there might be, the assembly was certainly tumultuous. It is not usual for persons who are tried for capital matters to be insulted, not only by the rude multitude of spectators who are present, but by the judge himself. But our Saviour was so insulted; for he was spit upon, buffeted, and smitten with the palms of their hands; and Pilate, with a sarcastic sneer, unbecoming the character of a judge, said, 'Behold the Man;' 'Behold your King.'e

Here we may observe concerning his persecutors, that they sought false witnesses against him, that is, they endeavoured to persuade or bribe any whom they could find among the most vile and profligate wretches, to come in against him. Yet they could not bring the matter to bear for some time. Accordingly, it is said, 'They sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death, but found none; yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.' The evidence which many gave was not regarded; and they were set aside. At last they found two, whom they depended on, as legal evidences. But it is observed that 'their witness did not agree together;'g and even if they had agreed in their testimony, the matter alleged against him was no crime, namely, 'We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' This refers to what he had said when he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and when, foretelling his resurrection from the dead, he used this metaphorical way of speaking, that when they had destroyed this temple, meaning his body, he would raise it up in three days. We will suppose that the Jews, then present, did not understand what he meant by this expression, or that he did not explain it, as the evangelist does. But let them understand it in what sense they would, it was no crime for

him to say so. Hence, when it was witnessed against him, though the high priest urged him to make a reply, 'he held his peace, and answered nothing,' because there was nothing alleged worth an answer. The thing he was charged with carried its own confutation, and inferred not the least degree of guilt in him. This his enemies themselves seemed to be sensible of; and therefore they asked him the trying question, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed?' expecting that his reply would have afforded matter for them to proceed upon for his conviction. Our Saviour gives a direct answer to the question, saying, 'I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'i Here he was called to give a reply; the question was worthy of an answer; and therefore he does not, on this occasion, hold his peace, but witnessed a good confession, though he knew that his doing so would cost him his life.

Some things may be observed concerning Pilate's conduct in his trial. He acted contrary to the good advice which was given him by his wife. In this advice she told him that 'in a dream she had suffered many things because of Christ,' and as the evangelist thinks it worthy to be noticed that the advice was occasioned by a dream, we have ground to conclude that the dream was a divine one,—a circumstance which rendered the advice more solemn, and peculiarly deserving his regard.—Again, he acted against the dictates of his own conscience. For 'he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy,'l and therefore he ought to have stopped all farther proceedings, as in cases of malicious prosecutions. That he acted against his conscience, appears also from the fact that 'he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.'—Moreover, he appears to have been a very mean-spirited man, and therefore was apprehensive that the Jews, had he released our Saviour, would have accused him to Cesar for

sparing one whom they would have pretended to have been a usurper, and a rebel, in as much as he styled himself 'King of the Jews.' Accordingly, he feared that he should have been turned out of his place, or otherwise punished, provided the matter were not fully heard, or the misrepresentations which might be made of it were believed by him. This seems the main reason of his delivering our Saviour up to them to be crucified. Accordingly, Pilate at first 'sought to release him;' but upon the Jews saying, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend,' he 'brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat,' 'and,' in haste, 'delivered him unto them to be crucified.'n—Further, when he thought it his interest to comply with the Jews in this matter, he did not pass sentence on him himself; thinking, perhaps, that to do so would not be advisable, as being contrary to the profession he had, a little before, made of his innocency. But he asked his prosecutors, what he should do with him; which was an unprecedented instance of barbarity and injustice, in one who had the character of a judge or magistrate.

7. Our Saviour was tormented by his persecutors, scourged, buffeted, smitten with the palms of their hands, crowned with thorns. These thorns, as most divines suppose, pierced his head, drew blood from it, and occasioned part of the torments he endured. We may add, that they compelled him to bear his cross, till his strength was so exhausted that he could carry it no longer. They then obliged 'one Simon, a Cyrenian, to bear it;' or, as Luke says, 'to bear it after him,' that is, as some suppose, to help him to carry it, going behind, and bearing a part of its weight. These things he endured immediately before his crucifixion, from wicked men, divested of all humanity, as well as religion. But still there is something more afflictive which he endured.

8. He conflicted with the terrors of death, and felt and bore the weight of God's wrath. These were the sufferings which he endured, more especially in his soul. We may observe that the death he was going to endure was exceedingly formidable to him, and accompanied with great terrors; so that there must certainly have been some bitter ingredients in it, more than in the death of others If many of the martyrs who have been, as the apostle says, 'pressed out of measure above strength,' that is, have suffered as much as frail nature could well bear, have endured death without any dread of the wrath of God, the sting and bitterness thereof being taken away; why, it may be asked, should our Saviour, who never contracted the least degree of guilt, have had any conflict in his own spirit? To this it may be replied, that there were some things in his death which rendered it more formidable than it ever was to any of his saints and martyrs.

It is more than probable that the powers of darkness had a great hand in setting before his view the terrors of the wrath of God due to sin; which none are better able to do, than they who are the subjects of it. Accordingly, it is observed in this Answer, that he conflicted with the terrors of death, and the powers of darkness. The devil is sometimes said to have 'the power of death,' that is, if the Spirit of God do not come in with his comforting presence, but Satan be suffered to do what he can to fill the soul with horror, he hath certainly power to make death beyond measure terrible. His design herein, with respect to our Saviour, was either to drive him to despair, induce him to repent of his undertaking what he came into the world to accomplish, or, at least, to induce him to take some indirect methods to decline suffering. That Satan had some hand in this matter we infer from what our Saviour says when, considering himself as fallen into the hands of his enraged enemies, he tells them, not only that this was 'their hour,' that is, the time in which

they were suffered to express their rage and malice against him, but 'the hour of the power of darkness.'s

His death was in itself more terrible than the death of his people, when the sting and bitterness of it are taken away from them. Accordingly, it is farther observed in this Answer, that he felt and bore the weight of God's wrath; which was the punishment of the sins of his people, for whom he suffered. It was on this account that he is said to have 'begun to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;' to have cried out, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;' and to have prayed that, 'if it were possible,' this part of his sufferings 'might pass from him.' We cannot suppose that he was afraid of death; but the wrath of God was what he principally feared. As this wrath is in itself so terrible, he might well be supposed to be amazed, and exceeding sorrowful, at the view of it, not for his own sin, but ours; and yet herein not to be guilty of any sin himself. That this may farther appear, let it be considered that, as 'he bore our sins,'u and 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him' for them; so he bore every thing which was a punishment of them, excepting some circumstances which are peculiar to us, and which were inconsistent with his perfect holiness, and the efficacy of his sufferings to take away the guilt of our sin. We must suppose, therefore, that he bore, that is, had an afflictive sense of, the wrath of God due to it. Nothing less than this could occasion him to sweat drops of blood in his agony in the garden. Had there been no circumstance in his death but merely his leaving this miserable world, in which he had met with such ill treatment, the very fact of his having received that treatment would have rendered his stay in it less desirable. But, when he considered the bitter ingredients which were in his death, and how he should, when on the cross, be forsaken of God, as to his comforting though not his supporting presence, a view of these made his death more

formidable than the death of any of his people oan be said to be. This leads us to consider the last part of his sufferings.

9. He endured the shameful, painful, and cursed death of the cross. The pains which he endured before, in being buffeted, scourged, and crowned with thorns, were very great; but what he suffered, when nailed to the cross, and hanging on it till he died, was too great for words to express. His body was, as it were, torn asunder by its own weight, and the small and very sensible nerves and fibres of it broken, by their violent extension. The apostle, therefore, speaks of it as the most cruel death, as appears by the emphasis he puts on the words, 'He humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross.' This death was a punishment peculiar to the Romans, while the empire was heathen; but when Christianity obtained in the world, it was forbidden by supreme authority, not only because of the barbarity of it, but out of respect and honour to our Saviour, who suffered it.z We have, therefore, only some monuments of antiquity which discover what kind of death it was. There is enough said of it, however, to give us ground to conclude, that it was the most cruel, painful, and formidable death. In undergoing it, the body was fastened to and extended on a tree or stake, driven into the ground for the purpose; the arms extended on a transverse beam; the hands and feet fastened, either by ropes or nails. The former, as some suppose, were often used in fastening persons to the cross; and, if so, the nailing our Saviour to it, was an instance of unusual cruelty. But whether this observation be just, or not, is uncertain.

That our Saviour was nailed to the cross, appears from the mark and print of the nails remaining after his resurrection, which he showed to Thomas for his conviction. His being nailed to the cross greatly tended to increase the pain of his crucifixion. For the weight of the whole body depended on the hands and feet, which, being nervous,

are more sensible of pain than many other parts; and, they being wounded with the nails, the pain must have been much more exquisite, and this not only for a little while, but for several hours, all which time he felt the pains of death, and did, as it were, die many deaths in one. This kind of death was so cruel, and so excessively tormenting, that some of the Roman emperors who were of a more merciful disposition, when persons, for the highest crimes, had deserved it, ordered that they should first be slain, and then hanged on a cross, to be exposed to shame, or as a terror to others, without suffering those inexpressible tortures which would attend their dying on it. But our Saviour submitted to all these; and so willing was he to bear them, that when they offered him a mixture of wine and myrrh, as a narcotic or stupifying potion, that he might be less sensible of his pain, which was the only kindness they pretended to show him, and which is, by many, supposed to be customary in such cases, 'he received it not.' This is as if he had said, 'I contemn all your offered assistances to ease my pain, as much as I do your insults and reproaches; all my ease and comfort shall be derived from heaven, and not from you.'

There is another circumstance observed in the death of the cross, namely, that it was shameful. Many think it was styled so, because persons who suffered it were stripped of all their garments. But I am inclined to think that this opinion, though almost universally received, is no better than a vulgar error; for the Romans, who were a civilized nation, would not admit anything to be done which is so contrary to the law of nature as this thing would have been, had it been done. Besides, there are other circumstances mentioned by the evangelist, which farther argue its improbability. It may be said, indeed, that the soldiers parted our Saviour's garments, and divided them among themselves, after they had cast lots for his upper garment or seamless coat;c and it may be supposed that this was

done before his crucifixion. But it seems more than probable, that only his upper garment or seamless coat, was taken from him before he was nailed to the cross; that his other garments were not taken away till he was dead; and that, when he was taken down from it, they were exchanged for those linen garments in which he was buried. This seems evident from the words of the evangelist, who intimates that his garments were taken off 'when they had crucified him.' The principal reason, then, why the death of Christ is called shameful, as the apostle styles it when he says, 'He despised the shame,' is that it was a punishment inflicted on none but those who were charged with the vilest crimes, or who were slaves, and hence was called a servile punishment.e When any one was made a freeman of Rome, he was exempted from it; so that it was reckoned the highest crime to punish such an one with it, because of the reproach of it.

It is farther observed that the death of the cross was a cursed death. On which account, the apostle speaks of Christ as 'made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' For understanding this let it be considered, that to be accursed, sometimes signifies to be abandoned of God and man. But far be it from us to assert this concerning the blessed Jesus, 'who had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in his mouth.' The meaning of that scripture, as applied to him, is only this, that the death of the cross had a curse annexed to it, and denoted that the person who suffered it died the death of those who were made a public example, as if they had been abandoned of God. Now, though Christ's death had this appearance; yet he was, at the same time, God's beloved Son, in whom he was well-pleased, how much soever he bore the external marks of God's wrath, or abhorrence of our sins, for which he suffered. The scripture which the apostle refers to, is Deut. 21:22, 23; whence we may take occasion to observe that, after the Jews had

put persons to death for notorious crimes, they sometimes hanged them on a tree, and that such were deemed accursed. The common punishments which were ordained, in scripture, to be inflicted on malefactors, were burning, slaying with the sword, and stoning; and when persons were hanged up before the Lord, that they might be a public spectacle to others, it was done after they were slain. Thus it is said that Joshua smote the five kings, 'and slew them, and then hanged them on five trees until the evening.' Thus, too, David slew the two men who murdered Ishbosheth, and then 'hanged them over the pool in Heshbon.'h And its being said that these were 'hanged before the Lord,' was a significant sign of God's righteous judgment inflicted on them for their crimes; on which account they were said to be cursed. But our Saviour was not liable to the curse of God, as one who had committed any crime which deserved it. The curse, as regarded him, had respect to the kind of death which he endured for our sins; who, in consequence of them, were exposed to the curse, or condemning sentence of the law.

Christ's Humiliation after his Death

We are now to consider Christ's humiliation after his death. Though the greatest part of his humiliation was finished when he yielded up the ghost; yet his state of humiliation was not fully ended till he rose from the dead. It is accordingly observed, in the latter of the Answers we are now explaining, that 'he was buried, and continued under the power of death till the third day;' which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, 'He descended into hell.' The words in question are contained in that Creed, which is commonly attributed to the Apostles.

1. Christ was buried. Before his death, while he hanged on the cross, he had, as was formerly observed, the visible mark of the curse of

God upon him, without any desert of his own; and this he was delivered from, when he was taken down from the cross. It was a custom among the Romans to suffer the bodies of those who were crucified to hang on the cross till they were devoured by wild beasts or fowls of the air, or till they were turned to corruption, unless, as an act of favour, they were given to their relations to be buried. But, in this instance, we may observe that Christ's implacable enemies desired that his body might be taken down soon after he was dead; not out of respect to him, but for fear the land should be defiled. For God had ordained in the law that, 'if a person were hanged on a tree, his body should not remain all night upon it, but must be buried, lest the land should be defiled.' They were the more importunate, too, that he should be taken down, because of the sanctity of the approaching day.k They petitioned Pilate for it with one view; and Joseph of Arimathea did so with another. He begged the body that he might bury it. Here we may observe that, after the Jews had done their worst against him, and he was taken from the cross, there was a becoming honour and respect showed to his sacred body. Herein that scripture was fulfilled, 'He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich, in his death.'m These words, indeed, seem to have some difficulty in them, as they are thus translated.; for though he was crucified with the wicked, it can hardly be said that he made his grave with them. I would choose therefore to render them, as some expositors do, 'His grave was appointed,' namely, by his persecutors, to have been with the wicked; that is, they designed to have thrown him into the common grave of malefactors, who had no marks of respect shown them. But it was otherwise with Christ; for 'he made his grave with the rich,' that is, he was buried in the tomb of Joseph, a rich and honourable counsellor, in which he himself designed to lie, and which he had hewn out of the rock for that purpose. This honour, as the prophet observes, was conferred on our Saviour,

'because he had done no violence; neither was deceit found in his mouth.'

There were several reasons why God ordained that he should be buried, and that in such a way and place as he was. His burial was a convincing proof to the world that he was really dead. So much depended upon his death, that it was thought necessary that there should be an abundant evidence of it. It is, indeed, expressly said that 'he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.' His enemies, too, were convinced of the fact, and hence thought it needless to break his legs, as they did those of the thieves who suffered with him; providence ordering this, that 'that scripture should be fulfilled' which fore-signified that 'a bone of him should not be broken.' Besides, that there might be a farther proof of his being really dead, it is said that, even when they knew it, 'they pierced his side:' an action which, of itself, would have killed him, had he not been dead. This they did, that they might be sure he was dead, before they took him down from the cross.' It is farther observed that Pilate, his unjust judge, was resolved to be satisfied that he was really dead, before he gave orders for his being taken down from the cross. Accordingly it is said, 'Pilate marvelled if he were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.'q It may be, the reason why they were so inquisitive to know whether he were really dead or not, was that he seemed to die in his full strength. For there is something remarkable in the expression which the evangelist uses, 'Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.' By this it appears that his spirits were not so much exhausted, but that he might, according to the course of nature, have lived longer; but he seemed by an act of his own will to surrender his soul to God. This was so remarkable an occurrence that it was not merely by accident that it was mentioned by the evangelist. Indeed, it was the means of the centurion's conviction that 'he was

the Son of God.'s Again, providence ordered that he should be buried by persons of reputation and honour, that so the world might know that, how much soever the rude multitude despised him, persons of figure and character in the world paid a due respect to him. It was farther ordained that he should be buried in a new tomb, wherein never man was laid, that so his resurrection might be more fully demonstrated, that none might pretend that another was raised instead of him, since no other was buried in this grave. The fine linen in which his body was wrapped, and the sweet spices or perfumed ointment with which it was embalmed, not only were agreeable to the method of sepulture practised by the Jews, but were also a public testimony of that respect which his friends bore to him, to whom his memory was precious. Hence Nicodemus, who formerly was afraid to come publicly to him, or who, as is said, at the first came to Jesus by night, 'brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes; and they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.'u

2. As Christ died, and was buried; so he continued under the power of death till the third day. This the apostle calls 'Death's having dominion over him;' and it must be reckoned a part of his humiliation as truly as the act of dying. For though his soul enjoyed the bliss and happiness of heaven immediately after his death, as he tells the penitent thief that 'that day he should be with him in paradise;'y yet, as it was, when separate, in a state of imperfection, and had a natural desire and hope of reunion with the body, there were some degrees of perfect blessedness of which it was not then possessed. Moreover, so long as he continued under the power of death, he was not fully discharged by the justice of God. The work of satisfaction was not completed till he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and to have fully conquered death and hell by his resurrection from the dead. His continuing under the power of death

till the third day, therefore, was a part of his humiliation. Besides, his body, while remaining a prisoner in the grave, could not actively bring that glory to God which it did before, or would do after its resurrection; and it was at that time incapable of the heavenly blessedness, and, in particular, of its being so glorious a body as now it is.

3. As all these things attend the state of separate souls, or the unseen state into which Christ is said to have gone immediately after his death, some, as is observed in this Answer, call his enduring them, his 'descent into hell.' This is what we are next to consider. But as it is largely and judiciously handled by several writers,' I shall insist on it with brevity. We shall first consider the subject as founded on scripture, as the judicious Calvin does,a without regard had to its being inserted in any Creed of human composition. It is said, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' Here Christ's soul being in hell, seems, as the author now mentioned observes, to be put before his death. He accordingly supposes that the apostle hereby intends the sufferings which our Saviour endured in his soul; which were not, in all respects, unlike the punishment due to sin in hell. In this opinion he is followed by several modern writers. The principal reason which they assign for it, is that, as our Surety, he endured all the essential parts of that punishment which our sins had deserved; and they hence suppose that he endured an afflictive sensation of the wrath of God, which bore some resemblance to that which is endured in hell. But, though I would not extenuate Christ's sufferings, especially in that part of them which was most formidable to him, which was the cup that he desired, if it were possible, might pass from him; and though we cannot suppose that any thing less than a view which he had of the wrath of God, due to our sins, would fill him with that horror and amazement which he expressed; yet we ought carefully to

distinguish between this part of his sufferings, and the punishment of sin in hell, in as much as he was exempted, as a judicious writer observes, from the sting of conscience, and a constant sense of the everlasting displeasure of God, together with despair of any better condition, or the least relaxation. Besides, it is expressly said, in this scripture, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul;' which shows that though he might be destitute of the comfortable sense of God's presence, and had occasion to cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and though the effects of God's wrath which he bore, might fill him with the greatest uneasiness, from the afflictive view which he had of it in his soul, yet he was not destitute of the supporting presence of God, nor separate from his love, which always redounded to his person. While, however, the sense of this text must be thus qualified, if we suppose that it denotes Christ's sufferings in his soul before his death; it does not sufficiently appear that the apostle speaks of his sufferings antecedent to it. What the apostle says, is brought in as an argument, to prove that Christ should be raised from the dead. Accordingly, his 'flesh' is said to 'rest in hope.'

We shall proceed, therefore, to consider Christ's descent into hell, as stated in one of the articles of the Creed, which is commonly attributed to the apostles. This is particularly referred to, in the Answer under our present consideration; where it is noticed after the mention of his death. Here something might have been premised concerning that Creed in general, and the reason of inserting this article in it. But this having been insisted on with great judgment by others, all that I shall add is, that, notwithstanding what we meet with in some fabulous and spurious writings, this Creed was not compiled by the apostles, how consonant soever it be to the doctrines laid down by them. We have no account given of it by any ancient writers before the fourth century, so that, it is of later date than either the Nicene or the Athanasian Creed; the former of which was

composed about the year of our Lord 325, the latter not long after it. In the Nicene Creed, there is no mention of Christ's descent into hell. The Athanasian Creed, indeed, notices it, but makes no mention of his being buried. The words are these: 'He descended into hell, and the third day he arose from the dead.' Some have hence concluded, that nothing is intended but his being buried, or continuing in the state of the dead till his resurrection. Some think, indeed, that there was a marginal note in some copies of this creed, to explain what is meant by his descending into hell, namely, that he was buried; which the compilers of the Apostles' Creed afterwards thought to be a part of the Creed itself, and therefore added, 'He died, was buried, and descended into hell.' But, passing by this critical remark, concerning the reason of the insertion of this clause, we shall proceed to consider how it is explained by various writers, who treat on the subject.

The Papists and Lutherans assert that our Saviour descended locally into hell after his death, not to suffer any of the torments which are endured there, but to show himself as a conqueror over those who are detained in it, and triumph over them. As to the Papists, they suppose that he went also into a place which they describe as a prison, where the souls of the Old Testament saints were detained, as being incapable of entering into heaven, in as much as they had not a sufficient discovery of Christ and the gospel made to them while they were on earth, and therefore were detained in this prison, which we may call a fictitious place. The Papists represent it as being between heaven and hell. It is not, indeed, according to them, a place of torment; but they suppose it was such that its inmates were destitute of the heavenly blessedness. They add, that immediately after Christ appeared among them, and manifested himself to them, they believed. In this sense they understand the scripture where it is said, that 'the gospel was preached to them that are dead.' They say farther, that, after he had preached to them, he carried them with

him into heaven. This opinion of Christ's descending locally into hell, is very absurd, and contrary to scripture. It is contrary, in particular, to what he says to the penitent thief upon the cross, 'To day shalt thou be with me in paradise;'g by which, doubtless, he means heaven, which is called Paradise in other scriptures. The method which the Papists take to evade the force of the argument founded on this text, is to pretend that our Saviour speaks of the penitent being with him in heaven, as he is there in his divine nature. Or, as this appears to be so great a strain on the sense of the text that very few will much regard it, they have another evasion, which is as little to the purpose, namely, to pretend that there ought to be a stop put after the words 'to day.' According to this gloss, the meaning is, 'Now, at this time, I say unto thee, that thou shalt be with me in paradise, or heaven, when I ascend into it, after I have descended into hell, and that other place which I must go to, before I come to heaven.' But this sense of the text is so evasive, that none who read the scripture impartially, can suppose that it is just. Nothing farther, therefore, needs be said respecting it. That Christ immediately went into heaven, as to his soul, when he died upon the cross, appears from his last words, 'Father, into thine hands I commend my spirit; which having said, he gave up the ghost.'i This giving of himself up to God, implies a desire that God would receive his spirit; even as Stephen said, with his dying breath, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Christ, in effect, desires that God would receive his spirit; and can we suppose this prayer to have been unanswered, or that he was not immediately received into heaven? We might farther have shown how little ground they have to conclude that Christ went to preach the gospel to those who, by reason of the darkness of the Old Testament dispensation, were detained in prison, as being unfit for the heavenly state. But as the falseness of the supposition has been considered elsewhere,l we pass it over at present. As for the scripture which they bring in its defence, that Christ 'went and preached to the spirits in

prison,' it is plain, from the context, that the apostle means nothing but Christ's sending Noah to preach to the old world, 'who were disobedient,' and, for being so, were sent into the prison of hell, 'after the long-suffering of God had waited on them, while the ark was building.' [See Note 3 U, p. 606.] How easy a matter is it for those who regard not the analogy of faith, or the context of those scriptures which they bring in defence of their wild absurdities, to pretend to prove any thing from scripture! As to what they say concerning Christ's descending into hell, to triumph over the devils and others, who were there plunged into that abyss of misery, the conjecture has no foundation in scripture. We read, indeed, of his 'spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them;' but he did so, 'in his cross,' not in hell. We read, too, of his 'destroying him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;'o but it was not by going in his own Person into that place where he is detained in chains of darkness; it was not by any thing done by him after his death, but it was, as the apostle expressly states, 'by death;' for by his death he purchased that victory which he obtained over him on the cross, which was the seat of his triumph. There is therefore no foundation to assert his local descent into hell.

The most probable opinion concerning Christ's descend into hell, and one which I cannot but acquiesce in, is what is observed in this Answer, implying his continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death, till the third day. The word 'hell,' indeed, in our English tongue, generally, if not always, signifies that place of torment to which they are adjudged who are for ever excluded from the divine favour. Thus it is said concerning the rich man in the parable, that 'in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.' But the Hebrew and Greek wordsq which we often translate 'hell,' have not only that but another sense affixed to them; for they sometimes signify 'the grave.' So our translators frequently render the words.

Thus Jacob speaks of 'bringing down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave;' and elsewhere it is said, 'The Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.'s The Hebrew and Greek words are understood also in the sense of the state of the dead. Thus Jacob, when he thought that his son Joseph was torn in pieces, without being laid in the grave, says, 'I will go down into the grave unto my son.' There are many other places in which the Hebrew word is so rendered; and as to the Greek word, according to its proper derivation and signification, it denotes the state of the dead, or the unseen state. Thus our Saviour, after death, continued in the state of the dead, his soul being separate from his body till the third day, when his state of humiliation was finished.

[NOTE 3 U. 'The Spirits in Prison.'—'It is plain from the context,' as Dr. Ridgeley remarks, 'that the apostle means nothing but Christ's sending Noah to preach to the old world;' but it is not equally plain that, by 'the spirits in prison,' he means the souls of the antediluvians 'sent into hell.' Christ went 'by the Spirit,'—not personally, but by another; and he 'preached' to the old world by Noah, who was 'a preacher of righteousness,' (2 Pet. 2:5.) just as 'he came and preached peace' to the Ephesians (Eph. 2:17.) by Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles. The time when he did so was 'the days of Noah,' 'while the ark was a-preparing.' Of 'the spirits' or 'souls' to whom he preached, 'a few,' or the eight members of Noah's family, were 'saved by water' or 'in the ark.' The parties in prison were 'the disobedient,' the objects of the present 'long suffering of God:' they were not 'spirits' merely, but persons or living men; for souls is, in Hebrew phraseology, the current historical name for human beings as distinguished from the inferior animals. See inter alia, Gen. 2:7; 12:5; 14:21; 46:15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27; Exod. 1:5. 'The prison' in which the persons were, was the doomed world, converted, by the divine threatening or premonition of the coming deluge, into a vast place of

custody from which there was no escape. Either the divine threatening was an insurmountable barrier which walled the antediluvians round, and shut them inevitably up to the approaching judgment; or it stood over them as 'a watch,' and held them 'in durance' or 'in keeping' as criminals, to await the infliction upon them of their merited retribution. Εν φυλακη may have the sense of either 'in prison' or 'in keeping,' 'in durance,' 'under guard;' (See Matt. 14:3, 10; Luke 2:18; Acts 12:10.) and, in either sense, it figuratively describes the antediluvians, while the objects of God's long-suffering, and the hearers of Christ's preaching by the Spirit in the person of Noah, as obnoxious to the general deluge which had been threatened as a punishment for their crimes.—ED.]

CHRIST'S EXALTATION IN HIS RESURRECTION

QUESTION LI. What was the estate of Christ's exaltation?

ANSWER. The estate of Christ's exaltation comprehendeth his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of the Father, and his coming again to judge the world.

QUESTION LII. How was Christ exalted in his resurrection?

ANSWER. Christ was exalted in his resurrection, in that, not having seen corruption in death, of which was it not possible for him to be held, and having the very same body in which he suffered, with the essential properties thereof, but without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life, really united to his soul, he rose again from the dead the third day, by his own power: whereby he declared himself to be the Son of God, to have satisfied divine justice, to have vanquished death, and him that had the power of it, and to be Lord of quick and dead; all which he did as a public Person, the Head of his church, for their justification, quickening in grace, support against enemies, and to assure them of their resurrection from the dead at the last day.

THE former of these Answers containing only a general account of what is particularly insisted on in some following Answers, we pass it over, and proceed to consider Christ as exalted in his resurrection.

The Incorruption of Christ's Body

1. We observe, then, that Christ did not see corruption in death. Corruption, according to our common acceptation of the word, imports two things. The first is the dissolution of the frame of nature, or the separation of soul and body. In this sense every one who dies sees corruption; for death is the dissolution or separation of the two constituent parts of man. Accordingly, the apostle calls it 'the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle.' Now, when our Saviour is said not to have seen corruption, it is not to be understood in this sense, because he really died. But corruption consists principally in the body's being putrified, or turned into dust. In this sense it is said, 'Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.'x These words are explained in a following verse, in which it is said that 'his flesh did not see corruption;' that is, he did not continue long enough in the state of the dead for his body to be corrupted, which it would have been, without a continued miracle, had it lain many days in the grave. It may be objected, that to lie two or three days in the grave is sufficient to contract some degree of corruption; so that Christ's body could not, in all respects, be free from corruption. But there was a peculiar hand of providence, in keeping it from being corrupted, during the short space of time in which it continued in the state of the dead; which was an indication of the great regard which God had to him, his sufferings being now at an end. But there may be another reason assigned. As the filth of sin is sometimes, to beget in us a detestation of it, illustrated by things putrified and corrupted; so God would not suffer the body of Christ to be corrupted. As, moreover, his soul had not the least taint of moral corruption in life, it was not expedient that his body should have the least mark or emblem of it in death. Besides, it was necessary that his body should not see corruption, by being turned into dust as the bodies of all men will be, in order that we might have evident proof that the same body which died was raised again from the dead. But this will be farther insisted

on, under a following Head, when we consider the reason why he rose again so soon as the third day.

2. It was not possible for our Saviour to be held any longer under the power of death than till the third day. This statement is founded on Acts 2:24. For understanding it, let us consider that, had he continued always under the power of death, it would have argued the insufficiency of his satisfaction; so that his obedience in life, and his sufferings in death, could not have attained the end designed; and consequently the infinite worth and value of them would, in effect, have been denied. But the justice of God being fully satisfied, it could not refuse to release him out of prison, that is, to raise him from the dead. Again, it was not possible that he should be held any longer under the power of death than till the third day, because the purpose and promise of God must have their accomplishment. Indeed, he was given to understand, before he suffered, that his body should be detained no longer in the grave. Accordingly, he intimates to his followers, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' This event, therefore, was proposed as a sign; and an appeal is made to it for the confirmation of his mission and doctrine. It was hence impossible that he should be held any longer in the grave.

The Reality of Christ's Resurrection

We are to prove that Christ actually rose again from the dead. The two main proofs, necessary to support our faith in the fact are, a sufficient testimony given of it by creatures, and a farther confirmation of it by miracles, which are a divine testimony. Both these we have. It may be observed, too, that, as appears by daily experience, the great ends of his death and resurrection are fully obtained; and that their being so affords us unquestionable matter of conviction.

1. As to a sufficient testimony given by creatures, Christ's resurrection was attested by sufficient, undeniable evidence. Two angels were sent from heaven as the first witnesses of it. They are described as being 'in shining garments, who said, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.' They are called, indeed, 'two men,' because they appeared in human form; but another evangelist calls them 'two angels.'b Again, the resurrection of Christ was attested by several men and women who were his familiar friends and followers before his death, and saw and conversed with him after his resurrection, and therefore had sufficient proof that it was he who suffered that was raised from the dead. And, lest the testimony of his apostles should not be reckoned sufficient, though there were enough of them to attest the matter, he was afterwards seen by a greater number, namely, 'above five hundred brethren at once.' Now, surely, all these could not be deceived, in a matter of which it was necessary for themselves, as well as others, that they should have the fullest conviction.

That it was morally impossible that his disciples, in particular, should be imposed on, will appear, if we consider that they were his intimate associates. It was for this reason, among others, that providence ordered that he should appear to them, and converse mostly with them. Had he appeared to others who never knew him before, and told them that he was risen from the dead, though they could not question his being alive whilst they conversed with him, yet they might doubt whether he was the same person who died, and so was raised from the dead; and it cannot well be conceived that such could receive a full conviction as to this matter, without a miracle. But, when he appeared to those who were intimately acquainted with him before his death, the conviction is easy and natural. For if his countenance or outward appearance as much resembled what it was before his death, as ours after a fit of sickness does what it was

before; then his aspect, or external appearance to them, would afford such matter of conviction as very few pretend to gainsay; especially when we consider that it was but three days since they saw him before he was crucified. It may be objected, however, that his countenance was so altered that it was hard to know him by it; for Mary, one of his intimate acquaintances, when she first saw him, mistook him for 'the gardener;' and it is said that, 'after this, he appeared in another form unto two of them.'e But Mary might easily mistake him for another person, through surprise, and not looking steadfastly on him, as not expecting to see him. Hence, her mistake may easily be accounted for, though we suppose his countenance not much to differ from what it was before his death. As to the scripture which speaks of his appearing 'in another form' to two of his disciples, as they walked into the country, the event narrated in it is mentioned, with some particular enlargement, by the evangelist Luke, together with the conversation our Saviour had with them; and it is observed, that 'their eyes were holden, that they should not know him,' and that afterwards 'their eyes were opened, and they knew him.'g May we not, from hence, suppose either that there was something preternatural in the change of Christ's countenance, with the design that, at first, they should not know him; or that there was some impression upon the minds of the disciples, which prevented their knowing him? If the former of these be supposed, as according with St. Mark's words relating to his appearing 'in another form,' the miracle will not give us sufficient occasion to conclude that, in other instances of his appearing to his disciples, our Saviour's countenance was so much altered that it was impossible they should know him by it. But if this should not be allowed, or if it should be objected that the most intimate friends may mistake the person whom they see, if there be nothing else to judge by but the likeness of his countenance to what it was before, let us add, that our Saviour not only appeared to his disciples, but conversed with them and brought to their

remembrance what had passed between him and them before his death. Thus he says, 'These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you,' &c. Now, when a person not only discovers himself to others, but brings to mind private conversation which had formerly passed between them, at particular times and places, no ground is left to doubt whether he be the same person or not. Hence, Christ's appearing to his intimate, particular friends, and conversing with them, and calling to mind former conversation held with them before his death, proves that he was the same Person who had lived before; so that they might be as sure that he was raised from the dead, as they were that he died.

Those persons who, after his resurrection, were witnesses to the truth of it to the world, were also very worthy of credit. They were of such a temper that they would believe nothing themselves, but upon the fullest evidence. This temper they had to such an extreme as is uncommon; providence so ordering it, that we might thence be more sure that we were not imposed on by their report. They were incredulous, even to a fault. For, though they had sufficient intimation given them that our Saviour would rise from the dead at the time he really did, and were also credibly informed by the women who had an account of his resurrection from the angels; yet it is said, 'Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.'—Moreover, though they afterwards received a farther account of the matter from the two disciples who conversed with Christ on the way to Emmaus, and had sufficient ground from them to conclude that he was risen from the dead: yet, when our Saviour, at the same time that they were reporting this matter to them, appeared in the midst of them, 'they were terrified,' as if they had 'seen a spirit.'k This circumstance farther discovers how much they were disinclined to believe anything, without greater evidence than what is generally demanded in such cases. Also, the report given by the rest

of the disciples to Thomas, concerning his resurrection, and his having appeared to them and conversed with them, which was a sufficient ground to induce any one to believe it, was not, in the least, regarded by him; for he determined that unless 'he saw in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, he would not believe;' and in this matter he was afterwards indulged by our Saviour for his conviction. All these things are plain proof that the disciples who were to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection, were not persons of such a temper that they might easily be imposed on; so that their report is the more convincing to us. Moreover, they were men of an unspotted character, unblemished honesty and integrity; which is a very necessary circumstance to be regarded in those who are witnesses to any matters of fact. Their conversation was subject to the inspection of their most inveterate enemies, who, if they could have found anything blameworthy in it, would, doubtless, have alleged it against them, as an expedient to bring their persons and doctrines into disrepute. This would have had a tendency to sap the very foundation of the Christian religion. The Jews also would not have needed to have recourse to persecution, or to call in the aid of the civil magistrate to silence them, if they could have produced any instances of dishonesty, or want of integrity, in their character. The apostle Peter, who was one of the witnesses, appeals to the world, in behalf of himself and the rest of the apostles, when he says, 'We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.' Indeed, their writings discover not only great integrity, but holiness; and hence the same apostle styles them all 'holy men of God.'m—Further, they could not be supposed to have any prospect of advantage by deceiving the world, as to the fact of Christ's resurrection; but, on the other hand, were to look for nothing else but the greatest degree of opposition, from both the Jews and

the heathen. The former, who had always been such enemies to their Lord and Master, would, doubtless, be so to them. Besides, they reckoned it their interest to oppose and persecute every one who propagated this doctrine; for they apprehended that, if the world believed it, it would fasten an eternal mark of infamy upon them. They were also apprehensive that it would 'bring on them the guilt of his blood,' that is, the deserved punishment of putting him to death. It may be objected, perhaps, that the apostles might have some view to their own interest, when they first became Christ's disciples, or might expect some secular advantage by being the subjects of his kingdom, as apprehending that it was of a temporal nature. But this they had not any ground to expect from him. Besides, since his crucifixion, all expectations of that kind were at an end; and therefore their reporting that he was risen from the dead, if he had not been so, would have been to invent a lie contrary to their own interest. Moreover, they would by this course not only have imposed on others, but have incurred the divine displeasure, and ruined their own souls; the happiness of which was as much concerned in the truth of their testimony as that of ours. Now, none can suppose that they ever appeared so desperate, as not to regard what became of them either in this or another world.

We have thus considered the testimony of those apostles who saw and conversed with Christ after his resurrection, together with their respective character, as witnesses of the fact. To them we have the addition of another witness, namely, the apostle Paul, who saw him, in an extraordinary manner, after his ascension into heaven, and heard his voice, saying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.' In reference to this, he says concerning himself, 'Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time;'p that is, one who had this qualification for the apostleship, or his being a witness to Christ's resurrection, after that

time in which others were qualified to bear their testimony to this truth, that is, after Christ's ascension into heaven. We may observe concerning this witness, that he was well known by all the Jews to have been one of the most inveterate enemies to Christianity in the world. This he frequently afterwards took occasion to mention, that so his testimony might be more regarded. Indeed, nothing short of the fullest evidence as to this matter, could induce him to forego his secular interest, and, in common with the rest of the apostles, to expose himself to the loss of all things in defence of this truth.

Now that we are speaking of the witnesses to Christ's resurrection, and of the apostle Paul as attesting it from his having seen him in a glorified state, we may take notice of one more witness, namely, the blessed martyr Stephen, who declared, in the presence of his enraged enemies, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.' He was, doubtless, one of the holiest and most upright men in his day; and, when he gave his testimony, it is said in the foregoing words, 'He was full of the Holy Ghost;' and certainly the Holy Ghost would not suggest a falsity to him. This he spake when ready to expire, and at a time when men are under no temptation to deceive the world; so that if, at any time they are to be believed, it is then, when they are in the most serious frame, and most thoughtful about that world into which they are immediately passing.

Having thus noticed the testimony of Christ's friends and followers to his resurrection, we might add the testimony of enemies themselves. They were forced to own this truth, though it was so much against their own interest, and though it made their crime, in crucifying him, appear so black and heinous. Thus we may observe that, when Christ was buried, the Jews, from the intimation which they had previously received that he was to rise again after three

days, desired Pilate that his sepulchre should be made sure till that time. This was accordingly done. A stone was rolled to the mouth of it, and sealed; and a watch was appointed to guard it. The men of the watch, too, were Jews; for Pilate says, 'Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.' He did not order Christ's friends and followers to watch the sepulchre, but his enemies. It is observed also concerning them, that, when the stone was rolled from the door of the sepulchre by the ministry of an angel, 'the keepers,' or the watch which Pilate had set, 'did shake, and became as dead men,'s or were ready to die with fear. This could not throw them into a sleep; for fear awakens, rather than stupifies the passions. Accordingly, it is said, 'Some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests the things that were done. And when they were assembled together, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.' But as this would render them liable to the governor's resentment, and some degree of punishment for their not attending their respective post with that watchfulness which was necessary, they add, 'We will persuade him, and secure you.' It is then said, 'They took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.' This is the most stupid and absurd method which could have been taken, to discountenance the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Indeed, it contains a proof of it. The soldiers, at first, reported matter of fact; but the evasion of it confutes itself. Must we not suppose that there were a considerable number who watched the sepulchre? Doubtless, they would take care to have several there present, lest those who might come to steal him away should be too strong for them. Now, if there were several present, could they be all asleep at the same time? Or could the tomb be opened, which they had made stronger than ordinary, and the stone rolled from it, and yet none of them be awakened out of their sleep? Besides, if they

were asleep, their evidence that Christ was, at the same time, stolen away by his disciples, is too ridiculous to be regarded by any who consider what sort of evidence deserves to be credited; for how could they know what was done when they were asleep?

2. Having thus spoken of the testimony given to Christ's resurrection, both by angels and by men, we proceed to consider how it was confirmed by miracles, which are no other than a divine testimony. The former sort of evidence, indeed, is sufficient to convince any one who does not give way to the greatest degree of scepticism. But yet we have farther proof of it; for, as the apostle says, 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.' Now, God himself has been pleased to set his seal to this truth, or to confirm it by the extraordinary testimony of miracles, which were wrought by the apostles. This testimony was, in some respect, necessary, that the faith of those who were to be convinced by it might be properly divine, and therefore founded on greater evidence than that of human testimony, how undeniable soever it were. Accordingly it is said, that 'with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.'u The Holy Ghost, in particular, by whose immediate efficiency these miracles were wrought, is said to be a witness to the fact. Thus the apostles say, 'We are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.' The meaning of this is, 'We are speaking and acting by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost, confirming to you this great truth.' Indeed, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were an extraordinary means for the conviction of the world concerning this truth. This our Saviour, before his death, gave his followers ground to expect at this time; for he spake 'concerning the Spirit, which was not before given,'y that is, not in so great a degree as to enable them to speak with divers tongues, and work various sorts of miracles beyond what they had done before. Accordingly, it is said,

'the Holy Ghost was not yet,' or before this, 'given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' Christ promised them also, immediately before his ascension into heaven, that 'these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.' These miracles are called 'signs,' as ordained to signify or give a proof of Christ's resurrection. They are said to be wrought by those who had the faith of miracles, or who believed the doctrine of the resurrection themselves, and thereby induced others to believe it. Moreover, they wrought them 'in his name,' with a design to set forth his glory, which could not have been evinced hereby, had he not been risen from the dead. We may add, that all the gifts and graces of the Spirit which believers are made partakers of, are convincing evidences of the doctrine of the resurrection. But this will be considered under a following Head, when we speak on the latter part of this Answer, respecting the fruits and consequences of Christ's resurrection, which the church in all ages experiences, and whereby the work of grace is begun, carried on, and perfected in them.

The Properties of Christ's Risen Body

We come now to consider the properties of the body of Christ, as thus raised from the dead. In this Answer, it is said, that the same body was raised again, with all its essential properties, but without mortality and other common infirmities belonging to this life.

1. It was the same body which suffered which was raised from the dead, other wise the raising of it could not be called a resurrection. The apostle Paul, speaking concerning the general resurrection at the last day, compares it to the springing up of 'seed' sown in the ground,

which, though it be very much altered as to its shape and many of its accidental properties, yet is the same in substance which was sown. Accordingly, 'every seed hath its own body.' The matter is the same, though the form is different.

2. When it is said, that the body of Christ had the same essential properties which it had before his death, we are to understand that it was material, and endowed with the same senses it had before, which were exercised in the same manner, though it may be in a greater degree.

3. It is farther observed that it had not the same accidental properties which belonged to it before; for it was without mortality and other infirmities of this life. The apostle says, concerning the resurrection of all believers, 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.' It is said, in particular, concerning our Saviour, that, 'being raised from the dead, he dieth no more,'c that is, he was raised immortal. And as believers, after their resurrection from the dead, shall be delivered from the common infirmities of life—such as hunger, thirst, pain, sickness, and the like—much more may we conclude that our Saviour was so. But how far his human nature was changed, as to all its properties, it is not for us to pretend to determine; nor ought we to be too inquisitive about it. Yet we may conclude that, though it was raised incorruptible and immortal, and exempted from the common infirmities of this life, it was not, while on earth, clothed with that lustre and glory which was put upon it when he ascended into heaven. The reason of this might probably be, that he might converse with men, or that they might be able to bear his presence; which they could not have done had his body been so glorious as it is at present since his ascension into heaven.

The Period between Christ's Death and Resurrection

It is farther observed, that Christ was raised from the dead on the third day; that is, he continued in the state of the dead from the evening of the sixth day to the morning of the first, which is the Christian Sabbath. The day on which Christ died is said to have been 'the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.' This another evangelist explains, and says, 'It was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath.'e The reason why the day before the sabbath is so called, is that it was the day in which the Jews prepared every thing that was necessary for the solemnity of the day following, and gave a despatch to their worldly affairs that they might not be embarrassed with them, and, by forethought and meditation on the work of that day, might be better prepared for it. This was on the sixth day of the week; and Christ died in the evening, not long before sunset. It is said, also, that he rose again from the dead 'when the seventh day was past, very early in the morning on the first day of the week.' So that our Saviour continued in the state of the dead a part of the sixth day, the whole of the seventh, and a part of the first day of the week. On this account he is said to have 'risen again on the third day,'g that is, the third day, inclusive of the day of his death and that of his resurrection. The learned Bishop Pearson, in his marginal notes on the fifth article of the Creed, illustrates it by a tertian, or third day ague, which is so called though there is but one day's intermission between the paroxysms of it; and so the first and third day are both included in the computation. Both he and others who treat on this subject, farther illustrate it by observing that the scripture often speaks of a number of days, inclusive of the first and last; as when it is said, 'When eight days were accomplished, our Saviour was circumcised,' including the days of his birth and circumcision, between which six days intervened.i Thus our Saviour continued

three days in the state of the dead, inclusive of the first and last; or, he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.

We shall now consider what reasons may be assigned why providence ordered that Christ should continue three days, and no longer, in the state of the dead.

1. It seems agreeable to the wisdom of God that there should have been some space of time between his death and resurrection, that so there might be a sufficient evidence that he was really dead, since much depends on our belief of that fact. He might have breathed forth his soul into the hands of God one moment, and received it again, as raised from the dead, the next. But God in wisdom ordered it otherwise; for, had Christ expired and risen from the dead in so short a time, it might have been questioned whether he died or not. His having lain in the grave till the third day, however, puts this matter beyond all dispute.

2. It was agreeable to the goodness and care of providence that our Saviour should not continue too long in the state of the dead. Had he continued several years in the grave, there could not have been an appeal to his resurrection during all that space of time to confirm the faith of his people concerning his mission. God would not keep his people too long in suspense whether it was he who was to redeem Israel; nor would he too long delay the pouring forth of his Spirit, or the preaching of the gospel, which were designed to be deferred till Christ's rising from the dead. It seems to have been most convenient, too, that he should soon rise from the dead, that is, on the third day, that the world might have a convincing proof of his resurrection, while his death was fresh in their memories, and the subject of the discourse of all the world. Besides, having been told beforehand of his resurrection, they either were or ought to have been in

expectation of this wonderful and glorious event; and consequently it would be an expedient for their greater conviction.

To what has been said concerning Christ's rising again on the third day, so that he lay but one whole day and a part of two days in the grave, it is objected that he is said, to have been 'three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.' This, it is said, includes a longer time than what is before mentioned, so that he was crucified on the fifth day of the week, not on the sixth; and it is also contrary to what has been said concerning his being crucified on the preparation before the sabbath. In answer to this objection, we remark that it cannot be denied that, according to the scripture account of time, the measure of a day contains the space of time from one evening to the next, which is twenty-four hours. This we call a natural day, the night being the first part, and not the morning, according to our computation; as we reckon a day to contain the space of time from one morning to the next. The reason why the Jews thus begin their day is, that it is said, 'The evening and the morning were the first day.'l The sabbath-day also was reckoned to continue during the space of time from the evening of the sixth day to the evening of the seventh, that is, from sunset to sunset; as it is said 'from even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath.' This farther appears, from what is said concerning our Saviour's 'going into Capernaum, and, on the sabbath-day entering into the synagogue and teaching;' for it is said, in a following verse, 'When the sabbath was over, they brought unto him all that were diseased and possessed with devils; and the city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many that were sick of divers diseases,'n &c. From this it appears that the sabbath was over at sunset that day; for the Jews, thinking it unlawful to heal on the sabbath-day, as they expressly say elsewhere, would not bring those who had diseases to be healed till the sabbath was past.— Again, when a whole natural day, consisting of twenty-four hours, is

spoken of in scripture, it is generally called a day and a night, or an evening and a morning. The Jews have no compound word to express this by, as the Greeks have. Thus it is said, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.'p Here the word which we render 'days,' signifies in the Hebrew, as our marginal reference observes, 'evening morning,' or spaces of time each of which consists of evening and morning. Elsewhere also it is said that Moses was upon the mount 'forty days and forty nights,' that is, forty of those spaces of time which we call days, each of which makes a day and a night. So that a day and a night, according to the Hebrew way of speaking, imports no more than a day. When, therefore, our Saviour is said to have been three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, it is an Hebraism, which signifies no more than three days, or three of those spaces of time, each of which, being completed, consists of a day and a night.—Further, it is a very common thing, in scripture, for a part of a day to be put for a day, by a synecdoche of the part for the whole. Hence, a part of that space of time which, when completed, contains day and night, or the space of twenty-four hours, is called a day; so that what is done on the third day, before it is completely ended, is said to take up three days in being done. Thus Esther says, 'Fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king;' whereas it is said, after this, that 'on the third day Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house.'s She could not be said, therefore, to fast three whole days, but only a part of three; for, before the third day was ended, she went to the king. A part of three days is thus put for three days, or that which is said to be done after three days and three nights, which is all one, may be said to be done on the third day, though the day be not completely ended. Our Saviour may be said, therefore, to have been three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, that is, a part of those spaces of time,

which, if completed, would have contained three days and three nights.

Christ raised by his Own Power

Christ raised himself from the dead by his own power. Here let it be considered that no power but what is divine can raise the dead; for it is a bringing back of the dissolved frame of nature into the same or a better state than that in which it was before its dissolution, and a remanding of the soul which was in the hand of God to be again united to its body, which none can do but God himself. Accordingly, the apostle mentions it as a branch of the divine glory; and God is represented as 'he who quickeneth all things.' The body of Christ, therefore, was raised by divine power. Thus the apostle says, 'This Jesus hath God raised up;'u and when he mentions it elsewhere, he makes use of a phrase which is uncommonly emphatic—he wants words to express it, and speaks of 'the exceeding greatness of his power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.' Again, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are God, as has been observed under a foregoing Answer,y it follows that this infinite power belongs equally and alike to them all; so that all these divine Persons may be said to have raised Christ's body from the dead. That the Father raised him no one denies who speaks of his resurrection; and the apostle expressly says, that 'he was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.' But it is farther said that he raised himself from the dead. Thus he tells the Jews, speaking of the temple of his body, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'a That the Holy Ghost raised him, seems to be implied in the expression in which it is said, 'He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;' that is, the Spirit, by this act of divine power, declared him to have been the Son of God, and to have finished the work he came

about. Elsewhere, too, he is said to have been 'quickened by the Spirit.'c

Christ, by raising himself by his own power, declared that he was the Son of God; that is, he not only declared that he was a divine Person, which his sonship always implies, but, declared also his mission and authority to act as Mediator, and that he had accomplished the work which he came into the world to perform. As to what he says concerning his raising himself by his own power, 'Destroy this temple, and after three days I will raise it up,' the Socinians, apprehending it to be an argument tending to overthrow the scheme they lay down who deny his divinity, are forced to make use of a very sorry evasion. They suppose, that the meaning of the passage is only this, that the Father put life into his dead body, and united it to the soul, and that he afterwards lifted himself up out of the grave. But this is certainly a very jejune and empty sense of the words. Is it so great a matter for a Person who was quickened by divine power, to lift up himself from the grave in which he lay? In this sense, any one may be said to raise himself up, as well as Christ, or any one might raise the dead, after having been quickened by divine power, by taking him by the hand, and lifting him up from the ground. This shows how much men are sometimes put to it to support a cause which is destitute of solid arguments for its defence. According to this method of reasoning, the whole world may be said to raise themselves at the last day, when God has put life into their dead bodies. But certainly more than this is implied in Christ's raising himself up; for it is opposed to his body being destroyed, or the frame of nature being dissolved in death; so that he certainly intends that he would exert divine power, in raising himself from the dead, and hereby declare himself to be a divine Person, or the Son of God.

The Effects of Christ's Resurrection

We are next to consider the effects of Christ's resurrection, either as they respect himself, or his people.

1. As to himself, his resurrection was a demonstrative evidence that he had fully satisfied the justice of God, or paid the whole price of redemption, which he had undertaken to do; for hereby he was released out of the prison of the grave, not only by the power, but by the justice of God, and received a full discharge. Accordingly he was, in this respect, justified; and a full proof was given that the work of redemption was brought to perfection. It is also observed, that hereby he conquered death, and 'destroyed him that had the power of it, that is the devil,' and so procured to himself a right to be acknowledged as the 'Lord, both of the dead and living.'e This is, in some respects, different from that universal dominion which he had over all things, as God; and which was the result of his being the Creator of all things, and was not purchased or conferred upon him, as the consequence of his performing the work which he came into the world to accomplish. I say, the dominion which we are considering is what belongs to him as Mediator. It includes a peculiar right which he has, as Mediator, to confer on his people those blessings which accompany salvation. It includes, also, his right to give laws to his church, defend them from their spiritual enemies, and bestow all the blessings on them which were promised to them in the covenant of grace. It includes, moreover, his ordering all the affairs of providence to be subservient to these ends. Had he not designed to redeem any of the race of mankind, he would have had a dominion over the world as God, the Judge of all,—a right to condemn and banish his enemies from his presence. But he could not be said to exercise dominion in the way in which it is displayed with respect to the heirs of salvation; for that would have been inconsistent with his divine perfections. Had he not died, and risen again, he would, indeed, have had a right to do what he would with

his creatures; but as he could not, without this, have redeemed any, so he could not confer upon a peculiar people, that possession which he is said hereby to have purchased.

2. The effects of Christ's resurrection, which respect his people, consist more especially in four things. First, their justification is owing to it. As we are said sometimes to be justified by his death, or 'by his blood;' so elsewhere we are said to be justified, both by his death and by his resurrection, in different respects. 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.'g By these words, some understand that Christ, by his death, paid the debt which we had contracted to the justice of God; and that, by his resurrection, he received a discharge or acquittance in their behalf for whom he died and rose again; so that when he was discharged, his people might be said to be discharged in him, as their public Head and Representative. This is well expressed in our large English Annotations. "Our justification, which was begun in his death, was perfected in his resurrection. Christ did meritoriously work our justification and salvation, by his death and passion; but the efficacy and perfection thereof, with respect to us, dependeth on his resurrection. By his death he paid our debt; in his resurrection he received our acquittance. Isa. 53:8, 'Being taken from prison and from judgment.' When he was discharged, we, in him, and together with him, received our discharge from the guilt and punishment of all our sins." This is very agreeable to what is said in the present Answer,—that he did all this as a public Person, the Head of his church. Nevertheless, there is another notion of our justification, which consists in our apprehending, receiving, or applying his righteousness by faith, which, as will be observed in its proper place, cannot, from the nature of the thing, be said to be before we believe. —Another effect of Christ's resurrection is our quickening in grace. Thus it is said, 'When we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us

together with Christ.'k This implies either that, his death being the procuring cause of all inherent grace, begun in regeneration, and carried on in sanctification, his resurrection was the first step taken in order to his applying what he had purchased, and that afterwards we are, as the consequence, raised from the death of sin to a spiritual life of holiness; or else it denotes that communion which believers have with Christ in his resurrection, as well as his death, as he is the Head and they are the members. This agrees with the peculiar mode of speaking often used by the apostle Paul, who, in several places of his epistles, speaks of believers as crucified, dead, and buried, risen, and ascended into heaven, and sitting at God's right hand in heavenly places, in or with Christ.—Again, Christ's resurrection is a means for our support against our enemies, whose utmost rage can extend itself no farther than the grave. They for whom Christ died and rose again shall obtain a glorious resurrection and eternal life with him; and therefore he advises his people 'not to be afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.'m—This will farther appear, if we consider another effect of Christ's resurrection, which is, that they are assured by it of their resurrection from the dead at the last day. Christ's resurrection is, as it were, the exemplar and pledge of theirs. As hereby he conquered death in his own person; so he gives them ground to conclude that this 'last enemy,' which stands in the way of their complete blessedness, 'shall be destroyed.' Accordingly, it is said, that he is 'risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.'o But this will be farther considered under a following Answer.

CHRIST'S EXALTATION IN AND AFTER HIS ASCENSION

QUESTION LIII. How was Christ exalted in his ascension?

ANSWER. Christ was exalted in his ascension, in that having, after his resurrection, often appeared unto, and conversed with his apostles, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and giving them commission to preach the gospel to all nations; forty days after his resurrection, he, in our nature, and as our Head, triumphing over enemies, visibly went up into the highest heavens, there to receive gifts for men, to raise up our affections thither, and to prepare a place for us where himself is, and shall continue, till his second coming at the end of the world.

QUESTION LIV. How is Christ exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God?

ANSWER. Christ is exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God, in that, as God-man, he is advanced to the highest favour with God the Father, with all fulness of joy, glory, and power over all things in heaven and earth, and doth gather and defend his church, and subdue their enemies, furnisheth his ministers and people with gifts and graces, and maketh intercession for them.

IN the former of these Answers, we have an account of Christ's ascension into heaven; in the latter, of his sitting at the right hand of God, which contains a circumstance of glory immediately consequent upon his ascension. Accordingly we are led first to consider Christ's ascension into heaven.

The Interval between Christ's Resurrection and his Ascension

Here we may observe the distance of time between his resurrection and ascension, and what he did during that interval. It is expressly said that 'he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them,' that is, the apostles, 'forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.' Some of the evangelists are more particular on this subject than others. But, if we compare them together, we may observe that our Saviour, during this interval, did not converse freely and familiarly with the world, as he had done before his death, during the exercise of his public ministry. Indeed, we cannot learn, from any account given by the evangelists of this matter, that he appeared so as to make himself known, to any but his friends and followers. He might, it is true, have appeared to the Jews, and, by doing so, have confuted the lie which they so studiously propagated, that his disciples came by night and stole him away, and consequently that he was not risen from the dead. But he thought, as he might well do, that he had given them sufficient proof before his death that he was the Messiah; and, as he designed that his resurrection should be undeniably attested by those who were appointed to be the witnesses of it, it was needless for him to give any farther proof of it. Besides, his enemies being wilfully blind, obstinate, and prejudiced against him, he denied them any farther means of conviction, as a punishment of their unbelief; so that he would not appear to them after his resurrection. Indeed, had he done it, it is probable, considering the malicious obstinacy and rage which appeared in their temper, that they would have persecuted him again, which it was not convenient that he should submit to, his state of humiliation being at an end.

Again, he did not continue all the forty days with his apostles; nor have we ground to conclude that he abode with them in their houses as he did before his death, or that he eat and drank with them, excepting in two or three particular instances, mentioned by the

evangelists, the design of which was to prove that, after his resurrection, he had as true a human body, with all the essential properties of it, as he had before his death, and therefore was not, as they supposed him to be when first they saw him, a spectrum. All the account we have of his appearing to his friends and followers, is, that it was only occasionally, at such times as they did not expect to see him. At one time he appeared to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and made himself known to them when they came to their journey's end, and then withdrew himself in an instant. Afterwards, we read of his appearing to the apostles, when they were engaged in social worship, on the day of his resurrection; of his appearing to them again on the first day of the following week;s and of his appearing to them another time at the sea of Tiberias. After the account of the last of these appearances, it is expressly said that 'this was now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.'u Besides, we read elsewhere of his being 'seen of above five hundred brethren at once;' which was probably in Galilee, where his followers generally lived, and where he chiefly exercised his public ministry before his death. This seems to have been appointed as a place of general rendezvous, if we may so express it; for he says, 'After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee;'y and the angel gives the same intimation, 'Go your way, tell his disciples that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.' Now this intimation being, as is more than probable, transmitted to his followers, five hundred of them waited for him there, and accordingly he appeared to them. All these appearances were only occasional; he principally designing thereby to convince them of the truth of his resurrection, and to give his apostles, in particular, instruction concerning some things which they were unapprized of before.

Having thus spoken concerning the time which Christ continued on earth, during which he sometimes appeared to his disciples, we now proceed to consider what he imparted to them during his stay, or at those particular times when he appeared to them. Here we cannot certainly determine anything farther than the account we have in scripture; in which, as was before observed, it is said that 'he spake of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.' By 'the kingdom of God,' I humbly conceive, is meant either that glorious state and place to which he was to ascend, where they should at last be with him, which was a very useful and entertaining subject on which they could not but be happy in hearing what he said; or it means the gospel-state, which, in the New Testament, is often called 'the kingdom of God,' or 'the kingdom of heaven.' As he designed that they should be his ministers, whom he would employ in preaching the gospel, and thereby promoting the affairs of his kingdom; it was necessary that they should receive instructions concerning the gospel-state. Without this they could do nothing for promoting his interest in the world; or, at least, they must have a particular direction from the Holy Spirit relating to the subject, else they would have no warrant to give instructions to the church concerning the new dispensation. We have no ground to doubt that they had the Spirit's direction in everything which they laid down for the church, as a rule of faith or practice afterwards. But this they seem not to have had while our Saviour was with them; so that the nature of the gospel-state, as is more than probable, was a part of what he discoursed with them about, as he ordered them to teach those to whom they were sent to 'observe all things, whatsoever he had commanded them.'

We have sufficient ground to conclude, that he gave them direction concerning the observance of the first day of the week, as the Christian sabbath. He had told them before his death, that he was 'Lord of the sabbath;' and now we may suppose that he more

eminently discovered himself to be so, by changing the day from the seventh to the first day of the week. That they had an intimation from him concerning the Christian sabbath seems probable, from the fact that it was observed by them, in the interval between his resurrection and ascension. We read more than once, too, of his giving countenance to their observance of it, by his presence with them. Yet, at this time, the Holy Ghost was not poured forth upon them. Their practice, therefore, seems to have been founded on some intimation given them by our Saviour, during his continuance with them forty days; though perhaps the matter was confirmed to them afterwards, by extraordinary revelation from the Holy Ghost.

It was in this interval, also, that our Saviour gave them a commission to preach the gospel to all nations, and instituted the ordinance of baptism. The commission which he now gave differs very much from that which he had before given to his twelve disciples, when he ordered them 'not to go in the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter into any city of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'d Now, however, none are excluded; but their commission must be exercised throughout the world, wherever they went. Together with this, too, he promised 'to be with them,' so as to assist and succeed them in their ministry, 'to the end of the world.' Moreover, he enjoined them 'to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high, waiting there for the promise of the Father,' or for their being baptized by the Holy Ghost, which privilege they should soon after receive. This was a very necessary advice which our Saviour gave them; for, though they had a commission to preach the gospel, they wanted those qualifications for it which they were to receive from the Holy Ghost They were to tarry at Jerusalem, also, after they had received extraordinary gifts from the Holy Ghost, till they had an intimation given in what parts of the world they should begin the exercise of their public ministry.

Again, though it is not particularly mentioned in the evangelical history, yet it is not improbable, that our Saviour spake to his disciples concerning the nature of the gospel-church and its government, how they were to exercise their ministry in it, what doctrines they should preach, what success should attend them, and what they should suffer for his sake. Why may we not suppose that he spake of these things to all his apostles, when he condescended to tell Peter, 'by what death he should glorify God?' Their knowledge of many of these things was necessary for the right discharge of their ministry, which they were to begin at Jerusalem, where the first church was to be planted; and it can hardly be supposed that he would only give them a commission to preach the gospel, without some instructions as to how they should execute it. But as this is only a probable argument, let me add that it is certain they afterwards had particular direction as to this matter, from the Holy Ghost, who was given, after Christ's ascension into heaven, to lead them into all truth, or to impart, by them, to the gospel-church, an infallible and standing rule of faith and practice.

Christ's Ascension

After our Saviour had continued forty days on earth from his resurrection, and, in that time, conversed with his apostles of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, he ascended into heaven, or, as it is expressed in the Answer we are considering, he visibly went up into the highest heavens. There are two phrases, in scripture, whereby this is set forth. It is said, 'he was taken up,' and 'he went up.' This variation of expression is used by the Holy Ghost, as some think, to denote two different respects or circumstances attending his ascension. 'His going up' signifies that he ascended into heaven by his own power, pursuant to the right which he had to that glory; as he says elsewhere, 'Ought not Christ to suffer, and to enter

into his glory?'h His being 'taken up' into heaven, signifies the Father's act in exalting him. As he sent him into the world, so he took him out of it into a better, when he had finished his work upon earth. This variety of expression we find used in several other scriptures. Thus it is said, that 'he ascended up on high,' 'entered into heaven,'k and so put in his claim to the heavenly glory; and, on the other hand, 'he was received up into heaven,' and consequently his claim to it admitted of. Accordingly, he was 'exalted' to this honour 'by God's right hand,'m as what was due to him as the consequence of his sufferings.

That we may more particularly consider what it was for Christ to ascend into heaven, let it be observed that we are not to understand hereby that his divine nature was translated from earth to heaven, or changed the place of its residence; for that is contrary to its omnipresence. Whenever a change of place is ascribed to it, it respects not his essential, but his manifestative presence. Though it was united to the human nature, yet it was not confined to it, or limited by it; and though, in one way, it displayed its glory therein whilst he was on earth, and, in another, when he ascended into heaven, yet, considered as to its essential glory, it fills all places. Hence, it is said, that he was in heaven whilst here on earth.—Again, when we say that Christ ascended into heaven in his human nature, the language is not to be understood in a metaphorical sense, as though it denoted only his being advanced to a more glorious state than he was in before his death; since heaven signifies a glorious place, as well as state. Were it to be understood only in a metaphorical sense, it might, for the same reason, be said that there are no saints or angels locally in heaven; for the metaphor might as well be applied to them as to our Saviour. But this is directly contrary to the known acceptation of the word in scripture. Moreover, that his ascending into heaven denotes a change of place, as well as state, is

evident from the fact that, though his state of humiliation was over immediately after his resurrection, yet he says, concerning his human nature, that, during his abode forty days on earth, though raised from the dead, 'I am not yet ascended to my Father.'o—His ascension into heaven, then, is to be understood, in the most proper and known sense of the word, inferring a change of place, as well as state, denoting his being carried from this lower to the upper world, in his human nature, and so entering into that glorious place, as well as triumphant state. This is called 'the heaven of heavens;' which gives us ground to conclude, that the word 'heaven' is taken in various senses in scripture. It is sometimes taken for the air; accordingly the fowls that fly in it, are said to 'fly in the midst of heaven.' Sometimes it is taken for the clouds; and so we read of 'the rain,'r or 'dew of heaven,' as coming down from thence. Sometimes it is taken for the stars; so we read of 'the stars of heaven.'t But, besides all these senses of the word, it is taken for the seat of the blessed, the throne of God, where he manifests himself, in a glorious manner, to his saints and angels. To this place Christ ascended; and, in reference to his doing so, it is said, not only that he 'went' into heaven, but that 'he was made higher than the heavens,' or, that 'he ascended far above all heavens.'x Accordingly it is said, in this Answer, that he went up into the highest heaven.

Now, that Christ ascended into heaven, and that in a visible and glorious manner, is evident from the account we have in scripture of his ascension; which, together with the circumstances that went immediately before it, is what is next to be considered. We read in scripture that, when the eleven disciples were assembled together, he came with a design to take his leave of them; and that after he had 'opened their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures,' and had farther confirmed their faith by applying these to himself, and had concluded all those necessary instructions which he

gave them, 'he led them out as far as Bethany,' and then 'lifted up his hands and blessed them, and, while he blessed them, was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.' But, as this relation seems somewhat different from the account given elsewhere of the ascension by the same inspired writer,z who observes that, when Christ had ascended into heaven in the sight of his disciples, 'they returned to Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey,' clearly implying that he ascended into heaven from that mountain; how, it may be asked, could he have ascended thither from Bethany? It is observed, that Bethany was about fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, and the mount of Olives a sabbath-day's journey; so that Bethany and the mount of Olives seem to be almost a mile distant from each other. If Christ, then, ascended from one of these places into heaven, how could he be said to ascend from the other? The answer which may be given to this seeming inconsistency, is that the town of Bethany was situated at the foot of the mount of Olives; so that the part of the mountain which was nearest to it might have two names, namely Olivet, which was the name of the whole mountain, and Bethany, which denomination it might take from the adjoining village. Or, if this be not sufficient to solve the difficulty, we may remark that when the evangelist says, in one of the places, that our Saviour 'led them out as far as Bethany,' he does not say he was taken up into heaven from thence; but says only that, after he led them thither, 'he blessed them, and, while he blessed them, he was parted from them.' It is hence probable that, when he was come to Bethany, he gave them an intimation that he should soon be received into heaven; that, while he was going thence, or going up the mount of Olives, he continued blessing them; and that, when he was come up to that part of the mount whence he ascended, he 'lifted up his hands,' and conferred his last benediction on them, and then 'was parted from them, and a cloud received him' and conveyed him to heaven. There is therefore

no inconsistency between the two scriptures, as to the place whence he ascended. It is farther observed that his ascension was visible. 'They looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up.'b

From this account of Christ's ascension into heaven, we may make two or three remarks. As to the place whence he ascended, which was the mount of Olives, it may be observed that it was the same place to which he often retired, when he was at Jerusalem, to converse with God in secret. Here it was that he was in his agony,d in which he sweat great drops of blood, when he had a very terrible apprehension of the wrath of God which he was to bear as a punishment due to our sin, which was the most bitter part of his suffering; and therefore here he chose to begin his triumphs, as from hence he ascended into heaven. Hereby he seems, as it were, to give an intimation to his people, that they ought to set the glory which they shall be advanced to, against the sufferings of this present life, as a ground of encouragement and support to them. That place which, at one time, discovered nothing but what was matter of distress and anguish of spirit, at another time opened a glorious scene of joy and happiness. This mountain, which before had been a witness to that horror and amazement in which our Saviour was when in the lowest depths of his humbled state, now represents him as entering immediately into his glory. The place in the mountain whence he ascended, is not particularly mentioned, nor is there any mark of sanctity put on it. The Papists, indeed, with a great deal of superstition, pretend to discover the very spot of ground whence our Saviour ascended; and impose on those who will believe them, by showing them the print of his feet, which they suppose he left behind him upon the mountain; in which place they have erected a church, open in the top, to signify his ascension into heaven. But this is little better than a fabulous conjecture. It is an easy matter to find some hollow places in any mountain; but to say that any such small valley was made by our

Saviour's feet, as a memorial of his ascending thence, is nothing but an imposition on the credulity of ignorant persons, without scripture warrant.

From what has been said concerning Christ's conversing with his disciples about the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, we may observe that the work he was engaged in, just before his ascension into heaven, was of such a nature that it is a very desirable thing for a person, when called out of the world to be found so doing. Our Saviour's whole conversation, while on earth, had, some way or other, a reference to the kingdom of heaven, and had a tendency to bring his people thither; and this was the last subject which he conversed with them about.

What is said concerning his blessing them when he was parted from them, accords with what is mentioned concerning Elijah, whose translation into heaven was a type of Christ's ascension thither, concerning whom it is said that he bade 'Elisha ask what he should do' or desire of God 'for him, before he was taken from him.' As the great design of our Saviour's coming into the world was to be a public blessing to his people; so the last thing he did for them was to bless them. He did this, either as a divine Person, by conferring blessedness upon them; or, as man, by praying for a blessing for them, whereby he gave them a specimen of the work in which he is engaged in heaven, ever living to make intercession for them. It is farther observed, that 'he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.' Sometimes when persons blessed others, they did it by laying their hands upon them. This Jacob did when he blessed the sons of Joseph,f as a sign of his faith, which was herein expressed, that blessings should descend from God upon them. When many persons were blessed at the same time, the person blessing, instead of laying on hands, sometimes lifted them up. Thus Aaron is said 'to have

lifted up his hands towards the people, and blessed them.' So Christ lifted up his hands when he blessed his disciples, as an external sign of his lifting up his heart to God, while he prayed for the blessings which they stood in need of.

Having thus noticed Christ's ascension to heaven, I cannot wholly pass over one thing more mentioned in this Answer, namely, that he ascended as our Head. The headship of Christ is a circumstance often mentioned by the apostle Paul, who supposes him to stand in this relation to his people in every thing which he did for them as Mediator. As their Head he is considered as a public Person, the Representative of all his elect, who acted in their name, as well as for their interest.

The Necessity of Christ's Ascension

We are now led to consider that it was necessary that Christ should ascend into heaven after he had finished his work on earth; his ascension being an accomplishment of what was foretold concerning him. The psalmist mentions it in a very beautiful and magnificent way, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.' Elsewhere also it is said, 'Thou hast ascended on high.'i This passage the apostle Paul particularly applies to his ascension into heaven, as a prediction of the event. Christ's ascension was signified also by that eminent type of it which consisted in the high priest's entering into the holiest of all. This was equivalent to a prediction; and is spoken of by the apostle as shadowing forth the event.l Moreover, the ascension was foretold by our Saviour himself, whilst he was on earth, before and after his death. He tells his disciples, 'I go to prepare a place for you,' and, 'I ascend to my Father,'n &c.; so that there was really an appeal to his ascension into heaven, as well as to his resurrection, for the

proof of his mission, and his relation to God as his Father. It was necessary, therefore, that he should ascend thither. His ascension was necessary also as it was a glory promised him as the consequence of his sufferings. 'It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect, through,' or after, his 'sufferings.' Again, it was necessary that he should ascend visibly into heaven, or that his apostles, who were to be witnesses of his ascension as well as of his resurrection, should see him go thither. The fact of the ascension was necessary to be believed, as well as the fact of the resurrection; and whatever they were to give their testimony to, must be the result of the fullest conviction. Hence, that they might convince the world that he was ascended into heaven, they required to be qualified to tell them that they saw him ascend thither. It may be objected that, as they might give their testimony that he rose again from the dead, though they did not see him rise, they might attest the truth of his ascension, though they had not seen him ascend into heaven. Now, it is true that their testimony that he was risen from the dead was sufficient, though they did not see him rise; for they saw him after he was risen, and had undeniable proofs that he was the same Person who suffered. But there is a circumstance attending his ascension into heaven which renders it necessary that they should see him ascend thither, though it was not necessary that they should see him rise from the dead, in order to their giving conviction to the world. He did not design that they should see him, after his ascension, till his second coming to receive them into heaven; and then their testimony will be at an end; so that it was necessary that they should see him ascend. The apostle Paul, it is true, at his conversion, saw him clothed with his heavenly glory in his exalted state; but this was a singular and extraordinary manifestation of himself, which he gave his other disciples no ground to expect. Hence, that they might want no qualification which was necessary in order to the fulfilling of their

testimony, he ascended into heaven visibly, in the presence of all his apostles.

The Ends of Christ's Ascension

There are several great and valuable ends of Christ's ascension, mentioned in this Answer, some of which were glorious to himself, and all of them advantageous to his people.

1. He triumphed over his enemies. The apostle says, 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive.' This is an allusion to the solemn triumphs of princes, after having obtained some remarkable and complete victories. Now the empire of Satan was demolished, and his prisoners ransomed, and delivered from his power. Accordingly, the gospel, which was to be preached throughout the world, was a public 'proclamation of liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound.'q

2. Christ ascended into heaven, that he might receive gifts for men. The scripture seems to distinguish between Christ's purchasing and his receiving gifts for men. The former was done by his death; the latter was consequent on his ascension into heaven. There are two expressions used on this subject,—that of the psalmist, 'Thou hast received gifts for men,' and that of the apostle, 'He gave gifts unto men;'s that is, he received gifts for men, with a design to give them to them. This he did, after his ascension into heaven, when there was a very great effusion of the Spirit on the gospel church, and when she was furnished with a variety of ministers, such as 'apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' This bestowal of gifts is a farther allusion to the custom of princes in their triumphs; on which occasion they extend their royal bounty to their subjects.

3. Christ ascended into heaven 'to prepare a place' for his people, as he told them he would do, before his death. Accordingly he is said to 'have entered there, as the Forerunner;'x and so he took possession of those heavenly mansions in their name, to which he designs, at last, to bring them.

4. He ascended into heaven, to raise up their affections thither, and to induce them to 'set their affection on things above.' That place is always most dear to us which is our home, our rest, where our best friends reside. Our thoughts are most conversant about it; and we are inclined to desire to be with them there. Hence, Christ's being in heaven, together with all his saints, is a motive to all believers to have their 'conversation in heaven;' which is the character given of them by the apostle.z

5. The last thing observed in this Answer is, that Christ designed to continue in heaven till his second coming at the end of the world. It is said, 'Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things.' But at that time, he will come again into this world, not to reside or fix his abode here, but to receive his people into heaven, where they shall be with him to all eternity; as it is said, 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.'b

Christ's Session at the Right Hand of God

Having thus spoken concerning Christ's exaltation in his ascension into heaven, we proceed to consider him as exalted in sitting at the right hand of God. This is a glory which was conferred upon him after his ascension into heaven. Sitting at the right hand of God is a figurative way of speaking, which the Holy Ghost condescends to make use of. It cannot be understood in any other sense; for God, being a Spirit, is without body, or bodily parts; and, being immense, 'the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him.' Hence, the

expression denotes, not the situation of Christ's human nature in some particular part of heaven, but his being advanced to the highest honour there. 'The right hand,' amongst men, is used to signify some peculiar marks of honour conferred on those who are seated there. Thus when Bathsheba went in unto king Solomon, he caused a seat to be set for her, and she sat 'on his right hand.'d So when Christ is said 'to sit on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,' the language denotes the highest degree of honour conferred on him, as Mediator.

In particular, Christ's sitting there denotes the glorious rest which he enjoys, after having sustained many labours and afflictions in this world; a sweet repose, and perfect deliverance, from all those things which formerly tended to make him uneasy, while in his way to it. It implies also the honour and supreme authority which he is invested with. Others are represented as servants standing in the presence of God. Thus it is said, 'Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.' But Christ is distinguished from them all by this mark of regal dignity, that he 'sits and rules upon his throne.'g The apostle says, concerning him, that, having 'purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;' intimating, that he was 'made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.' This he farther proves when he says, 'To which of the angels said he, at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?'i—Again, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God signifies the perpetuity, or eternal duration of his mediatorial glory and authority; for 'to sit,' in scripture, often signifies, to abide. But this was formerly considered, when we spake concerning the eternity of Christ's kingdom. There are other things, mentioned in this Answer, which are the fruits and effects of Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, namely, the exercise of his power over all things,

in heaven and earth; and, as the consequence of this, his gathering and defending his church, subduing their enemies, and furnishing his ministers with gifts and graces. But these will be more particularly insisted on, under a following Answer, when we shall be led to speak concerning the special privileges of the visible church.m What we are next to consider is, that Christ, as sitting at the right hand of God, makes intercession for his people.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

QUESTION LV. How doth Christ make intercession?

ANSWER. Christ maketh intercession, by his appearing in our nature continually before the Father in heaven, in the merit of his obedience and sacrifice on earth, declaring his will to have it applied to all believers, answering all accusations against them, procuring for them quiet of conscience, not withstanding daily failings, access with boldness to the throne of grace, and acceptance of their persons and services.

THE intercession of Christ, as was observed under a former Answer, is a branch of his priestly office, and is founded on his satisfaction. The reason why it is mentioned in this place, after we have had an account of his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, is, as I conceive, that the apostle lays down these heads in the same order: 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'

The Necessity of Christ's Intercession

In speaking concerning Christ's intercession, we shall consider first its necessity. Now, this appears from its having been foretold and typified. It was predicted concerning him, that he should 'make intercession for the transgressors;' and elsewhere God the Father is represented as saying to him, 'Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.'p These words, though they have the form of a command, are, doubtless, a prediction relating to this matter; whereby it is intimated, that the glorious success of the gospel, when preached to the world, should not only be the purchase of his death, but the consequence of his intercession. Moreover, what Elihu speaks of an advocate, as pleading the cause of a poor afflicted person, and saying, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom;' and 'He shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable to him, and he shall behold his face with joy, for he will render unto man his righteousness;' seems to be understood of Christ rather than of any other; for it is most agreeable to the character given him of 'a Messenger with him,' and 'an Interpreter, one among a thousand,' and of his being 'gracious unto him,' when he thus makes intercession for him. Again, when he is represented by the psalmist, as saying concerning his enemies, I will not 'take up their names into my lips,'r the language plainly intimates his design to intercede for all others, namely, for his people. That David does not here speak in his own person, but in the Person of Christ, is very evident from the fact that it was his duty, in common with all mankind, to pray for his enemies. He therefore speaks of another sort of intercession, namely, Christ's, which is different from that which one man is obliged to make for another. Accordingly, in some following verses, we have a prediction of his rising from the dead before he saw corruption; a prediction which is particularly applied

to him in the New Testament. We may add, that as Christ's intercession was expressly foretold by the prophets; so it was typified by the high priest's entering every year into the holy of holies with blood and incense, to appear before God in behalf of the people, as making intercession for them. This is expressly applied to Christ, as the Antitype, and to his 'entering into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us.'t

Again, Christ's intercession was necessary on account of the condition of fallen man requiring it. Some have been ready to conclude, that, by reason of that infinite distance which there is between God and man, it was necessary that there should be an Advocate to procure for him a liberty of access to God. But that does not evidently appear. For, as we have no ground to conclude that the holy angels, though infinitely below him, are, by the intervention of an Advocate or Intercessor with him in their behalf, admitted into his presence, or made partakers of the blessings which are the result of being admitted there; so man would not have stood in need of a Mediator or Advocate, to bring him into the presence of God, or plead his cause any more than he would have needed a Redeemer, had he not fallen. His present circumstances, however, require both. It is necessary that Christ should intercede for him, because, being guilty, he is rendered unworthy to come into the presence of God, and is actually excluded from it. The psalmist says, 'Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' This punishment is the immediate consequence of guilt, whereby the sinner is exposed to the curse of God, whose holiness obliges him to order such to depart from him. Moreover, there is a servile fear, or dread of him as a consuming fire, which attends a sense of guilt. On this account, the sinner desires rather to fly from, than to have access to him; so that he needs an Intercessor to

procure for him this privilege of access. Besides, there are many accusations brought in against him, as a ground and reason why he should be excluded from the divine favour, and not have any saving blessings applied to him. All these accusations must be answered; and on this account there is need of an Advocate to plead his cause.

Christ the only Competent Intercessor

None but Christ, our great Mediator and Advocate, is fit to manage this important work for us. We cannot plead our own cause; for guilt stops our mouths, as well as renders us unworthy of any blessing from God. It is certain, also, that no mere creature can do it for us. For none can speak any thing in their favour who are under a sentence of condemnation, unless an expedient were found out to bring them into a state of reconciliation with God; for that would tend to the dishonour of his justice. Nor can any plead for a blessing to be bestowed on them, but he who was able to make atonement for them; which no mere creature could do, since the greatest price which he can give is far from being of infinite value. But such a price as this Christ has laid down, as was formerly shown, in speaking concerning his priestly office; and therefore he alone is fit to be an Advocate or Intercessor for his people.

The Reality of Christ's Intercession

We are now led to consider that Christ is his people's Advocate, or makes intercession for them. This appears from several scriptures. Thus it is said, 'He ever liveth to make intercession for them;' and, 'We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'y

1. Christ is represented as making intercession for his people before his incarnation. Thus it is said, 'The Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.'a

2. After his incarnation, he interceded for his people in his human nature; and while he was on earth, he did it agreeably to that state in which he then was; though the efficacy of his intercession depended on his completing the work of our redemption, which was not done before he arose from the dead. On this account, there was something proleptical in his intercession then, as well as when he is represented as making intercession before his incarnation.

3. As the price of redemption was not fully paid till his state of humiliation was at an end, on which account he is generally styled a consummate Mediator from the time when he was made 'perfect through sufferings;' so he was, after that, a complete Advocate or Intercessor for his people. Accordingly, he is said, in a way of eminence, 'to make intercession for them,' after his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, in his glorified state. There he manages their cause with an advantageous plea, which he could not use while on earth; for then he had not accomplished his work of redemption, and therefore could plead the promise made to him only on condition of his bringing that work to perfection which then was only begun. Moreover, whatever act of worship he then performed, was agreeable to that state of humiliation in which he was; but now that he is in heaven, and his work of redemption finished, he pleads his absolute and actual right to receive those blessings for his people, and apply them to them, which God had promised in the covenant of redemption. This, too, he does with those circumstances of glory which are agreeable to his exalted state, as sitting at God's right hand, and as having such visible marks of the divine favour that nothing can be denied him which he asks for. It is true, while he was on earth, he said, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me,'c &c.; and this he might well say, in as much as there was sufficient security or ground to conclude, that he could not fail in the work which he was engaged in, so as to leave it incomplete. How much more, then,

may he say this, when he is in his exalted state, and pleads as one who has brought to perfection the work which he came into the world to perform? Let me add, that he will intercede for his people for ever; as he shall always continue in this exalted state. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise. If Christ's presence in heaven be a full and comprehensive plea for all the blessings we enjoy or hope for; then so long as he shall abide there, he will intercede for us, and that will be for ever. That this may farther appear, let it be considered that the sacrifice which he offered for his people while on earth, procured for them not only the blessings they enjoy in this world, but those which they shall be possessed of in heaven. And as his being received into heaven was a convincing evidence that what he did and suffered, before he went thither, was accepted, and deemed effectual to answer all its valuable ends; so his continuance there will remain a standing and eternal evidence of its acceptance and efficiency. Now, this is the nature of a plea, and it respects not only the blessings which they now enjoy, but all they hope for, so that their eternal happiness is founded on it. This is what the apostle principally intends when he says, 'He ever liveth to make intercession for them.'

The Difference between Christ's Intercession and our Prayers

We shall now consider the difference between Christ's intercession for us with the Father, and our praying for ourselves or others, and that when we address ourselves either to men or God.

1. When we intercede with men to obtain some favour from them, we hope, either by our arguments or our importunity, or, at least, by our interest in them, or some obligations which we have laid them under, to persuade them to alter their minds; because we are treating with mutable creatures. But this is by no means to be applied to Christ's

intercession, in which he deals with an unchangeable God, who has, in various instances, declared his love to and willingness to save all those whose salvation he intercedes for. In this sense we are to understand our Saviour's words, 'I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you.' Moreover, when we intercede with men for any favour, we do not usually present any price paid by us for the benefit we intercede for. But Christ, in interceding for his people, presents the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, which is the only thing that renders his intercession effectual.

2. When we pray to God for ourselves or others, our doing so differs from Christ's intercession; for we present ourselves and our petitions to him in the name of Christ, and hope for a gracious answer in virtue of his mediation and righteousness; so that our access to God is mediate, Christ's immediate. We plead what he hath done for us as our Surety, and not anything done by ourselves; but he pleads what was done only by himself. We acknowledge, in all our supplications, that we are unworthy of the least of his mercies; whereas he appears in our behalf before God, as one who is worthy to have that granted which he pleads for.

The Manner of Christ's Intercession

We shall now consider how Christ makes intercession.

1. It is observed that he does this by appearing in our nature continually before the Father in heaven, in the merit of his obedience and sacrifice on earth. The allusion is to the practice of attorneys or advocates in civil courts, when a cause is to be tried; in which case the plaintiff or defendant does not appear himself, but his advocate appears for him. Thus Christ 'appears in the presence of God for us.' This virtually includes the nature of a plea. For understanding it, let

it be considered that as God cannot, consistently with the glory of his divine perfections, save any of the fallen race of mankind upon any other condition than that satisfaction should be given to his justice, and such a price of redemption paid as tends to secure the glory of his holiness and other perfections; so he has, in his eternal covenant with the Son, promised that, if he would perform this work, he would bring his people to glory. Christ, on the other hand, undertook it with the encouragement that, when he had perfected it, he should be received into glory as a public testimony that justice was fully satisfied. Hence, his being set at God's right hand in heavenly places, is a convincing evidence to angels and men, that his work is brought to perfection. Accordingly, his being there, or appearing in heaven, contains the nature of a plea; more especially if we consider him as appearing there as our Head and complete Redeemer, who has finished the work which he came into the world to perform. This I take to be the principal idea in Christ's intercession.

If it be farther inquired, whether he makes use of a voice, as we do when we pray for ourselves or others; I dare not deny that he does, since he made use of words when he prayed for his people on earth; which was a short specimen of his intercession for them in heaven. Yet it must be considered that it is impossible for words to express the particular necessities of every one whom he appears for in heaven, at the same time; and to suppose that Christ represents the case of one at one time, and another at another, as we do when we pray for different persons, is hardly sufficient to answer all the valuable ends of his intercession for all his people at all times. Nor are we to suppose, since the human nature of Christ is not omniscient, that he has therein a comprehensive view at once of all the particular necessities of his people; for that would be to confound his human nature with his divine. And it is only in the human nature that he prays; though the efficacy of his prayer is founded on the

infinite value of his oblation performed in it, which, as was formerly observed, was the result of its union with the divine. Hence when Christ is said to make use of words in interceding for his people, they are to be considered principally as expressive of their wants and infirmities in a general way; so that a few comprehensive words may include the general idea of those things which are common to them all. In this respect, I am far from denying that Christ, in interceding for his people, makes use of words. But, when we consider his being in heaven, or appearing in the presence of God in behalf of his people, as virtually containing, as was before hinted, the nature of a plea, it extends itself to every particular necessity of those for whom he intercedes at all times.

2. It is farther observed that Christ, in making intercession, declares his will to have the merit of his obedience and sacrifice applied to all believers. Thus he says, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,' &c. Here he does, as it were, make a demand of what is due to him, in right of his purchase; and so his intercession is distinguished from a supplication or entreaty, that God would bestow an unmerited favour. All our prayers, indeed, are supplications that God would bestow upon us undeserved blessings; but Christ's prayer is a kind of demand of a debt due to him, pursuant to the merit of his obedience and sufferings. Moreover, this mode of speaking may be farther understood, as containing an intimation of his divine will to have what he purchased, in his human nature, applied to his people; though this is rather a consequence of his intercession, than, properly speaking, a formal act of it.

3. It is farther observed, that he intercedes for his people, by answering all accusations which may be brought in against them. Thus the apostle supposes a charge to have been brought in against

God's elect, and that they were under a sentence of condemnation; and shows how this sentence is reversed by the death of Christ, and the charge answered by his intercession. If we consider the many things laid to the charge of God's elect, either by the world, Satan, or their own consciences, these are supposed to be either false or true. What is falsely alleged, Christ, as their Advocate, answers, by denying the charge; and undertakes to vindicate them from it. But when the thing laid to their charge is undeniably true, as, for instance, that they are sinners, and have contracted guilt, and deserve to be for ever banished from the presence of God; this Christ undertakes to answer no otherwise than by pleading the merit of his obedience and satisfaction, whereby they obtain remission of sins and a right to eternal life.

The Results of Christ's Intercession

Christ, by his intercession, procures for his people many invaluable privileges, three of which are mentioned in this Answer.

1. Quiet of conscience, notwithstanding daily failings. This supposes that the best believers on earth, by reason of the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to many sinful infirmities. Accordingly, it is said, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;' and, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'k The sins of believers, too, have a proportionable degree of guilt attending them; and this guilt has a tendency to make the conscience uneasy, unless we have an Advocate who has a sufficient plea to allege in our defence. But such an one is Christ; and consequently his intercession procures for us this privilege. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

2. He procures for us also access, with boldness, to the throne of grace. As sin renders us guilty; so guilt exposes us to fear, and a dread of coming before the throne of God, as a God of infinite holiness and justice. But, when he is represented as sitting on a throne of grace, as the consequence of Christ's death and intercession, our servile fear is removed, and we are encouraged, as the apostle says, to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

3. Another consequence of Christ's intercession, is the acceptance of our persons and services; first, of our persons, then of our services; as it is said, 'The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.' The acceptance of our persons is a branch of our justification, which is founded on Christ's sacrifice and intercession, as it is said, 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved;'o and the acceptance of our services, which are performed by faith, supposes the removal of the guilt which attends them by reason of our sinful infirmities. Thus God's people are called 'an holy priesthood,' and are said 'to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'

Let us consider now, how Christ's intercession ought to be improved by us. It is a great remedy against those desponding or despairing thoughts which we are sometimes liable to, by reason of the guilt of sin, when charged on our consciences. In this case, we should give a check to ourselves, and say, with the psalmist, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?' Why should we entertain such sad and melancholy thoughts, when Christ intercedes on our behalf for the forgiveness of all our sins? Our sincere repentance, too, together with the exercise of the graces which accompany it, will afford us an evidence of our interest in his intercession; and this will be an expedient to raise our dejected spirits, and fill us with the joy of his salvation.—Again, Christ's

intercession is to be improved by us, as an encouragement to prayer; and as a farther ground to conclude, that our poor, broken, imperfect breathings shall be heard and answered for his sake who pleads our cause.—Moreover, his intercession is a great inducement to universal holiness; since we have ground to conclude, that those services which are performed to his glory, shall be accepted on account of his intercession.

CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT

QUESTION LVI. How is Christ to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world?

ANSWER. Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world, in that he who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day, in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness.

The Object and Period of Christ's Second Advent

OUR Saviour, being in his exalted state, is to continue at the right hand of God till he has finished the remaining part of his work in the application of redemption, and, by his Spirit, in the methods of his providence and grace, brought in the whole number of the elect. After this follows another branch of his mediatorial glory, when he shall come again to judge the world at the last day. This is the subject of the present Answer.

Though he is already solemnly invested with a power of exercising judgment, and is continually distributing rewards and punishments in the course of his providence; yet the full manifestation of his glory, as Judge of quick and dead, and that in a visible manner in his human nature, is deferred till the last day. Though he is now known by the judgments which he executes, and which are often attended with wonderful displays of his divine glory; and though the eternal state of all men is fixed by him at their death, at which time a particular judgment is passed on them by him, it being 'appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;' yet these present acts of judgment are done without those external and visible marks of glory in his human nature with which he shall appear in the end of time. This is styled, 'the last day;'s and, in respect to its being such, that measure of duration which we generally call time will be ended, and another, which is distinguished from it, and which, by reason of its having no end, is called eternity, shall commence. Not that it is like the eternity of God, without succession; but some think it differs from time, principally in this, that it shall not be described by the same measures that it now is; nor shall the motion of the heavenly bodies produce those effects which they do in the frame of nature, whereby the various changes of seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, follow each other in their respective courses. Some, indeed, think that the period of the final judgment is called 'a day' in the same sense as the present season or dispensation of grace is sometimes called the sinner's 'day,' or the day of God's patience and long-suffering. When this shall be at an end, and the gospel, which is compared to a glorious light shining in it, shall be no longer preached, the design of it being fully answered, the period immediately following, when Christ shall come to judgment, may well be styled the last day.

This glorious appearing of Christ to judge the world, is set in opposition to that part of his state of humiliation in which he was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, and is designed to aggravate the crime of those at whose tribunal he stood, who, though he then told them of this matter, namely, that 'hereafter they should see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven,' yet believed him not. His glorious appearing may be considered also as set in opposition to all that contempt which his name, interest, and gospel, daily meet with in an ungodly world; whereby he is, as it were, judged and condemned afresh, and the unjust sentence which was passed upon him in effect approved of; from all which he shall be for ever vindicated, when his glory shines forth in a most illustrious manner, as calling the whole world to stand at his tribunal, and rewarding every one according to his works.

The time when Christ shall thus come to judge the world, is not known by either angels or men. Indeed, our Saviour himself, while on earth, speaks of it as a secret which had not been made known to him as man. The reason why God has thus concealed it is, that he would not give occasion to any to indulge the least degree of carnal security, just as, for the same reason, he has not made known to us the term or bounds of life; but that we may be always ready for his coming. Hence, we cannot but reckon it an instance of unwarrantable presumption in several Jewish writers, and some of the Fathers, after them,y to suppose, as they do, that the world shall continue six thousand years from the creation; that the world's having been made in six days, and the seventh ordained to be a sabbath, had a mystical signification; that, in its application to this matter, a day answers to a thousand years; and that, as the world was two thousand years without the written word or law of God, and afterwards two thousand years under the law, so the days of the

Messiah shall continue two thousand years, and then follows the eternal sabbatism at Christ's second coming. As for the Jews who speak of this matter, their unbelief is condemned out of their own mouths; for they do, as it were, concede, that the time in which the Messiah was to come, was that in which he actually appeared. The opinion which we have stated, however, is a groundless conjecture, so far as it respects the end of the world. Indeed, it is an entering into a secret which is altogether hid from mankind.

The manner of Christ's Second Advent

We are now to consider that glory with which Christ shall appear, when he comes to judge the world. It is said, he shall come in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his holy angels, and with other circumstances which will be very awful and tremendous.

1. He shall come in his own glory. By this we are to understand, that the glory of his divine nature shall shine forth, or be demonstrated, in a more illustrious manner than it has hitherto been. When he was on earth, this glory had, as it were, a vail put on it, by reason of the low and humbled state of his human nature. But, when he shall come again in his exalted state, it will never be a matter of doubt to any, whether he be God incarnate or not. We may add, that there will be many things done by him, when he comes to judgment, which will be eminently the effects of his divine power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and faithfulness; whereby the glory of his divine nature will farther appear, in determining the final state, both of angels and of men.

2. It is said also that he shall appear in his Father's glory. For understanding this, let us consider that whatever work he is engaged in, or glory he receives, as Mediator, takes its rise from the Father. It was he that called him to perform it, 'sanctified, and sent him into

the world,' furnished him with a human nature, united to his divine Person. From him it was that he received a commission to lay down his life, and to take it up again. And it is he who hath appointed the day in which he will judge the world; and pursuant to whose decree and appointment, he will come to perform this glorious work.—Again, every thing which he does as Mediator, is referred to the glory of the Father. Accordingly, he says, 'I honour my Father.' Hence, the work of judgment, which is, as it were, the laying of the top-stone of the glorious fabric of our salvation, will tend eminently to set forth the Father's glory, who laid the foundation-stone of that fabric.—Further, whatever work he performs for the honour of the Father, he receives from him a testimony of his highest approbation of him therein. When he was on earth, as the apostle says, 'he received from God the Father honour and glory; when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'a This testimony was given to him at his baptism, and transfiguration 'in the holy mount;' the latter of which the apostle more immediately refers to, as appears by the following context.—We may conclude, therefore, that, as his coming to judgment will be the most illustrious part of his mediatorial work, he will have the most glorious testimony from the Father. Indeed, his receiving the saints to heaven, who are styled, 'Blessed of his Father,' who shall 'inherit the kingdom which he had prepared for them from the foundation of the world,' will be a standing monument of his approbation of him, or well-pleasedness with whatever he has done in order to their salvation. Hence, he may well be said to come in the glory of his Father.

3. It is farther said that he shall come in the glory of his holy angels. This, indeed, is to be understood in a sense different from that of his appearing in his own glory, or that of his Father's, for the angels are said rather to behold and admire his glory, than to confer any glory

upon him. Still they are described as attending him in his coming. Thus it is said, 'He shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.' He will appear in the glory of his angels, as they shall be his retinue, and bear a part in the solemnity of that day; whereby they not only acknowledge his rightful authority to engage in that glorious work, but their willingness to attend him in any part of it in which he thinks fit to employ them, as ministering spirits in subserviency to the proceedings of that day. This leads us to consider that glorious solemnity, together with some things which will be done preparatory to Christ's judging the world. Accordingly it is said,

4. He shall come 'with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.' These are the apostle's words; and he adds that the voice of the archangel and the sound of the trumpet shall be followed by the resurrection from the dead, and the change of those who, being found alive, 'shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.' Elsewhere he says, 'The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'e Our Saviour also says that a throne shall be erected, and that 'when he shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, he shall sit on the throne of his glory.' We read likewise of 'the gathering' of the whole world before him, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked; which is said to be done by the ministry of angels.g These things will go immediately before Christ's judging the world. But as it is expressly said, in this Answer, that he shall come with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God, this we shall particularly consider.

When he is said to come with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, it does not seem probable that by 'a shout,' is meant an inarticulate sound, in the sense in which the word is sometimes used by us, as signifying that joy and triumph which is expressed by those

who shout for victory. Yet the word may be understood in a metaphorical sense, as signifying some triumphant expressions of joy, suitable to the great occasion; or the word which we render a shout, may signify the powerful word of command given by our Saviour, whereby the dead are called out of their graves. Agreeably to this, it is added that Christ shall come with the voice of the archangel. This name has given occasion to some to inquire whether there be one among the angels who is called so, as being the prince and chief of all the rest, who will receive the word immediately from Christ, and transmit it to other angels, whereby the world will be summoned to appear before his tribunal. But it is very difficult for us to understand this matter. That there is a very beautiful order and harmony among the angels, is beyond dispute; yet we have no ground to assert that one is superior to the rest, unless that be the meaning of the word 'archangel,' in this and two or three other scriptures in which we meet with it. But though I will not contend with those who are otherwise minded, I am rather inclined to think that the word is always applied to our Saviour, and that he is called the 'archangel,' as he is the Head and Sovereign of all the angels. These, as the apostle says, 'were created by him, and for him,'i and they are commanded 'to worship him;' and it is elsewhere said, 'Angels, and authorities, and powers, are made subject unto him.'l He certainly, therefore, has a greater right to the glorious character of archangel than any creature. If it be objected, that Christ's being said to come with the voice of the archangel, denotes that the archangel is distinguished from him; it may be replied, that that does not necessarily follow; for the meaning of the words may be, that the Lord shall descend with a shout, or powerful word of command, given forth by him, who is the Prince and Lord of all the angels, and transmitted by them to the whole world, who shall be hereby summoned to appear before him.

Again, he is said to come with the sound of a trumpet. This seems to allude to the use of trumpets to gather the hosts of Israel together, when they were to march by their armies, or in the day of their solemn festivals, and in the year of Jubilee, which was proclaimed thereby. Accordingly, this eternal Jubilee, and triumph of the saints, is said to begin with the sound of a trumpet. Not that there shall be a material trumpet, like those in use among us, as some who have low apprehensions of the glory of this day have supposed. We are not to think that there is nothing figurative in the mode of speaking; for the principal thing intended is, that there shall be some glorious ensigns of the divine Majesty, or effects of his power, which shall fill his saints with exceeding great joy, and his enemies with terror, and shall be a signal to all to appear before his tribunal. This is all we need to determine concerning it; though I will not altogether deny the literal sense of the words, provided they be understood in the same manner as when God appeared from Mount Sinai, with 'the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud.' It is not improbable that there will be a sound like that of a trumpet formed in the air, by the immediate power of God, which shall be heard throughout the world, and which will be an intimation to all that the great Judge of quick and dead is at hand, and will be a branch of that external glory with which he shall appear.

We might here have proceeded to consider Christ as seated on his throne, and the glorious work which he shall be engaged in, in judging the world in righteousness, which is the last thing mentioned in this Answer. But, as we shall be led, in discussing some following Answers, particularly to insist on that subject, and to speak concerning the persons to be judged, as set at Christ's right or left hand, together with the manner of proceeding in that day, the sentence passed, and the final state of angels and men determined thereby, together with the consequence both to the righteous and

wicked; we shall at present proceed to speak concerning the application of redemption, or the benefits procured by Christ's mediation.

THE APPLICATION OF THE BENEFITS OF REDEMPTION

QUESTION LVII. What benefits hath Christ procured by his mediation?

ANSWER. Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption, with all other benefits of the covenant of grace.

QUESTION LVIII. How do we come to be made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured?

ANSWER. We are made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured, by the application of them unto us, which is the work especially of God the Holy Ghost.

QUESTION LIX. Who are made partakers of redemption through Christ?

ANSWER. Redemption is certainly applied and effectually communicated to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it, who are, in time, by the Holy Ghost, enabled to believe in Christ, according to the gospel.

What the Benefits of Redemption are

IN the first of these Answers, we have an account of the blessings which Christ, as Mediator, has procured for his people, namely, redemption, with all the other blessings of the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is the foundation of all the blessings which we enjoy, or hope for; and, among these, redemption is included. But as this has been already considered, we need not at present enlarge on

it. As for those benefits of the covenant of grace which are the consequents of our redemption, they differ from it in this respect, that redemption is said to be wrought out for us by Christ in his own Person, while some of these are more especially considered as wrought in us. These benefits are particularly mentioned in several following Answers; which treat of effectual calling, sanctification, repentance unto life, and other graces, which are inherent in us, whereby our hearts and actions are changed and conformed to the will of God. There are likewise other blessings which more especially respect our state God-ward; such as justification, in which our sins are pardoned and our persons accepted,—and adoption, in which we are made and dealt with as God's children. There are, moreover, several other benefits which follow these, whereby the work of grace is carried on, and we are enabled to go on in the ways of God, with spiritual peace and joy, in believing, till we come to glory

The Application of Redemption a Divine Work

It is farther observed, that we are made partakers of these benefits, by the application of them to us. First, they are purchased; and then they are applied. We are first redeemed by price; and then we are delivered by the almighty power of God. The application of the benefits is said to be more especially the work of the Holy Ghost; while the purchase of them belongs only to the Mediator.

In considering the application of redemption, we may observe that it is a divine work. It is therefore not to be ascribed to ourselves, but is 'the gift of God.' And as it is a work appropriate to God; so it is, in several scriptures, said to be wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, we are said to be 'born of the Spirit,'p and 'saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' On this account, the Spirit is sometimes called the Spirit of holiness and of

power, and he is said to dwell in us; which plainly shows that he is eminently glorified in the application of redemption.

But as it is said, in one of the Answers we are explaining, that this is the work especially of God the Holy Ghost, which is a mode of speaking often used by those who treat on this subject, we are called on to exercise great caution. When we speak of it as the work especially of God the Holy Ghost, we are not to understand it as though the Father and the Son were not equally concerned in it. For it is allowed by all who have just ideas of the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, that those works in which any of the divine perfections are displayed, belong equally and alike to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Hence, when the application of redemption is said more especially to belong to the Holy Ghost, we are to understand only that this work is peculiarly attributed to the Spirit, in as much as hereby he demonstrates his personal glory, in the subserviency of the work performed by him, to the glory of the Father, and of Christ the Mediator. But this we shall pass over, having insisted on it elsewhere.s

How and to whom Redemption is applied

We are now to consider redemption, as certainly and effectually applied to all for whom it was purchased, together with the character of the persons who are interested in it. In this account of its application, there is something supposed, namely, that it is not applied to all mankind. This every one will allow; for even they who plead for universal redemption do not assert the universal application of it, or that all mankind shall be eventually saved, as being contrary to the whole tenor of scripture. We must conclude, therefore, that it is applied to none but those for whom Christ has purchased it. This is evident from the fact, that the design of the

purchase of it was, that they who were redeemed might reap the benefit of it.

In this sense it is farther observed that it is certainly and effectually applied to them. From this it follows, that the application of it does not depend on the will of man, or on some uncertain conditions which God expects we shall perform, that so the death of Christ might be rendered effectual. For whatever condition can be assigned as conducive to its application, is the purchase of Christ's death. On this account, the Spirit's applying one saving benefit, would need to be considered as a condition of his applying another; and this is not only an improper sense of the word 'condition,' but contains several things derogatory to the divine glory. But this subject needs not be farther insisted on, as we have had occasion to speak of it elsewhere.

This leads us to consider the character of the persons to whom redemption is applied. These are described as persons who are enabled to believe in Christ, according to the gospel. This is a very extensive character, belonging to those who are interested in Christ's redemption. It includes all other graces which accompany or flow from saving faith. We are not by nature disposed to believe in Christ, but are rather averse to it; so that, as is farther said, we are enabled to believe in him, as will be considered under a following Answer. And this is said to be done according to the gospel; because the gospel not only discovers to us the object of faith, but contains many invaluable promises of this and other graces which accompany salvation. The grace of faith is farther said to be wrought in time, to denote that, though the purpose relating to it was from eternity, and the purchase of it was made before we had a being, yet the application of it is in God's appointed time, when, after we have run great lengths in impenitence and unbelief, he is pleased to call us by his grace, and thereby bring us into the way of salvation.

THE CONDITION OF THOSE WHO ARE WITHOUT THE GOSPEL

QUESTION LX. Can they who have never heard the gospel, and so know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved, by their living according to the light of nature?

ANSWER. They who, having never heard the gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, he they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the law of that religion which they profess; neither is there salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the Saviour only of his body the church.

Opinions and Preliminary Remarks respecting the Salvability of the Heathen

THIS Answer is an inference deduced from the doctrine of the preceding. For if redemption be applied to those only who are enabled to believe in Christ according to the gospel, it follows that they who have not the gospel, cannot be made partakers of this privilege. The general scope and design of the Answer, is to assert the necessity of divine revelation, as well as of faith in Christ, against those who suppose that the gate of salvation is much wider than our Saviour has determined it to be, who says, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' I am sensible that this doctrine cannot but be disrelished by those who are not disposed to exclude any from a possibility of attaining salvation, and are ready to charge those with groundless censoriousness and want of Christian temper who pass so severe a

sentence on so great a part of mankind as are included in it. It is contrary also to the presumptuous hope of corrupt nature, which is unwarrantably prone to expect salvation, without faith in Christ. This expectation some defend by arguments, but many more by their practice.

They who maintain the doctrine of universal redemption, design to advance the goodness of God, and are ready to conclude that it is inconsistent with that divine perfection to exclude any from a possibility of salvation. It is hence not agreeable to their method of reasoning, to confine the means of grace to so small a number as that of those to whom the gospel is preached. Accordingly, many of them have asserted, that the Heathen, as well as Christians, are put into a salvable state by the death of Christ; so that they shall be saved if they live according to the dictates of the light of nature, though they know nothing of Christ and the gospel. But, in order to their maintaining this argument, they have some great difficulties to surmount; in as much as, while they attempt to aggrandize the mercy of God, they seem to overthrow the necessity of divine revelation, as well as run counter to the sense of many scriptures. On this account, others who have asserted universal redemption, have not extended the universality of it any farther than to those who are favoured with the gospel. They either leave the salvability of the Heathen as a matter which we know nothing of, and ought not to inquire into; or they seem to suggest that the dark traditional knowledge of the gospel, which they suppose some of the Heathen have had, was sufficient to lead them to a small degree of faith in Christ. Or as this opinion cannot well be defended, others have supposed that God may lead many of the Heathen into the knowledge of Christ, before they go out of the world, by some secret methods not to be discerned by us. These are not willing, with the Deists, to set aside the necessity of divine revelation. Others again, who do not suppose it necessary to

salvation, believe it to be necessary only in order to our farther improvement in the way of salvation; and therefore conclude, that Christianity is only a brighter or clearer way to heaven. These are more especially opposed in the Answer we are explaining.

I am sensible that the subject we are entering on has been treated with more reflection and censure than many others; and that, in maintaining it, we are supposed to conclude that the divine dispensations are too severe, and that that goodness and mercy which are God's nature and delight are not sufficiently advanced and magnified. We are told also, that it is a sour and ill-natured way of reasoning to suppose that any are put under a necessity of perishing for want of a divine revelation; and that it does not become us to pass a damnatory sentence on any, more especially on so great a part of the world as that is, who know nothing of Christ and the way of salvation by him. It is necessary for us, therefore, to premise that we pretend not to pass a judgment concerning the final state of particular persons, by concluding that they who are now strangers to Christ and his gospel shall always remain so. For we know not when, to whom, or by what means, God will reveal Christ to those who now sit in darkness, and are unacquainted with the way of salvation by him. And as for the possibility of God's revealing Christ in a secret way to those who do not sit under the sound of the gospel, we will not deny it. Yet we cannot infer the certainty of events from the possibility of them; so that we must have a clearer proof of the salvability of the heathen before we can believe it. Again, God might justly have excluded the whole race of mankind, as well as the fallen angels, from a possibility of attaining salvation; for there was nothing out of himself which moved him to have compassion on those who are the heirs of salvation, any more than on others. Farther, we are far from supposing that the heathen shall be condemned for not believing in Christ, whom they never heard of, or for not complying

with the gospel overture, which was never made to them. Invincible ignorance, though an unhappiness, and a consequence of our fallen state, is not a crime. Hence, the heathen shall be judged by the law of nature. If the apostle's words, 'As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law,' be applicable to them, which, I think, no one will deny, their condemnation cannot be equal to that of those who neglect and despise the great salvation offered to them in the gospel. Yet the heathen, who have had no other light than that of nature, cannot be exculpated from the charge of many other sins committed by them; in which respect they have rebelled against the light they have been favoured with. All of them, indeed, have not contracted the same degree of guilt with those whom the apostle describes; who committed sins contrary to nature, 'being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness,'z and many other sins of the blackest nature; and therefore all of them are not liable to the same condemnation. Indeed, some of the heathen moralists have been a blessing in many respects to the age in which they lived. By their writings and example they have endeavoured to reform it from vice and immorality; and it is certain that they shall not be punished for crimes which they have not committed. But whether the best of them shall be saved by the merits of Christ, though destitute of faith in him, is the question under our present consideration. To conclude that their good works have merited salvation, is not only contrary to the analogy of faith, but is more than what can be said concerning the best works which were ever performed by Christians; and to argue, as many do, from the goodness of God, that they shall be saved, is certainly an inconclusive way of reasoning, unless we had some intimation of his purpose relating to the subject. If God has determined to save them, we must have recourse to his revealed will, and prove from scripture that there are promises of eternal life made to those who have no interest in Christ, and that there is at least some ground for believing

that some shall be happy in beholding his glory in another world, who have had no communion by faith with him in this. These things must be proved, before we can see reason to deny what is stated in this Answer; which we proceed to consider.

No Salvation except by knowledge and belief of the Gospel

It is observed that they who never heard the gospel, and neither know nor believe in Christ, cannot be saved. This supposes that faith and salvation are inseparably connected. Though it is particularly applied to those who are destitute of the gospel, it is levelled against all who, whether they have the means of grace or not, presumptuously expect salvation without ground, and remain in a state of unbelief and impenitency. Here let us consider, that many who are called Christians, though they know little more than the mere name of Christ, yet doubt not that they shall be saved by his merits, and so live and die in this fatal mistake, how vile soever their conversation has been. Accordingly, the prophet Isaiah says, 'Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope.' So Moses also describes a person who, 'when he heareth the words of this curse, yet blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.'b It is too notorious to be denied, that a great part of men who live without God in the world, though grossly ignorant and openly profane, expect to be saved; and it is one of Satan's great engines, by which he endeavours to banish all religion out of the world, to persuade his deluded subjects that all things shall go well with them, though they make no pretensions to it. This presumption is rather founded in stupidity, than supported by arguments; and is a great instance of the alienation of the mind and affections from God, and shows how deceitful and desperately wicked the heart of man is, when destitute of divine grace.

But what shall we say of those who pretend to defend this, and thereby put a sword into the hands of those who adhere to them to destroy themselves? This the Deists do. As their method of reasoning is subversive of the Christian religion, and of faith in Christ as connected with salvation, I cannot omit to mention it in this place. Though they express not a due veneration for the divine Majesty, they profess not to be Atheists, that they may not be excluded from the society of mankind, who have some degree of abhorrence of Atheism impressed on their nature. They talk, indeed, of God, and of natural religion, but make revealed religion the subject of their scorn and ridicule. If they read the scriptures, it is apparently with a design to burlesque them, and charge them with inconsistency and self-contradiction. When they speak of revelation, or the gift of prophecy, they give it no better a term than enthusiasm; and, when they mention the failings, recorded in scripture, of those who were otherwise holy and excellent men, they take occasion maliciously to reproach them, and insinuate that they were vile persons, guilty of the most enormous crimes, and yet were saved; and they wickedly infer that there is nothing solid and substantial in religion, and that persons may be as safe and happy without it as with it. If they refer to the brightest and most excellent part of the character of the saints recorded in scripture, they suppose it to be the effect of implicit faith, and to take its rise from priestcraft. Our Saviour himself is not only divested by them of his glory, but reckoned, as they suppose Moses was of old, a designing person, who brought a new set of notions into the world to amuse and confound it. As for his miracles, which none but the blinded Jews, and they who are equally prejudiced against Christianity, ever pretended to contest, much less to vilify, they treat them with the utmost scorn and contempt, as a late writer has done, whose blasphemy has been made manifest by those who have written in defence of this part of our religion. There are other persons, however, who are not disposed to indulge so great a degree of

profaneness, and have been sensible that the method we have stated is not a right one to extirpate Christianity, and cannot but be treated with the utmost abhorrence by those who read the scripture with any religious design; who, nevertheless, though they speak of God, yet glorify him not as God. These will, indeed, allow him to have some divine perfections; but they cast a reproach on his providence, and suppose that he is too great to be affected with or concerned about the actions and behaviour of so mean a creature as man. They say, too, that as what we call sin can be no disparagement to his glory, so he is too good and pitiful to his creatures to punish them, at least, with eternal torments for it. Hence, if they allow the soul to be immortal, and capable of happiness in another world, which all of them, without exception, do not; yet they suppose that God made no creature to be for ever miserable. As for the laws he has given to mankind, which are enstamped on their nature, and which contain nothing but what might have been known without revelation, they pretend that these were designed only to keep the world in order, to promote the interest of civil society, to prevent men from murdering one another, disturbing the tranquillity of the government under which they live, or invading the property of others; which is not doing as they would have others to do to them. As for the punishment of sin, that they say is no farther to be regarded than as vice and immorality render persons obnoxious to bodily diseases, to some marks of infamy which custom has annexed to them, or to the lash of human laws. This is all the scheme of religion which some among the Deists endeavour to propagate; and everything which is built more immediately upon divine revelation, they reckon not only unnecessary but enthusiastic, and no other than a contrivance of some who, with a view to their own interest, endeavour to puzzle the world with mysterious doctrines which neither they nor their votaries understand. It must be supposed that these men do not think that the knowledge of Christ, or faith in him, is necessary to

salvation; yet they doubt not that it shall go well with them in another world, if there be a future state,—which, through the influence of that scepticism which is, for the most part, a concomitant of Deism, they sometimes question. We shall not make so great a digression from our present subject as to give a particular reply to their assertions; which, though propagated with much assurance, are not pretended to be defended by solid arguments. Indeed, the whole gospel is a reply to them. Whatever doctrine of the gospel is maintained by Christians, will have a tendency to give them an abhorrence of their scheme, and confirm their faith against such attempts as are used to stagger and pervert it.

Having thus spoken concerning the methods which are used by some to overthrow revealed religion, and the necessity of faith in Christ to salvation, we shall now proceed to consider on what grounds persons hope to be saved without the knowledge of Christ or faith in him.

1. Some have no other ground of hope than the goodness of the divine nature. They think that, because God delights not in the misery of any of his creatures, but takes all occasions to make himself known as a God of infinite kindness and compassion, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways, and who will not resent those injuries which we may offer to him, but will lay those under eternal obligations to him who have, by their sins, rendered themselves unworthy to be saved by him; they may therefore hope that all things shall go well with them, though they are utter strangers to the way of salvation by a Redeemer, and are altogether destitute of faith in him. But this we cannot call any other than a presumptuous confidence. It is nothing else but to abuse the riches of God's goodness, and to claim an interest in it without ground. It is, indeed, a very great truth, that God delights in mercy; and this attribute cannot be too much admired or advanced by us;

yet it must not be set in opposition to any of his other perfections. He is certainly a just and holy, as well as a merciful God; and therefore we are not to suppose that one of these perfections shall be glorified, to the dishonour of another. Might not fallen angels as well say that, because God is merciful, he will deliver them from those chains of darkness and misery in which they are held; as men may say that the mercy of God should be presumed to be a foundation of hope to those who have no ground to conclude their interest in it, as expecting it in another way than that in which he has declared his will to glorify it? It is certain that whensoever God designs to glorify his mercy in saving persons, he first determines to advance the glory of it in making them meet for salvation, by sanctifying or purifying their hearts by faith. To separate these two, therefore, is a dishonour to the divine perfections. God never designed to save his people in sin; but first to save them from it, and then to crown with complete blessedness the work which he had begun. Hence, the man who lives in all excess of riot, and yet hopes for salvation, must be guilty of a groundless presumption. When we read, in scripture, of God's extending mercy, we find that there are certain marks and characters given of those persons who have ground to lay claim to an interest in it. Thus it is said, 'The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy;' but then it is added, that this 'mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.'d Elsewhere the psalmist admires the goodness of God, which is doubtless, beyond expression, wonderful, when he says, respecting the present displays of goodness, and the future reserves of it, 'O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up, and wrought!' but it follows that this belongs only 'to them that fear him, and to them that trust in him before the sons of men!' Elsewhere too, it is said, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies,'f that is, to them, exclusive of all

others. Moreover, we never read of God's glorifying his mercy but in Christ; first in bringing sinners nigh to him by his blood, and then in applying, by his Spirit, the redemption purchased. Thus the apostle says, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;' and then he adds, as an expedient to give sinners a ground of hope that they have an interest in this privilege, that, in the gospel, God sends an embassy to them, to 'beseech them,' as they value their own souls, 'to be reconciled to God,' by complying with the gospel overture, and repenting of and desisting from their rebellion against him. When he is represented as 'the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,' he is, at the same time, styled 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,'h to denote that his mercy is displayed in and through a Mediator. Hence, our hope of attaining it must be founded in our interest in him; and this cannot be considered otherwise than as including the grace of faith. Are they who have a right to expect salvation called 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ?' They are farther described as 'conformed to his image.'k Have they a right to 'the inheritance of the saints in light?' They are characterized as 'made meet for it.' And when the apostle exhorts persons to 'look for the mercy of God unto eternal life,' he intimates that their doing so would be a presumptuous expectation, were it separate from their 'keeping themselves in the love of God.'m

2. Others have no foundation for their expectation of salvation, but by extenuating sin; and are hardly persuaded to confess themselves to be sinners, how vile soever their conduct be. Thus it is said concerning Ephraim, 'The balances of deceit are in his hand, he loveth to oppress;' yet he refuses to acknowledge this, and says, 'In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.' So, when the prophet Jeremiah exhibits a charge against a degenerate age, and tells them, 'Thou hast taught the wicked ones thy ways, also in thy skirts is found the blood of the poor innocents,' what

abominable stupidity were they guilty of when they reply, 'Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me!'o Sometimes the persons of whom I speak build their hope of salvation, though they cannot exculpate themselves from the charge of sin, on the mere supposition that some others are greater sinners than themselves. Thus the Pharisee pleases himself that he was not guilty of some notorious sins,—that he was no extortioner, or adulterer, nor even as the Publican, whom he looked upon with great contempt. Or if they are forced to conclude themselves to be among the number of the vilest and most notorious sinners; yet they presume that God will not punish them eternally for their sins, but will make some allowance for the propensity of human nature to sin, or the force of those temptations which they have not been able to withstand. Or, if they are liable to any extraordinary afflictions in this life, they suppose that these are sufficient to compensate for all the sins they have committed, and that therefore their miseries shall not be extended beyond it. Hence, that which lies at the root of this presumptuous hope, is a secret denial of the infinite demerit of sin, or that it deserves eternal punishment. Now, that we may show the vanity of the expectation which has no other foundation than this, let us consider, that to extenuate sin, is an argument that persons are unacquainted with themselves, and know not the plague of their own hearts. This expectation, therefore, is the most destructive fallacy which men can put on themselves, and a sad token that they are given up to judicial blindness. When God shall charge sin on the conscience, or as the psalmist says, 'reprove them,' and 'set their iniquities in order before their eyes,' which he will do at one time or other, they will appear to have been self deceived, and the ground of their hope of salvation will sink under them.—Again, to suppose that sin does not deserve eternal punishment, is an affront to the holiness of God, and a disbelief of those threatenings which are denounced against it. It is, in effect, to deny that sin is objectively infinite; which

cannot be done without denying, in effect, that God is a God of infinite perfection. It is a flying in the face of his justice, and charging him with mal-administration. To such as are guilty of it, it may be said, as Elihu says to Job, 'Wilt thou condemn him that is most just?'r or, as God says to reprove and humble him, 'Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous?' But, as the eternity of the punishment of sin is particularly insisted on, under a following Answer,t we shall say no more on the subject at present, but that this method of reasoning has a tendency to banish all religion out of the world, and is never made use of except by those who make no pretensions to it.

3. If it be reckoned preposterous for any one to found his hope of salvation on the extenuating of his sins, others have a more plausible pretence. Though they are not only destitute of the grace of faith, but strangers to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, they expect to be saved because they perform some works which are materially good. If they perform some moral duties, or abstain from some gross enormities, much more if they have a form of godliness, and are reckoned to be religious persons by the world, and, in many instances, are useful to those with whom they converse; they are ready to conclude that they do, as it were, merit eternal life, and that God becomes a debtor to them. The class formerly mentioned have too light thoughts of sin: these set too great a value on their duties; and to do this is contrary to what our Saviour says, 'When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.' I would not have it thought that by these remarks I design to depreciate any moral duties or virtues, which have a degree of excellency in proportion to their nature. The only thing which I intend is, that good works which do not proceed from a right principle, and are not performed for right ends, if there be not an internal principle of grace implanted in regeneration, or faith in

Christ, as the main-spring of them, or if they be put in the room of Christ's righteousness, and so made the foundation of our justification or right to eternal life, are not accepted by God; so that the hope of salvation which is founded on them is vain and unwarrantable.

4. There are others who, as it is expressed in this Answer, frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the law of that religion which they profess, and doubt not but, in so doing, they shall be saved. This presumption is defended by many who call themselves Christians, who suppose that a person may be saved in any religion, whether true or false. These do not hesitate to say that, if they lived at Rome, they would embrace the Popish doctrines; or, if in Turkey, they would profess the Mahommedan faith; or, had they been born in India, among the Pagans, they should have had ground to conclude that they were in a safe way to heaven. This opinion certainly reflects dishonour on the Christian name. It also savours so much of scepticism, that those who hold it must be supposed to believe that there is nothing certain in religion, or that the different modes of it are only a political engine, a mere human invention, which stands upon no other basis than tradition, and has nothing else to propagate it but implicit faith. This is the notion which they who set themselves against divine revelation entertain concerning religion in general. Or, if there be any thing in religion which escapes their reproach and censure, it is only such maxims as are founded on the laws of nature, such as that we ought to do to others as we would have them do to us; that we ought to govern our passions, that they may not be outrageous, and disturb not only our own peace but that of all civil societies; and that we must not offer injuries or violence to those whom we converse with, but rather be gentle, good-humoured, kind, and compassionate to them, and abstain from those enormities which are abhorrent to nature. An attention to these matters they

suppose to be sufficient to denominate any one a good man, who needs not entertain any doubt of his own salvation. But this is to set aside all revelation, and disbelieve the demonstrative evidence which we have of the truth of the Christian religion. It is to cast contempt on that, as unnecessary, which possesses the greatest excellency. It also involves a denial of that which is experienced by all true believers, namely, that revealed religion has the greatest tendency to dispose them to glorify God, and to do good to men. These sensibly find that they have the greatest comfort, and most solid ground of hope, in firmly adhering to religion, in laying all the stress of their salvation on what is revealed in the gospel, and in desiring to adhere steadfastly by faith to Christ as the only way of salvation.

Salvation only by Christ

It is farther observed, in this Answer, that there is salvation in no other than Christ. The scripture is very full and express to this purpose. Thus it is said, 'Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' Elsewhere also the apostle says, 'Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'y On him the church is built. He is the only Mediator between God and man, the only Redeemer, who purchased salvation for those who shall be made partakers of it. He laid the foundation-stone of this glorious fabric, and we must conclude, that the carrying on of the work belongs to him, till the top-stone is laid, and the work brought to perfection. On this account he is styled, 'the Author and Finisher of faith.'

1. We may observe, then, that faith, and all other graces which accompany salvation, have a peculiar reference to Christ. We are said to 'obtain precious faith through his righteousness.' He is said to

'dwell in the hearts' of his people 'by faith,'b and 'to increase their faith.' He is also the object of faith. He says, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'d The grace of faith is frequently described as a 'coming to him;' and it is such a coming as implies more than an attendance on his ordinances, for it is connected with salvation. This is the meaning of the metaphorical expression in which it is said that those who come to him 'shall never hunger not thirst;' by which we are to understand that all their desires shall be fulfilled, and they shall be satisfied with that perfect blessedness of which he will make them partakers. Besides, it is such a coming to Christ, as is the effect of God's almighty power: he says, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.'f

That faith and all other graces which accompany salvation have a peculiar reference to Christ, will further appear if we consider that salvation is founded on his executing his three offices of Priest, Prophet, and King. The first of these he executes in our behalf; not in us, but for us, whereby faith and all other graces are purchased. As to his other two offices, namely, his prophetic and kingly, especially when the work of them is rendered effectual to salvation, his people are the subjects in whom they are executed. The work performed is internal; the consequence of it is the soul's giving that glory to him which is the result; this cannot be done without our knowing him to be a Mediator, and, as such, ordained and qualified to execute the offices; and a knowledge of these points cannot be attained without divine revelation. Moreover, the point we are considering is evident from that reasoning of the apostle in which he views our 'calling on the name of the Lord,' as inseparably connected with salvation, as necessary to it, and as proceeding from faith; for, says he, 'How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed?' And this faith supposes the preaching of the gospel; which gospel is represented, in many scriptures, as a display of the glory of Christ. It follows,

therefore, that there is no salvation without divine revelation, or that they who never heard of Christ, and consequently never believed in him, have no right or claim to it. We might observe also the account which the same apostle gives of that worship which is necessary to salvation, when he says, 'Through him we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father.' To have access to God is certainly necessary to salvation; and this is by a Mediator, and is elsewhere called 'coming to God by him.' But this cannot be done without the knowledge of him as the way to the Father, and that faith in him which is founded on knowing him. Moreover, salvation is to be considered as a promised blessing, founded in the covenant of grace; so that they who are strangers to this covenant have no right to lay claim to its promises, which are nowhere contained but in divine revelation, and are said to be 'yea and amen in Christ, to the glory of God.'i What hope, then, can there be of obtaining these promised blessings without the knowledge of Christ?

2. That there is no salvation without faith in Christ, as founded in divine revelation, farther appears from the fact that there is no justification without it. Justification is inseparably connected with salvation by the apostle, when he says, 'whom he justified, them he also glorified.' To separate these two, is to suppose that a person may expect salvation, without being delivered from the guilt of sin, and the condemning sentence of the law; or to have a right to eternal life, without being able to plead any righteousness which is worthy of God's acceptance. But to do this is certainly to build our hope on a sandy foundation, and is contrary to those scriptures which set forth the impossibility of our being justified by the works of the law, or the necessity of faith in Christ's righteousness in order to our being justified. This the apostle Paul frequently inculcates. Hence no one can plead any thing done by him as the matter of his justification, though he could say as that apostle did, 'Touching the righteousness

that is in the law, I am blameless.'l Elsewhere the apostle Paul says, 'Though I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified.' If the best saint in the world must, to support his expectation of being discharged from condemnation, have something infinitely more valuable than any act of his own obedience; then certainly that obedience which is performed according to the dictates of the light of nature, without divine revelation, is far from being a sufficient foundation to support a person's hope of justification and salvation. But such as are destitute of the gospel, have nothing else to plead. Hence, we must conclude, as it is expressed in this Answer, that they who never heard the gospel, and believe not in Christ, cannot be saved.

3. This may be inferred also, from those scriptures which set forth the pernicious consequence of unbelief. It is said, 'He that believes not, is condemned already,' and 'shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;' and elsewhere, 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.'o in as much, too, as faith is founded on divine revelation, there are other scriptures which represent those who are destitute of it as being in a hopeless state. Thus the apostle tells the church at Ephesus, that 'when they were Gentiles,' and consequently strangers to the gospel, 'they had no hope, being without God in the world;' so that whatever knowledge they had of a God by the light of nature, or whatever blessings they received from common providence, they had not such a knowledge of him, nor such an interest in him, as gave them hope of salvation. The apostle does not speak of them as being in a hopeless state, because their conversation had been more vile than that of other Gentiles, as acting contrary to the dictates of the law of nature; but he speaks of them as Gentiles, that is, without the light of divine revelation; so that what he says concerning them, is applicable to all the heathen as such.q Again, it is observed in scripture, that, before Christ was

preached to the Gentiles, they were not the objects of his special care and goodness, but, in this respect, neglected by him. Accordingly it is said that, 'in times past, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;' and elsewhere these are called, 'times of ignorance which God winked at.'s So the passage is rendered in our translation. But this is not so agreeable to the sense of the Greek word, as if we rendered it, 'During the times of this ignorance, God having overlooked them,' that is, the Gentiles, 'hath now commanded all men every where to repent;' and, if they were disregarded by him, they could not be supposed to be the objects of his special grace, or to have a right and title to salvation. Moreover, the apostle Paul, when speaking of some among the heathen who, notwithstanding their being destitute of gospel-light, excelled others in wisdom, casts the utmost contempt on those attainments in the knowledge of divine things which they gloried in, as being insufficient to salvation. Hence he says that, whatever they knew of the perfections of the divine nature, so far as these may be known without divine revelation, yet 'by wisdom they knew not God;' and he adds, 'Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?'u

It is objected, that it is contrary to the goodness of God to condemn persons for invincible ignorance, as that of the heathen must be supposed to be, since it was impossible for them to know the way of salvation by a Redeemer. But we must distinguish between God's condemning persons for not knowing the gospel, which is to condemn them for invincible ignorance; and his not giving the gospel, as a necessary means of grace and salvation, to a great part of the world, whom he designed, as we formerly observed, to overlook, and suffer to walk in their own ways. If the goodness of God had laid a natural obligation on him, without an act of his sovereign will, to bestow the means of grace, or the knowledge of the way of salvation

on them, then it would have been contrary to his divine perfections to have denied the gospel to any, and so to condemn those who are ignorant of it. But it is one thing for God to leave them in their fallen state, the result of which is their not knowing the way of salvation; and another thing for him to condemn them for not knowing it, as if there were no other reason obliging him to inflict his righteous judgment on them,

It is farther objected, that the apostle says, 'That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them;' and, 'When the Gentiles, which have not the law,' that is, any other law than that of nature, 'do by nature, the things contained in the law; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.'y From this it is argued that the Gentiles have sufficient knowledge of the divine law to bring them into a state of salvation; their consciences being said to 'excuse them,' that is, not to charge guilt upon them, so that they are justified by walking according to the dictates of the light of nature. But as to the former of the scriptures quoted, 'That which may be known of God, is manifest in them, or showed to them,' the apostle does not speak of those things which are to be known of God which have an immediate reference to salvation; nor does he say that every thing necessary to be known of him in order to salvation is manifest in them. What he says, is, 'that of God which is known by them,' is from him as the God of nature; 'he has shown it to them,' that is, as he adds in the following context, he has given them sufficient light to discover his 'eternal power and Godhead,' in a way of reasoning 'from the things that are made.' But the eternal power and Godhead may be known by those who are destitute of that knowledge which is necessary to salvation. As to the other scripture quoted, in which the

Gentiles are said 'to do by nature the things contained in the law,' the apostle does not infer from this fact that they are the servants of God, or willing subjects to his government, or indeed that they fulfil the law of nature. Hence, we cannot suppose that he concludes them to be justified thereby; which is contrary to the whole tenor of his doctrine in other parts of his writings. It is true, he says that 'their consciences' sometimes 'excuse,' as well as at other times 'accuse them;' yet it must be considered that conscience may excuse, or plead not guilty, with respect to the charge of some crimes which are committed by others, when, at the same time their doing so does not exempt them from the guilt of sin in general, or give them a right and title to eternal life. The apostle, therefore, designs only to show how far the corruption of men may be restrained by their attending to the dictates of the light of nature, whereby much sin and guilt might be prevented. But he does not determine that God has any farther design of grace towards them. If God had had any such design, he would have given them the means of salvation; and if he has not said that he will save them, without giving them these means, we have no ground to assert that he will; for to do so, would be to draw a conclusion, without sufficient evidence from scripture.

Another objection is this: it is said that 'the goodness of God leadeth to repentance;' but repentance is certainly connected with salvation; therefore the goodness or bounty of God, which persons who have no other light but that of nature have some knowledge of, may lead them to salvation. But it is evident that the apostle in this scripture speaks not to the Gentiles, but to the Jews; for, having, in the preceding chapter, considered the vile abominations which were practised by the Gentiles, he in this reproves the Jews when he says, 'Thou art inexcusable, O man that judgest, and yet dost the same things;'b and, 'Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God.' Now, if the apostle is speaking to them

when he says, 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,' we are to understand hereby, not only the bounty of common providence, or those effects of the divine goodness which are known and experienced by the whole world, but the goodness of God which they had experienced who were its peculiar objects, who were favoured by him above all the rest of the world, 'to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.'d Certainly, therefore, they were highly to blame, that they were not hereby led to repentance.

It is farther objected that the apostle, in disputing with the Athenians, puts them upon 'seeking after God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him.' From this it is argued that, if it were impossible to find God, that is, the way of acceptance in his sight, by the light of nature, it would have been a preposterous thing for the apostle to have put them upon seeking him; so that, from his address to them, we may infer that the heathen are not destitute of all means of grace, or without a possibility of salvation. Now if, by 'seeking the Lord,' the apostle means inquiring into the way of salvation by a Redeemer, and pressing after faith in him, as it is said, 'Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;'f 'If thou seek him, he will be found of thee;' this does not argue that the heathen, before the gospel was preached to them, might, in seeking the way of salvation, find it. For, though he is speaking to the heathen, they are considered, at the time of his doing so, as having the gospel preached to them by him, and therefore not destitute of the external means of grace; which he advises them to attend to, in hope that their endeavours might be successful. If, on the other hand, he speaks to them without regard to the privilege they then enjoyed, and so informs them what they might attain to without divine revelation, which is the only sense which seems in the least to favour the objection, then, by 'seeking the Lord,' we must understand their

inquiring into the divine perfections, so far as their knowledge of these is attainable by the light of nature; and the consequence would be, their attaining such a degree of that knowledge as would discover the absurdity of the idolatry which they were guilty of, and which the apostle is arguing against. He makes use of a mode of speaking which is very agreeable to this sense of the text, when he says, 'If haply ye might feel after him.' This is a metaphor taken from those who are endeavouring to find their way in the dark, when they feel after things which they cannot see, and sometimes, by doing so, find them. His saying that 'haply,' or peradventure, 'you may find him,' implies that, though the heathen, by the light of nature, had some means of attaining such a measure of knowledge as would have given them a full conviction that there was but one God, and that this God ought to be worshipped in a way agreeable to his divine perfections, and consequently that they ought not to think that 'the Godhead was like to gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art, and man's device,' so that they would have been effectually convinced as to the gross idolatry which they were charged with; yet some did not attend to the light of nature, so far as this amounts to, which was the case of those with whom he was disputing. His design, therefore, is to reprove their idolatry, and persuade them to seek after that knowledge of God which would have induced them to forsake it. This is his design in that part of his argument in which he speaks of their 'seeking the Lord, if haply they might feel after him;' and when, in another part of it, he treats of that knowledge of God which is more immediately connected with salvation, he speaks of 'Jesus and the resurrection,' though they treated what he said with ridicule and contempt. It does not follow, therefore, that the heathen, by the light of nature, had a sufficient discovery of the way of salvation.

There is another objection against the doctrine we are maintaining, founded on the case of some persons who are supposed to have been

destitute of divine revelation, as living without the pale of the church, and yet are commended in scripture as men excelling many others in grace, concerning whom there is no reason to doubt that they were in a state of salvation; such as Melchizedek, Job, Job's friends, with whom the dispute was held, mentioned in the book of Job, the centurion concerning whom our Saviour says, 'Verily, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel,' and Cornelius, whom we read of in the Acts of the Apostles; who were all supposed to be in a state of salvation, and yet reckoned among the heathen. As to Melchizedek, we have under a former Answeri given our sentiments who he was; and if what was there observed be true, it will render this objection of no force. But as the objection is founded on the commonly received opinion, that Melchizedek was a priest and a king in the land of Canaan, we may add that his having been so will make very little to the purpose; for, it is certain that he was not an idolater, or a stranger to revealed religion; so that it cannot be argued from his case, that they who are so, may be in a state of salvation. As to Job and his friends, it is certain that they were well acquainted with the revealed will of God, as appears from their discourses recorded in the book of Job; and to say that they were out of the pale of the church, as they did not descend from that branch of Abraham's family from which the Israelites came, will not do much service to the objection, unless it could be proved that they were strangers to the faith and way of salvation professed by the church. Under a former Answer, we considered them as living before the scriptures were committed to writing, and also before the distinction between Jew and Gentile was much known in the world, or, at least, before the true worshippers of God had universally apostatized to idolatry. Hence, though many other nations were idolaters, and probably some were so in the country where they lived, yet it does not appear that they were so. Their case, therefore, cannot be brought as an argument, to prove that such as are destitute of the

knowledge of the true God as founded on divine revelation, may be in the way of salvation. As to the centurion, though he was a Roman officer, it does not follow that, when he came to our Saviour, and expressed his great faith and humility, he was an heathen; for he had seen or heard of Christ's miracles and his doctrine, and probably might have been convinced thereby, and disposed to believe in him from conviction. It is certain, at least, that his words do not argue him to be an heathen; so that the part of the objection which refers to him is foreign to the design for which it is brought. As to Cornelius, there are certainly many things extraordinary in his character, such as that he was a 'devout man, and one that feared God;' that he gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always;'l and that his prayers and his alms 'came up for a memorial before God;' all which expressions seem to favour the objection. Yet, if this account of him give ground to conclude that he was in a state of salvation before Peter was sent to preach the gospel to him, which the learned Beza and others suppose, it must still be proved that he was altogether a stranger to divine revelation, and to the knowledge it conveys of the way of salvation, else the objection founded on his case is of no force. It is said, indeed, that 'he fell down at Peter's feet, and worshipped him;'n which seems to argue him to have been, at that time, no better than a heathen idolater. But they who conclude him to have been then in a state of salvation, reckon this nothing else but an act of extraordinary civil respect; which, because it had the appearance of religious worship, Peter, as is intimated in the following words, refused to receive, lest some present should conclude that he gave him that honour which belongs to God only. All that I shall say, in answer to the objection, as supposing him to be in a state of salvation, is that though he was a Roman, and bred up in the Roman religion, yet it appears, from his general character, that he was very much concerned about the salvation of his soul, and therefore, doubtless, had not been wanting in his inquiries about the way to

attain it. The gospel, indeed, had not been publicly preached at that time to the Gentiles, and he had not had any opportunity to converse with the apostles, or to sit under their ministry; but, as his conversation had been principally among the Jews, he might have been informed by them that, though they did not believe our Saviour who was crucified to be the Messiah, yet the Messiah was expected, and that, when he came, he would do that for his people which was foretold by the prophets. Here his faith rested. He wanted only a convincing evidence that our Saviour was he; and this, Peter was sent to communicate to him. We may suppose, however, that he was not converted before Peter was sent to him. This seems the more probable view; for, in Peter's relation of the matter to the apostles, he adds a particular circumstance which implies as much, namely, that 'he should tell him words, whereby he and all his house should be saved.' This plainly argues that he and his house were not previously in a state of salvation; and, if so, the objection, which supposes that he was, is sufficiently answered. If we acquiesce in this answer, there is one difficulty which remains to be accounted for, namely, how his not having been in a state of salvation is consistent with his character as a devout man, fearing God, and having his prayers and his alms accepted by him. The only reply I shall give to this is, that some duties which are materially good may be performed by those who are not in a state of salvation; and that these works may, as far as they have any property of goodness in them, come up for a memorial before God. Thus God owned the humiliation, repentance, and reformation of the Ninevites. Thus, also, when one came to our Saviour, and told him how he had observed the commandments of God, and, at the same time, expressed an earnest desire to inherit eternal life; it is remarked that, though he would not part with all for Christ, and therefore was not to be reckoned a believer, yet 'Jesus beholding him, loved him,'p that is, he approved of what was good in him, though it wanted some circumstances which were necessary to

constitute an action good in all respects. Why, then, may we not suppose that God approved of what was excellent in Cornelius' character before he was converted by Peter's preaching?

Another objection against the doctrine we are maintaining is, that the heathen had some means of salvation, which took their rise from divine revelation, as appears from several rules and modes of worship which they had by tradition from the Jews. It was a generally received opinion among them, that the sins they committed were, some way or other, to be expiated, or that some atonement was to be made for them; on which account they offered sacrifices, and had their temples, altars, and priests, consecrated for that purpose. These things, it is inferred, are more than they had learned from the law of nature. But this argument has very little weight. It seems, indeed, to allow that there is a necessity of persons being, at least, in a small degree, apprized of some doctrines which took their rise from divine revelation. But what was transmitted pure and uncorrupt to the church, was handed down to the heathen nations by uncertain tradition, and with a great mixture of corruption; so that it is hard to find such a resemblance between it and the pure doctrine as to determine it to be of divine origin. But suppose they had a conviction that sin was to be expiated by sacrifice, they had still no manner of idea as to any reference the sacrifices they offered had to Christ. Yet this, as the apostle observes, was the only thing in those sacrifices which were performed by a divine warrant, which had a tendency to 'take away sin,' or 'make them that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.' Hence, though the Jews offered sacrifices, and observed several other rites of worship instituted by God; yet, in as much as they rested in the external performance of them, and were destitute of faith in Christ, and did not perform other religious duties which were to attend them, their observances were reckoned no better than 'vain oblations,'r or unprofitable services.

How much more might all the rites of worship observed by the heathen be deemed so? The fact of the heathen having performed these rites, therefore, does not give us sufficient ground to conclude that those have the means of salvation who are destitute of divine revelation and faith in Christ.

Christ the Saviour only of the Church

It is farther observed, in this Answer, that Christ is the Saviour only of his body the church. This seems to obviate an objection which might be brought against the impossibility of attaining salvation without faith in Christ. For some will be ready to conclude that Christ may be a Saviour, by his death, to those who are strangers to him, and not members of his body the church; and, therefore, it is added that he is the Saviour only of such. This is what several mean when they say that there is no salvation out of the pale or enclosure of the church. The point is rather to be explained than denied. The meaning of it will appear from what is said in the following Answers; wherein the visible church is described as including those who profess the true religion; and the invisible church is called 'the body,' of which Christ is 'the Saviour;' and the members of the latter are said to be made partakers of union and communion with him, and to be inseparably joined to him, as their Head and Husband, when they are effectually called, so that they have an interest in that salvation which he has procured. We hence have ground to conclude that he will save none by his merits but such as are made partakers of the internal graces of the Spirit, and are united to him by a lively faith, founded on divine revelation. This is accordant with what has been already maintained in this Answer; which establishes the necessity of divine revelation, or the impossibility of persons attaining salvation by framing their lives according to the light of nature, though they never heard of the gospel, or of Jesus Christ, the sum and substance

of it. If this be reckoned a hard saying, tending to lessen the mercy of God with respect to its objects, it must be considered that we have no rule of judging concerning this matter but what is contained in scripture. If God has there made known to his people the only way of salvation, we have no warrant to extend it farther than he has done, or to say that, because he can apply his grace in such methods as are altogether unknown to us, he will do so. To speak in this way is no just or conclusive reasoning.

The great design of all that we have said in this Answer, is to induce us to set the highest value on Christ and his gospel, and to adore and magnify him for the privileges which we enjoy by being favoured with it, and to put us upon improving it to the best purposes; for if they are excluded from its benefits who never heard of it, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?'

THE CHURCH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

QUESTION LXI. Are all they saved who hear the gospel, and live in the church?

ANSWER. All that hear the gospel, and live in the visible church, are not saved, but they only who are true members of the church invisible.

QUESTION LXII. What is the visible church?

ANSWER. The visible church is a society made up of all such as, in all ages, and places of the world, do profess the true religion, and of their children.

QUESTION LXIII. What are the special privileges of the visible church?

ANSWER. The visible church hath the privilege of being under God's special care and government, of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies, and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved, and excluding none that will come unto him.

QUESTION LXIV. What is the invisible church?

ANSWER. The invisible church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head.

THEY who are made partakers of Christ's redemption, and are brought into a state of salvation, have been already described as members of Christ's body the church. We are now led to consider them as brought into this relation to him. Accordingly we are to inquire in what sense they are members of Christ's church; and to speak of this church as to its nature, constitution, subjects, and privileges.

The Meaning of the Word 'Church'

We shall first inquire what we are to understand by the word 'church,' as we find it applied in scripture.

1. It is sometimes used to signify any assembly that is met together, whatever be the design of their meeting. Though it is very seldom

taken in this sense in scripture; yet there are two or three places in which it is so understood. Thus the multitude who met together at Ephesus, who made a riot, crying out, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians,' are called 'a church;' for the word is the same which we generally so render. Our translators, indeed, render it, 'the assembly was confused;' and it is said, 'This matter ought to be determined in a lawful assembly,'b that being an unlawful one; and, 'the town-clerk dismissed the assembly.' In all these places, the word, in the Greek,d is the same which we, in other places, render 'church;' and the reason why our translators have rendered it 'assembly,' is that the word 'church' is used in a very uncommon sense in these places,—a sense in which we do not find it used in any other part of scripture.

2. The word 'church' is frequently used by the Fathers metonymically, for the place in which the church met together for religious worship. So also it is often understood among us, and some other reformed churches, as well as among the Papists. But it does not sufficiently appear that it is ever so understood in scripture. Some, it is true, suppose that it is taken in this sense in 1 Cor. 11:18, where it is said, 'When ye come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you;' and, they think, it is farther explained, and proved to be taken in this sense, from what the apostle adds, 'When ye come together into one place;' 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God?'f They hence conclude that the apostle means nothing else but the place where they were convened together; more especially, as 'the church' is here opposed to their own 'houses.' But it may be replied that, in the first of the verses now mentioned, 'When ye come together in the church,' the word may be very easily understood of particular persons met together with the rest of the church. As to its being said 'when ye come together into one place,' the phrase refers, not to the place in which they were assembled, but to their meeting together

with one design or accord. And when it is said, 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God?' the opposition is not between their own houses and the place where they were met together; but the meaning is, 'By your not eating and drinking in your own houses, but doing it in the presence of the church or the assembly of God's people that are met together, you are not only chargeable with indecency, and with interrupting them in the work which they are come about, but you make a kind of schism among them, as doing that which they cannot in conscience approve of, or join with you in; and their disapproval you are ready to call caprice or humour, and hereby you despise them.' Indeed, the place of worship cannot, properly speaking, be said to be the object of contempt. We conclude, therefore, that the apostle does not use the word, in this metonymical sense, for the place of worship, but for the worshipping assembly.

It is objected that the word 'synagogue' is often taken metonymically, in scripture, for the place where persons were assembled to worship. Thus our Saviour is said sometimes to 'teach in the synagogues of the Jews.' Elsewhere we read of one, concerning whom the Jews say, 'He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.'i The psalmist also, speaking concerning the church's enemies, says, 'They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land.' The apostle James, likewise, adapting his mode of speaking to that which was used among the Jews, calls the church of God 'a synagogue.' 'If,' says he, 'there come unto your assembly,' or synagogue, as it is in the margin, 'a man with a gold ring,'l &c.; where the word is taken for the place where they were assembled. The objectors hence infer that we have as much reason to understand the word 'church' for the place where the church meets together. Now, though the word 'synagogue,' in most of these scriptures, certainly denotes the place where persons meet together on a religious account; it is very much to be doubted

whether it is to be so understood in the last of the scriptures referred to. Accordingly, our translators render it 'assembly;' and so the meaning is, 'When you are met together, if a poor man come into your assembly, you despise him.' But suppose the word 'synagogue' were to be taken in this, as it is in the other scriptures, for the place of worship; suppose, also, that by a parity of reason, the word 'church' may be taken in the same sense; all that can be inferred is, that they who call places of worship 'churches' speak agreeably to the sense, though it may be not agreeably to the express words of scripture. This, however, is so trifling a controversy, that it is not worth our while to say any thing more respecting it.

The learned Mode insists largely on it, in a discourse founded on the words of the apostle already mentioned, 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God?' He there attempts to prove from the opposition that there is between their 'own houses' and 'the church of God,' that the apostle, by 'the church,' means the place of worship. But the inconclusiveness of this argument has been already considered. What he farther says, to prove that there were places, in the apostle's days, appropriated or set apart for divine worship, and, in particular, that the room in which the disciples met together on the day of our Saviour's resurrection and eight days after, in which they were honoured with his presence, was the same in which he ate his last Passover with them, and instituted the Lord's Supper, and that it was in that place that they constantly met together for worship, that there the seven deacons were afterwards chosen, and that afterwards a goodly church was erected on the same spot of ground,—what he says to prove these points, is mere uncertain conjecture. That the disciples met together in an apartment or convenient room in the dwelling-house of some pious one of their number, is very probable. But his observation that it was an upper room, on account of being freest from disturbance and

nearest to heaven, seems to be too trifling for so great a man. As to his supposing that this room is referred to in the account of the disciples' 'breaking bread from house to house,'o a phrase which he contends ought to be rendered 'breaking bread in the house,' that is, in this house appointed for the purpose; his rendering and the opinion founded on it, are not so agreeable to the sense of the Greek words, as our translation is. As to his proving that there were particular places appropriated for worship in the three first centuries, by referring to several quotations out of the Fathers who lived in those ages, what he says is not to be contested. Yet the objection which he brings against this being universally true, taken from what Origen, Minutius Felix, Arnobius, and Lactantius say concerning the Christians, in their time, declining to build them, after they had been disturbed and harassed by various persecutions, seems to have some weight, and is not sufficiently answered by him. What he says on the subject may be consulted in the work of his to which we have referred. All that we shall say is, that it is beyond dispute that as the church was obliged to convene together for religious worship, it was necessary that the usual place in which this was performed should be known by them. But it still remains uncertain whether,—though, at some times, in the more peaceable state of the church, they met constantly in one place,—they did not, at other times, adjourn from place to place, or sometimes convene in the open air, in places where they might meet with less disturbance from their enemies. All who are conversant in the history of the church in those ages, know that they often met, especially in times of persecution, in caves and other subterraneous places, near the graves of those who had suffered martyrdom; their object in doing this was not only to encourage one another to bear a similar testimony to Christianity to that which the martyrs had done, but that they might be more retired and undisturbed in their worship.

But, as most things connected with this subject are of little moment, what I would principally oppose is an opinion which the excellent writer now mentioned attempts to prove, in his following Dissertation, as to the reverence which is due to these churches, not only whilst divine duties are performed in them, but at other times, as supposing that they retain a relative sanctity which calls for veneration at all times. The main stress of his argument rests on the sanctity of those places which, by divine appointment, were consecrated for worship under the ceremonial law; and on the reverence which was expressed by persons when they entered them, which, by a supposed parity of reason, he applies to those places which are erected for worship under the gospel-dispensation. But it does not follow that, because the tabernacle and temple had a relative holiness in them, the same thing is applicable to places of worship under the gospel-dispensation. The temple was a type of God's presence among men, and in particular of the incarnation of Christ, which was a glorious instance of that presence. The temple was also an ordinance for their faith in this matter; and on that account it was holy. Besides, there was a visible external symbol of God's presence, whose throne was upon the mercy-seat, between the cherubim, in the holy of holies; so that this might well be called 'a holy place,' even when worship was not performed in it. But it is certain that other places of worship, and, in particular, the synagogues, were not then reckoned so, when no worship was performed in them, though they were erected for that purpose. Moreover, our Saviour seems to intimate, that the holiness of places is taken away under the gospel-dispensation. This appears from his reply to the woman of Samaria, when, speaking concerning their 'fathers worshipping in this mountain,' that is, in the temple which was erected on mount Gerizim, he says, 'The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father;' that is, no place shall be so consecrated for religious worship

that it shall be more acceptable there than elsewhere, and consequently no veneration is to be paid to any such place more than another, where the same worship may be performed.s

3. What we have been stating is little other than a digression from our present design; which is to show that the word 'church,' in scripture, is, for the most part, if not always, taken for an assembly of Christians met together for religious worship, according to the rules which Christ has given for their direction. The Hebrew word, in the Old Testament, by which the church of the Jews is signified, is generally rendered 'congregation,' or assembly; so that, in our translation, we never meet with the word 'church' in the Old Testament. Yet what is there called 'the congregation,' or assembly of the Israelites, might very properly be called 'a church,' inasmuch as it is so styled in the New Testament. Thus it is said concerning Moses, that 'he was in the church in the wilderness.'u But it is certain that the word 'church,' is peculiarly adapted, in the New Testament, to signify the Christian church, worshipping God according to the rules prescribed by our Saviour, and others delivered by his apostles, under the Spirit's direction. This is the sense in which we are to understand it, in discussing these Answers. [See Note A, page 36.]

The meaning of the phrases 'the Visible' and 'The Invisible Church'

We proceed to consider the church as distinguished into visible and invisible. Each of these is particularly defined, and will be farther insisted on under some following Heads. At present, we may offer something, by way of premisal, concerning the reason of this distinction. The word 'church,' according to its grammatical construction, signifies a number of persons who are called; and, in its application to the present subject, every one who is a member of it,

may be said to be called to be made partaker of that salvation which is in Christ. Now, there is a twofold calling spoken of in scripture. The one is visible and external, whereby some are made partakers of the external privileges of the gospel and all its ordinances; the other is internal and saving, whereby others are made partakers of those special and distinguishing blessings which God bestows on the heirs of salvation. The former our Saviour intends when he says, 'Many are called, but few are chosen;' the latter is what the apostle speaks of, when he connects it with 'justification' and 'glorification.' Now, they who are called in the former of these senses, are included in that branch of the distinction which respects the visible church; the latter are members of that church which is styled invisible. The former are members of, Christ by profession; the latter are united to him as their Head and Husband, are made partakers of spiritual life from him, and shall live for ever with him. The members of the visible church are the children of God, as made partakers of the external dispensation of the covenant of grace. These God speaks of, when he says, 'I have nourished and brought up children.'z Elsewhere also he says concerning the church of the Jews, who were externally in covenant with him, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born.' But the members of the invisible church are the children of God by faith;b and because children in this sense, 'heirs,—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' These things, however, must be particularly insisted on.

The Invisible Church

Accordingly, we shall say something concerning the invisible church. This is described, in one of the Answers we are explaining, as containing the whole number of the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ their Head.

1. They are said to be elect, and subject to Christ their Head. On this account, some have included in the number the holy angels; inasmuch as they are styled, by the apostle, 'elect angels;' and Christ is, in some respects, their Head, as the apostle calls him 'the Head of all principality and power;'e and elsewhere the church is said to come to 'an innumerable company of angels.' But though they are indeed elected, it may be questioned whether they were chosen in Christ, as the elect among the children of men are said to be; and though Christ is styled their Head, yet his headship over them does not include those things which are implied in his being the Head of his chosen people, as he is the Head of the covenant of grace on which their salvation is founded, or 'the Captain of their salvation,'g who, having purchased them by his blood, brings them into a state of grace, and then to glory. For these, and similar reasons, I would not assert that angels are properly a part of Christ's invisible church, but would infer that it includes those only who are elected to salvation among the children of men.

2. They are farther described as persons who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head. Hence, there is a part of them that are not actually brought in to him. These our Saviour speaks of, under the metaphor of sheep who were 'not of this fold,' concerning whom he says, 'Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.' There is also another part of them who are triumphant in heaven; as well as those who are actually called by the grace of God, and are on their way to heaven, struggling, at present, with many difficulties, through the prevalence of corruption,—and conflicting with many temptations, and exposed to many evils, which attend the present state. These different circumstances of those who are brought in to Christ, give occasion to the known distinction between 'the church triumphant' and 'the church militant.'

To that part of this description of the invisible church which includes those who shall be gathered unto Christ, it is objected that no one can be said to be a member of this church who is not actually brought in unto him; for to say this would be to suppose that unconverted persons might be members of it, and consequently that Christ is their Head, Shepherd, and Saviour. Yet they are characterized, in scripture, as children of wrath, running in all excess of riot, refusing to submit to him, and neglecting that great salvation which is offered in the gospel. How, then, it is asked, can such be members of Christ's church, and that in the highest sense of the word 'church?' Moreover, it is objected, against the account given of the invisible church in this Answer, that a part of those who are said to be the members of it, are considered, at present, as not existing. It must, we are told, be a very improper, if not absurd, way of speaking, to say that such are members of Christ's church.

Now, I am not inclined to extenuate those expressions of scripture which represent unconverted persons as children of wrath, in open rebellion against God, and refusing to submit to him; nor would I say any thing from which such might have the least ground to conclude that they have a right to any of the privileges of God's elect or of Christ's invisible church, or that they are included in that number. To do this would be to expose the doctrine of election to one of the main objections which are brought against it,—that it leads to licentiousness. Yet let it be considered that this Answer treats of the invisible church; so that whatever privileges are reserved for those who, though elected, are in an unconverted state, are altogether unknown to them, and it would be an unwarrantable presumption for them to lay claim to them. We must not deny, however, that God knows who are his, who are redeemed by Christ, and what blessings, pursuant to their being so, shall be applied to them. He knows the time when they shall be made a willing people, in the day of his

power; and what graces he designs to work in them. He considers the elect in general as given to Christ, and Christ as having undertaken to do all that is necessary to fit them for the heavenly blessedness. Moreover, we must suppose that God knows, without the least doubt and uncertainty, the whole number of those who shall appear with Christ in glory, at his second coming. For things which are future to us, are present with respect to him; as, with one single view, he knows all things past and to come, as well as present. Now, if the expression made use of be thus qualified, which is agreeable to the design of this Answer, I cannot see that the objection has sufficient force to overthrow it; any more than those arguments which are usually brought against the doctrine of election, can render it less worthy to be received by us.

The other branch of the objection, is that they who are not in being cannot be denominated members of Christ's church in any sense. Now, though it be allowed that such cannot be, at present, the subjects of any privileges; yet we must consider that, since God seeth not as man seeth, they may, in his eternal purpose to save them, be considered as the objects of his grace, and therefore, in his account, be reckoned members of Christ's invisible church, that is, such as he designs to bring into being, and afterwards to make meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. I see no reason, therefore, to except against the mode of speaking in which they are described as persons who shall be gathered under Christ their Head. If, however, the objection respected only the propriety or impropriety of a word, and had not a tendency to overthrow the doctrine of God's certain and peremptory election, I would not militate against it.

3. This church, which is said to consist of the whole number of the elect, is styled invisible. By this we are not to understand that their election of God cannot be known by themselves; for we have

sufficient ground, from scripture, to conclude that believers may attain the assurance of this in the present life. But the church is so called, because many of them have finished their course in this world, and have entered into that state in which they are, with respect to those who live here, no more seen. Moreover, the number of those who are styled the members of this church, cannot be determined by any creature. It is known to God only. That grace, also, which any of them experience, how far soever they may arrive at the knowledge of it themselves, cannot be said to be certainly and infallibly known by others. Hence, the apostle says concerning them, that 'their life is hid with Christ in God.' [See Note B, p. 38.] Although, however, this church is at present invisible; yet, when the whole number of the elect shall be brought in to Christ, and, as the apostle says, 'gathered together unto him,' it shall no longer remain invisible. For 'when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then they shall also appear with him in glory.'l

We may farther observe concerning the church, as thus described, that it has many glorious characters given of it. It is frequently, in the Song of Solomon, called Christ's spouse. By this name, the inspired writer seems to intend more than what could well be said concerning the Jewish church; for the description there given of it, as being all fair, and without spot, is applicable rather to the state in which the saints shall be hereafter, than to that in which they are at present, so that I am inclined to think that he speaks of the invisible church, or the election of grace. The character which he gives of them is an allusion to that conjugal union which there is between Christ and believers. In reference to this union, it is said elsewhere, 'Thy Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.'n The psalmist, also in a very elegant manner, describes the church as thus related to Christ, when he says, 'Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir;' and then goes

on to speak of it as arrived at the highest pitch of honour and happiness, and as introduced into the king's presence 'in raiment of needle-work,' with gladness and rejoicing, being brought into his palace.p The apostle calls it, 'the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written,' or, as it is in the margin, enrolled, 'in heaven.' It is considered also, when brought to perfection, and 'presented' by Christ 'to himself,' or to his own view at last, as 'a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy, and without blemish.'r In this respect it may be called, 'the holy catholic church;' though many, without sufficient ground, understand the words of the Creed in which it is so called, in a sense very different from and inferior to this. [See Note C, p. 38.]—Again, the invisible church is but one body, and therefore not divided, like the visible church, into many particular bodies, as will be observed under a following Head. This seems to be the meaning of the expression in which it is said, 'My dove, my undefined is but one.'—Further, it is not the seat of human government, as the visible church is; nor are persons said to be received into its communion. Whatever officers Christ has appointed, to secure the order and promote the edification of his churches, have nothing to do in the church considered as invisible. It is, however, eminently under Christ's special government; who is the Head as well as the Saviour of it.—Again, there are many special privileges which belong to it. These include all the graces and comforts which are applied to its members by the Holy Spirit; and so they are considered as enjoying union and communion with Christ in grace and glory, as being called, justified, sanctified, and many of them assured of their interest in Christ here, while all of them shall be glorified with him hereafter. These privileges are insisted on, in several following Answers. We therefore pass them over at present, and proceed to consider another of the Answers which we are to explain.

The Visible Church

We have next an account of the visible church. This is described as a society made up of all those who, in all ages and places of the world, profess the true religion, and of their children. In this description of the church, we may observe that it is called visible, not only because the worship performed in it, and the laws given to those particular churches of which it consists, are visible, but because its members are so, or known to the world, and because the profession they make of the true religion, or subjection to Christ as their Head and Sovereign, is open, 'free, and undisguised, whereby they are distinguished from the rest of the world.

Moreover, it is called a Society. This denomination it takes from the communion which its members have with one another. But as the word is in the singular number, as denoting but one body of men, it is to be inquired whether this be a proper mode of speaking, though frequently used. It is allowed by all Protestants, that there are, and have been ever since the first preaching of the gospel by the apostles, many particular churches in the world. That there were such in the apostolic times, appears from what we often read in the New Testament, as the apostle Paul directs his epistles to particular churches, such as those at Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, &c. Some of these were larger, others smaller; yet they are equally called churches, denoting that no regard is to be had to the number of persons of which each of them consists. Thus we read of churches in particular houses; and these, for the reasons above-mentioned, may each of them, without the least impropriety of expression, be styled a visible church.—But it must also be allowed, on the other hand, that the church is spoken of in the singular number, in scripture, as if it were but one. Thus it is said, 'Saul made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed

them to prison.'x Speaking of himself, he says, 'Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;' and elsewhere, 'Beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.'z Now, it is certain that it was not one particular church that he directed his persecuting rage against, but all the churches of Christ wherever he went, especially those in Judea. These he speaks of in the plural number; and, by doing so, he explains what he means by his 'persecuting the church of God;' for it is said, 'He which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.'b Elsewhere, too, it is said, 'God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers.' By 'the church,' here, we are to understand all the churches; for the apostles were not pastors of any particular church, but acted as pastors in all the churches wherever they went. Though every church had its own respective pastor set over it, who was in a peculiar manner related to it, yet all these churches are called in this place 'the church.' We are not, therefore, to contend about the use of a word, provided it be rightly explained, whether persons speak of the church in the singular, or churches in the plural number. If we speak of the church as if it were but one, the word is to be taken collectively for all the churches of Christ in the world. This the apostle explains, when he speaks of them all as if they were 'one body,' under the influence of the same Spirit, 'called in one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all.'d This is that 'unity of the Spirit' which they were to 'endeavour to keep,' and, in keeping which, they were to act agreeably to their faith. In this respect, we freely allow that all the churches of Christ are one. There is but one foundation on which they are built, one rule of faith, one way to heaven, in which they all professedly walk. Moreover, not only have the churches of Christ communion with one another in their particular societies; but there is a communion of churches, whereby they own one another as walking in the same fellowship

with themselves, express a sympathy with one another in afflictive circumstances, and rejoice in one another's edification and flourishing state. In these respects, we consider the churches as one; and so call them all the church of Christ. This is to be understood, however, with certain limitations. We are not to suppose that the church, as the seat of government, is one; or that there is one set of men who have a warrant to bear rule over the whole, that is, over all the churches of Christ; for none suppose that there is one universal pastor of the church, except the Papists. All Protestants, however they explain their sentiments about the catholic visible church, allow that the seat of government is in each particular church, of which no one has any right to give pastors to other churches, or to appoint who shall be admitted into their respective communion.

There is another thing in this description of the visible church which stands in need of being explained and defended. It is said that it consists of all such as, in all ages and places of the world, do profess the true religion. If nothing be intended hereby but that none have a right to the privilege of communion of saints, or are fit to be received into any church of Christ, but those who profess the true religion, or the faith on which the church is built, I am far from denying it; for to do so would be to suppose that the church professes one faith and some of its members another, or that it builds up what it allows others to throw down. But I am a little at a loss to account for the propriety of the expression, when the church is said to be a society professing the true religion in all ages. It cannot be supposed that the church or churches which are now in being are any part of that society which professed the true religion in Moses' time, or in the apostolic age. It is, however, principally the propriety of expression which is to be excepted against; for I suppose nothing is intended by it but that, as the church in every respective foregoing age consisted

of those who embraced the true religion, so it consists of no other in our age.

There is one thing more which I would take leave to observe in this description of the church. What I refer to is a defect in the description, which renders it incomplete. It speaks of the church as consisting of those who profess the true religion; but makes no mention of that bond of union which constitutes every particular branch of the universal church, a church of Christ. It speaks, indeed, of those qualifications which belong to every one as a Christian, which is a remote, though necessary condition, of being received into church-communion; but it takes no notice of that mutual consent which is the more immediate bond by which the members of every church coalesce together. But this we may have occasion to consider under a following Head.

The last thing I observe in this description of the visible church is, that it consists not only of the professors of the true religion, but of their children. This is rather to be explained than denied. Yet I cannot but observe that many have run too great lengths in what they have asserted concerning the right of children to this privilege. Some of the Fathers not only considered them as members of the church, but brought them to the Lord's table, and gave them the bread dipped in the wine, in the same way as food is applied to infants when they are too young to discover anything of its design. That which led them into this mistake was their misunderstanding the sense of our Saviour's words, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' They supposed that these words were meant of eating bread and drinking wine in the Lord's Supper; though they might easily have known that this was not our Saviour's meaning, inasmuch as the Lord's Supper was not instituted till some time after, and, when instituted, was not

designed to be reckoned so necessary to salvation that the mere not partaking of it should exclude from it. Cyprian gives an account of his administering it to an infant brought by her mother, and relates a circumstance attending the ministration which savours so much of superstition in that grave and pious Father, that I forbear to mention it.f The giving of the Lord's Supper to children, was practised not only by him, but by several others in some following ages. Many, also, in later ages, speak of children as incomplete members of the church. Some suppose that their being so is the result of their baptismal dedication. Others suppose that it is their birthright; and they have, in consequence, maintained that when the children come to be adult, they rather claim their right to church-communion than are admitted to it, as those who are not the children of church-members. As a farther consequence of their opinion, they assert that, if they are guilty of vile enormities, and thereby forfeit their privilege, they are in a formal way to be excommunicated; and that it is a defect in the government of the churches in our day that this is not practised. The opinion of these parties, however, is not what is meant, in the Answer under consideration, by children being members of churches, together with their parents. What is meant will, I think, be allowed by all: it is, that children being the property of parents, the latter are obliged to dedicate them, together with themselves, to God, and, pursuant to their doing so, to endeavour to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, hoping that, through his blessing on education, they may, in his own time and way, be qualified for church-communion, and then admitted to it, that hereby the churches of Christ may have an addition of members to fill up the places of those who are called off the stage. As to the concern of the church in this matter, which in some respect redounds to the advantage of the children of those who are members of it, they are obliged to show their regard to them, so far as to exhort their parents, if. there be occasion, to express a due concern for their

spiritual welfare; or, if the children are defective in religion, to extend their censure rather to the parents than to them, as neglecting a moral duty, and so acting unbecoming the relation they stand in to them.

Having thus spoken concerning the description given of the visible church in this Answer, we shall now proceed to discuss it more particularly, and accordingly shall consider its former and present constitution and government. [See Note D, page 40.]

The Church under the Mosaic Dispensation

As to the Jewish church before the gospel-dispensation, it was erected in the wilderness, and the laws by which it was governed were given by God, and transmitted to Israel by the hand of Moses. We read of a very remarkable occurrence preceding their being settled as a church. God demanded an explicit consent from the whole congregation to be his people, and to be governed by those laws he should give them. They then made a public declaration, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do;' and 'Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.' Soon after, there was another covenant-transaction between God and them, mentioned in a following chapter: 'Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.' This was confirmed by sacrifice. 'He took half of the blood, and put it in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar, and he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people.' They here repeated their engagement, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient:' and then 'he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words.'

Immediately after, we have an account of an extraordinary display which they had of the divine glory: 'They saw God, and did eat and drink,'h which was a farther confirming of the covenant. On some important occasions they renewed this covenant with God. They 'avouched him to be their God;' and he condescended, at the same time, to 'avouch them to be his peculiar people.' Thus they were settled in a church-relation by God's appointment, and by their solemn covenant and consent to be his people.

After this, we read of God's settling the form of their church-government, appointing the various ordinances and institutions which are contained in the ceremonial law, settling a ministry among them, and giving directions concerning every branch of the work which was to be performed. Aaron and his sons had the priesthood committed to them; and they were to offer gifts and sacrifices. The high priest was to be chief minister in holy things; the other priests assistants to him in most branches of his office. And when the temple was built, and the service to be performed in it established, the priests attended in their respective courses, each course entering on their ministry every sabbath; and there being twenty-four courses,l it came to their respective turns twice every year. The porters, also, who were to wait continually at the avenues of the temple day and night, to prevent any unclean person or thing from coming into it, as well as its being plundered of the treasures which were laid up in chambers adjoining to it,—they also, the number of whom was the same as that of the priests, ministered in their courses. The singers, too, who attended some parts of the worship, ministered in their courses.n Besides these, there were some appointed to represent the people, who were chosen to come up from their respective places of abode with the priests when they ministered in their courses. These are called stationary men. Dr. Lightfoot gives an account of them from some Jewish writers who treat on the subject. Not that we have

any mention of them in scripture; but it is supposed that the appointment of them took its rise from the lawp which obliged those who brought an offering to the Lord to be present, and to 'put their hands upon the head' of it, as well as the priests who had the main concern in the service. From this law it is inferred that, as, besides the sacrifices which were offered for particular persons, there were daily sacrifices offered in behalf of the whole congregation, and as it was impossible for them to be present to bear a part in this service, it was necessary that some should be deputed to represent the whole body of the people, that so there might be a number present to assist in this service, and that these acts of worship might be performed in the most public manner. Inasmuch, too, as this was to be performed daily, it was necessary that some should be deputed whoso proper business it was to attend. Dr. Lightfoot thinks also, that, as there were priests deputed to minister in their courses, so there was a number of persons deputed to represent the people, who went up to Jerusalem with the priests of the respective course. He adds, that at the same time that these were ministering in the temple, the people met together, and spent the week in those synagogues which were near the place of their abode, in fasting and other acts of religious worship; in which, though at a distance, they implored a blessing on the service which their brethren were performing. As to the rest of the people, they were obliged to be present at Jerusalem at the solemn and public festivals performed three times a-year. Such of them as had committed any sin which was to be expiated by sacrifice, were to go up thither to the temple at other times, and bring their sacrifices to atone for the guilt which they had contracted.

It may be said that though this was, indeed, a solemn method of worship, exceedingly beautiful, and having a feature which was its glory, namely, that the temple-service was typical of Christ and of the way of salvation by him; yet it seems to have included no means for

instructing the people in the doctrines of religion, as there would be but a small attainment of this end in coming up to Jerusalem to worship at the three yearly festivals. How, it is asked, did they spend their sabbaths? Or, what acts of worship were they engaged in, in their respective places of abode? We answer, that God appointed a sufficient number to be their ministers in holy things, helpers of their faith as to this matter; he appointed not only the priests, but the whole tribe of Levi, whose place of residence was conveniently situated. They had forty-eight cities in various parts of the land; some of which were not far distant from any of the people. These instructed them in the way of God. The people sought knowledge from their mouths. Besides, in addition to the temple, there were several other places appointed for religious worship. These were of two sorts, synagogues, and places of prayer.

The synagogues were generally built in cities, of which hardly any were without them, if they consisted of a number of persons who were able to erect them, and had leisure from their secular employments to preside over, and set forward the work to be performed in them. This work was of a different nature from the temple-service, in which gifts and sacrifices were to be offered, God having expressly forbidden the erecting of any altars elsewhere than in the temple. The worship performed in the synagogues was prayer, reading, and expounding the law and the prophets, and instructing the people in all other duties of religion which were necessary to be performed in the conduct of their lives. The manner of doing this, was not only by delivering set discourses, agreeably to our common method of preaching,s but by holding disputations and conferences about some important matters of religion. Thus the apostle Paul 'disputed in the synagogues.' Disputations were hold occasionally; but the Jews met constantly in the synagogues for religious worship; and our Saviour encouraged them in doing so by his presence and

instructions. Thus it is said, not only that 'he taught in their synagogues,' but that this was his constant practice; for it is said, 'He came to Nazareth, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read.'u There were also certain officers appointed over every synagogue. Thus we read sometimes of 'the rulers of the synagogues,' whose business was to prevent the doing of any thing which was indecent and disorderly. And there were some persons from whom a word of exhortation was expected, who were called ministersy of the synagogue. Nor are we to suppose that this method of promoting religion in the synagogues, was practised only in the last and most degenerate age of the Jewish church; for they had their synagogues in the more early and purer ages. If we had no express account of this in the Old Testament, yet it might be inferred from the notices of the synagogues in our Saviour's time; for certainly there were then no methods used by the Jews to instruct the people in matters of religion, which were not as necessary, and consequently in use, in preceding ages. It is true, we do not often read of synagogues in the Old Testament. Yet there is mention of them in the scripture formerly referred to,a in which the psalmist complains, that 'they had burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land;' where the word, being in the plural number, cannot be meant, as the Chaldee Paraphrast renders it, of the temple. This appears from the context, in which the psalmist speaks of 'the enemies of God roaring in the midst of the congregations.' Besides, he expressly mentions their burning the temple, by 'casting fire into the sanctuary of God, and casting down the dwelling-place of his name to the ground.'

Besides the synagogues, there were other places in which public worship was performed, called places of prayer. Mr. Mede gives an account, from Epiphanius, of the difference that there was between these and the synagogues. He says, that a 'proseucha,' or a place

appointed for prayer, was a plot of ground encompassed with a wall or some other-like mound or enclosure, open above, much like our courts; whereas a synagogue was a covered edifice, as our houses and churches are. He adds, that the former were generally fixed in places without the cities, in the fields, in places of retirement; and that they were generally rendered more private, and fit for the work which was to be performed in them, by being surrounded with a plantation of trees. He supposes that these were not only made use of in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, but in preceding ages; and that the grove, which Abraham is said to have planted, in which he called on the name of the Lord,d was nothing else but one of these convenient places, planted for that purpose, in which public worship was performed. This seems very probable. Moreover, we read, in scripture, concerning 'high places.' These, as Lightfoot observes,f are sometimes spoken of in scripture in a commendable sense. Thus Samuel is said to have gone up into one of these 'high places,' to perform some acts of religious worship. We read also of another 'high place,' in which there was 'a company of prophets, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they did prophesy.'h It is true, in other scriptures, we read of them as abused by that idolatry which was performed in them. These the pious kings of Judah, who reformed religion, took away. And as to its being said in the history of some of their reigns, that how much soever they destroyed idolatrous worship, yet 'the high places were not taken away;'k Lightfoot thinks that they should not have been destroyed as places of worship or public assemblies; that it is not reckoned a blemish in the reign of those kings, that the high places were not taken away; and that, whatever abuse there was, consisted in sacrifice and incense being offered there, which were parts of worship confined to the temple. So that if the kings had not only reformed them from the abuse of those who exercised their idolatry in them, but had proceeded to reform this abuse of their sacrificing

there, they might lawfully have met there to perform religious worship; which it is supposed, they did in synagogues, high places, and groves, which were appointed for that purpose. Thus, then, they met together for religious worship in other places besides the synagogues.—Again, we read in the New Testament, that Paul went, on the sabbath-day, out of the city of Philippi, 'by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made;' and there he preached the word by which Lydia was converted. This some think to have been one of those places to which the Jews resorted for prayer and other public worship. Others suppose also that the place mentioned in the gospel, to which our Saviour resorted, was one of these; and that the words, 'he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,' ought to be rendered, 'in that particular place where prayer was wont to be made to God.'n But the Greek words may as well be rendered as they are in our translation; and then they have reference to no particular place of prayer, but import his retirement to perform this duty.

We have thus endeavoured to prove, that the church of the Jews had other places in which worship was performed, besides the temple,—a circumstance which was of very great advantage for propagating religion among them. We might have farther proceeded to consider their church-censures, ordained by God for crimes committed, whereby, when the crimes they were guilty of did not deserve death, persons were cut off from among their people by excommunication. But I shall not enlarge any farther upon this Head, but proceed to speak concerning the gospel-church.

The Church under the Ministry of the Apostles

Here we shall consider the methods taken, in order to the first planting and increase of the church, by the apostles. When our

Saviour had finished the work of redemption, he, after his resurrection, altered the form of the church, and appointed his apostles not only to signify to the world that he had done so, but to be instruments in erecting the new church. We have already considered the apostles as qualified to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and also as having received a commission from him to preach the gospel to all nations, and an order to tarry at Jerusalem till they received those extraordinary gifts from the Holy Ghost which were necessary for their performing the work they were to engage in. Agreeably to the instructions given them, they all now resided at Jerusalem; and, a few days after Christ's ascension into heaven, the Holy Ghost was poured upon them on the day of Pentecost. They then immediately began to exercise their public ministry in that city; and they had there the advantage of publishing the gospel to a numerous concourse of people, who had resorted thither from the various parts of the world in which the Jews were dispersed, to celebrate the festival. Some suppose that there was a greater number gathered together than was usual, it being one of those three feasts to which the Jews resorted from all the parts of the land. A learned writerp supposes, indeed, that the Jews were not obliged to go to this feast from other nations; and that those who did go were not said, as these are, to dwell at Jerusalem. He thinks, therefore, that what brought them thither from the several parts of the world, was the expectation which the Jews generally had that the Messiah would appear, and erect a temporal kingdom, and that Jerusalem was the place where he would fix his throne; so that they would be there to wait on him, and share the honours they expected from him. But, whatever occasion brought them thither, it was a seasonable opportunity for the gospel first to be preached. Accordingly, Peter preached his first sermon to a multitude who were gathered together; and therein he exercised the gift of tongues, by which means, not only was his discourse understood by men of different

languages, but they had a plain proof that he was under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He takes occasion also to improve this amazing dispensation of providence, by telling them that it was an accomplishment of what had been predicted by the prophet Joel; and then he preached Christ to them, declaring that he and the rest of the apostles, were all witnesses that God raised him from the dead, and exalted him by his right hand, and that, in consequence of this, the extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon them. The success of his first sermon was very remarkable; for there were added to the church, as the first-fruits of his ministry, 'three thousand souls.' We read also that 'the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.' Soon after it is said that 'the number of the men,' of whom the church consisted, 'was about five thousand.' This was a very large and numerous church; and, as is more than probable, it met in the same city. For we must conclude that they fixed their abode there, rather than that they returned to the respective places whence they came, that they might have an opportunity to sit under the sound of the gospel, which was at that time preached nowhere else. What makes this more probable is the method they adopted for their subsistence in the world. There would have been no occasion for those who had possessions to sell them, and dispose of the price to supply the exigencies of their fellow-members, had they not removed from their habitations, and forsaken all for the sake of the gospel.

This church had wonderful instances of the presence of God among them, which did more than compensate for the loss they must be supposed to have sustained as to their secular affairs. We read, for some time, of little else but success attending the gospel, and of persecutions raised by the Jews against it which rather tended to their own shame and confusion than to the extirpating of it. When the Jews, at length, so far prevailed that, after the death of Stephen,

the first martyr, a new persecution was begun by the instigation of Saul, as yet not converted to the faith, the immediate consequence was the scattering of the church 'throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria,' but the eventual result was the furtherance of the gospel; for, wherever the brethren went, they preached, and many believed. The apostles, at the same time, obeying the order which was previously given them, continued at Jerusalem;t and there still remained a church in that city sitting under their ministry. This was wisely ordered by the providence of God, not only as an accomplishment of those predictions which respected the gospel being first sounded thence, but that, in this church, a sufficient number might be trained up for the exercise of the ministry in other places, when there should be occasion for their services; and, in order to this, they had some advantages which no schools of learning could afford them, for they had the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. Here it was that the prophets and evangelists were first raised up, being immediately taught by God. This was the first scene of the gospel-church. Here it continued till the apostles were ordered, by the Holy Ghost, to travel into those parts of the world in which, by his direction, their ministry was to be exercised. The greatest part of them were ordered to those places in which some of the Jews resided. But Paul was ordained to exercise his ministry among the Gentiles. Accordingly, we read that 'the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.' This divine command they immediately obeyed; and then we read of churches erected in various parts of the world by his ministry who is styled 'the apostle of the Gentiles.'

There are several things observable in the exercise of Paul's ministry. Wherever he went, he preached the gospel, and confirmed it by miracles, as occasion served. This was attended with such wonderful success and expedition, that the multitudes which were converted by

his ministry exceeded not only what might be gathered by one man in the compass of his life, but by several ages of men, unless their ministry should be accompanied by a remarkable hand of providence. At one time, we read of him exercising his ministry 'from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum;' at other times, in several parts of Asia Minor; then in Spain, and at Rome, and in some parts of Greece;y and wherever he went, his ministry was attended with such wonderful success as might be described in the words of the Roman emperor, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' When the apostle had, by the success of his ministry, prepared in any place fit materials for a church, as it would have taken up too much of his time to reside among them till they were provided with a pastor and other officers, who were necessary to carry on the work which was begun, he sent for one of the evangelists, who, as was formerly observed, were fitted for this service by those extraordinary gifts which they had received, while they continued in the church at Jerusalem. The office of these evangelists seems to have been principally this; they were to 'set in order the things that were wanting,' or left by the apostles to be done, and to 'ordain elders in every city;' as the apostle Paul intimates in his charge to Titus, who appears to have been an evangelist particularly ordained to minister to him, and to build upon the foundation he had laid. The evangelists appear to have had all the qualifications for the ministry which the apostles had, excepting what respected the latter having seen Jesus, and having been thereby qualified to be witnesses of his resurrection; and they continued till they had performed their work, in settling pastors and other officers in churches; and then they were ready to obey another call, to succeed the apostles in some other places, and so perform the same work there.

While the apostles were thus concerned for the gathering and building up of churches, and were assisted in this work by the

evangelists, there was a continual intercourse between them and those churches whose rise was owing to the success of their ministry. Accordingly, they conversed with them by epistles; some of which they received by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as designed to be a rule of the church's faith in all succeeding ages. Some of these epistles were written by other apostles, but most of them by Paul. He sometimes desires to 'know the state' of the churches to whom he wrote; at other times, he informs them of his own, the opposition he met with, the success of his ministry, the persecutions he was exposed to for it,b and the necessity of the churches which required contribution for their support; and in doing this, he often enlarges on those important truths, which, had he been among those to whom he wrote, would have been the subject of his ministry. This was necessary to strengthen their hands, and encourage them to persevere in that faith which they made profession of. We may add, that there were, upon several occasions, messengers sent from the churches to the apostle, to inform him of their state, to transmit to him those contributions which were necessary for the relief of other churches, and to give him the countenance, encouragement, and assistance, which his necessities required. Some of these were very excellent persons, the best that could be chosen out of the church for the service. The apostle calls some of them, 'the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ,' which is an extraordinary character. Some think, that he means, by the expression, that they were the messengers of churches which were the glory of Christ, that is, the seat in which he displays his glory. Others suppose, that he calls the messengers, 'the glory of Christ,' as they, by their wise and faithful conduct, promoted his glory; which was not dependent on, but illustrated thereby. Sometimes they were ministers of churches, sent occasionally on these errands. Thus Epaphroditus was a messenger and minister of the church at Philippi;d and Onesiphorus was sent to strengthen and encourage the hands of the

apostle, when he was a prisoner at Rome, whom Paul speaks of with great affection, when he says, 'He sought me out very diligently, and found me, and was not ashamed of my chain.' These were very useful persons to promote the interest of Christ, which was carried on by the apostles; though it does not appear that theirs was a standing office in the church, their service being only occasional.

The Nature and Government of the Christian Church

Having thus considered the apostle as engaged in gathering and building up churches, in the way which was peculiar to them in the first age of the gospel, we shall now proceed to speak concerning that state and government of the church, which was designed to continue longer than the apostolic age, and is a rule to the churches of Christ in our day. We have already considered the evangelists as succeeding the apostles, in appointing officers over churches, directing them to fit persons who might be called to the ministry, and instructing these how they should behave themselves in that relation. This was necessary, in consequence of these officers not having ground to expect such extraordinary assistances from the Spirit of God as the apostles and the evangelists had received, any more than pastors and other church-officers are to expect them in our day. This leads us to consider the nature, constitution, and government of the churches of Christ in all ages.

I. We shall first consider what we are to understand by a particular church, and what is the foundation of it. A church is a number of visible professors, called to be saints, or, at least, denominated, and, by a judgment of charity, esteemed saints; united together by consent, in order to their having communion with one another; and testifying their subjection to Christ, and hope of his presence in all his ordinances; designing hereby to glorify his name, propagate his

gospel and interest in the world, and promote their mutual edification in that holy faith which is founded on scripture revelation. For these purposes they are obliged to call and set over them such pastors and other officers as God has qualified for the service, to be helpers of their faith, and to endeavour to promote their order, whereby the great and valuable ends of church communion may be answered, and God therein be glorified. This description of a particular church is agreeable to scripture, and founded on it, as may be easily made appear by referring to several scriptures in the New Testament relating to this matter. We read that the members of Christ are characterized as saints by calling, or 'called to be saints.' The churches in Macedonia are said to 'give their own selves to the Lord, and to the apostles by the will of God.'g—to sit under their ministry, and follow their directions, so far as they imparted to them the mind of Christ, and were helpers of their faith and order, to his glory; and we read of their 'professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ.' The church at Ephesus also is described as 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,' namely, the doctrines laid down by them, as the only rule of faith and obedience, 'Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.' As to their duty towards one another, they are farther said 'to build up themselves in their most holy faith, and to keep themselves in the love of God;' that is, to do every thing, by the divine assistance, which is necessary for these ends, 'looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;'i or, as it is said elsewhere, to 'consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together,' inasmuch as this is an instituted means for answering that great end. Many other scriptures might have been brought to the same purpose, tending to prove and illustrate the description we have given of a gospel-church.

But this may be evinced, also, in a reasoning from the laws of society, as founded on the law of nature, and applied to a religious society, which takes its rise from divine revelation and is founded on it. In order to our doing this, we shall lay down the following propositions. First, it is agreeable to the law of nature, and the whole tenor of scripture, that God should be glorified by social worship, and that all the members of worshipping societies should endeavour to promote the spiritual interest of one another. Man is, by the excellency of his nature, fitted for conversation; and he is obliged to it, by his relation to others who have the same capacities and qualifications. As, moreover, the glory of God is the end of his being, it ought to be the end of all those intercourses which we have with one another; and, as divine worship is the highest instance of our glorifying God, we are, as intelligent creatures, obliged to worship him in a social way.— Again, it is the great design of Christianity to direct us how this social worship should be performed by us as Christians, paying a due regard to the gospel, and the glory of the divine perfections as displayed in it. These are the subject of divine revelation, especially of that part of it whence the laws of Christian society are taken.— Further, they who have been made partakers of the grace of God, are obliged, out of gratitude to him, as the author of it, to proclaim his glory to the world. And as the experience of that grace, and the obligations which it lays persons under, are extended to others as well as ourselves, so all who are under like engagements, ought to be helpers of the faith and joy of one another, and to promote their mutual edification and salvation. Now, that this may be done, it is necessary that they consent or agree to have communion with one another in those duties in which they express their subjection to Christ, and desire to wait on him together in all his holy institutions. And the rule for their direction in this is contained in scripture; which sets forth the Mediator's glory, as King of saints, gives a perfect directory for gospel-worship, and encouragement to hope for

his presence in it whereby it may be attended with its desired success. Finally, as Christ, in scripture, has described some persons as qualified to assist and direct us in this matter, as well as called them to this service, it is necessary that these religious societies should choose and appoint persons to preside over them, who are styled pastors after his own heart, who may feed them with knowledge and understanding, so that his ordinances may be rightly administered, and the ends of church communion answered, to his glory, and their mutual advantage.

In this method of reasoning, the constitution of churches appears to be agreeable to the law of nature. We are not to suppose, however, with the Erastians and others, that the church is wholly founded on the laws of civil society, as if Christ had left no certain rules by which it is to be governed, besides those which are common to all societies, as an expedient to maintain peace and order. For there are other ends to be answered by church communion, which are more immediately conducive to the glory of Christ, and the promoting of revealed religion, which the law of nature, and the laws of society founded on it, can give us no direction in. It is a great dishonour to Christ, the King and Head of his church, to suppose that he has left them without a rule to direct them in what respects the communion of saints; as much as it would be to assert that he has left them without a rule of faith. If God was so particular in giving directions concerning every part of that worship which was to be performed in the church before Christ's coming, so that they were not, on pain of his highest displeasure, to deviate from it; certainly we must not think that our Saviour has neglected to give laws, by which the gospel-church is to be governed, distinct from such as are contained in the law of nature.

It may hence be inferred, that no church, or religious society of Christians, has power to make laws for its own government, in those things that pertain to religious worship, or are to be deemed a part of it. I do not say that a church has no power to appoint some discretionary rules to be observed by those who are of the same communion, provided they are kept within due bounds, and Christ's kingly office be not invaded. There is a very great controversy in the world, about the church's power to decree some things which are styled indifferent; but persons are not generally agreed in determining what they mean by indifferent things. Some understand by them those rites and ceremonies which are used in religious matters. These they call indifferent, because they are of less importance; but by being made terms of communion, they cease to be indifferent. Besides, whether they are of greater or less importance, if they respect a necessary mode of worship, conducive to the glory of God, such as occasions him to be more honoured than he would be by the neglect of it, to call them indifferent is to carry the idea of indifference too far, and to extend the power of the church beyond its due bounds. For as the terms of communion are to be fixed only by Christ, and as the means by which he is to be glorified, which have the nature of ordinances in which we hope for his presence and blessing, must be sought for from him; so the church has not power to ordain or sanction them without his warrant. Hence, when we speak of those indifferent matters which the church has power to appoint, we mean those things which are no part of religious worship, but merely discretionary, which may be observed or not, without any guilt contracted, or censure ensuing.

II. We are now led to consider the matter of a church, or the character of those persons who are qualified for church communion. We have already considered the church as a religious society. It is, therefore, necessary that all the members of it embrace the true

religion; and, in particular, that they deny none of those fundamental articles of faith which are necessary to salvation. It is not to be supposed that the members of any society have a perfect unanimity in their sentiments about all religious matters; for that is hardly to be expected in this world. They are all obliged, however, as the apostle says, 'to hold the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God,' and publicly to avow or maintain no doctrine which is subversive of the foundation on which the church is built. Revealed religion centres in Christ, and is referred to his glory as Mediator. Hence, all the members of a church ought to profess their faith in him and willingness to own him as their Lord and Lawgiver, and to give him the glory which is due to him as a divine Person, and as one who is appointed to execute the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. The apostle gives a short but very comprehensive description of those who are fit members of a church, when he says, 'We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'m It follows, that every religious society is not a church. False religions have been propagated among the heathen and others, in distinct societies of those who performed religious worship, who yet had no relation to Christ, and therefore were not reckoned among his churches. On the other hand, we cannot determine concerning every member of a particular church, that his heart is right with God. That is a prerogative which belongs only to the Searcher of hearts. It is the external profession which is our rule of judging. All are not in a state of salvation who are church-members, as the apostle says, 'They are not all Israel which are of Israel.' He makes a distinction between a real subjection to Christ by faith, and a professed subjection to him. He says, concerning the church of the Jews, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that

of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.'o Yet they were all church-members, professedly or apparently devoted to God. Concerning such we are bound, by a judgment of charity, to conclude, that they are what they profess themselves to be, till their conduct plainly gives the lie to their profession. The visible church is compared to the net, which had good and bad fish in it; and to 'the great house' in which are 'vessels' of various kinds,—'some to honour, and some to dishonour,'q—some fit for the master's use, others to be broken as 'vessels wherein is no pleasure,'—some sincere, others hypocrites. Yet till their hypocrisy is made manifest, they are supposed to be fit matter for a church. [See Note E, p. 42.]

III. We are now to consider the form or bond of union, whereby the members are incorporated into a society, and so denominated a church of Christ. It is neither profession of faith, nor conduct agreeable to it, which constitutes a person a member of a particular church; for, according to the laws of society, there must be a mutual consent to walk together, or to have communion one with another in all the ordinances which Christ has established. As the materials of which a building consists, do not constitute the building unless they are cemented and joined together; so the union of professing Christians, whereby they are joined together and become one body by mutual consent, is necessary to constitute them a church, as much as their professed subjection to Christ to denominate them a church of Christ. Hereby they become a confederate body; and as every one, in a private capacity, was before engaged to perform those duties which are incumbent on all men as Christians, now they bring themselves, pursuant to Christ's appointment, under an obligation to endeavour, by the assistance of divine grace, to walk becoming the relation they stand in to each other, or, as the apostle expresses himself, 'to build up themselves in their most holy faith,' so that the

ends of Christian society may be answered, and the glory of Christ secured; and they have ground to expect his presence in waiting on him in all his holy institutions. By means of this union they who were before considered as fit subjects for church-fellowship are said to be united together as a church of Christ. But as this principally respects the foundation or erection of churches, there are other things necessary for their increase, for the maintaining of that purity which is their glory, and for thereby preventing their contracting the guilt which would otherwise ensue.

IV. We are thus led to consider the power which Christ has given them, and the rules which he has laid down to be observed by them, in the admission of persons to church communion, and in the exclusion of them from it.

1. As to the admission of members who may fill up the places of those whose relation to them is dissolved by death, it is highly reasonable that the churches should have all the satisfaction which is necessary concerning their fitness for church communion. But we must inquire what terms or conditions are to be insisted on, and complied with, in order to admission. We must not suppose that these are arbitrary, or such as a church shall please to impose; for it is no more in their power to make terms of communion, than it is to make a rule of faith or worship. In this, a church differs from a civil society. The terms of admission into the latter are arbitrary, provided they do not interfere with any of the laws of God or man. But the terms of Christian communion are fixed by Christ, the Head of his church; and therefore no society of men have a right to make the door of admission into their own communion straiter or wider than Christ has made it. This is a matter in which some of the reformed churches differ among themselves; though the dissention ought not to rise so high as to cause any alienation of affection, or any degree of

uncharitableness, so as to occasion any to think that because they do not in all things agree as to this matter, they ought not to treat one another as those who hold the Head, and are designing to advance the interest of Christ in the various methods they are pursuing to advance it. I think it is allowed by most of the churches of Christ—at least by those who suppose that persons have no right to church communion, without the consent of that particular society of which any one is to be made a member—that nothing short of a professed subjection to Christ, and a desire to adhere to him in all his offices, as well as worship him in all his ordinances, can be reckoned a term of church communion. For we suppose the church to be built upon this foundation; and nothing short of it can sufficiently set forth the glory of Christ as its Head, or answer the valuable ends of church communion. It follows that, as ignorance of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ disqualifies for church communion, so also does immorality in conduct; for both of these evince a person to be alienated from the life of God, a stranger to the covenant of promise, and in subjection to Satan, the god of this world, which is inconsistent with a professed subjection to Christ. Hence, a mind rightly informed in the great doctrines of the gospel, with a conduct in life corresponding to it, is to be insisted on, as a term of church communion.

But that in which the sentiments of men differ, is the way and manner in which this qualification for church communion is to be rendered visible; and whether some things which are merely circumstantial are to be insisted on as terms of communion. That those qualifications which are necessary to church communion ought to be, in some way or other, made visible, is taken for granted by many on both sides. Indeed, without it the church could not be called 'visible,' or a society of such as profess the true religion, and, together with it, their subjection to Christ. Qualification for fellowship must,

in a special manner, be made known to those who are to hold communion with the persons admitted, as called to be saints; for this communion cannot, from the nature of the thing, be held, unless the character of saints be, in some way or other, made to appear. If it be said that there is no occasion for this character to be explicit, or the profession of it to be made otherwise than as their relation to a church declares them visible professors; we must observe that that relation is only a presumptive evidence that they are Christians, and does not sufficiently distinguish them from the world, especially from that part of it who make an outward show of religion, and attend on several branches of public worship. This mere outward profession is certainly very remote from the character given of all those churches which we have an account of in the New Testament, concerning some of whom the apostle says, that 'their faith' was not only known to the particular society to which they belonged, but was 'spread abroad,' or 'spoken of throughout the whole world.' This it could never have been, if they who were more immediately concerned to know it, had received no other conviction than what is the result of their joining with them in some external acts of worship. That Christian character must be made visible may be inferred, also, from what is generally allowed by those who explain the nature of the Lord's Supper, which is a church ordinance, and lay down the qualifications of those who are deemed fit to partake of it, particularly that they are under an obligation to exmine themselves, not only concerning their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, but concerning their faith to feed on him, their repentance, love, and new obedience, their trusting in his mercy, and rejoicing in his love, and that they are under a necessity of renewing the exercise of those graces which may render them meet for this ordinance. This is consonant to the practice of many of the reformed churches; who will not admit any into their communion, without receiving satisfaction as to their having these qualifications for this ordinance. Now, as the

matter in controversy with them principally respects the manner in which this is to be given, and the concern of the church in it, we may infer that there is the highest reason that the church should receive satisfaction, as well as those who preside over it. They are obliged, in conscience, to have communion with the persons admitted, and to reckon them among the number of those who have been made partakers of the grace of Christ; and this they cannot well be said to do, unless the Christian character of the persons admitted be in some way or other made visible to them.

We are thus led to consider the manner in which a profession of Christianity is to be made visible,—whether it is to be done by every one in his own person, or whether a report of it by another in his name may be deemed sufficient. This I can reckon no other than a circumstance. Hence, I am of opinion that one of these ways is not so far to be insisted on, as that a person whose qualifications for it are not to be questioned, should be denied the privilege of church communion because he is unwilling to comply with it, as thinking that the main end designed by it may be as effectually answered by the other. If a person be duly qualified, as the apostle says concerning Timothy, to make 'a good profession before many witnesses;' if his making such a profession may not only have a tendency to answer the end of giving satisfaction to the church, but be an expedient, in an uncommon degree, to promote their edification; if he have something remarkable to impart, and desire to bear his testimony to the grace of God which he has experienced in his own person, and thereby to induce others to join with him in giving him the glory of it; there is no law of God or nature which prohibits or forbids him to do it. Nor ought such a public profession to be censured, as if it could not be made without being liable to the common imputation that pride must be the necessary inducement to it; for that is such a censure and reproach as is unbecoming

Christians, especially when it is alleged as an universal exception. I am far, however, from pleading for such a public profession as a necessary term of communion; nor do I think that a person's desire to give the church satisfaction in such a way, ought always to be complied with; for whatever occasion some may suppose they have for it, all are not fit to do it in such a way as may tend to the church's edification. There are various other ways by which a church may know that those who are proposed to its communion have a right to it, which I forbear to mention. But one of them is not to be so far insisted on, as that a refusal to comply with it rather than another, provided the general end be answered, should debar a person, otherwise qualified, from church communion. The church being satisfied, he is joined to them by their consent; and is, in consequence, laid under equal engagements with them, to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless.

2. We are now led to consider the exclusion of members from church communion. This is agreeable to the laws of society, as well as their admission into it; and hereby a becoming zeal is expressed for the glory of God, and a public testimony given against those who discover the insincerity of their professed subjection to Christ, which was the ground and reason of their being admitted into that relation which now they appear to have forfeited.

Now, the church has a right to exclude those from its communion who appear to be unqualified for it, or a reproach to it. Here I cannot but take notice of the opinion of the Erastians, that a church has no power, distinct from the civil government, to exclude persons from its communion. This opinion was advanced by Erastus, a physician in Germany, soon after the beginning of the Reformation. What seems to have given occasion to it, was the just prejudice which he entertained against the Popish doctrine, concerning the

independence of the church upon the state. This was then, and is at this day, maintained and abused to such a degree, that if a clergyman insults the government, and sets himself at the head of a rebellion against his lawful prince, or is guilty of any other enormous crimes, he flies to the church for protection, and generally finds it there; especially if the king should, in any respect, disoblige him, or refuse to lay his crown at his feet, if he desire it. Opposition to this was, I say, a just prejudice; and gave first rise to the opinion of Erastus, who, in opposing one extreme, ran into another. The argument by which his opinion is generally supported, is, that the independence of the church upon the state tends to erect or set up one government within another. But this is not contrary to the law of nature and nations, when a smaller government is not co-ordinate with the other, but allowed and protected by it. The government of a family or corporation must be acknowledged by all to be a smaller government included in a greater. But will any one deny that they are inconsistent with it? May not a master admit into his family whom he pleases, or exclude them from being members of it? Or may not a corporation make the by-laws by which it is governed, without being supposed to interfere with the civil government? And, by a parity of reason, may not a church, pursuant not only to the laws of society, but to the rule which Christ has given, exclude members from its communion, without being supposed to subvert the fundamental laws of civil government? We do not deny that, if the church should pretend to inflict corporal punishments on its members, or make use of the civil sword, which is committed into the hand of the magistrate; or if it should act contrary to the laws of Christ, by defending, encouraging, or abetting those who are enemies to the civil government, or excluding them from those privileges which the laws of the land give them a right to, its doing so would be a notoriously unwarrantable instance of erecting one government within another, subversive of it.

But this is not the design of excommunication, as one of those ordinances which Christ has given to his church.

We are now to consider the causes of inflicting censure on persons. These are no other than those things which, had they been before known, would have been a hinderance to their being admitted to church communion. Hence, when a person is guilty of those crimes which, had they been known before, he ought not to have been received, and when these are made to appear, he is deemed unqualified for that privilege which he was before admitted to partake of. On this account we generally say, that every one first excludes himself, by being guilty of those crimes which disqualify him for church communion, before he is to be excluded from it by the sentence of the church.—But, that we may be a little more particular on this subject, let us consider that they who disturb the tranquillity of the church, by the uneasiness of their tempers, or who are not only unwilling to comply with the method of its government, but endeavour to make others so, or who are restless in their attempts to bring innovations into it, or to propagate doctrines which are contrary to scripture, and the general faith of the church founded on it, though these be not directly subversive of the gospel, yet, inasmuch as the persons are not satisfied in retaining their own sentiments, without giving disturbance to others who cannot adhere to them, such, I think, ought to be separated from the communion of the church, purely out of a principle of self-preservation; though it is not the church's immediate duty to judge the state so much as the temper of the persons, whom they withdraw from.—Again, if a person propagate a doctrine subversive of the gospel, or of that faith on which the church is founded, he is to be excluded. It is such an one, as I humbly conceive, whom the apostle styles 'an heretic,' and advises Titus 'to reject,' and of whom he speaks as one that 'is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.' Some think

that the person here spoken of, is one who pretends to believe one doctrine, but really believes another which is of a most pernicious tendency; that he is to be rejected, not for his sentiments, but for his insincerity; and that on this account he is said to be 'self-condemned.'a But I cannot acquiesce in this sense of the text. For though there may be some in the world who think to find their account, gain popular applause, or, some way or other, serve their worldly interest, by pretending to believe those doctrines which they really deny; yet this cannot be truly said of the person whom the apostle, in this scripture, describes as 'an heretic.' He is, indeed, represented as inconsistent with himself; and his being so is supposed to be known and alleged, as an aggravation of the charge on which his expulsion from the religious society of which he was a member is founded; but did ever any man propagate one doctrine, and tell the world that he believed another, so that he might, for this conduct, be convicted as an hypocrite? Certainly his acting thus could not be known without his own confession; and the church could not censure him, but upon sufficient evidence. It may be said that they might know this by divine inspiration. But though it is true that they were favoured with divine inspiration in that age, in which, among other extraordinary gifts, they had that of 'discerning spirits;' yet it is greatly to be questioned, whether they ever proceeded against any one upon extraordinary intimations, without some apparent matter of accusation, which was known by those who had not this extraordinary gift. For, if they had a liberty to proceed against persons in such a way, why did not our Saviour reject Judas, who was one of that society who attended on his ministry, when he knew him to be an hypocrite, or 'self-condemned,' in a most notorious degree? Yet our Saviour did not reject him; and the reason, doubtless, was, that he designed that his churches, in succeeding ages, should, in all their judicial proceedings, go upon evidence which might easily be known by all, when they expelled any one from

their communion. Besides, if the sense contended for be the true sense of the text, and the ground on which persons are to be rejected, no one can be known to be self-condemned now; for we have no extraordinary intimations since miraculous gifts ceased; nor can we believe that any thing was instituted as essential to the church's proceedings, in the modes of government, which could not be put in practice except in the apostolic age; and if so, then having recourse to extraordinary discerning of spirits, as a foundation of proceeding against persons to be excluded from church communion, will not serve the purpose for which it is alleged. It must be concluded, therefore, that the person here said to be 'self-condemned,' was deemed so, not because he pretended to hold that faith which he really denied, but because his present professed sentiments were the reverse of what he had before pretended to hold, his profession of which was a term on which he was admitted into the church. In this sense he is said to be 'self-condemned;' his present errors being a contradiction to the faith which he then professed, in common with the rest of the society of which he was admitted a member.—Further, persons are to be excluded from church communion for immoral practices, which not only contradict their professed subjection to Christ, but argue them to be in an unconverted state. When they were first received into the church, they were supposed, by a judgment of charity, to be Christ's subjects and servants. Their own profession, which was not then contradicted by any apparent blemishes in their conversation, was the foundation of this opinion, which the church was then bound to entertain concerning them. But, when they are guilty of any crimes which are contrary to their professed subjection to Christ, the church is to take away the privilege which they had before granted them. For by these crimes they appear to be disqualified for their communion; and the church's excluding them is necessary, inasmuch as by it they express a just detestation of every thing which would be a reproach to them, or an

instance of disloyalty to Christ, or rebellion against him as their Head and Saviour.

We are now to speak concerning the method of proceeding in excluding persons from church communion. We must consider this as a judicial act, and therefore not to be done without trying and judging impartially the merits of the cause. A crime committed is supposed to be first known by particular persons, who are members of the church; or if any injury be done, whereby another has received just matter of offence, he is supposed to be first apprized of it before it be brought before the church. In this case, our Saviour has expressly given direction concerning the method in which he is to proceed. He says, 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' If this scripture be rightly understood, it will give great light to the method of proceeding in this matter. Here we must consider, that the crime is called 'a trespass.' Accordingly, it is, in some respects, injurious to others; and by its being so, the offender contracts some degree of guilt for which he is to be reproved. Were it otherwise, there would be no room for a private rebuke or admonition, in order to bring him to repentance; nor, upon his obstinate refusal to repent, would the church have ground to proceed in excluding him from its communion. We are not to suppose, however, that the crime is of such a nature as is, in itself, inconsistent with a state of grace, or as affords matter of open scandal to the Christian name, as if a person were guilty of adultery, theft, or some other notorious crime; for, in this case, it would not be sufficient for the person who is apprized of

it to give the offender a friendly and gentle reproof, so that, upon his confessing his fault, and repenting of it, all farther proceedings against him ought to be stopped. For, in such a case, I humbly conceive that he who has received information concerning it, ought to make it known to the church, that so the matter may not only be fully charged upon him, but his repentance be as visible as the scandal he has brought to religion, by his crime, has been. If I know a person to be a traitor to his prince, a murderer, or guilty of any other crime whereby he has forfeited his life, it is not sufficient for me to reprove him privately for it, in order to bring him to repentance; but I must discover it to proper persons, that he may be brought to condign punishment. So, in this case, if a person be guilty of a crime which in itself disqualifies for church communion, and brings a reproach on the ways of God, the church ought to express their public resentment against it; which will tend to secure the honour of religion. Hence, it ought to be brought before them immediately; and they ought to proceed against the offender, by excluding him from their communion, even though, for the present, he seem to express some degree of sorrow for his crime, as being made public. And if they judge that his repentance is sincere, and that the world has sufficient ground to conclude it to be so, then they may express their forgiveness of it, and so withdraw the censure they have passed upon him. But, in crimes of a lesser nature, a private admonition ought to be given; and if this be to no purpose, but the person go on in his sin, so that it appears to be habitual, and his repentance not sincere, the cause is then to be brought before the church. But, in order to this, the person who first reproved the offender must take one or two more, that they may join in the second reproof; and if all this be to no purpose, then they are to appear as evidences against him, and the church is to give him a public admonition; and if this solemn ordinance prove ineffectual, then he is to be excluded. His exclusion is styled his 'being to them as an heathen man or publican;' that is,

they have no farther relation to him, any more than they have to the heathen or publicans, or no immediate care of him, otherwise than as they are to desire to know whether the censure inflicted on him be blessed for his advantage.

We are now led to consider the temper with which the sentence of exclusion from church communion ought to be denounced, and the consequences of it, with respect to him who falls under it. The same frame of spirit ought to discover itself in this as in all other reproofs for sin committed. There ought to be a zeal expressed for the glory of God, and, at the same time, compassion to the souls of those who have rendered themselves obnoxious to it; without the least degree of hatred being felt toward their persons. The crime is to be aggravated in proportion to its nature, so that he who has committed it may be brought under conviction, and be humbled for his sin; yet he is to be made sensible that his spiritual advantage is intended by the discipline to which he is subjected. This is very contrary to those methods which were taken in the corrupt state of the Jewish church; who, when they excommunicated persons, denounced several curses against them, and whose consequent behaviour was altogether unjustifiable. We have an account, in some of their writings, of two degrees of excommunication practised among them. One of these deprived them of only some privileges which that church enjoyed, but not of all. Another carried in it more terror, by reason of several anathemas annexed to it; which were a great abuse and perversion of the design of the law relating to the curses which were to be denounced on mount Ebal. This law was given, not as a form to be used in excommunication, but to show the Israelites what sin deserved, and to be an expedient to prevent those sins which would expose them to the divine wrath and curse.d The Jews pretend, too, to have a warrant for their excommunications by anathema from Deborah and Barak's cursing Meroz, and from Joshua's denouncing

a curse upon him who should rebuild Jericho.f But these instances do not give countenance to their proceedings; for we must distinguish between anathemas denounced by immediate divine direction by persons who had the spirit of prophecy, and those curses which were denounced by others who were altogether destitute of it. —Moreover, as the Jews, in the degenerate ages of their church, abused the ordinance of excommunication, so they discovered such a degree of hatred to those whom they excommunicated, as ought not to be expressed to the vilest of men. An instance of this we have in their behaviour towards the Samaritans; who, according to the account we have from Jewish writers, were excommunicated in Ezra's time, for building a temple on mount Gerizzim, and setting up corrupt worship there, in opposition to that which ought to have been performed in the temple at Jerusalem. For this they were justly excluded from the Jewish church;h but their morose behaviour towards them was unwarrantable. That there was an irreconcilable enmity between them, appears from the woman of Samaria's answer to our Saviour, when desiring her to give him water; and it is evident that he was far from approving of the behaviour of the Jews towards them. The woman was amazed that he should ask water of her, and said to him, 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans;' that is, they retain the old rancour and prejudice against them, that they will not have any dealings with them which involve the least obligation on either side. These things were consequences of excommunication, which they had no ground for in scripture.

As to the Christian church, they seem to have followed the Jews too much in that in which they are not to be imitated. Hence arose the distinction between the greater and the lesser excommunication; which is agreeable, though expressed in other words, to that which

we have already mentioned. Their denouncing anathemas against persons excommunicated by them, how much soever it might have argued their zeal against the crimes they committed, is no example for us to follow. It is beyond dispute, that they endeavoured to make this censure as much dreaded as was possible, to deter men from committing those crimes which might deserve it. Tertullian calls it, 'an anticipation of the future judgment;' and Cyprian supposes a person on whom it is inflicted to be 'far from a state of salvation.'l Moreover, some have supposed that persons, when excommunicated, were possessed by the devil. This they conclude to be the sense of the apostle, when he speaks of 'delivering' such 'unto Satan.'n They think that Satan actually seized and took possession of them; that God permitted this as an expedient to strike terror into the minds of men, to prevent many sins from being committed; and that it was more necessary at the time when the church was destitute of the assistance of the civil magistrate, who took no care to defend the church, or to punish crimes committed by its members. But I cannot think that there was ever such a power granted to the church, how much soever the necessity of affairs might be supposed to require it. We read nothing of it in the writings of those Fathers who lived in the early ages, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, or Cyprian; who would, doubtless, have taken some notice of this extraordinary miraculous punishment attending excommunication, had there been any such thing. Some of them, indeed, speak of the church's being favoured, in some instances, after the apostle's time, with the extraordinary gift of miracles, and particularly that of casting out devils; but we have no account of the devil's possessing any upon their being cast out of the church. We read in scripture, indeed, of 'delivering' a person excommunicated 'to Satan.'p But I cannot think that the apostle intends any more by the phrase than a person's being declared to be in Satan's kingdom, that is, in the world, where Satan rules over the children of disobedience. If, too,

his crime be so great as is inconsistent with a state of grace, he must, without doubt, be reckoned a servant of Satan, and in this sense be delivered to him. Besides, there is a particular design of the delivering to Satan mentioned by the apostle, namely, 'the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;' so that the person's good is to be intended by it, that he may be humbled, brought to repentance, and afterwards received again into the bosom of the church.

We have thus considered the general description of a church, the matter and form of it, and the power granted to it of receiving persons into its communion or excluding them from it. From what has been stated on these subjects, we may infer that nearness of habitation, how much soever it may contribute to the answering of some ends of church communion, which cannot be attained by those who live many miles distant from one another, is not sufficient to constitute persons church members, or to give them a right to the privileges which attend that relation. Parochial churches have no foundation in scripture; for they want both the matter and form of a church; nor are they any other than a human constitution.—Again, the scripture gives no account of the church as national or provincial. Though persons have a right to many civil privileges, as born in particular nations or provinces, it does not follow that they are professedly subject to Christ, or united together in the bonds of the gospel. If a church which styles itself national, exclude persons from its communion, whether it be for real or supposed crimes, it takes away a right which it had no power to confer, but which is founded on the laws of men, which are very distinct from those which Christ has given to his churches.

V. We are now led to consider the government of the church, by those officers which Christ has appointed in it. Tyranny and anarchy

are extremes, inconsistent with the good of civil society, and contrary to the law of nature, and are sufficiently guarded against by the government which Christ has fixed in his church. He has appointed officers to secure its peace and order, and has limited their power, and given directions which concern the exercise of it, so that the church may be governed without oppression, its religious rights maintained, and the glory of God and the mutual edification of its members promoted.

We have already considered those extraordinary officers whom Christ set over the gospel-church, when it was first constituted, namely, the apostles and evangelists. But there are others whom he has given to his churches. These are either such as are appointed to bear rule, more especially in what respects the promoting of faith and order, who are styled pastors and elders; or they are such as have the oversight of the secular affairs of the church, and the trust of providing for the necessities of the poor committed to them, who are called deacons.

As to the former, namely, pastors and elders, we often read of them in the New Testament. All, however, are not agreed in their sentiments as to whether the elders spoken of in scripture are distinct officers from pastors, or whether Christ has appointed two sorts of them, namely, preaching and ruling elders. Some think the apostle distinguishes between them, when he says, 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' The 'double honour' here intended, seems to be not only civil respect, but maintenance, as appears from the following words, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and the labourer is worthy of his reward.' Now, the parties to whom I refer suppose that this maintenance belongs to such only as 'labour in word and doctrine,' and not to the

other elders who are said to 'rule well.' They hence conclude that there are elders who 'rule well,' distinct from those who 'labour in word and doctrine.' Others, indeed, think that the apostle, in this text, speaks only of the latter sort; and then the stress of his argument is laid principally on the word 'labouring,' as if he had said, 'Let every one who preaches the gospel and presides over the church, have that honour conferred on him which is his due; but let this be greater in proportion to the pains and diligence which he shows for the church's edification.' I cannot but think, however, since it is agreeable to the laws of society, and not in the least repugnant to any thing we read in scripture concerning the office of an elder, that, in case of emergency, when the necessity of the church requires it, or when the work of preaching and ruling is too much for a pastor, the church being very numerous, it is advisable that some should be chosen from among themselves, to assist him in managing the affairs of government and performing some branches of his office distinct from that of preaching, a work to which they are not called, as not being duly qualified for it. These are helpers or assistants in government; and their office may have in it a very great expediency; as in the multitude of counsellors there is safety, and the direction and advice of those who are men of prudence and esteem in the church will be very conducive to maintain its peace and order. But I cannot think that the office of ruling elders is necessary in smaller churches, in which the pastors need not their assistance.[See Note F, page 43.]

We shall now speak concerning the office of a pastor. This consists of two branches, namely, preaching the word and administering the sacraments on the one hand, and performing the office of a ruling elder on the other.

We may first consider him as qualified and called to preach the gospel. This is an honourable and important work, and has always been reckoned so by those who have had any concern for the promoting of the glory of God in the world. The apostle Paul was very thankful to Christ that he conferred upon him the honour of being employed in this work, or, as he expresses it, that 'he counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry.' Elsewhere he concludes, that it is necessary that they who engage in this work be sent by God, 'How shall they preach, except they be sent?'s This is a necessary prerequisite to the pastoral office, as much as speech is necessary to an orator, or conduct to a governor. Yet persons may be employed in the work of the ministry, who are not pastors. These, if they faithfully discharge the work they are called to, may be reckoned a blessing to the world, and a valuable part of the church's treasure. Considered as distinct from pastors, however, they are not reckoned among its officers. This is a subject which very well deserves our consideration. But, as we have an account elsewhere of the qualifications and call of ministers to preach the gospel, and of the manner in which their work is to be done, we pass the subject over at present.

We shall next consider a minister as invested with the pastoral office, and so related to a particular church. The characters by which those who are called to it are described in the New Testament, besides that of a pastor, are a bishop or overseer, and a presbyter or elder, who labours in word and doctrine. The world, it is certain, is very much divided in their sentiments about this matter. Some conclude that a bishop is not only distinct from, but superior, both in order and degree, to those who are styled presbyters or elders; while others think either that there is no difference between them, or, at least, that it is not so great that they should be reckoned distinct officers in a church. The account we have, in scripture, of this matter, seems to be somewhat different from what were the sentiments of the church

in following ages. Sometimes we read of several bishops in one church. Thus the apostle, writing to the church at Philippi, directs his epistle to the bishops and deacons. Elsewhere he seems to call the same persons bishops and elders or presbyters; for he sent to Ephesus, 'and called the elders of the church,'x and advised them to 'take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over whom the Holy Ghost had made them overseers' or bishops. At another time, he charges Titus to 'ordain elders,' or presbyters, 'in every city.' He then gives the character of those whom he was to ordain, bidding him take care that they were 'blameless,' and had other qualifications necessary for this office; and, in assigning a reason for his doing so, he adds, 'For a bishop must be blameless,' &c. Here it is plain, the words 'elder' and 'bishop' are indifferently used by him, as respecting the same person. The apostle Peterz also addresses himself to 'the elders' of the churches to whom he writes, styling himself 'an elder together with them,' and 'a witness of the sufferings of Christ,' which was his character as an apostle; and he exhorts them to perform the office of 'bishops,' or 'overseers,'b as the word which we render 'taking the oversight' signifies; whence it is evident that elders and presbyters had the character of bishops, from the work they were to perform. Moreover, the venerable assembly who met at Jerusalem to discuss an important question brought before them by Paul and Barnabas, is said to have consisted of the apostles and elders. Now, if bishops had been not only distinct from elders but a superior order to them, they would have been mentioned as such, and, doubtless, have met with them; but it seems probable that they are included in the general character of 'elders.' Some think that the same persons are called bishops, because they had the oversight of their respective churches, and elders, because they were qualified for this work by the age and experience to which they had, for the most part, arrived; as the word 'elder' signifies not only one who is invested with an office,d

but one who, by reason of his age, and of the wisdom which often attends it, is fitted to discharge its duties.

We read nothing in scripture of diocesan churches, or bishops over them; how much soever diocesan episcopacy was pleaded for in many following ages. They who maintain it generally have recourse to the writings of the Fathers and church historians: but were the proofs taken thence more strong and conclusive than they are, they would not be sufficient to support its divine right. I shall not enlarge on this particular branch of the controversy; as it has been handled with much learning and judgment by many others, who refer to the writings of the Fathers of the three first centuries, to prove that churches were no larger in those times than one person could have the oversight of, and that these chose their own bishops. Some think, indeed, that there is ground to conclude, from what we find in the writings of Ignatius, Tertullian, Cyprian, and other Fathers in these ages, that there was a superiority of bishops to presbyters, at least in degree, though not in order; that the presbyter performed all the branches of the work which properly belonged to bishops, with only this difference, that it was done with their leave, or by their order, or in their absence; and that, there being several elders in the same church, one of these, when a bishop died, was ready to succeed him in his office. Some of the Fathers speak also of the church as parochial, and contradistinguished from diocesan. But as it does not appear, by their writings, that the parochial churches of which they speak had no bond of union but nearness of habitation, I cannot so readily conclude that their church state depended principally on this political circumstance. I am of opinion rather that Christians thought it most convenient for those to enter into a church relation, who, by reason of the nearness of their situation to each other, could better perform the duties which were incumbent on them as church members. It appears, too, from several things occasionally

mentioned by the Fathers, that the church admitted none into its communion but those whom they judged qualified for it, not only by understanding the doctrines of Christianity, but by a conduct becoming their profession; and that they caused them to remain a considerable time in a state of probation, admitting them to attend on the prayers and instructions of the church, but ordering them to withdraw before the Lord's Supper was administered. These are sometimes called 'hearers,' by Cyprian, at other times, 'candidates,' but most commonly 'catechumens.' And there were persons appointed not only to instruct them, but to examine what proficiency they made in religion, in order to their being received into the church. In this state of trial they continued generally two or three years. Such was the care taken that persons might not deceive themselves and the church, by their being joined in communion with it, without having the necessary qualifications. This was a very different state of things from that of parochial churches, as understood and defended by many in our day. Hence, the calling of churches 'parishes,' in the three first centuries, was only a circumstantial description of them. In every one of these churches, too, there was one who was called a bishop or overseer, with a convenient number of elders or presbyters; and it is observed by the learned writer just referred to, that the churches were at first comparatively small, and not exceeding the bigness of the city or village in which they were situated, each of which was under the care or oversight of its respective pastor or bishop. This was the state of the church, more especially, in the three first centuries. But, if we descend a little lower to the fourth century, when it arrived at a peaceable and flourishing state, we shall find that its government was very much altered. Then, indeed, the bishops had the oversight of larger dioceses than they had before. This proceeded from the aspiring temper of particular persons,h who were not content till they had added some neighbouring parishes to their own; and so

their churches became very large, till they extended themselves over whole provinces. But even this Was complained of by some as an abuse. Chrysostom frequently insisted on the inconvenience of bishops having churches too large for them to take the oversight of, and of their not so much regarding the qualifications as the number of those over whom they presided; and he signifies his earnest desire that those under his care might excel rather in piety than in number, as it would be an expedient for his better discharging the work committed to him.

We have thus spoken concerning the character and distinction of the pastors of churches, together with the form of the church in the first ages of Christianity, and what is observed by many concerning the agreement and difference which there was between bishops and presbyters. But this last point has been so largely insisted on by many who have written on both sides of the question, and the controversy turns so very much on critical remarks on occasional passages taken out of the writings of the Fathers without recourse to scripture, that it is less necessary or agreeable to our present design to enlarge on it. We may observe, however, that some of those who have written in defence of diocesan episcopacy, have been forced to acknowledge that Jerome, Augustin, Ambrose, Chrysostom, in the fourth century, and Sedulius, Primatius, Theodoret, and Theophylact, in some following ages, all held the identity of both name and order of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church. Jerome, in particular, is more express on this subject than any of them, and proves it from some arguments taken from scripture. He also speaks of the distinction between bishops and elders, as the result of those divisions by which the peace and order of the church was broken; and says that it was no other than a human constitution.l This opinion of Jerome is largely defended by a learned

writer; who shows that it is agreeable to the sentiments of other Fathers who lived before and after him.

Having thus spoken concerning a pastor as styled a bishop or presbyter, we shall now consider him as invested with his office, whereby he becomes related to a particular church of Christ. That no one is pastor of the catholic church, was observed under a foregoing Head. We there showed that the church, when styled catholic, is not to be reckoned the seat of government; that, therefore, we must consider a pastor as presiding over a particular church; and, that, in order to his doing so, he must be called or chosen, on their part, to take the oversight of them, and comply with the invitation on his own part, and afterwards be solemnly invested with this office, or set apart to it. Let us now consider what more especially respects the church, who have a right to choose or call qualified persons, to engage in this service, and to perform the two branches of the pastoral office, namely, instructing and governing. This right of a church to choose their pastor is not only agreeable to the laws of society, but is plainly taught in scripture, and appears to have been the sentiment and practice of the church in the three first centuries. The church's power of choosing their own officers, is sufficiently evident from scripture. If there were any exception, it must be in those instances in which there was an extraordinary hand of providence in the appointment of officers over the churches; but even then God sometimes referred the matter to their own choice. Thus, when Moses made several persons rulers over Israel, to bear a part of the burden which before was wholly laid on him, he refers the matter to their own election. 'Take ye wise men,' says he, 'and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.'o The gospel-church, also, which at first consisted of 'about an hundred and twenty' members, when an apostle was to be chosen to succeed Judas, 'appointed two' out of their number, and

prayed that God would 'signify whether of them he had chosen;' and, when they had 'given forth their lots, the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.'q So we render the words; but if they had been rendered, 'he was numbered among the eleven apostles by common suffrage,' or vote, the translation would have been more expressive of the sense. Soon after, we read of the choice of other officers in the church, namely, deacons;s and the apostles said to the church, 'Look ye out among you seven men, whom we may appoint over this business.' And afterwards, in their appointing elders or pastors over particular churches, we read of their choosing them by vote or suffrage. Thus it is said, 'When they had ordained them elders in every church.' So we translate the words;u but they might be better rendered, 'When they had chosen elders in every church by the lifting up of the hand.' This lifting up of the hand was, and is at this day, a common mode of electing persons either to civil or religious offices. And it might be easily proved from the Fathers, that it was the universal practice of the church in the three first centuries, and not wholly laid aside in following ages, till civil policy and secular interest usurped and invaded the church's rights. But this argument having been judiciously managed by Dr. Owen, I pass it over, and proceed to consider the question of ordination.

A pastor having been chosen by the church, and having confirmed his election by his own consent, then follows his being separated or publicly set apart to his office, with fasting and prayer. This is generally called ordination. It does not, indeed, constitute a person a pastor of a church; so that his election, confirmed by his consent, would not have been valid without it. Yet it is not only agreeable to the scripture rule, but highly expedient, that, as his ministerial acts are to be public, his entering into his office should be so likewise, and, in order to this, that other pastors or elders should join in the solemnity; for, though they do not confer the office upon him, yet

they testify their approbation of the person chosen to it; and so a foundation is laid for that harmony of pastors and churches which tends to the glory of God, and the promoting of the common interest. Ordination also protects against several inconveniences which might follow without it; since it is possible that a church may choose a person to be their pastor, whose call to, and qualification for, his office may be questioned. It is, moreover, natural to suppose, that they would expect their proceedings in the settlement of their pastor to be justified and defended by other pastors and churches, so that the communion of churches may be maintained. But how can this be done, if no expedient be used to render the matter public and visible; which this way of ordaining or setting apart to the pastoral office does? For they who join in it testify their approbation of what is done, as being agreeable to the rule of the gospel.

Public inauguration or investiture in the pastoral office, is, for the most part, performed with imposition of hands. As this is so frequently mentioned in scripture, and appears to have been practised by the church in all succeeding ages, it will be reckoned by many to be no other than a fruitless attempt, if not an offending against the generation of God's people, to call in question its warrantableness. It is certain that it was used in the early ages of the church, particularly in public and solemn benedictions. Thus Jacob laid his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh, when he blessed them. It was used also in conferring political offices; in healing diseases in a miraculous way;z and sometimes in receiving persons who were eminently converted to the Christian faith and baptized. These things are very evident from scripture. Yet it may be observed, that, in several of these instances, it has, for some ages past, been laid aside, by reason of the discontinuance of those extraordinary gifts which were signified by it. There was, doubtless, something extraordinary in the patriarchal benediction; as Jacob did not only pray for a

blessing on the sons of Joseph, but, as a prophet, he foretold that the divine blessing, which he spake of, should descend on their posterity. Hence we do not read of this ceremony having been used in the more common instances, when persons who were not endowed with the spirit of prophecy, put up prayers or supplications to God for others. Though it was sometimes used in the designation of persons to political offices; yet it was so in those times in which the church of the Jews was under the divine theocracy, and when extraordinary gifts were expected to qualify persons for the office they were called to perform. As to the cases mentioned in scripture, of imposition of hands in the ordination or setting apart of ministers to the pastoral office, when extraordinary gifts were conferred, or when these gifts were bestowed on persons who were converted to the Christian faith and baptized; in all these and similar cases, the ceremony was used as a significant sign and ordinance for their faith. But it is certain that the conferring of extraordinary gifts to qualify for the pastoral office, is not now to be expected; so that it must either be proved that something besides this was signified, which may be now expected, or the use of the ceremony, as a significant sign or an ordinance for our faith, cannot be well defended. If it be said that the conferring of the pastoral office is signified by it, it must be proved that they who use the sign have a right to confer the office, or to constitute a person a pastor of a particular church. If these things cannot easily be proved, we must suppose that the external action is used without its having the nature of a sign; and then it is to be included among things which are indifferent; and a person's right to exercise the pastoral office, does not depend on its use, nor, on the other hand, is that right to be called in question by reason of the neglect of it. To conclude this Head, if the only thing intended by the ceremony be what Augustin understood to be the meaning of imposition of hands on those who were baptized in his day, namely, that it was merely a praying over persons, I have nothing to object against it. But if more be intended

by it, and especially if it be reckoned so necessary to the pastoral office that the duties of that office cannot be acceptably performed without it, there may be just reason for many to except against it.

We shall now consider the pastor as discharging his office. This more immediately respects the church to which he stands related, especially in what concerns his presiding or ruling over them. If there be more elders joined with him, with whom he is to act in concert, they constitute what is generally called a Consistory. This I cannot think essential to the exercise of that government which Christ has appointed; though sometimes, as was before observed, it may be expedient. But whether there be one or more who bear rule in the church, their power is subjected to certain limitations, agreeably to the laws of society, and particularly to those which Christ has given to his church. As the nature of the office we are speaking of does not argue that the church is without any government, or under such a democracy as infers confusion, or supposes that every one has a right to give laws to the whole body; so it has not those ingredients of absolute and unlimited monarchy or aristocracy which are inconsistent with liberty. We suppose, therefore, that a pastor and other elders, if such be joined with him, are not to rule according to their own will, or to act separately from the church in the affairs of government, but are to rule and act in their name, and with their consent. Accordingly, they are generally styled the instruments by which the church exerts that power which Christ has given it; and a church, when officers are set over it, is said to be organized. This is called, in scripture, the power of the keys; which, agreeably to the laws of society, is originally in them, and is to be exercised in their name, and with their consent, by their officers; so that a pastor, or other elders with him, have no power to act without the consent of the church, in receiving members into or excluding them from its communion. This I cannot but think to be agreeable to the law of

nature, on which the laws of society are founded, as well as to the gospel rule. I am aware that many of the reformed churches who allow that this power is originally in them, conclude, notwithstanding, that it may be consigned over to the pastor and elders, and that it actually is consigned over to them when they are chosen to their office. The principal argument by which this opinion is generally defended, is, that because they are fit to teach, they are fit to govern, without being directed in any thing relating to government. But the question is not concerning the fitness of persons, which is not to be denied, but whether the church ought to divest itself of that power which Christ has given it; especially when it may be exerted without auarchy or confusion,—which it certainly may, if it be not abused, or the due exercise of it neglected. In order to this, a church officer is to prepare matters for the church, that nothing trifling, vain, or contentious may be brought before them; and to communicate them to it, to desire to know their sentiments about them, and to declare, improve, and act according to these. There are, indeed, some branches of the pastoral office which are to be performed without their immediate direction; such as preaching the word, administering the sacraments, visiting the sick, comforting the afflicted, endeavouring to satisfy those who are under doubts or scruples of conscience, and exciting and encouraging all to perform those duties, to which their professed subjection to Christ and their relation to his church oblige them.

We shall now consider pastors or elders of churches, as employed occasionally in using their best endeavours to assist others in some difficulties in which their direction is needed or desired. An assembly of them for this purpose is what we call a synod. This word is very much disrelished by some in our age; and it were to be wished that there had been no occasion for this prejudice, from the account we have of the abuses practised by synods and councils in former ages.

These abuses gave great uneasiness to Gregory Nazianzen, who complains of confusions and want of temper, which were too notorious in some synods in the age in which he lived. Afterwards we find that almost all the corruptions which were brought into the church were countenanced by some synod or other. Many of the synods assumed to themselves a power of making laws which were to be received with the same obligation as if they had been delivered by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They also opened a door to persecution; so that they, in many instances, took away not only the religious but the civil rights of mankind. It will, therefore, be thought strange that I should so much as mention the word; but, though I detest every thing of this nature which has been practised by them, it is not impossible to treat on the subject in an unexceptionable manner. It is certainly a warrantable practice, founded in the law of nature, for persons who cannot compromise a matter in debate, to desire the advice of others. The same is, doubtless, true in religious matters. We suppose, therefore, that there may be some matters debated in a church which cannot be decided among themselves. Now, in a case of this kind, provided it be an affair of importance, it is expedient for them to apply themselves to other churches, to give their advice by their pastors and elders. If it be some corruption in doctrine which has insinuated itself into the church, they may desire to know the sense of others about it; still reserving to themselves a judgment of discretion, without reckoning their decrees infallible. Or if it be a matter of conduct, which, through the perverseness of some, and the ignorance of others, may be of pernicious tendency if suitable advice be not given; then advice ought to be desired and complied with, so far as it appears to be agreeable to the mind of Christ. Such a course is not only allowable, but very expedient. I have nothing to say as to the number of persons to whom the matter may be referred. A multitude of counsellors may sometimes be mistaken, when a smaller number have given better

advice. Nor have I any thing to allege in defence of ecumenical councils; much less such as have been convened by the usurped power of the bishop of Rome. We are speaking of a particular church under some difficulties, desiring the advice of as many as they think meet to refer the matter to. Or if a Christian magistrate demands the advice of the pastors or elders of churches in his domiuions, in those religious affairs which are subservient to his government, they ought to obey him. These things are altogether unexceptionable. But when ministers give vent to their own passions, and pretend to give a sanction to doctrines which are unscriptural; or when they annex anathemas to their decrees, or enforce them by excommunication, or put the civil magistrate on methods of persecution; they go beyond the rule, and offer prejudice rather than do service to the interest of Christ. When, however, they only signify what is their judgment, when it is desired, about some important articles of faith or church-discipline, or some intricate cases of conscience, and endeavour to give conviction rather by arguments than by their authority, not only do they perform a duty, but they are an advantage to the church, as the synod which met at Jerusalem was to the church at Antioch.

Having thus considered the office of a pastor, it might be expected that we should consider that of a teacher. This many think to be a distinct officer in the church; as the apostle says, 'He gave some pastors and teachers.' Many who treat on this matter, while they suppose a teacher to be a distinct officer from a pastor, yet, when they call him a teaching elder, and allow him to have a part of the government of the church, as well as to be employed in the work of preaching, use a method of explaining the nature of his office which supposes it to differ little or nothing from that of a pastor, except in name. They may say that the difference consists in the pastor being superior in honour and degree to a teacher, and may make the latter no more than a provisionary officer in the church, appointed to

perform what properly belongs to the pastor, when he is absent or indisposed, or when, for any other reason, he desires him to officiate for him. But I cannot see reason to conclude that this is the meaning of the word 'teacher,' as mentioned by the apostle. Hence, while they plead for its being a distinct office in the church, and, at the same time, explain it in such a way, there seems to be little else but a distinction without a difference. Others think that it was, indeed, a distinct office, but that a teacher was called, by the church, to some branches of teaching which the pastor could not well attend to, and that he is of the class who were styled by the primitive church, 'catechists.' This opinion deserves our consideration. We read, in the early ages of the church, of persons who had this office and character. Their work was such as needed, as much as any other, those gifts which our blessed Saviour was pleased to bestow on men, for the propagating of his interest in the world. For whether they preached publicly or not, as the pastor was called to do, their business was to instruct not only the catechumens who were disposed to embrace the Christian doctrine, but all who were willing to be taught by them. For this end there were public schools erected, which were under the direction, care, and countenance of the church. In these the method of instruction was, to explain the scriptures, and, in public and set disputations, to defend the Christian religion against those who opposed it. By these means many were converted to the Christian faith from among the heathen; and others, who were initiated in it, were thereby as well as by public preaching, established and confirmed in it, and, in consequence, qualified for church communion, and then baptized and joined to the church. We read in the writings of the Fathers and church historians, of several who performed this office with very great reputation and usefulness.f And it is thought by some to have been not only agreeable to the practice of the church in the apostlo's days, but derived from it; and though it is not so plainly mentioned in scripture as some other

offices are, yet that the apostle refers to it, when he says, 'Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth,' that is, 'Let him that is catechized communicate to the catechist.' But this is, at best, but a probable sense of the word; and therefore not sufficient of itself to give ground to conclude that the apostle means this office when he speaks of teachers as distinct officers from pastors. Though, doubtless, the practice of the church, as above-mentioned, in appointing such officers, was commendable; yet it does not fully appear that this is what the apostle intends. I will not, however, deny it to be a probable conjecture, and I should acquiesce in it, rather than in any other sense of the text which I have hitherto met with, did I not think that the words 'pastors and teachers' might be as well, if not better, understood, as signifying one and the same office. I would rather, therefore, understand them as Jerome and Augustin do, and paraphrase them thus: 'He gave some pastors, namely, teachers, or pastors that are teachers or engaged in preaching the gospel, which is the principal branch of their office.' What gives me farther ground to understand the words in this sense, is, that the apostle, when he enumerates the officers of a church elsewhere, speaks of teachers without any mention of pastors: 'God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers.'k Here no mention is made of pastors, they being included in the word 'teachers.' This is agreeable to what we observed elsewhere;' and it is all we shall add on this Head.

The next officer in the church is a deacon. His work is described as 'serving tables,' that is, the Lord's Table, by providing what is necessary for the Lord's Supper, and assisting in the distribution of the elements. He is also to supply the poor with necessaries, and to take care that the minister may be maintained and other expenses defrayed. In order to his attending to his work, he is to receive the contributions raised by the church for the purposes mentioned. The

office, therefore, is properly secular, though necessary and useful, as subservient to others which are of a spiritual nature. The apostle gives an account of the qualifications of those who are to engage in it,n and, in doing so, he speaks of deacons as persons of an unblemished character, of great gravity and sobriety, and of other endowments which may render them faithful in the discharge of their trust, and exemplary and useful in their station. In the first age of the church after the apostles' days, when it was under persecution, it was the deacon's work to visit and give necessary relief to the martyrs and confessors. But we do not find that they performed any branches of service besides this, and those above-mentioned. Tertullian, indeed, speaks of them, in his time, as being permitted to baptize in the absence of bishops and presbyters; in doing which, they went beyond the scripture rule. Afterwards, they preached; and this practice has been defended to this day, by all who plead for diocesan episcopacy. But the arguments they bring for it, from scripture, are not sufficiently conclusive. They say, that Stephen and Philip, who were the first deacons, preached; but this they did as evangelists, not as deacons. It is pleaded, too, that deacons are required to be 'apt to teach;'p but the meaning of this is, that they must be fit to edify those, by their instructions, whom they relieve, in giving them a part of the church's contributions, that, by their conversation, they may do good to their souls, as well as, by what they give them, to their bodies. Its being farther said, that 'they who have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith,' does not sufficiently prove, as many ancient and modern writers suppose, that they are qualified for the office of presbyters; for there is no affinity between the two offices, and one cannot, properly speaking, be a qualification for the other. The 'good degree' is, probably, to be understood of their having great honour in the church, as persons eminently useful to it; and 'great boldness in the faith,' is not boldness in preaching the

gospel, but resolution and steadfastness in adhering to the faith,—and, in their proper station, defending it, and being ready, when called, to suffer for it. We have thus considered the government of the church, and the officers whom Christ has appointed in it.

VI. The last thing to be considered, is the privileges of the visible church, particularly as its members are said to be under God's special care and government, and, in consequence, have safe protection and preservation, whatever opposition they may meet with from their enemies, and also enjoy communion of saints, and the ordinary means of salvation.

1. We shall consider the church as under the care of Christ. This is the result of his propriety in them, and his having undertaken to do for them, as Mediator, all things which are necessary to their salvation. This care, extended towards them, is called special, and so differs from that which is expressed in the methods of his common providence in the world, and confers many distinct and superior privileges. There are several metaphorical expressions used in scripture, to denote Christ's care of his church, and the particular relation he stands in to it. Thus he is described as their 'Shepherd,' performing those things for them which such a relation imports, namely, his giving them, in a spiritual sense, rest and safety, gathering, leading, and defending them. And as their Shepherd he does more for his people than the shepherd who, being faithful to his trust, hazards his life; for Christ is expressly said to 'give his life for his sheep.'s Moreover, his care of his church is set forth by his standing in the relation of a 'Father' to them; which argues his tender and compassionate concern for their welfare, as well as safety. Now, his care extended to his church, consists in his separating them from the world, and, as it were, gathering them out of it, or out of that part of it which 'lieth in wickedness.' 'The whole world,' says the apostle,

'lieth in wickedness,'u or, as the word may be rendered, 'in the wicked one;' on which account it is called Satan's kingdom. Christ gives his people restraining grace, brings them under conviction of sin, and humbles them for it; and, by the preaching of the gospel, not only informs them of the way of salvation, but brings them into it. Again, he raises up and animates some amongst them for extraordinary service and usefulness in their station, adorning them with those graces whereby their conversation is exemplary, and they are made to shine as lights in the world. Not only in some particular instances, but by a constant succession, he fills up the places of those who are removed to a better world, with others who are added to the church daily, such as shall be saved. Further, his care of his people is extended by fatherly correction, to prevent their ruin and apostacy; which, as the apostle says, is a manifestation of his 'love' to them. He also keeps them from and 'in the hour of temptation,'y 'bruises Satan under their feet,' and supports them under and fortifies them against the many difficulties, reproaches, and persecutions they are exposed to in this world; as Moses says, in the blessing of Asher, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be; the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'a

2. The visible church is under Christ's special government. It is a part of his glory, as Mediator, that he is its supreme Head and Lord. This cannot but redound to the advantage of his subjects; who profess subjection to him, not only as their duty, but as their peculiar glory, they being thereby distinguished from the world, and entitled to his special regard. As their King, he gives them laws by which they are visibly governed; so that they are not destitute of a rule of government, any more than of a rule of faith. Their peace, order, edification, and salvation, are, in consequence, promoted. And all the advantages which they receive from the wisdom and conduct of pastors or other officers, whom he has appointed to go in and out

before them, 'to feed them with knowledge and understanding,' 'to watch for their souls,'c are Christ's gifts, and therefore privileges which the church enjoys as under his government. Again, he protects and preserves them, notwithstanding the opposition of all their enemies; so that whatever attempts have been hitherto made to extirpate or ruin them, have been ineffectual. The church has weathered many a tempest, and has enjoyed safety, as well as various marks of the divine honour and favour, under all the persecutions to which it has been exposed; so that, according to our Saviour's prediction, 'the gates of hell have not prevailed against it,' and all these afflictive dispensations of providence are overruled for promoting his own glory and their spiritual advantage.

3. Another privilege, which the church enjoys, is communion of saints. Communion is the consequence of union. Hence, as they are united together as visible saints, they enjoy that communion which is the result. The apostle speaks of a twofold fellowship which the church enjoys, their attaining of which he reckoned the great end and design of his ministry: 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' The former is included in church-communion; the latter is an honour which God is pleased sometimes to confer on those who are brought into this relation. It is what all are to hope for, though none but they who are Christ's subjects by faith are made partakers of it. The communion of saints, however, is in itself a great privilege, inasmuch as the common profession which they make of subjection to Christ, and the hope of the gospel with which they are favoured, are a strong motive and inducement to holiness. Nor is it the smallest part of the advantage arising hence, that they are interested in the prayers of all the faithful which are daily put up to God for those blessings on all his churches which may tend to their edification and salvation. As to

the members of particular churches who have communion with one another, there is a great advantage arising from mutual conversation about divine things, and the endeavours which they are obliged to use, 'to build up themselves in their holy faith,'f and 'to consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, but exhorting one another,' and from the obligations they are under to 'bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,'h and to express sympathy and compassion for one another under the various afflictions and trials to which they are exposed. Another privilege which they are made partakers of, is, that they have communion with one another in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; in which they hope for and enjoy communion with him whose death is showed forth, and in which the benefits of his death are applied to those who believe.

4. The church is farther said to enjoy the ordinary means of salvation, and the offers of grace to all its members, in the ministry of the gospel. This is what we are to understand by 'the word preached and prayer.' These are called the ordinary means of salvation, as distinguished from the powerful influences of the Spirit; which are the internal and efficacious means of grace, producing such effects as infer the right which those who enjoy them have to eternal life. These ordinary means of grace the church is said to partake of. It is for their sake that the gospel is continued to be preached; and a public testimony to the truth of it is given by them to the world. Accordingly, in the preaching of it, Christ is offered to sinners; and grace is given whereby the church is increased and built up by the addition to it of those who are taken out of the world, as God makes these ordinances effectual to answer that end. The duty of waiting on him in the preaching of the gospel is ours; the success of the preaching is entirely owing to the divine blessing attending it. These are the privileges which the visible church enjoys. We might

have proceeded to consider those which the members of the invisible church are made partakers of, namely, union and communion with Christ in grace and glory; but these are particularly insisted on in some following Answers.

[NOTE A. Various Significations of the word 'Church.'—Dr. Ridgeley formally states three senses of the word 'church.' The first of these is the derivational meaning of the word, and do not affect the discussion of any question in ecclesiastical economy. The second is a meaning which he successfully shows to be unsanctioned in scripture. The third alone has connexion with the doctrines he discusses; and is, he says, 'the sense in which we are to understand the word in discussing these Answers.' Here, surely, is great simplicity and uniqueness of definition—one sense of the word church to stand in room of those twelve or twenty senses which are imposed on it by the lucubrations of many theological writers! 'The word church in scripture, is, for the most part, if not always, taken for an assembly of Christians met together for religious worship, accounting to the rules which Christ has given for their direction.' Does Dr. Ridgeley, then, adhere to this simple and only definition? Not at all. He either totally lorgets it, and substitutes definition after definition as occasion suits him; or, in utter inconsistency with its terms, he makes it include has notion o 'the visible church,' the invisible church,' 'the church militant,' and 'the church triumphant,' as well as other modified senses of the word. It hence is as necessary as if he had offered no definition whatever, to attempt to show what the scriptural meaning or rather meanings of the word are.

Apart from the use of the word church in reference to the former dispensation—an use of it which would probably establish two peculiar meanings, or meanings distinct from its use in reference to the economy of redemption or the Christian dispensation, but

meanings which he dormant with the temporary or prefigurative and abolished state of things to which they applied—it appears to be employed, in the New Testament, in only two senses. Some scope must be allowed, indeed, for greater or less latitude of signification. I speak not of degrees of meaning, but of distinct kinds or generic varieties of meaning; and, in opposition to the theory which makes it mean a cluster of Christian congregations, the aggregate body of congregations in a province or kingdom, the office-bearers of a congregation, a court or assembly of ecclesiastical rulers, a body of governors or pastors, the whole baptized population of a state, the aggregate multitude of professing Christians in the world, or any delegated or ruling representative power over the Christian faith and discipline, I am inclined to state that, as appears to me, it means only the aggregate body of the redeemed, or a single congregation, no matter how small, of professing Christians.

1. The word church means the aggregate body of the redeemed in such passages as the following:—'And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;' 'And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church;' 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: this is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church,' Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22; 5:25, 32. That 'the church,' in these and similar passages, means simply and collectively the redeemed, cannot admit of doubt. Now, by a synecdoche—a figure of speech very frequently used by the inspired writers, by which a part is taken for the whole—it appears, in some other passages, to mean either the redeemed in their successive generations on earth, or those of them who are cotemporary or who communicate in concurrent circumstances. But 1 would no more call this a distinct sense of the word church, than I would say that the

word atonement has one meaning when it is expressed by the phrase 'Christ was made under the law,' or 'he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,' and another meaning when it is expressed by the phrase 'he died for us,' or he 'became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' The figure of a part for the whole affects not the generic nature or the distinctiveness of a meaning, but only its extent or degree. The multitude of the redeemed are so completely one body, that whatever is affirmed of any part of it may well be described by epithets, or designated by an appellative, proper to the whole. Such texts, then, as these,—'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;' 'And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets,' (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:28.) are not exceptions to the definition of 'the church' as meaning the aggregate body of the redeemed. At all events, they are far from sanctioning any one of the many varied meanings which are contended for by most writers on ecclesiastical economy.

2. The word 'church' means, in a large number of passages, a single congregation of professing Christians. Two or three instances will sufficiently serve for illustration. Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours;' 'And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea;' 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,' 1 Cor. 1:2; Col. 4:16; Rev. 2:7. The current and emphatic manner in which this sense of the word occurs, to the exclusion of such senses as make it mean a number of neighbouring congregations, or the congregations of any district, province, or state,

remarkably appears in the seemingly uniform use of the plural 'churches' whenever more congregations than one are mentioned. The following passages may be consulted in illustration, 1 Cor. 16:1, 19; 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:22; Rev. 1:4, 11, 20; 2:7, 11, 17, 19, 23; Acts 9:31; 15:41; 16:5; Rom. 16:4, 16; 1 Cor. 7:17; 11:16; 14:33, 34; 2 Cor. 8:19, 23; 11:8, 28; 12:13; 1 Thess. 2:14: 2 Thess. 1:4.

Some writers contend that the word designates two or more congregations in the same city in the phrases 'the church at Ephesus' and 'the church at Jerusalem;' and the reason they assign for their opinion is, that at Ephesus there appear to have been several pastors, and at Jerusalem more church-members than could assemble in one place of meeting. A plurality of pastors, however, is no evidence of a plurality of congregations. Most of the Christian congregations during the first, second, and third centuries—at least most if not all in large towns—appear, on unquestionable testimony, to have had each a college of pastors. As to the church at Jerusalem, I have no inclination to make it seem less numerous, than the highest calculations will warrant; but, whatever were its numbers, it clearly, so long as we have notices of it in the New Testament, held all its public meetings as a single congregation. We have no hint either of two simultaneous meetings having been held, or of the members having been partitioned into two or more sections; but, on the other hand, we have an account of 'all the multitude,' 'the apostles and elders, with the whole church,' so late as thirteen years after the day of Pentecost, holding their meeting in one place. Acts 15:12, 22. A very large proportion of the converts or original members of the church at Jerusalem, it must be remembered, were strangers or temporary visiters from almost every province of the Roman empire (Acts 2:7–11.); and they must be supposed, like the Ethiopian eunuch, to have soon returned to their respective homes, there to live in a dispersed condition as 'the salt of the earth.' Besides, however

numerous the resident members of the church were, they had scarcely tasted the enjoyments of church-fellowship when 'they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles,' Acts 8:1. No stronger a presumption, perhaps, against a theoretic possibility of any church being able to meet and to observe Christian ordinances in one place, could be urged than the events of the church at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. 'They that gladly received the word,' we are told, 'were baptized; and the same day there were added about three thousand souls,' Acts 2:41. Now, is it conceivable, a theorist might exclaim, that a church could meet in company with so enormous a multitude that three thousand of the latter should at a single meeting be converted? Is it conceivable that, in one place of assembly, three thousand persons could be baptized—that a church of more than this number of persons could, in one place, hold stated meetings and observe Christian ordinances? Yes, says the narrative, not only is it possible, but it was the fact; for apart from the circumstance that the conversion and the baptism of the three thousand occurred at the church's public meeting, 'the church,' after the three thousand were added to them, and while constantly receiving fresh accessions, 'continued daily with one accord in the temple,' Acts 2:46. See also chap. 4:23, 24, 31, 32; 5:41, 42. The instances of Ephesus and Jerusalem, then, are no exceptions to the current and remarkably frequent use of the word church to designate a single Christian congregation.

Another class of theological writers allege that the word 'church' hears two meanings distinct from any we have yet mentioned. One of these is a Christian congregation as actually assembled. They distinguish this sense of the word from a Christian congregation simply as such, and found particularly on the passage, 'It is a shame for women to speak in the church;' (1 Cor. 14:35.) remarking that if 'church' be not here understood as something distinct from a

congregation, female church-members are virtually prohibited from ever speaking. But is it not clear that 'in the church' means in the church as such? If by church were meant church-fellowship, or the relation of church-membership, women might, indeed, be said to lie under an obligation of perpetual silence. But what is said is, 'It is a shame for women to speak in the church,'—not in the condition of church-members, not in the family circle, not in the presence of a few fellow-members, but either in the congregation as assembled or in any manner involving address to all its members. The writers to whom I allude seem thus to fall into a non-sequitur when they argue for the distinctness of a church as such, and of a church as assembled. Nor do they reason better in support of their other sense of the word,—that it means a family of believers together with any Christians statedly meeting with them for worship. This meaning they found on the phrase which occurs in three texts, in reference to-three distinct bodies, 'the church which is in their house,' Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2. But who, except a person habituated to make distinctions almost for the sake of making them, can see any difference between a church in a private house and a church in a vast area like that of the temple at Jerusalem, except that the one was very small and the other very large? Various principalities on the continent of Europe do not number half a million of subjects, while the principality of China is said to number upwards of three hundred millions; are the former, on account ot their comparative littleness, not really sovereign states?

The two senses, then, of the word church—that it means the aggregate body of the redeemed, and that it means a single congregation of Christians—appear, so far as we have examined the subject, to be the only ones sanctioned in reference to the Christian dispensation.—ED.]

[NOTE B. The Invisible Church.—Not one scripture is quoted as even remotely sanctioning the use of the word 'church' in the sense of 'the invisible church.' Nor, in fact, are we told or helped to conceive what 'the invisible church,' as distinct from the church in the sense of the aggregate body of the redeemed, is. So far as appears from either definition or evidence, the thing talked about eludes not more completely the sense of sight, than every other sense, and the understanding to boot. Dr. Ridgeley speaks of it, under three particulars, as elect and subject to Christ, as only in the progress of being gathered to its living Head, and as 'hid with Christ in God.' But so far as these ideas are correlative with any meaning of the word church, they describe simply the general body of the saved, or denote some features by which it is characterized. If, on such grounds, or on account of distinguishing phases in the condition or history of the redeemed, we are to have the distinction of 'the church invisible,' we not only may, with Dr. Ridgeley, have the further distinctions of 'the church militant,' and 'the church triumphant,' but may also have the distinctions of 'the church elect,' 'the church regenerated,' 'the church millennial,' 'the church ante-resurrectional,' 'the church post-resurrectional,' 'the church in sackcloth,' 'the church in royal robes,' 'the church imperfect,' 'the church perfect,' 'the church missionary,' 'the church terrestrial, 'the church associate with angels.' There is, in fact, no end to distinctions, when the passion for making them usurps the place of simplification and exposition. The scholars of the nineteenth century could probably add tenfold to the long list of them in the writings of the schoolmen of the dark ages, who regarded the making of them as the only creditable achievement in theological pursuit. But modern writers, instead of perpetuating the practice of the schoolmen, are better employed when they discard every distinction not sanctioned by the Bible. The simple fact that the idea ot 'the church invisible' has not the countenance of one text of scripture, and is incompetent to throw light on any doctrine ot

revelation, or any scriptural view of ecclesiastical economy, is a sufficient reason for its being entirely rejected.—ED.]

[NOTE C. The Holy Catholic Church.—The ancient Christians held no such opinion respecting 'the church' as seems indicated in what is popularly but erroneously termed 'the Apostles' Creed.' Neither the apostolic Christians, as distinguished from early errorists, nor the senior Christian community, as distinguished from the first dissenters, were called 'the Catholic church.' Those summaries of the primitive faith which are preserved in the extant writings of the three earliest centuries, are free from such phraseology, on the subject of 'the church,' as figures in some creeds of later periods. One of them given by Origen, says merely, that "the true faith is very clearly preached in all the churches;" another, given by Cyprian, speaks of "the remission of sins, and life everlasting, through the holy church;" and all the others are silent as to either 'the church' or 'churches.' The general writings of the period pursue a similar course. Tertullian, and even earlier authors, made frequent use, indeed, of the word 'church;' yet they employed it in no such exclusive sense as was attached to it in the fourth and following centuries; but identified it chiefly with 'the body of Christ,' or with the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit. "Where the church is," says Irenæus. "there is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and every grace." "The Spirit," says Tertullian, "gathers together that church which the Lord hath established; and hence any number of persons who may have jointly adopted this faith, are esteemed a church by its author, who set it apart. The church, therefore, will indeed give remissions; but the church is the Spirit acting through the spiritual man; the church is not a number of bishops (ministers)."

Early in the third century undue importance began to be attached to the administering and removing of church censures. Sins against the

brethren came to be in a degree undistinguished from sins against God; or, more properly, sins as disqualifying for Christian fellowship, came to be undistinguished from, sins as affecting the condition of the soul. The province of the churches to judge of the evidences of Christian character, began gradually to be viewed as a province to decide on the state of a professing Christian's heart. All the early churches justly regarded their discipline as the use of 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' or as the exercise of the power of 'binding and loosing,' which was committed to the apostles. But what, in the two earliest centuries, was viewed as admission to mere fraternal confidence, began, in the third, to be viewed as in a degree the imparting of a character, or the deciding of a moral condition. What chiefly, and perhaps solely, occasioned this change, was the gradual usurpation by the pastors or 'bishops' of undue ecclesiastical power. When the ecclesiastics of the third century set up pretensions to a loftier domination than comported with the simplicity of more primitive times, they claimed for their authority every possible kind of importance, and naturally promulged new and strange doctrines, such as might impress the people with awe, respecting the nature and consequences of their acts of discipline. To admit or to excommunicate members, was hence represented as 'a binding' or 'a loosing' in some mysterious or peculiarly solemn sense,—'a binding' or 'a loosing' of such a character, as to involve more or less the highest interests of the soul. This error, which was destined to assume, in the course of a few centuries, the settled form of the Romish doctrine of absolution from all sins by ordained priests, had acquired sufficient distinctness of outline to be perceptible, even in the days of Tertullian; and as first mooted, or as existing in a shadowy and unacknowledged state, it is exactly what that primitive writer denounces in the quotation which closed our last paragraph: "The church will, indeed, give remissions; but the church is the Spirit acting through the spiritual man; the church is not a number of

bishops." Tertullian's doctrine, promulged during the first years of the third century, was extensively undermined between the years 248 and 260,—a period which was distinguished by alike the pious labours and the injurious influences of the celebrated Cyprian. That generally excellent man was the worst innovator, whom the churches had hither to encountered, on the rights and liberties of the Christian people; and, without intending or foreseeing so painful a result, he did more than many of his predecessors united, to convert the primitive form of church order into an incipient system of unscriptural domination.

Now, excepting one given by Origen which talks simply of 'the preaching of truth in the churches,' that given by Cyprian is the only one of the primitive summaries of faith, which affords even a remote sanction to the clause in the apostles' creed: 'The Holy Catholic Church.' Yet even Cyprian says nothing respecting 'the Catholic church,' and he speaks of 'the Holy church,' not as a distinct article of belief, but as connected with 'remission of sins and life eternal.' He identifies—not in his creed, indeed, but in his accompanying writings —first, 'the church' with the church's bishops, and next, the bishops' acts of discipline with some loose or floating ideas of absolution from sin or of infliction of punishment as affecting the permanent condition of the soul. He no doubt represents faithfully the belief which prevailed at the period, especially among his own immediate people; yet he states it as a belief simply in the doctrine of 'remission of sins through the holy church;' and he leaves us to inter, what is rendered abundantly certain by even later records than his writings, that all such notions of 'the Holy Catholic Church' as prevailed from near the commencement of the fourth century, generally till the epoch of the Reformation, and in a degree till the present time, were unknown and unthought of at the period when he wrote.

We must thus look to later documents than the primitive summaries of faith, in order to find sanction for the phrase, 'the holy Catholic Church.' The earliest creed in which it appears is the Nicene. No writer mentions any thing of 'the church' as on article of belief, or says any thing like 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' before Alexander bishop of Alexandria; and even he is known or thought to have written so, only as he is reported in the ecclesiastical history of Theodoret, who wrote about the year 430. Alexander himself was the cotemporary of the council of Nice, and was a chief party in bringing before it both the Arians and the orthodox sect of Miletians; and, as represented by Theodoret, he speaks of 'the one only Catholic and apostolic church,' in the course of a professed commentary on the enactments of Nice. After him, except as existing in the Nicene creed, there is no further trace of the clause till the time of Epiphanius, who wrote about the year 390. This writer, as well as several cotemporary or immediately subsequent Greek authors, record it as begun to be incorporated, among the eastern churches, with copies of the apostles' creed. Yet, even at the late dale of the close of the fourth century, when this clause begun to he copied from the Nicene creed into the apostles', it read for a season in all copies of the latter, not 'the Holy Catholic Church,' but simply 'the Holy Church.' Rutinus, who was cotemporary with Epiphanius, remarks,—"We do not say 'we believe in the Holy Church,' but we believe 'the Holy Church,' not as in God, but as a church congregated by God;" and Augustine, writing about the year 410, and expounding the apostles' creed, says, "We believe the Holy Church, to wit, the Catholic one." clearly adding the word 'catholic' as a term expository of the phrase, 'the Holy Church,' which was all his copy of the creed contained.

This phrase, then, 'the Holy Catholic Church,' belongs, in all its authority and parts, to the creed of Nice, and in no degree or respect whatever to the apostles' creed, except as carried into it from the

other toward the end of the fourth century, and during the progress of the fifth. If we would know either its history or its intended meaning, we must look solely to the proceedings of the Nicene council. In the creed of that assembly, it reads, 'I believe one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church.' This is its legitimate shape, that which it originally possessed, and the only one in which it ought ever to have appeared. Let the clause retain this form, and let a glance be given at the occasion and the objects of convoking the council of Nice, and all its intended meaning, as well as its utter want of sanction in the consent of the three earliest centuries, will be distinctly understood. The Nicene council was summoned by Constantine the Great, to settle existing differences among the various parties and sects of the professing Christians. It dealt, in the first instance and chiefly, with the Arians, who were a heterodox party in the hosom of the general communion; and next to them. it dealt most prominently with the Novatians and the Miletians, who were two large sects of orthodox dissenters, or according to the language of the period, orthodox 'schismatics.' One of its twenty canons is occupied wholly with the affairs of the Novatians. Now, as regarded doctrine, it declared—fitly enough—that the Arians were not believers in Christ's true gospel; and as regarded communion, it declared—most unfitly—that the Novatians and the Miletians were not members of Christ's true church; or what amounted to the same thing, it enacted that the Arians should not be treated as Christian brethren because they were 'heretics,' and that the Novatians and Miletians, except on condition of their 'conforming,' should not be treated as such, because they were 'schismatics.' What the council decreed against error was summed up in the numerous clauses of their creed which assert the true Deity of Christ: and what they decreed against the orthodox sects was summed up in the words, 'the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church.' Their conduct virtually amounted to the foreshadowing, though unwittingly, of those

baneful claims which have, for so many centuries, been pleaded by the Church of Rome. The words 'Holy Catholic Church,' if interpreted either by the light of history, the concurrent usage of early authors, or the original intention of the council of Nice, mean little else than that the large sect protected and endowed by the Christian Roman Emperors, and afterwards presided over by 'the patriarchs' of Rome, is the one only church built on the apostles or acknowledged by Christ, whilst the holiest and most orthodox communities who dissented from it, in common with such egregious errorists as the Valentinians, the Basilidians, and the Carpocratiaus, lie under the displeasure of the great King of the Christian dispensation. We might quote several early writers on the clause to show that this view of its original meaning is correct; but we shall content ourselves with one quotation from Augustine: "We believe the Holy Church, to wit, the Catholic one; for heretics and schismatics call their congregations churches; but heretics, by false opinions concerning God, violate the faith; and schismatics, by unjust separations, depart from brotherly love, although they believe what we believe. Wherefore a heretic doth not belong to the catholic church, because she loves God; nor a schismatic, because she loves her neighbour."

So far, then, as the apostles' creed represents the Christian sentiments of the three earliest centuries, the clause, 'the Holy Catholic Church,' must be expunged; and so far as it represents the sentiments of later ages, that clause must be treated as at war with the doctrines of the Bible, and as a defence of the corruptions which pioneered the papacy. The best possible apology which can be made for it is, that, viewed apart from its history, it absolutely wants meaning. 'To believe a church,' in any such sense as to believe a doctrine, such as 'the resurrection of the body,' or 'the life everlasting,' is manifestly absurd; and 'to believe in a church,' would be to make erring mortals the guides of unerring faith, or to invest

them with an authority over the conscience which should be inconsistent with the supreme claims of revelation. The scriptures invite us to 'believe' only in doctrines revealed; and they invite us to 'believe in' only the living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ's churches upon earth are simply communities of 'saints,' 'faithful men,' 'called,' 'brethren;' they are bodies of believers who must 'bear one another's burdens,' and 'each esteem others better than himself'—'fed' and 'taught' by ministers who are not 'lords over them, but helpers on their joy'—and bound to 'stand fast in the liberty where with Christ hath made them free.'—ED.]

[NOTE D. The Visible Church.—Used as a collective term to denote all Christian congregations, or the aggregate body of professing, Christians, the word 'church' is convenient and expressive, and can hardly, even by a fastidious thinker, be regarded as liable to exception. This sense of it, however, must not, I think, be exhibited as having the sanction of scripture; nor must it be allowed to have any influence or place in questions of ecclesiastical economy. To speak of the church in a general way as expressive of the aggregate body of professing Christians, is only a convenient usage, which saves a writer from periphrases, or from the cacophonous use of such phrases as 'the professing Christian churches of the world,' 'the professedly Christian population of the earth:' but to speak of 'the church' in the technical and distinctive manner intended by the designation 'the visible church,' is to introduce interminable confusion into our ideas of ecclesiastical economy, and afford an inlet and a sanction to innumerable abuses in the practice of discipline and the observance of ordinances. The phrase 'visible church,' if viewed in the light of history, or even in that of present usage, is a perfect polyglott of significations,—sometimes exhibiting six or eight languages in a row. Even an alleged part of 'the visible church'—'the national church' of any given country—is not

unfrequently understood in a variety of conflicting senses. At one time it means all the inhabitants of the soil: at another, all the baptized inhabitants; at another, all the baptized who have received baptism in the established communion; at another, all the Christian communicants of the country; at another, all the communicants of the established sect; at another, all the church judicatories ot the country; at another, the supreme ecclesiastical judicatory of the establishment co-operating with the state. In all these senses, and perhaps in some others, the phrase 'the church of——,' as designative of the sect established by law in a country, is often understood. Yet this phrase, with all its diversity of meanings, designates only a part of what is meant to be expressed by the phrase, 'the visible church.' How perplexingly confused, then, how surpassingly indefinite, how exquisitely adapted to the purposes of subterfuge and corruption, must the latter phrase be! The grossest outrages on Christian liberty, the most latitudinarian or licentious invasions on scriptural views of ecclesiastical discipline, the wildest efforts to extend the Christian name to almost any thing in faith and almost every thing in morals, the most audacious courses of antichristian usurpation and tyranny, have all careered over the phrase 'visible church' as a field of summer dust, a wilderness of impalpable sand, throwing up such clouds as have at once concealed their own movements and blinded the eyes of onlookers or pursuers.

The only definition of 'the visible church' which can at all bear examination, is that which makes it a collective name for all single Christian congregations, or a designation of the aggregate body of professing Christians. This seems to be, with some deviations, the sense attached to it throughout Dr. Ridgeley's remarks; it is, at all events, the sense in which he understands it when he claims for it a scriptural sanction. As far, then, as he is concerned, the only question is, whether the use of the word 'church,' thus understood, is

simply a matter of convenience, or whether it possesses sacred authority, and, in consequence, ought to influence our views of ecclesiastical economy?

Now, Dr. Ridgeley does appear to me to fail in his attempt to adduce scriptural proof. As to the passage. 'God hath set some in the church, first apostles; secondarily prophets,' &c., (1 Cor. 12:28.) it would be hard to show that 'the church' of Which it speaks is the aggregate body of Christian congregations cotemporaneously existing at any period on the earth. Just to that church, to those persons, to that elected multitude whom Christ bought with his blood, has God given, as they pass in their successive generations through the world, all those ordinances, whether the ministry of apostles, or the ministry of prophets, or the ministry of evangelists, or the ministry of pastors and teachers, which are for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' Eph. 4:11–13. The apostles, in particular—on the peculiarity of whose office Dr. Ridgeley appears wholly to rest his argument—were not given to the aggregate body of single congregations in the primitive age, nor to the aggregate body of professing Christians in any one period of the world's history, but to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven,' or to that entire church over whom their inspired writings will have an everlasting influence. Hence, the wall of the new Jerusalem, the emblem of the entire body of the saved in a state of celestial glorification, is said to have 'twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb,' Rev. 21:14. Hence, too, the united multitude of Jewish and Gentile believers—all who have 'access by one Spirit to the Father'—are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the

building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,' Eph. 2:20, 21.

As to the passages which speak of Paul's persecuting 'the church,' they may not be of so easy explanation. If, however, any one should assert that by 'the church' of which they speak is to be understood only the church at Jerusalem, the obligation to prove the opposite would lie with persons who adopt Dr. Ridgeley's exposition. For before it can be alleged that the word is an aggregate designation of several churches or congregations, proof must be furnished that such churches existed at the time to which the passages refer. Now, where is the proof that, at the period of Paul's being a persecutor, there had been formed any other stated congregation than that at Jerusalem? Paul, it is to be remembered, was converted in the year 33; and he is first noticed as a persecutor only in the previous year, when, in consequence apparently of his proceedings, the church at Jerusalem 'were all scattered abroad throughout Judea and Samaria.' His persecution is noticed in the book of Acts seemingly in connexion with Jerusalem only, and with his purpose to make inquisition in Damascus. He appears to have remained at Jerusalem till he went to the high priest; and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues.' He speaks, indeed, of 'the churches of Judea;' but be not only says that 'he was unknown by face to them,' but makes mention of them as cotemporaneous with his 'going into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,' Gal. 1:21, 22. Now, as we learn from comparing Gal. 1:17, 18. with Acts 9:22–30, he did not go unto 'Syria and Cilicia,' or toward 'Cæsarea and Tarsus,' till at least three years—possibly not till four or five or six—after his conversion. Is it not probable, then, that 'the churches of Judea' which then existed had sprung out of the labours of the brethren composing the church at Jerusalem who, a little while before his conversion, 'were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria,' and who 'went everywhere preaching the

word?' Acts 8:1, 4. If so, these churches 'hearing that he who persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed,' (Gal. 1:23.) must refer simply to his persecuting persons of their views and character,—persecuting the class of men to which they belonged. Had they existed as churches in the says of his being persecutor, and been subjected, as Dr. Ridgeley's argument assumes, to his persecuting rage, he could I ardly have been 'unknown to them by face.' At whatever time these churches were planted, they were, so late as at least three years after his conversion, unacquainted with his person, and had only heard of his character and history.

Two things may seem strange in the supposition I have made,—that, so late as the date of Paul's conversion, or in the fourth year after the day of Pentecost, there was no Christian church except that of Jerusalem; and that, so early after that interval as the date ot his going to Syria and Cilicia, churches had sprung up in Judea. But it must be remembered that the apostles, in the commission they received to preach the gospel to the world, were instructed to 'begin at Jerusalem;' (Luke 24:47.) and that they appear to have been remarkably slow to commence exertions beyond the precincts of that city. Peter's visit to Cornelius, for example, did not occur till eleven years utter Pentecost, or seven alter Paul's conversion. As to churches springing up in Judea between the date of the dispersion of the church of Jerusalem and that of Paul's going to Syria and Cilicia, no event, not expressly narrated, can seem more probable. The interval between the dates was four years; and the number of dispersed brethren employed in preaching must have been very great,—almost multitudinous. During this interval, too, we are expressly told 'Samaria received the word of God,' or for the first time produced any materials for a Christian church, Acts 8:14. Now, the dispersion which affected Samaria was exactly the event which affected Judea; for the brethren who went everywhere preaching the

word were 'scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.' What more probable an inference, then, than that 'the churches of Judea' referred to by Paul were planted during the period immediately succeeding his persecutions?

There is only another point in Dr. Ridgeley's argument, or in the passages adduced by him, which requires notice. Paul says he 'persecuted the church of God;' and he here employs a designation which may be thought too emphatic to be applied to the congregation of Jerusalem. But exactly the same designation is elsewhere applied by him to each of several congregations. Thus he inscribes his First Epistle to the Corinthians 'To the church of God which is at Corinth,' 1 Cor. 1:2. He asks the disorderly communicants of that congregation, in reference to their seemingly contemptuous treatment of the stated public meetings of their brethren, 'Despise ye the church of God?' 1 Cor. 11:22. He exhorts the elders of Ephesus, in reference to the pastoral duties which they owed to the congregation, to 'feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Acts 20:28. He asks, in reference to a bishop or pastor's relation to the congregation which he rules, 'If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall be take care of the church of God?' 1 Tim. 3:5. To apply the designation 'church of God' to a single congregation, is thus a current usage of the apostle's style.

I am far from asserting that the view I have given of the church which Paul persecuted, accords with assured fact. All I would say respecting it is, that it is vindicated by what appears to me respectable evidence; while the view contended for by Dr. Ridgeley is so far as I know, supported by no evidence whatever. Before it can be asserted that 'the church' which Paul persecuted was what is usually termed 'the visible church,' or even a plurality of Christian congregations, a refutation must be made of the reasons which have

been assigned for supposing that it was only the church at Jerusalem, and evidence must be furnished that other churches than the latter existed prior to Paul's conversion. Alter all, the three texts which speak of Paul's persecuting the church,—texts one in subject, though three ill number,—are the only ones out of upwards of one hundred which are seriously claimed in sanction of any of the technical or scholastic meanings attached by systematic writers to the word 'church.' Of thirty-two texts in which the plural 'churches' occurs, none whatever are claimed; and of about seventy in which the singular 'church' occurs, almost all are admitted, and the small remainder are but feebly denied, to exhibit 'the church' either as the aggregate body of the saved, or as a single Christian congregation.—ED.]

[NOTE E. Qualification for Church-fellowship.—"The apostle," says Dr. Ridgeley, "gives a short but very comprehensive description of those who are fit members of a church, when he says, 'We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' " Does it not follow, then, that some evidence of persons possessing this character is requisite for their own sakes, and ought to be demanded by a church before their being admitted to its fellowship? Yet Dr. Ridgeley makes the only qualification for admission to consist in, 'a profession,'—a qualification, according to him, so valid and conclusive as to entitle persons to the enjoyment and retention of fellowship till they shall perpetrate conduct which 'gives the lie,' to what they profess. No term, perhaps, has been more abused, more indefinite in meaning, more accommodated to all varieties of laxity or severity of discipline, than this word 'profession.' Every body of nominal Christians attaches to it just such a meaning as best accords with its own practical standard of fitness for church-fellowship. The geographical pastor, who admits all persons above a given age and within certain

territorial limits, and the austere Separatist disciplinarian, who demands acquaintance with not only the elements but the minute lessons of Christian character, equally, according to their own showing, require candidates to make 'a profession.' It is high time that Christian churches should define 'a profession' to be positive evidence—such evidence as satisfies the judgment of faithfulness and charity—of nothing less and nothing more than a person's being 'a new creature in Christ Jesus.'

The notion of 'the visible church,' as distinguished from 'the invisible,' has worked havoc upon correct notions of Christian fellowship. Pastors without number imagine that they are building up a community which is in some sense a true church of God, and composed of persons in some sense Christians; all the while that, confessedly to themselves, they are including in it but an indifferent proportion of hopeful members of what they are pleased to call 'the invisible church.' "The members of the invisible church," says Dr. Ridgeley, in a previous part of his work, (See conclusion of Sect. 'The meaning of the phrases, the Visible and the Invisible Church,' under this Quest.) "are the children of God by faith;" but "the members of the visible church are the children of God as made partakers of the external dispensation of the covenant of grace." All, then, who enjoy the ministry of the gospel—for that alone can be meant by the external dispensation of the covenant—are members of the visible church, and of course are to be admitted to its fellowship! Now, in what conceivable sense are they 'the children of God?' By what imaginable process does the mere enjoyment of the gospel ministry constitute persons Christians? In what consistent or vindicable sense can men who are destitute of faith in Christ be regarded as members of his body and subject of his kingdom? To talk of the Israelites having been the children of God, is only to confess the holly of the sentiment in question. For if all persons under the external

dispensation of the covenant are the children of God because the Israelites were so, the offering of wine and oil must be a Christian act ot thanksgiving, and the burning of incense a Christian act ot prayer. These 'carnal' acts were not less certainly symbolical of spiritual affections, than the act of circumcision was symbolical of the regeneration of the heart, or the outward sonship of an Israelite symbolical of the inward and heaven-horn sonship of 'a new creature in Christ Jesus.' Dr. Ridgeley's principle, then, of esteeming all who enjoy 'the external dispensation of the covenant of grace' to be 'the children of God' and 'members of the visible church,' till they 'give the lie' to their profession, is directly contradictory of the only sound qualification for church-membership which he had himself virtually stated,—satisfactory evidence of regenerated and believing character.

Dr. Ridgeley further says, 'The visible church is compared to the net which had good and bad fish in it, or to the great house in which are vessels of various kinds, some to honour and some to dishonour.' Now, what our Lord compares to 'the net' is, not 'the visible church,' but the kingdom of heaven, ἡ βασιλεια των ουρανων, the reign of heaven, the dispensation of divine mercy over our world. But this kingdom, this reign, this dispensation, extends to at least all persons who have access to the truths of the Christian revelation, or who enjoy opportunity of approaching the ministrations of the Christian economy. Accordingly, the very chapter (Matt. 13) which compares the kingdom of heaven to a net, compares it also to the sowing of seed. (compare verse 3 with verses 10, 11.) and to the joint growth of tares and wheat, verses 24–30. Hence, if the fish of all kinds caught in the net mean men of various characters united to the visible church, he who receives the seed by the wayside, and from whom the wicked one catches it away,—he who receives the seed among thorns, and in whom the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and render it unfruitful,—and he who receives the

seed into stony places, and who has not root in himself, but by and by, because of the word, is offended,—are all as legitimately and literally members of the church, as he who received the seed into good ground, and in whom it bears fruit and brings forth thirty, or sixty, or an hundred fold. Yet who, with a mind unobscured by false ideas of ecclesiastical economy, or with his thoughts fixed on the principles and model of church-discipline exhibited in the New Testament, does not see that the latter character only—he who produces fruit, or affords some evidence of his having spiritually profited by the ministry of the word—alone is entitled to enter the fellowship of 'a church of saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus?' Again, as to the illustration of 'the kingdom of heaven' by the parable of the tares and the wheat,—the field mentioned in the parable must, according to Dr. Ridgeley's view of the parallel parable of the net, be the visible church. No, says our Saviour, 'the field is the world.' The tares and the wheat, also, must be the associate or commingled body of persons 'making a profession of religion' and living together as fellow-members of the church. No, says our Lord, 'the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.' The party, likewise, who placed the tares and the wheat together, must be the Christian ministers of the visible church who admit all who make a profession to its fellowship. No, says our Lord, the party who 'sowed the tares,' or who intermixed them with the wheat, is 'an enemy,' and that enemy is 'the devil.' The very text, then, to which Dr. Ridgeley appeals in support of his notion of qualification for church-membership, directly denounces as 'the world,' and as the work of the destroyer, what that notion exhibits as the visible church and the legitimate work of Christian ministers. The parables to which I have referred are a warning to Christian churches and pastors scarcely less solemn than the injunctions and denunciations as to putting a difference between the clean and the unclean, (Ezek. 22:25, 26; 44:23.) to use such care in admitting none

to their fellowship but those who afford scriptural evidence of having spiritually profited by the gospel, that 'of the rest no man shall dare join himself to them,' Acts 5:13.—ED.]

[NOTE F. The Office of a Ruling Elder—Dr. Ridgeley writes quite unlike himself on the subject of ruling elders. He is eminent above most theological writers for appealing directly am solely 'to the law and to the testimony.' Very seldom, on even a very subordinate question, does he advance an opinion without referring to one or more texts in which he supposes it to be taught. His holding, therefore, that there may be ruling elders, and being able to adduce no better reason for it than 'I cannot but think' that it is allowable, is a tacit and somewhat emphatic confession that the doctrine is untenable on scriptural grounds. As to 'the necessity of the church' in any emergency requiring any additional office to those instituted by Christ or obviously sanctioned by the New Testament, or as to 'the work of preaching and ruling' in any instance being 'too much' for a pastor, and of such a kind as to render another set of office-bearers 'advisable,' the case is altogether imaginary. Cases of supposed 'emergency,' 'necessity,' or 'advisableness,' can never in a legitimate course of scriptural church order and discipline, outstrip the provision made by 'the Shepherd and Bishop of souls' for all his churches. Whenever they are alleged to do so, the interested parties are themselves the judges both of the necessity or emergency, and of the means for surmounting it, or of the remedy to be applied. All judge according to their respective temper am inclinations. What one calls an emergency, another calls an ordinary event; what one esteems a reason for introducing new, and, it may be, pompous and dignified offices, another esteems an evidence that the old and legitimate offices are corrupted, and require to be revived or reinstated in their primitive simplicity and vigour. Once admit, in fact, that any office may be instituted in Christian churches, or any

machinery of ecclesiastical economy erected on the principle of expediency, and an inlet and a sanction are afforded for exactly such a species of procedure, or course of innovation, as overthrew in the third and following centuries the pure and simple constitution of the primitive churches, and erected in its stead the complex ritual, and the prelatical, metropolitical patriarchal, papal government of the Romish hierarchy.—ED.]

THE BENEFITS ENJOYED BY THE INVISIBLE CHURCH

QUESTION LXV. What special benefits do the members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ?

ANSWER. The members of the invisible church, by Christ, enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory.

QUESTION LXVI. What is that union which the elect have with Christ?

ANSWER. The union which the elect have with Christ, is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably joined to Christ, as their head and husband, which is done in their effectual calling.

IN the preceding part of this work we considered man as at first made upright, as not having continued in that state, and as having plunged into those depths of sin and misery which would have rendered his state altogether desperate, without the interposition of a Mediator. Under several Answers we considered also the

designation of Christ to his mediatorial work, his fitness for it, and his faithful discharge of it. We there had an account of his Person as God-man; his offices of prophet, priest, and king; his twofold state of humiliation and exaltation; and the benefits which accrue to his church. The church was considered either as visible or as invisible; and the former as enjoying many privileges which respect, more especially, the ordinary means of salvation.

What the Benefits are which the Invisible Church enjoys

We are now led to consider the benefits which the members of the invisible church, namely, the whole number of the elect, which have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ their head, enjoy by him. These are of two general classes, namely, union and communion with him in grace and in glory; and they comprise the blessings of both worlds, as the result of their relation to and interest in him. They are first united to him, and then are made partakers of his benefits. All grace imparted to us here, is the result of union with him. 'Of him,' says the apostle, 'are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' 'He that abideth in me,' says our Saviour, 'and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.'k And the contrary to this is inconsistent with the exercise of any grace: 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Moreover, that communion which the saints have with Christ in glory, whereby they who are brought to a state of perfection participate of those graces and comforts which flow from their continued union with Christ, and the first-fruits or foretastes of glory which they have in this world, are also founded 'on union to the Saviour. Accordingly, the apostle calls Christ, in his people, 'the hope of glory;' and, speaking of his giving eternal life to them, he considers them as being 'in his hand,' whence 'none shall pluck them out,'m or

separate them from him. They shall, therefore, enjoy everlasting happiness with him, inasmuch as they shall 'be found in him.'

What Union to Christ is

We are thus led particularly to consider what union with Christ is. The scripture often speaks of Christ's being or abiding in his people, and they in him; and assigns this union as an evidence of their interest in the blessings he has purchased for them. Indeed, it is from hence that all internal and practical godliness is derived. This privilege argues infinite condescension in him, and tends to the highest advancement of those who are its subjects. That we may understand what is intended by it, let us take heed that we do not include in it any thing which tends on the one hand to extenuate it, or on the other, to exalt those who are made partakers of it above the station or condition into which they are brought by it. It is not sufficient to suppose that this union implies no more than that his people have the same kind of nature with him, as being made 'partakers of flesh and blood,' he having 'himself taken part of the same.' He is indeed allied to us, as having all the essential perfections of our nature; and his coming into this alliance was a display of infinite condescension in him, and absolutely necessary to our redemption. Yet this similitude of nature, abstracted from other considerations accompanying or flowing from his incarnation, involves no other idea of union between Christ and his people, than that which they have with one another; nor is it a privilege peculiar to believers, since Christ took on him the same human nature which all men have, though with a peculiar design of grace to those whom he came to redeem. This I take particular notice of, because the Socinians, and others who speak of this privilege, inasmuch as it is often mentioned in scripture, appear to have very low thoughts of it, when they suppose it to mean nothing more than common

participation of human nature.—Again, union with Christ includes more than the mutual love which is between Christ and believers, in the sense in which there is an union of affection between those who love one another. It is said, 'The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.'p Now, in such a union of affection, believers are united to one another; or, as the apostle expresses it, their hearts are 'knit together in love,' 'being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind;'r or, as he adds, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.' I say, union with Christ includes more than this; which is rather the fruit and consequence of that union, than the matter in which it principally consists.—Moreover, we must take heed that we do not, in explaining the union between Christ and believers, include more in it than what belongs to creatures infinitely below him to whom they are said to be united. We cannot but abhor the blasphemy of those who speak of an essential union of creatures with God, or of their having such an union as gave them something in common with Christ the great Mediator.t

But passing by these methods of explaining the union between Christ and believers, there are two senses in which it is understood in scripture. One is, that which results from Christ's being their federal head, representative, or surety; having undertaken to deal with the justice of God in their behalf, so that what he should do, as standing in this relation to them, should be placed to their account, as much as if it had been done by them in their own persons. This is what gives them a concern in the covenant of grace, made with him in their behalf,—of which something was said under a preceding Answer; and it is the foundation of their sins having been imputed to him, and of his righteousness being imputed to them,—which will be farther considered, when we treat of the doctrine of justification under a following Answer.x The union with Christ which is

mentioned in the Answer we are now explaining, is of another nature; and, in some respects, may be properly styled a vital union, as all spiritual life is derived from it, or a conjugal union, as it is founded in consent, and said to be by faith. Now there are two things observed concerning it.

1. It is expressed by our being spiritually and mystically joined to Christ. It styled a spiritual union, in opposition to those gross and carnal conceptions which persons may entertain concerning things being joined together in a natural way. Indeed, whatever respects salvation, is of a spiritual nature.—It is, moreover, called a mystical union; which is the word most used by those who treat on this subject. The reason is, that the apostle calls it 'a great mystery,' a phrase which we are not, as the Papists pretend,z to understand as meaning the union between man and wife, as set forth in the similitude by which the apostle had just illustrated this doctrine, but which we are to understand as meaning the union between Christ and his church. This is styled 'a mystery,' probably because it could never have been known without divine revelation; and because, as Christ's condescension, expressed in it, can never be sufficiently admired, so it cannot be fully comprehended by us. It is such a nearness to him, and such a display of love in him, as 'passeth knowledge.' There are, however, some similitudes used in scripture to illustrate it.—One of these is the union which there is between the vine and the branches. As by this, life, nourishment, growth, and fruitfulness are conveyed to them; so all our spiritual life, together with the exercise and increase of grace, depend on our union with Christ, our abiding in him, and our deriving from him what is necessary for these ends.—Union with Christ is compared also to the union between the head and members of a body. Thus the apostle farther illustrates it, when he styles him 'the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit

together, increaseth with the increase of God.'b This is a very beautiful similitude; whereby we are given to understand, that, as the head is the fountain of life and motion to the whole body, the nerves and animal spirits taking their rise thence, so that if the communication between them and it were stopped the members would be useless, dead, and insignificant; so Christ is the fountain of spiritual life and motion to all those who are united to him.—Again, union with Christ is illustrated by a similitude taken from the union between the foundation and the building. Accordingly, Christ is styled, in scripture, 'the chief corner-stone,' and 'a sure foundation.'d There is something peculiar in the phrase which the apostle uses, which is more than any similitude can express, when he speaks of Christ as 'the living stone,' or rock, on which the church is built, and of believers as 'lively stones,' to denote that they are not only supported and upheld by him, as the building is by the foundation, but enabled to put forth living actions, as those whose life is derived from their union with him.—There is another similitude, taken from the nourishment which the body receives by the use of food. Our Saviour styles himself 'the bread of life,' or 'the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die;' and proceeds to speak of his 'giving his flesh for the life of the world;' and adds, 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.'f—There is still another similitude, by which our being united to Christ by faith is more especially illustrated, taken from the union between husband and wife. Accordingly, the union between Christ and believers is generally styled a conjugal union. Thus the prophet says, 'Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name: and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.' And the apostle, speaking of a man's 'leaving his father and mother, and being joined unto his wife, and they two being one flesh,'h applies it, as was formerly observed, to the union between Christ and the church; and adds, that 'we are members of his body, of his flesh, and

of his bones.' This expression, if not compared with other scriptures, would be very hard to be understood; but it may be explained by similar phraseology, used elsewhere. Thus, when God formed Eve, and brought her to Adam, and thereby joined them in a conjugal relation, Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.'k We find also that other relations, which are more remote than this, are expressed by the same mode of speaking. Thus Laban says to Jacob, 'Surely thou art my bone and my flesh.' And Abimelech, pleading the relation he stood in to the men of Shechem, as a pretence of his right to reign over them, tells them, 'I am your bone and your flesh.'m Hence the apostle makes use of this expression, agreeably to the common mode of speaking used in scripture, to set forth the conjugal relation between Christ and believers.—The apostle, indeed, elsewhere alters the phrase, when he says, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' This is so difficult an expressson, that some who treat on the subject, though concluding that there is in it something which denotes the intimacy and nearness of this union, and more than what is contained in the other phrase, of their 'being one flesh,' nevertheless reckon it among those expressions which are inexplicable. Yet I cannot but adopt the sense in which some understand it; namely, that, inasmuch as the same spirit dwells in believers which dwelt in Christ, though with different views and designs, they are wrought up, in their measure, to the same temper and disposition; or as it is expressed elsewhere, 'the same mind is in them that was in Christ.'o This is such an effect of the conjugal relation between him and them, as is not always the result of the same relation amongst men. The reason why I call this our being united to Christ by faith, is that the union is founded in a mutual consent. As 'the Lord avouches them,' on the one hand, 'to be his people;' so they, on the other hand, 'avouch him to be their God.' The latter is, properly speaking, an act of faith; whereby they give up

themselves to be his servants, to all intents and purposes, and that for ever. Thus concerning our union with Christ.

It is farther observed in this Answer, that union with Christ is a work of God's grace. This it must certainly be, since it is the spring and fountain whence all acts of grace proceed. Indeed, from the nature of the thing, it cannot be otherwise. For if there is a wonderful display of condescending grace in God's conferring those blessings which accompany salvation, much more is there such a display in this union. If Christ be pleased to 'dwell' with and 'in' his people, and to 'walk in' them, or, as it is said elsewhere, to 'live in them,'r as a pledge and earnest of their being for ever with him in heaven; and if, in consequence, they are admitted to the greatest intimacy with him; we may, with becoming humility and admiration, take occasion to adopt what was spoken to him by one of Christ's disciples: 'How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' Is it not a great instance of grace, that the Son of God should make choice of so mean an habitation as that of the souls of sinful men, and not only be present with but united to them in those instances which have been already considered?

2. It is farther observed in this Answer, that we are united to Christ in effectual calling; and this leads us to consider what is contained in the two following Answers.

EFFECTUAL CALLING

QUESTION LXVII. What is effectual calling?

ANSWER. Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace; whereby, out of his free and especial love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto, he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit, savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills; so as they, although in themselves dead in sin are hereby made willing and able, freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.

QUESTION LXVIII. Are the elect effectually called?

ANSWER. All the elect, and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the Spirit; who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.

The General Nature of the Gospel Call

We have, in these Answers, an account of the first step that God takes, in applying the redemption purchased by Christ. This is expressed, in general, by the word 'calling;' whereby sinners are invited, commanded, encouraged, and enabled to come to Christ, in order to their being made partakers of his benefits. The apostle styles it 'an high, holy, and heavenly calling;' and a being 'called unto the

fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.'u Herein we are 'called out of darkness into his marvellous light,' and 'unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ.'y Indeed, the word is very emphatic. For, a call supposes a person to be separate, or at a distance, from him who calls him; and it contains an intimation of leave to come into his presence. Thus, in effectual calling, he who had departed from God, is brought nigh to him. God, as it were, says to him, as he did to Adam, when fleeing from him, dreading nothing so much as his presence, and apprehending himself exposed to the stroke of his vindictive justice, 'Where art thou?' which is styled, 'God's calling unto him.' Or it is as when a traveller is taking a wrong way, and in danger of falling into some pit or snare, and a kind friend calls after him to return, and sets him in the right way. Thus God calls to sinners; as the prophet expresses it, 'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.' In this call, God deals with men as reasonable creatures; and his doing so is by no means to be excluded from our ideas of the work of grace. Though this work implies some superior or supernatural methods of acting, in order to its being brought about; yet we may be under a divine influence, in turning to God, or in being effectually called by him, and accordingly may be acted upon by a supernatural principle, while, at the same time, our understandings or reasoning powers, are not rendered useless, but enlightened or improved thereby; by which means, every thing we do, in obedience to the call of God, appears to be most just and reasonable. This method of explaining the doctrine, wards off the absurd consequence charged upon us, that we represent God as if he dealt with us as stocks and stones. But more shall be said on this point under a following Head.

We shall now proceed more particularly, to consider the subject of these two Answers; wherein we have an account of the difference

between the external call of the gospel, which is explained in the latter of them, and the internal, saving, and powerful call, which is justly termed effectual, and is considered in the former of them.

The External Call of the Gospel

We shall first speak concerning the outward and common call of the gospel, together with the persons to whom it is given, the design of God in giving it, and the issue of it with respect to a great number of those who are said to be called. The reason why we choose to insist on this common call in the first place, is, that it is antecedent to the other, and made subservient to it in the method of the divine dispensation; for we are first favoured with the word and ordinances, and then these are made effectual to salvation.

1 We shall consider, then, what we are to understand by this common call. It is observed, that it is by the ministry of the word; in which Christ is set forth in his person and offices, and sinners are called to come to him, and, in so doing, to be made partakers of the blessings which he has purchased. Thus, to set forth Christ and invite sinners is the sum and substance of the gospel-ministry; and it is illustrated by the parable of 'the marriage-feast.' When 'the king' had made this feast 'for his son,' he 'sent his servants,' by whom are meant gospel ministers, to 'call' or invite persons, and therein to use all persuasive arguments to prevail with them to come to it. This is styled their being 'called.' And the observation made on persons refusing to comply with this call, 'Many are called, but few are chosen,'b plainly intimates that our Saviour here means no other than a common or ineffectual call. In another parable the same thing is illustrated by 'an householder's hiring labourers into his vineyard,' at several hours of the day. Some were hired early in the morning, at the third hour; others, at the sixth and the ninth. This denotes the gospel call which

the Jewish church had to come to Christ, before his incarnation, under the ceremonial law. And others were hired at the eleventh hour; denoting those who were called by the ministry of Christ and his disciples. That this was only a common and external call, is evident, not only from the intimation that they who had 'borne the burden and heat of the day,' that is, for many ages had been a professing people, 'murmured' because others who were called at the eleventh hour had an equal share in his regard; but also from what is expressly said—the words being the same as those with which the other parable is closed—'Many be called, but few chosen.'d Moreover, the apostle intends this common call, when he speaks of some who had been 'called into the grace of Christ;' not called by the power and efficacious grace of Christ, as denoting that the call was effectual; but called or invited to come and receive the grace of Christ, or called externally, and thereby entreated to embrace the doctrine of the grace of Christ. These are said to have been 'soon removed unto another gospel.' Elsewhere,f too, he speaks of some who, when 'the truth,' or the doctrines of the gospel, were first presented to them, expressed, for a time, a readiness to receive it,—on which account he says, 'Ye did run well,' or, ye began well; but who afterwards did not yield the obedience of faith to that truth which they seemed at first to have a very great regard to. Hence, the apostle says concerning them, 'This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.'

They who express some regard to this call, are generally said to have common grace, as distinguished from others who are under the powerful and efficacious influence of the Spirit, which is styled special. The former are often under some impressive influences by the common work of the Spirit, under the preaching of the gospel, and, notwithstanding, are in an unconverted state. Their consciences are sometimes awakened, and they bring many charges and

accusations against themselves; and from a dread of consequences, they abstain from many enormous crimes, as well as practise several duties of religion. They are also said to be made partakers of some great degrees of restraining grace. These results all arise from no other than the Spirit's common work of conviction; as he is said to 'reprove the world of sin.' They are styled, in this Answer, 'the common operations of the Spirit.' They may be called operations, inasmuch as they include something more than God's sending ministers to address themselves to sinners, in a way of persuasion or arguing; for, the Spirit of God deals with their consciences under the ministry of the word. It is true, this is no more than common grace; yet it may be styled the Spirit's work. For though the call is no other than common; and though the Spirit is considered as an external agent, inasmuch as he never dwells in the hearts of any but believers; yet the effect produced is internal in the mind and consciences of men, and, in some degree, in the will, which is almost persuaded to comply. These operations are sometimes called 'the Spirit's striving with man.' But as many of these internal motions are said to be resisted and quenched,—when persons first act contrary to the dictates of their consciences, and afterwards wholly extinguish them, —the Spirit's work in those whom he thus calls, is not effectual or saving. These are not united to Christ by his Spirit or by faith; and the grace which they possess is generally styled common grace. [See Note G, page 75.]

Here let us consider that there are some things presented to us in an objective way, which contain the subject of the gospel, or that call which is given to sinners to pursue those methods which, by divine appointment, lead to salvation. As 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;' so do common convictions, and whatever carries the appearance of grace in the unregenerate. In this respect God deals with men as intelligent creatures, capable of

making some such improvement of those instructions and intimations as may tend, in many respects, to their advantage. This must be supposed, else the preaching of the gospel could not, abstractedly from those saving advantages which some receive by it, be reckoned an universal blessing to those who are favoured with it. This is here called the grace which is offered to those who are outwardly called by the ministry of the word. Offers of grace, and invitations to come to Christ, are words used by almost all who have treated on this subject. Of late, indeed, some have been ready to conclude that these modes of speaking tend to overthrow the doctrine we are maintaining; for they argue that an overture, or invitation, supposes a power in him to whom it is given to comply with it. Did I think this idea necessarily contained in the expressions, I would choose to substitute others in the room of them. However, to remove prejudices or unjust representations which the use of them may occasion, either here or elsewhere, I shall briefly give an account of the reason why I use them, and what I understand by them. If it be said that such expressions are not to be found in scripture, the circumstance of their not being there should make us less tenacious of them. Yet they may be used without just offence given, if explained agreeably to scripture. Let it be considered, then, that the presenting of an object, whatever it be, to the understanding and will, is generally called an 'offering' of it. Thus Gad says to David, from the Lord, 'I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them,'l &c. So, if God sets before us life and death, blessing and cursing, and bids us choose which we will have,' his doing so is equivalent to what is generally called an offer of grace. As for invitations to come to Christ, it is plain that there are many scriptures which speak to that purpose. Thus it is said, 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' And, 'He, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'n And elsewhere Christ says, 'Come unto me, all ye that

labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' And, 'Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.'p Moreover, when an offer or invitation to accept of a thing, thus objectively presented to us, is made, the offer of it always supposes that it is valuable, that it would be greatly our interest to accept it, and that it is our indispensable duty to do so. Now, these are the principal ideas which I include in my sense of the word, when I speak of offers of grace in the gospel, or of invitations to come to Christ. Yet understanding the offers in this sense, does not necessarily infer a power in us to accept them, without the assistance of divine grace. Thus it may be said that Christ came into the world to save sinners; that he will certainly apply the redemption which he has purchased, to all for whom the price was given; that a right to salvation is inseparably connected with faith and repentance; that these and all other graces are God's gifts; that we are to pray, wait, and hope for them, under the ministry of the word; that, if we be, in God's own time and way, enabled to exercise these graces, our being so will be to our unspeakable advantage; and that, therefore, it cannot but be our duty to attend upon God in all his holy institutions, in hope of saving blessings;—these things may be said, and the gospel may be thus preached, without supposing that grace is in our own power. Now this is what we principally intend by gospel overtures or invitations. At the same time, we cannot approve of some expressions subversive of the doctrine of special redemption, how moving and pathetic soever they may appear to be; as when any one, to induce sinners to come to Christ, says, "God is willing; and Christ is willing, and has done his part; and the Spirit is ready to do his; and shall we be unwilling, and thereby destroy ourselves? Christ has purchased salvation for us; the Spirit offers his assistance to us; and shall we refuse these overtures? Christ invites us to come to him, and leaves it to our free will, whether we will comply with or reject these invitations. He is, as it were, undetermined whether he shall

save us or not, and leaves the matter to our own conduct. We ought, therefore, to be persuaded to comply with the invitation." This method of explaining offers of grace, and invitations to come to Christ, is not what we intend when we make use of these expressions.

2. We are now to consider the persons to whom this common call is given. It is indefinite, not directed to the elect only, or those with respect to whom God designs to make it effectual to their salvation; for, according to the commission which our Saviour gave to his apostles, the gospel was to be preached to all nations, or to every creature in those places to which it was sent. The reason is obvious; the counsel of God concerning election is secret, and not to be considered as the rule of human conduct; nor are they whom God is pleased to employ in preaching the gospel, supposed to know whether he will give success to their endeavours, by enabling those who are called to comply with it.

3. We shall now show how far the gospel call may, without the superadded assistance of special grace, be improved by men, in order to their attaining some advantage by it, though short of salvation. This may be done in two respects: gross crimes may be avoided; and some things may be done which, though not good in all those circumstances which accompany or flow from regenerating grace, are materially good. That gross enormous crimes may be avoided, appears in many unconverted persons, who not only avoid but abhor them; being induced by something in nature which gives an aversion to them. The point may be argued too, from the liableness of those who commit gross crimes to punishment in proportion to their respective aggravations; for either this must suppose in man a power to avoid them, or else the greatest degree of punishment would be the result of a necessity of nature, and not self-procured by any act of man's will,—though all suppose the will to be free with respect to

actions which are sinful. It would be a very poor excuse for the murderer to allege, that he could not govern his passion, but was under an unavoidable necessity to take away the life of another. Shall the man who commits those sins which are contrary to nature, say that his natural temper and disposition is so much inclined to them that he could by no means avoid them? If our natural constitution be so depraved and vitiated, that it leads us, with an uncommon and impetuous violence, to those sins which we were not formerly inclined to, whence does this arise, but from the habits of vice being increased by a wilful and obstinate perseverance, and by the many repeated acts which they have produced? And might not this, at least, in some degree, have been avoided? We must distinguish between habits of sin which flow immediately from the universal corruption of nature, and those which have taken deeper root in us by being indulged, and by exerting themselves, without any endeavours used, to restrain and check them. And if it be supposed that our natures are more habitually inclined to sin than once they were, might we not so far use the liberty of our wills as to avoid some things which, we are sensible, will prove a temptation to particular acts of sin; by which means the corruption of nature, which is so prone to comply with temptation, might be in some measure restrained, though not overcome? This may be done without converting grace; and, consequently, some great sins be avoided. To deny this, would be not only to palliate all manner of licentiousness, but to open a door for it. —Again, man has a power to do some things which are materially good, though not good in all those circumstances which accompany or flow from regenerating grace. Ahab's humility, and Nineveh's repentance,r arose from the dread they had of the divine threatenings; which is such an inducement to repentance and reformation, as takes its rise from nothing more than the influence of common grace. Herod himself, though a vile person, 'feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy; and when ho heard

him, did many things, and heard him gladly.' The Gentiles also are said to 'do by nature the things,' that is, some, things, 'contained in the law;' insomuch that 'they are a law unto themselves.'t Hence they did them by the influence of common grace. Now these things, namely, abstaining from grosser sins, and doing some actions materially good, have certainly some advantage attending them; as thereby the world is not so much like hell as it would otherwise be, and as to themselves, a greater degree of punishment is avoided.

4. We are now to consider the design of God in giving the common call in the gospel. That this cannot be the salvation of all who are thus called, is evident; because all shall not be saved. If God had designed their salvation, he would certainly have brought it about; since his purpose cannot be frustrated. To say that God has no determinations relating to the success of the gospel, reflects on his wisdom; and to conclude that things may happen contrary to his purpose argues a defect of power, as if he could not attain the ends he designed. But this having been insisted on under the heads of election and special redemption, I shall pass it by at present, and only consider that the ends which God designed in giving the gospel, were such as are attained by it, namely, the salvation of those who shall eventually be saved, the restraining of those who have only common grace, and the setting forth of the glorious work of redemption by Jesus Christ; which, as it is the wonder of angels, who desire to look into it, so it is designed in the preaching of the gospel to be recommended as worthy of the highest esteem, even in those who cast contempt on it. By the preaching of the gospel, also, those are convicted who shut their eyes against the glorious light which shines so brightly in it, or neglect to behold that light.

It is objected that Christ invites and calls men to come to him, as he often does in the New Testament, and when they refuse to comply,

mentions their refusal with a kind of regret; as when he says, 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.' The objectors hence infer that the preaching of the gospel, according to our view of it, is no other than an insult on mankind, a bidding them come without the least design that they should; as if a magistrate should go to the prison door, and tell the unhappy man who is not only under lock and key but loaded with irons, that he would have him leave that place of misery and confinement, and how much he should rejoice if he would come out, and upon condition of his doing so, propose to him several honours which he has in reserve for him. This, say they, is not to deal seriously with him. And if the offer of grace in the gospel answers the similitude, as they suppose it exactly does, there is no need for any thing farther to be replied to it: the doctrine confutes itself; as it argues the divine dealings with men to be illusory. But the similitude, how plausible soever it may appear to some, is far from giving a just representation of the doctrine we are maintaining. For when the magistrate is supposed to signify his desire that the prisoner would set himself free, which he knows he cannot do; hereby it is intimated, that though God knows that the sinner cannot convert himself, yet he commands him to do it, or to put forth supernatural acts of grace, though he has no principle of grace in him. But let it he considered that God nowhere commands any to do this. Our Saviour implies that he nowhere does so, when he speaks of 'the tree being made good' before the fruit it produces can be so;x or that it is impossible for men 'to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles;' implying that there must be an internal disposition wrought, before any acts of grace can be put forth. This is supposed in the preaching of the gospel, or the call to sinners to repent and believe; which they have no reason to conclude that they can do without the aids of divine grace, and these they are to wait, pray, and hope for, in all God's instituted methods. As to the statement in the objection respecting promises made to us on the condition that we

would release ourselves from the chains of sin, and concerning the joy God would have in our being set free, when the thing is in itself impossible; it is no otherwise true than as it contains a declaration of the connection there is between conversion and salvation, or between freedom from the slavery of sin and God's conferring many spiritual honours and privileges on those who are converted,—not that it does, in the least, denote that it is in our power to convert ourselves. But that this may be more clearly understood, we shall consider it with reference to the two branches of the objection, and so speak of God, either as commanding, calling, and inviting men to do what is out of their power, namely, to repent and believe, or as holding forth promises of that salvation which they shall not attain, because the graces of faith and repentance are out of their power. This is the substance of what is usually objected against the doctrine we are maintaining, by those who are on the other side of the question; who suppose that the call of the gospel, according to our view of it, is illusory, and therefore unbecoming the divine perfections.

As to God's commanding, calling, and inviting men to do what is out of their own power, as for instance, bidding a dead man to arise, or one who is blind to see, or those who are shut up in prison to come out thence; this is to be explained, and then, perhaps, the doctrine we are maintaining will appear to be less exceptionable. We have elsewhere, in defending the doctrine of particular redemption against an objection not much unlike this, considered how Christ is said to be offered in the gospel, or in what sense the overture may be said to be made to all who are favoured with it, while the efficacy of it extends to those only whom Christ has redeemed, and who shall be effectually called. But that we may a little farther explain this matter, let us consider that the gospel contains a declaration, that God designs to save a part of this miserable world, and that, in

subserviency to this end, he has given them a discovery of Christ, as the object of faith, and the purchaser and author of salvation. But he does not in this declaration give the least intimation to any, while in a state of unregeneracy, that they shall be enabled to believe, and, in consequence, be saved. The names, characters, or places of abode, or the natural embellishments of those who shall attain this privilege, are nowhere pointed at in scripture. Nor is the book of God's secret purpose concerning election to eternal life opened, so that any one can discern his name written in it, before he be effectually called. We have no warrant to look any farther than God's revealed will, which assigns no evidence of our interests in the saving blessings of the gospel till they are experienced by us, in this effectual call. Again, God plainly discovers to men, in the gospel, that all those graces which are inseparably connected with salvation, are his work and gift, and consequently out of their own power; or that 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.'a He nowhere tells the man who 'is tied and bound with the chain of his sin,' that he is able to set himself free; but puts him upon expecting and praying for it, from 'the pitifulness of his great mercy.' He nowhere tells him, that he can implant a principle of spiritual life and grace in himself, or that he ought so much as to attempt to do any thing to atone for his sins, by his obedience and sufferings; but suggests the contrary, and says, 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Further, he gives none the least ground to expect or lay claim to salvation, till they believe; and as both faith and salvation are his gifts, he puts them upon seeking and desiring them in their respective order, first grace, and then glory. Moreover, the gospel call is designed to put men upon a diligent attendance on the ordinances, as means of grace, and to leave the issue and success to God who 'waits that he may be gracious,'—that so his sovereignty may appear more eminently in the dispensing of this privilege; and, in the mean time, he assigns it as their duty to

'wait for him.'c And while we are engaged in this waiting, we are to acknowledge that we have nothing which can give us any right to the privilege we are seeking. We infer, therefore, that God might justly deny success to his ordinances. Yet if he is pleased to give us, while we are attending on them, earnest desires that they may be made effectual to our conversion and salvation, we may conclude his doing so to be a token for good, that he designs us some special advantage. Nor do we know but that even those desires for grace may be the beginning of the Spirit's saving work, and therefore an earnest of his carrying it on. Finally, when God commands persons, in the gospel, to do those things which cannot be performed without his special grace, he sometimes, when he gives the command, supposes them to have a principle of spiritual life and grace, which is, in effect, to bid one who is made alive put forth living actions, which respect, more especially, the progress of grace after the work is begun. In this sense I understand those words of the apostle, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh,' that is, hath wrought, 'in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.'

Let us now consider the gospel as holding forth promises of salvation, when, at the same time, it is not in our power to exercise those graces which accompany it. This gives occasion to those who except against the doctrine we are maintaining, to say that it represents God as offering those blessings which he does not design to bestow. Here we have opportunity to explain what we mean, when we consider salvation as offered in the gospel. By this we understand nothing else but a declaration that all who repent and believe shall be saved; which contains a character or description of the persons who have ground to expect this privilege. Not that salvation is founded on dubious and uncertain conditions, which depend upon the power and liberty of our will; or that it depends upon impossible conditions, as if God should say, 'If man will change his own heart,

and work faith and all other graces in himself, then I will save him.' All that we mean is, that those graces which are inseparably connected with salvation, are to be waited for in our attendance on all God's ordinances; and that, when he is pleased to work them, we may conclude that we have a right to the promise of salvation.

5. Having thus spoken of the gospel call, what it is, how far it may be improved by those who are destitute of special grace, and what is God's design in giving it, we proceed to consider the issue and consequence of it. It is observed in this Answer, that many wilfully neglect, contemn, or refuse to comply with it; with respect to whom it is not made effectual to their salvation. This appears from the report which Christ's disciples brought to him, concerning the excuses many made when called to come to the marriage-feast in the parable. One pretended that he had 'bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it;' another that he had 'bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them;' and another 'had married a wife, and therefore could not come.' It is elsewhere said, 'They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.' The prophet introduces our Saviour himself as complaining, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought.'f And the reason is, 'because Israel is not gathered;' which words are to be understood in a comparative sense, as denoting the fewness of those who complied with his gracious invitations to come to him, or were convinced by the miracles which he wrought to confirm his doctrine.—Our position is farther evident from the smallness of the number of those who are effectually prevailed upon under the gospel dispensation; which the apostle calls 'the grace of God that brings salvation, that hath appeared to all men, teaching them to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.' It appears,

also, from the great opposition and hatred which many express to the person of Christ, who is the subject of the gospel. The prophet not only relates this as what was observed in his day; but foretells that, in after ages, a great part of mankind would not believe the report made concerning Christ, and that he should be 'despised and rejected of men,' who would 'hide, as it were, their faces from him, and not esteem him.' This conduct is certainly the highest contempt of the gospel; for it is an undervaluing of the greatest privileges, as if they were not worthy to be embraced, desired, or sought after. And inasmuch as the conduct is wilful, arising from the enmity of the will of man against God, and against the method of salvation which he has prescribed, it has a tendency to provoke his wrath; so that those guilty of it being justly left in their unbelief, they will not come to Christ that they may have life. And as they are judicially left to themselves, they contract a greater degree of alienation from God and averse ness to him, and so never truly come to Jesus Christ; which is an awful and tremendous consideration.

This is the result with respect to those who have only the common call of the gospel. We must hence conclude that that call is not sufficient to salvation, unless there be an internal effectual call; and what that is, will be considered under our next head. But it is here necessary to inquire, whether all men, at least those who sit under the sound of the gospel, have sufficient grace given them to be able, by their own conduct, without the internal powerful influences of the Spirit, to attain salvation. This argument is much insisted on by those who adhere to the Pelagian scheme; so that we cannot wholly pass it over. Now, every one must allow that all who sit under the sound of the gospel have sufficient objective grace, or sufficient external means, to lead them in the way of salvation; for to deny this, would be to deny that the gospel is a perfect rule of faith. Accordingly, this is allowed on both sides; and we think nothing

more is intended, when God says, concerning the church of the Jews, 'What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?' But the question is, Whether there be a sufficiency of power or ability in man to enable him, without the internal efficacious grace of God determining and inclining his will, to make a right improvement of the gospel for his salvation? This is what we cannot but deny. For, that the external means of grace are not rendered effectual to the salvation of all who are favoured with them, is evident; because, as was just observed, many neglect and contemn the gospel. And as to others who improve it, so that the means of grace become effectual, it must be inquired, What is it that makes them so? how comes it that the preaching of the gospel is styled to some a savour of life, to others a savour of death? The answer which the Pelagians give is, that they in whom it is effectual render it so by their improving the liberty of their will; so that they choose what is represented in the gospel as eligible, and refuse the contrary. And if the question be asked, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another?' they have, when disposed to speak agreeably to their own scheme, this answer ready at hand, 'I make myself to differ;' which is as much as to say, 'I have a natural power of improving the means of grace, without having recourse to God for any farther assistance in a supernatural way.' It may easily be observed that this supposition is greatly derogatory to the glory of God, and renders all dependence on him, both to will and to do, unnecessary. It supposes that we have sufficient ability to work those graces in ourselves which accompany salvation; otherwise the grace is not sufficient to salvation. The supposition, therefore, is contrary to all those scriptures which speak of the graces which accompany salvation as the work or the effect of the exceeding greatness of the power of God.

The Previous Character of Persons who are Effectually Called

We are now led to consider the doctrine of effectual calling, as stated in the former of the Answers which we are explaining. At present we shall inquire into the antecedent character of those who are effectually called. They have nothing which can recommend them to the divine favour; for, being considered as fallen, guilty creatures, they are unable not only to make atonement for sin, but to do what is spiritually good. Thus the apostle represents them as 'without strength;' which is the immediate consequence of man's first apostacy from God. Universal experience, also, proves that we have a propensity to everything which is evil, and that this propensity daily increases. We may add, that the mind is blinded, the affections stupified, the will full of obstinacy, the conscience disposed to deal treacherously, whereby we deceive ourselves; so that the whole soul is out of order. The apostle speaks of man 'by nature,' as 'dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; having their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' The prophet speaks of 'the heart' of man as being 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'l The apostle again describes some as 'walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness:' and others as being 'filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.'n This, indeed, is spoken of the Gentiles, who were destitute of the means of grace, and had contracted greater

degrees of impiety than many others; but they who are effectually called would have run into the same abominations, their natures being equally inclined to them, without preventing grace. Accordingly, some of the church of Corinth are said to have done so before their conversion; whom the apostle speaks of as once having been 'unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners.' And elsewhere he says, 'We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.'p The obstinacy and perverseness of men going on in a course of sin is so great, that God reproves a professing people by telling them that 'their neck was an iron sinew, and their brow brass.' Thus they were, before he 'refined' and 'chose' some of them, 'in the furnace of affliction.'r It hence evidently appears, that men are not naturally inclined to comply with the gospel call; and that the privilege of willingness to comply is conferred on them, when, by the Spirit, the call is made effectual to their salvation.

It is objected to what has been said concerning persons being dead in sin, before they are effectually called, that the expression 'dead in sin' is metaphorical, and is not to be strained so far as to be made to imply that they are altogether without a power to do that which is spiritually good. But while the state of men before they are effectually called, is styled 'a death in sin,' which is a metaphorical expression, we must suppose that there is a sense affixed to it which, in some respects, is adapted to those ideas which we have of the words. If scripture metaphors prove nothing because the words are transferred from their literal sense to some other, we shall be at the greatest loss to understand many important doctrines contained in the sacred writings; which abound very much in such modes of speaking. We do not suppose the metaphor to be extended so far as

to imply that a person dead in sin, is incapable of acting as if he were a stock or a stone; the contrary to which is evident from what has been already said concerning the power which they who are in an unregenerate state have of doing things materially good. But we are now considering men as unable to do what is good in all its circumstances, which may render their actions the object of the divine approbation, as agreeable to God's revealed will. This, we suppose, an unregenerate person is as unable to do, as a dead man is to put forth living actions; and the reason is, that he is destitute of a supernatural principle of spiritual life. Scripture and experience not only evince the weakness, blindness, and disinclination of such to what is good, but their aversion to it. Whatever we do, therefore, either in the beginning or in the progress of the life of faith, must proceed from a renewed nature, or a supernatural principle implanted in the soul. This is sometimes called, 'a new heart,' 'a divine nature,'t as well as a quickening or a being raised from the dead.

The Change Wrought in Effectual Calling

We are now led to consider the change which is wrought in effectual calling, together with the grounds we have to conclude that it is a supernatural work, or, as it is styled in this Answer, 'the work of God's almighty power and grace.' Those whom we more especially oppose in this head of argument, are the Pelagians, and others, who, though in some things they seem to recede from them, yet cannot support their cause without adopting their scheme, when treating on the subjects of free-will, nature, and grace. These all allow that there is a change made in conversion or effectual calling; but they suppose that it is a change in man's natural temper and disposition, rather than one arising from a supernatural principle. According to them, it consists in overcoming those habits of sin which we have contracted,

and in acquiring habits of virtue,—a ceasing to do evil, and a learning to do well. They suppose also that the change is in man's own power, with the concurrence of God as the God of nature, or at least, with some superadded assistances from the external dispensations of providence, which have an influence on the minds of men to produce it. By this means they think grace is first attained, and men disposed to comply with the external call of the gospel, whereby it is rendered effectual. They sometimes, indeed, use the word 'conversion,' and speak of the power and grace of God in it; and that they may not seem to detract from its glory, they profess to adore and magnify God as its author. But all they say amounts to no more than that nature acts under the influence of common providence. Something, indeed, they ascribe to God; but much less than what we think the scripture does. They say that he has made man an intelligent creature, having a power capable of choosing whatever seems advantageous, or refusing what appears to be destructive to him. Man is hence able, they say, to discern what is his duty and interest; and when his will duly attends to these dictates of his understanding, it has a power inclining it to be influenced thereby, and to embrace whatever overtures are made conducive to his future happiness. They say, farther, that as the understanding and reasoning powers and faculties are often impaired and hindered in their acting, by some accidental inconveniences of nature, such as the temperament of the body, or the diseases to which it is sometimes liable, which affect the mind; these, God, by his powerful providence, removes or protects against, that the work may go on successfully. And as our outward circumstances in the world, give a different turn to our passions, and hinder us from entertaining any inclinations to religion, they suppose that there is a farther hand of providence in ordering the various changes or conditions of life, as to its prosperous or adverse circumstances; whereby a sanguine temper is changed to one which is more melancholy or thoughtful, and more inclined to be afraid of

those sins which are likely to be prejudicial; an angry and choleric temper, changed to one which has a greater mixture of meekness and humility. They say, too, that while hinderance may arise from a man's conversing with persons who tempt him to lay aside all thoughts about religion, or who load religion with reproach, in order to make him ashamed to pretend to it, the providence of God so orders circumstances and things as to make these persons unacceptable to him, or to make him disinclined to converse with them. There hence arises a congruity, as they call it, between men's natural dispositions and that grace which they are called by the gospel to exert, when they are persuaded to comply with it,—a congruity without which the overture would be in vain. Again, providence farther performs its part, by overruling some concurring circumstances external to and unthought of by an individual, in casting his lot among those who are able and desirous to persuade him to alter his sentiments in matters of religion; whose industry and zeal for his good, accompanied with their skilfulness in managing persuasive arguments used to convince him, have a great tendency to prevail upon him. He is hence persuaded, they say, to give a hearing to that which before he despised and made the subject of ridicule; and sometimes the motives and inducements which are used, accompanied with a pathetic manner of address in those whose ministry he attends, are very conducive to answer the end attained, namely, his conviction and the altering of his conduct in life,—all which are under the unforeseen direction of providence. They add, that there is a kind of internal work in exciting the passions by a general influence upon them, leaving it, notwithstanding, in man's power to determine them with respect to their proper objects; that as for the will, it still remains free and unbiassed; but that by this moral suasion, or these rational arguments, it is prevailed upon to comply with that which is for its advantage.

According to this method of accounting for the work of conversion, what the Pelagians attribute to the grace of God, is nothing more than the result of common providence; and is supposed to act no otherwise than in an objective way. What gives the turn to all is, the influence of moral suasion, whereby men are prevailed on; but for which, according to the view we have stated, they are beholden to God only as the God of nature. When this is called, by the Pelagians, a display of divine grace, nature and grace are, without scripture warrant, made to signify the same thing. Moreover, as it is plain that all which we have mentioned may be done, and yet persons remain in an unconverted state, and the gospel call be ineffectual, they suppose that there is something to be performed on man's part, which gives a sanction to and completes the work. Accordingly, say they, he must rightly use and improve the power of reasoning which God has given him, by diligently observing and attending to his law; he must persuade himself that it is highly reasonable to obey it; he must duly weigh the consequence of his compliance or refusal, and endeavour to affect himself with the consideration of promised rewards and punishments, to excite his diligence or awaken his fears; he must make use of those motives which are proper to induce him to lead a virtuous life, and, when he is brought to conclude this most eligible, he must add the force of the strongest resolutions, to avoid occasions of sin, perform several necessary duties, and associate himself with those whose conversation and example may induce him to virtue; he must attend on the word preached, with intenseness of thought, and a disposition to adhere, with the greatest impartiality, to what is recommended to him, as conducive to his future happiness. By these means, say they, he is persuaded; and thence proceed those acts of grace which afterwards, by being frequently repeated, arrive to a habit; so that, being brought into a state of conversion, if his acquired habits of goodness be not lost by negligence, stupidity, and impenitence, or by adhering to the

temptations of Satan, he is in a fair way to heaven; which, notwithstanding, he may miss by apostacy, since the work is to be carried on by him, as it was at first begun, by his own conduct.

This account of effectual calling or conversion, supposes it to be little more than a work of common providence. All the grace which the Pelagians seem to own, is nothing more than nature exerting itself under the conduct of those reasoning powers which God has given it. None pretend to deny that our reasoning powers are to be exerted and improved; or that those arguments which tend to give conviction, and motives to enforce obedience, must be duly attended to. Nor do we deny that there is a kind hand of providence seen in overruling our natural tempers and dispositions, in giving a check to that corruption which is prevalent in us, and in rendering our condition in life, some way or other, conducive to a farther work which God designs to bring about. We assert also, that providence greatly favours us in bringing us under the means of grace, or in casting our lot in places where we have the advantages of the conversation and example of others who are burning and shining lights in their generation. Nor is providence less seen in adapting a suitable word to our condition, or in raising our affections while attending to it. All this, however, falls very far short of effectual calling, as a display of God's power and grace. This work is no more than natural; while conversion is a supernatural work. In this we may be led by common grace; but effectual calling is a work of special grace. The effect of this is only a change of life; but we assert, and have scripture ground for doing so, that there is in conversion a change of heart. This scheme supposes the very principle and spring of grace to be acquired by man's improving his natural powers, under the conduct of God's providence; whereas we suppose, and shall endeavour to prove under a following head, that it is not acquired, but infused, and is the effect of divine power. This supposes that the

work is brought about by moral suasion, and that, while the understanding receives the arguments which are made use of in an objective way, the will is induced to a compliance, by choosing that which is good, and refusing that which is evil; whereas we assert that the will of man is bowed and subjected to Christ, its enmity overcome, and we are said to be 'made willing in the day of his power.'

But that which bears the greatest share in this work, is, according to the Pelagians, the will and power of man determining itself, by proper motives and arguments, to what is good. This supposes that the will acts freely in the matter. We have here an opportunity to consider the nature of human liberty. Now we do not deny, in general, that man is endowed with a free will, which exerts itself in things of a lower nature than that which we are speaking of; for this is as evident as that he is endowed with an understanding. We shall, therefore, in speaking concerning the liberty of the will of man, consider, first, what are the essential properties of liberty, without which an action would cease to be free; and, secondly, how far the power of man's free will may be extended, with a particular view to the matter under our present consideration.

1. As to the nature and essential properties of human liberty, they whose sentiments of free will and grace we are opposing, suppose that it is essential to a free action, that it be performed with indifference, that is, that the will of man should be so equally poised that, while it determines itself to one extreme, it might as well have determined itself to the other. They hence say, that he who loves God freely, might, by a determination of his will, as well have inclined himself to hate him; and that, on the other hand, he who hates God, might, by an act of his will, have determined himself to love him. The balance is supposed to be equal; and it is the method which the

person uses to determine his will, which gives a turn to it. They hence infer that those who persevere in grace, which they do freely, may, for the same reason, apostatize. Yea, they proceed farther, at least some of them do, and maintain that our Saviour might have sinned, and consequently that the work of our redemption might have miscarried in his hands; because, according to their notion of liberty, he acted freely in all those exercises of grace which, we suppose, were no less free that they were necessary. From the account they give of liberty, our opponents infer also, that the angels and glorified saints may sin, and so lose the state of blessedness which they are possessed of; otherwise their obedience is not free. These absurdities are so apparently gross, that they who duly weigh them will not easily adopt this notion of liberty. There is another absurdity, which the Pelagians dare not assert; for it would be the greatest blasphemy that could be expressed in words, though it equally flows from their method of explaining the nature of liberty; that either God must not act freely, or else he might act the contrary, with respect to those things in which he acts, like himself, as a God of infinite perfection; and accordingly, if he loves or delights in himself freely, or designs his own glory as the highest end of all that he does, and uses means to bring about those ends which are most conducive to it, wherein his holiness, wisdom, justice, and faithfulness appear, I say, it will follow from their scheme, and I cannot but tremble to mention it, that he might do the contrary; and what is this but to say, that he might cease to be God?

The arguments which they who attempt to support this notion of liberty, insist on, are taken from the ideas which we generally have of a person's acting freely. For instance, if a man performs any of the common actions of life, such as walking, sitting, standing, reading, writing, &c. freely, he may do the contrary. But there is a vast difference between asserting that many of the actions of life are

arbitrary or indifferent, so that we might do the contrary, and saying that indifference is essential to liberty; for that which is essential to an action must belong to every individual action of the same kind. Thus concerning their notion of liberty, whom we oppose.

The notion of liberty in which we acquiesce is, that its essential property or nature consists in a person's doing a thing without being laid under a natural necessity to do it; or doing it of his own accord, without any force laid on him.z Others express it by a person's doing a thing out of choice, as having the highest reason to determine him to do it. This is that notion of liberty which we cannot but approve of.

2. We are now to show how far the power of man's free will may be extended, with a particular view to the matter under our present consideration. Here let it be observed, that the power of man's will extends itself to things within its own sphere, and not above it. All actions and powers of acting, are contained within certain limits, agreeably to the nature and capacity of the agent. Creatures below man cannot put forth rational actions; and man cannot put forth supernatural actions, if he be not made partaker of a divine or spiritual nature, as being endowed with a supernatural principle, such as that which is implanted in regeneration. Consider him as an intelligent creature, and it is agreeable to his nature to put forth free actions, under the conduct and direction of the understanding; but if we consider him as renewed, converted, or effectually called, and acting agreeably to his being so, he is under the influence of a higher principle, which I call 'a divine nature,' according to the phrase which the apostle uses. The former supposes no more than the concourse of common providence, which first gave and then maintains our reasoning faculties; while the latter supposes that we are under the influence of the Spirit, whereby we are enabled to act in a supernatural way, our natures being renewed and disposed so to

act. In this, however, we are not divested of the liberty of our wills; but they are improved and enabled to do what before they were averse and disinclined to. That man acts freely in those things which are agreeable to his nature, as an intelligent creature, all will allow. Moreover, we consider that the understanding and the will concur in actions which are free, and that one of these is subservient to the other. For instance, we cannot be said to desire, delight in, choose, or refuse a thing, unless we have some idea of it, as an object which we think meet to be desired or rejected.—It may be farther inquired, whether the will has in itself a power to follow the dictates of the understanding, in things which are agreeable to our nature; and whether it is generally disposed to do this, unless biassed by the passions, inclining and determining it another way. Now this, I think, is not to be denied. But in our present argument, we are to consider the will of man as conversant about things supernatural, and accordingly, must give a different account of Christian liberty from that which is merely human, as before described. The Pelagians will allow what has been said concerning the nature of liberty in general; but the difference between us and them is, that we confine it within its own sphere, while they extend it farther, and apply it to regeneration, effectual calling, and conversion. Now as regards these, the will discovers itself no otherwise than as enslaved to or a servant of sin;c and the powers and faculties of the soul, with relation to it, are weakened by the prevalence of corruption, so that we are not able to put forth those actions which proceed from a renewed nature, and determine a person to be 'renewed in the spirit of his mind,' or to have put 'on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.'—Again, it may be inquired, whether the will necessarily follows the dictates of the understanding, so that the grace of God takes its rise thence. Now, the understanding, indeed, represents things spiritual and heavenly to us, as good and desirable, and worthy of all acceptation, and gives

us an undeniable conviction that all the motives used in scripture, to choose and embrace them, are highly reasonable; but yet it does not follow, that the will of man is always overcome by these representations of the understanding. The reason of this is, the strong propensity and inclination which there is in corrupt nature to sin, which bids defiance to all the arguments and persuasions which are used to the contrary, till we are brought under the influence of a supernatural principle, implanted in the soul in effectual calling.

This leads us farther to inquire, whether, supposing a man has this principle implanted in effectual calling, he then acts freely? or, what is the liberty of man's will, when internally moved and influenced by divine grace? Here we must consider that special grace does not destroy, but improve, the liberty of man's will. When there is a new nature implanted in him, it discovers its energy, and makes a change in all the powers and faculties of the soul. There is a new light shining in the understanding, vastly different from, and superior to, that which it had before. This may truly be called, 'the light of life,' not only as it leads to eternal life, but as it proceeds from a principle of spiritual life. It is what we generally call 'saving knowledge;' as it is said, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'f Now this light in the understanding, being attended with power in the will, the latter is induced to comply with the dictates of the former; not merely as being prevailed on by rational arguments, but as there is a divine power accompanying them. It is not indeed prevailed on without arguments; for the Spirit makes use of the word to persuade, as well as to direct. Though we do not, with the Pelagians, say that the will is overcome only by arguments, as if the victory were owing to our power of reasoning; yet we freely own that we act with judgment, and see the highest reason for what we do. We are enabled to use our reasoning powers, indeed; but these are sanctified by the Spirit, as

well as the will renewed; and both concur in order to our receiving and improving the doctrines contained in the gospel. The Spirit of God also removes those rooted prejudices which we had entertained against the way of salvation by Christ. Upon the whole, therefore, the gospel has its use, as it directs and excites our faith. Our reasoning powers and faculties have their use also, as we take in, and are convinced by, what is therein contained. All this, however, would be to no purpose, if there were not a superior power determining the will to a thorough compliance. We do not deny that moral suasion often has a tendency to incline a man to the performance of moral duties; but it is what I choose rather to call evangelical persuasion, or the Spirit of God setting home upon the heart and conscience what is contained in the gospel, which makes it effectual to salvation.

Effectual Calling a Divine Work

We have thus spoken concerning the nature and extent of human liberty. But as this liberty is not to be assigned as that which renders the gospel call effectual, let it be farther considered that effectual calling is brought about by the almighty power of God. As is observed in this Answer, it is 'a work of God's almighty power and grace.' This is what enhances the excellency and glory of it above all the works of common providence. Yet our saying that it is a divine work, is hardly sufficient to distinguish it from what the Pelagians often call it; by which, however, they mean nothing more than the powerful work of God, as the God of nature and providence. We must consider it as a work of divine power exerting itself in a supernatural way; not only as excluding the agency of creatures from bearing a part in it, but as opposed to those works which are brought about by the moral influence of persuasive arguments, without any change wrought in the will of man.In this sense we understand effectual calling to be a work of God's almighty power. That it may appear to be so, let it be

premised, that it is not inconsistent with God's dealing with men as intelligent creatures, endowed with liberty of will, to exert this power; for special providence or efficacious grace does no more destroy man's natural powers, by its internal influence enabling and exciting him to do what is supernaturally good, than common providence being conversant about the free actions of men, makes them cease to be free,—only the former exerts itself in a different and superior way, producing effects much more glorious and excellent. This being supposed, we shall, without pretending fully to explain the manner of the divine agency, which is principally known by its effects, endeavour to show that effectual calling is, in a way of eminence, the work of divine power, as distinguished from other works which are, in their kind, the effects of power in a natural way. We shall next observe what effects are produced by it, and in what order. We shall then consider it as it is, in a peculiar manner, attributed to the Spirit of God, and also show that it is a wonderful display of his grace. We shall farther consider this divine power as irresistible, and consequently such as cannot but be effectual to produce what it is designed to bring about. And finally, we shall say something concerning the season in which this is done; which is called 'God's accepted time.'

I. Effectual calling is eminently a work of divine power. For the proof of this, we have not only many express texts of scripture which sufficiently establish it, but we may appeal to the experience of those who are made partakers of this grace. If they compare their former and present state, they may easily perceive in themselves that there is such a change wrought in them as is contrary to the inclinations of corrupt nature,—a change in which the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills has been subdued, and such effects produced in them as they never experienced before. And the manner in which these effects have been produced, as well as the consequences of them,

gives them a proof of the agency of God in the change, and of the glory of his power exerted; so that they who deny that effectual calling is eminently a work of divine power, must be unacquainted with themselves, or not duly observe that which carries its own evidence with it.

But we shall take our proofs principally from scripture. There we have an account of the beginning of this work, which is styled 'the new birth.' In this we are said to be made 'partakers of the divine nature;' that is, a nature which is produced by divine power. We are also said to be 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'h The gospel, which is the instrument he makes use of in calling effectually, is styled 'the rod of his strength.' The effect of it is ascribed to the 'revelation of his arm.'k The season in which this is done, is called 'the day of his power.' And the gospel itself is, by a metonymy, called 'his power.'m The cross of Christ is also, when preached and made effectual for conversion, styled 'the power of God.' Moreover, the progress of the work of grace is ascribed to 'the power of God.'o It is this power which 'keeps' those who are effectually called 'through faith unto salvation.' That the power may appear to be extraordinary, the apostle uses an uncommon emphasis of expression, when he calls it 'the exceeding greatness of his power,' and 'the working of his mighty power;'q which words can hardly be translated without losing something of their force and beauty. Indeed, there is not an expression used in scripture to signify the efficacy of divine power, which exceeds, or, I may say, equals them. That the apostle may appear to speak of the power more strongly, he, in the following words, represents it as being no less than 'that power which wrought in Christ, when God raised him from the dead.'—Let me add, that something to the same purpose may be inferred from those metaphorical expressions by which conversion is set forth. Thus it is called 'a creation.' When we

are made partakers of this privilege, we are said to 'be created in righteousness and true holiness.'s The apostle seems to compare it with the creation of man at first after the image of God, which consisted principally in righteousness and true holiness. He, accordingly, considers this image as restored when a principle of grace is implanted, whereby we are again disposed to the exercise of righteousness and holiness. Elsewhere, also, he says, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that we should walk in them.' Here he supposes that this creating power must be exerted before we can put forth good works; so that it can be nothing less than the power of God. Nor would it have been styled 'a creation,' if it had not been a supernatural work; so that it is, in that respect, more glorious than many other effects of the divine power.—Conversion is styled, also, 'a resurrection from the dead.' Thus the apostle says, 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.'u In this respect, it certainly exceeds the power of men. A physician by his skill may mend a crazy constitution, or recover it from the confines of death; but to raise the dead exceeds the limits of finite power. This mode of speaking our Saviour makes use of to signify the conversion or effectual call of sinners, when he says, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.' He had, in the preceding verse, been speaking of those 'having eternal life,' and 'not coming into condemnation, and being passed from death to life,' who hear his words and believe; and then it follows, that 'the hour is coming,' that is, the time is near at hand when the Spirit shall be poured forth, and the gospel-dispensation be begun, and it 'now is,' in some degree, namely, in those who were converted by his ministry, 'when the dead shall hear his voice and live,' or pass from a state of spiritual death to life, as a means for their attaining eternal life. This view is much more agreeable to the context, than to conclude, as some do to evade the force of this argument, that, in the words 'now is,' our

Saviour speaks concerning some who were then, or should thereafter be, raised from the dead in a miraculous manner; and that 'the hour is coming,' refers to the general resurrection. But this seems not to be the sense of the text; because our Saviour, in a following verse, supposes his hearers to be astonished at the doctrine, as though it was too great an instance of power for him to implant a principle of spiritual life in dead sinners; and therefore he proves his assertion from his raising the dead at the last day: 'Marvel not, for the hour is coming,' that is, at the end of the world, 'when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice.'y This cannot well agree with understanding Christ's raising the dead to refer to the general resurrection; for that would represent him as answering their objection, or putting a stop to their wonder at what he had said, by asserting the same thing in other words. If, however, you suppose the dead 'hearing his voice,' to imply a spiritual resurrection, and 'the dead being raised out of their graves,' to be an argument to convince his hearers that his power was sufficient to bring about this great effect, there is much more beauty in the expression, and strength in the reasoning, than to understand the passage otherwise.—This is so plain a proof of the argument we are endeavouring to defend, that nothing needs be added. However, I cannot but mention another scripture, in which our Saviour says, 'No man can come to me except the Father draw him.' Here Christ, by 'coming to him,' does not mean attending on his ministry, which did not require any power to induce them to it; but 'believing on him,' so as to 'have everlasting life.' In this sense, 'coming to him' is often understood in the gospels;a and it is the immediate consequence of effectual calling. Now, when our Saviour says that 'no man can' thus 'come to him' without being 'drawn by the Father,' we may understand what he means by what is said in a following verse, namely, their being 'taught of God,' and having 'heard and learned of the Father.' Such, says he, 'come unto me.' Now, this 'teaching' certainly implies more than giving a rule of

faith contained in divine revelation; for Christ is not here, as elsewhere, proving the necessity of divine revelation, but is speaking concerning its saving efficacy; and none can deny that many have been objectively taught and instructed by the word, who have not come to Christ, or believed in him to everlasting life. The words are a quotation from the prophets, to whom he refers, and who intimate that they should be 'all taught of God.' But this teaching certainly implies more than an objective teaching and instructing; for in this sense they, having divine revelation, were always taught of God. What the prophet Isaiah mentions, when he foretells this matter, is a special privilege; as appears by his connecting it with the great peace which its subjects should have, or the confluence of saving blessings which should attend it. The prophet Jeremiah, who speaks to the same purpose, says, 'They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them;'d that is, not only shall they have an objective revelation, or that which some call moral suasion, but this shall be made effectual to their salvation. And in order to its being so, God promises that he would 'put his law in the inward part, and write it in the heart,' and that he would 'give them a new heart,' and 'put a new spirit within them,' and hereby 'cause them to walk in his statutes.' The teaching, therefore, is not merely a rectifying of some mistakes to which they are liable, but a producing in them of something which they had not before; not building upon the old foundation, but laying a new one, and so working a change in the powers and faculties of the soul. And as they formerly were obdurate and hardened in sin, he promises to 'take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh,' and by his 'word,' which is compared to 'a hammer,' to 'break the rock in pieces.'f This is certainly a work of power. But that it is so, will farther appear from what follows in considering the work itself.

II. We are thus led to show what effects are produced by the power of God, when we are effectually called.

1. The first step which he is pleased to take in this work, is his implanting a principle of spiritual life and grace, which is absolutely necessary for our attaining to, or receiving advantage by, the external call of the gospel. This is generally styled regeneration, or the new birth, or, as in the scripture just referred to, 'a new heart.' If it be inquired, what we are to understand by this principle, we answer that, as principles are known only by the effects they produce, springs of acting, by the actions themselves, we must be content with the description, that it is something wrought in the heart of man, whereby he is habitually and prevailingly biassed and inclined to what is good. In virtue of it, he freely, readily, and willingly chooses those things which tend to the glory of God; and refuses, abhors, and flees from what is contrary to it. As this effect more immediately concerns the understanding, whereby it is enabled to discern in a spiritual way the things which God reveals in the gospel, it is styled his 'shining in the heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory,' or his giving 'an eye to see, and an ear to hear.'h As it respects the will, it contains a power whereby it is disposed and enabled to yield the obedience of faith, to whatever God is pleased to reveal to us as a rule of duty; so that we are made willing in the day of his power. And as it respects the affections, they are all inclined to run in a right channel, to desire, delight, and rejoice in every thing which is pleasing to God, and to flee from every thing which is provoking to him. This is that whereby a dead sinner is made alive, and so enabled to put forth living actions.

Concerning this principle of grace, let it be observed that it is infused, and not acquired. The first principle or spring of good actions, may as truly be supposed to be infused into us as Christians,

as the principle of reasoning is said to be infused into us as men. None ever supposed that the natural power of reasoning may be acquired, though a greater facility or degree of it is gradually attained. In the same way, that power whereby we are enabled to put forth supernatural acts of grace, which we call a principle of grace, must be supposed to be implanted in us; for, were it acquired, we could not, properly speaking, be said to be born of God. I am hence obliged to infer, that the regenerating act, or the implanting of this principle of grace, which, in the order of nature at least, is antecedent to any act of grace put forth by us, is the immediate effect of the power of God. This none who speak of regeneration as a divine work, pretend to deny. I cannot but conclude, therefore, that it is wrought in us without the instrumentality of the word, or of any of the ordinary means of grace. My reason for thinking so is, that it is necessary, from the nature of the thing, to our receiving or improving the word of God. or reaping any saving advantage by it, that the Spirit should produce the principle of faith. Now, to say that this is done by the word, is, in effect, to assert that the word produces the principle, and the principle gives efficacy to the word; which seems, to me, little less than arguing in a circle. The word cannot profit, unless it be mixed with faith; faith cannot be put forth, unless it proceed from a principle of grace implanted; therefore this principle of grace is not produced by the word. We may as well suppose that the presenting of a beautiful picture before a man who is blind can enable him to see, or that the violent motion of a withered hand can produce strength for action, as we can suppose that the presenting of the word, in an objective way, is the instrument whereby God produces that internal principle by which we are enabled to embrace it. Nor would this so well agree with the idea of its being a new creature, or of our being 'created unto good works;' for then it ought rather to be said, we are created by faith, which is a good work. This is, in effect, to say that the principle of grace is produced by the

instrumentality of that which supposes its being implanted, and that it is the result and consequence of it.—I am sorry that I am obliged, in this assertion, to appear at least to oppose what has been maintained by many divines of great worth; who have, in all other respects, explained the doctrine of regeneration agreeably to the mind and will of God, and the analogy of faith. It may be the principal difference between this explanation and theirs is, that they speak of regeneration in a large sense, as including, not merely the implanting of the principle, but the exciting of it, and do not sufficiently distinguish between the principle as implanted and as deduced into action; for, I readily own that the latter is by the instrumentality of the word, though I cannot think the former so. Or it may be, they consider the principle as exerted; while I consider it as created or wrought in us, and therefore can no more conclude that the new creation is wrought by an instrument, than I can that the first creation of all things was.

I am ready to conjecture that what leads many divines into this way of thinking, is the sense in which they understand the words of the apostle: 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever;' and elsewhere, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.'l But this language respects not so much the implanting of the principle of grace, as our being enabled to act from that principle. It is as if the inspired writers had said, 'He hath made us believers, or induced us to love and obey him by the word of truth.' This supposes a principle of grace to have been implanted; otherwise the word of truth would never have produced these effects. Regeneration may be taken, not only for our being made alive to God. or created unto good works, but for our putting forth living actions, proceeding from that principle which is implanted in the soul. I am far from denying that

faith and all other graces are wrought in us by the instrumentality of the word; and it is in this sense that some who treat on this subject explain their sentiments, when they speak of being born again by the word. I persuade myself, therefore, that I differ from them only in the acceptation of words, and not in the substance of the doctrine they maintain. [See Note H, page 77.]

2. The principle of grace being implanted, the acts of grace in those who are adult, immediately follow. There is, in other words, a change of our behaviour, a renovation of our lives and actions, which may properly be called conversion. Having explained what we mean by regeneration, it is now necessary to consider how it differs from conversion. Here I shall take leave to transcribe a few passages from the excellent divine just mentioned. "Regeneration is a spiritual change; conversion is a spiritual motion. In regeneration there is a power conferred: conversion is the exercise of this power. In regeneration there is given us a principle to turn; conversion is our actual turning. In the covenant, the new heart, and God's putting the Spirit into them, is distinguished from their walking in his statutes, from the first step we take in the way of God, and is set down as the cause of our motion. In renewing us, God gives us a power; in converting us, he excites that power. Men are naturally dead, and have a stone upon them; regeneration is a rolling away the stone from the heart, and a raising to newness of life; and then conversion is as natural to a regenerate man, as motion is to a living body. A principle of activity will produce action. The first reviving us is wholly the act of God, without any concurrence of the creature; but, after we are revived, we do actively and voluntarily live in his sight. Regeneration is the motion of God in the creature; conversion is the motion of the creature to God, by virtue of that first principle. From this principle all the acts of believing, repenting, mortifying, quickening, do spring. In all these a man is active; in the other, he is

merely passive." This is what we may call the second step, which God takes in effectual calling; and it is brought about by the instrumentality of the word. The word before this was preached to little or no purpose, or, it may be, was despised, rejected, and disregarded; but now a man is enabled to see a beauty and a glory in it, all the powers and faculties of his soul being under the influence of the spiritual life implanted in regeneration, and inclined to yield a ready and cheerful obedience. This work is gradual and progressive, and as such, is called the work of sanctification,—of which more shall be said under a following Answer;o and it is attended with repentance unto life, and all other graces which accompany salvation. In this respect we are drawn to Christ by his word and Spirit; or, by his Spirit making use of his word, our minds are savingly enlightened, our wills renewed and determined to what is good; so that, as it is expressed in the Answer we are explaining, we are made willing and able freely to answer the call of God, and to accept of and embrace the grace offered and conveyed in the gospel.

The first thing in which that change which is wrought in effectual calling manifests itself, is our understanding being enlightened to receive the truths revealed to us in the word of God. Accordingly, we see things with a new and different light,—behold a greater beauty, excellency, and glory in divine things, than ever we did before. We are also led into ourselves, and convinced of sin and misery, concluding ourselves to be, by nature, in a lost and undone condition. The soul then sees the glory of Christ, the greatness of his love who came to seek and save those that were lost, and who now appears precious, as he is said to be to those who believe. Then the will—being determined or enabled so to do, by the Spirit of God exciting the principle of grace which he had implanted—accepts of Christ on his own terms; and the affections all centre in him, and desire to derive all spiritual blessings from him. Thus the work of

grace is begun in effectual calling, which is afterwards carried on in sanctification.

As we are here considering the beginning of the work of grace in effectual calling, I cannot but take notice of a question which frequently occurs on this subject, namely, Whether man, in the first moment of effectual calling, that is, in regeneration, be merely passive, though active in every thing which follows? That he is so, we cannot but affirm, not only against the Pelagians, but against others whose method of treating the doctrine of divine grace seems to agree with theirs. Here, that we may obviate a popular objection, usually brought against our assertion, as if we argued that God dealt with men as if they were machines, and not endowed with understanding or will, let it be observed that we consider the subjects of this grace no otherwise than as intelligent creatures, capable of being internally excited and disposed to what is good, or else God would never work this principle in them. Nor do we suppose, however men are said to be passive in the first moment in which this principle is implanted, that they are so afterwards; but we say that they are enabled to act under the divine influence. The case is similar to the literal creation of Adam. When his soul was created, it could not be said to be active in its own creation, and in the implanting of those powers which were concreated with it; yet it was active, or those powers exerted themselves, immediately after it was created. This is the state of the question we are now debating. We cannot but maintain, therefore, that men do not concur in the implanting of the principle of grace; for then they would be active in being created unto good works. But these are the result, and not the cause of that power which is infused into them, in order to their being produced. The doctrine we have stated is sufficiently evident, not only from the impotency of corrupt nature as to what is good, but from its utter aversion to it, and from the work being truly and properly divine, or, as was formerly

observed, the effect of almighty power. This is not a controversy of late date; but has been either defended or opposed, since the time of Augustine and Pelagius. Many volumes have been written concerning the aids and assistances of divine grace in the work of conversion. The schoolmen were divided in their sentiments about it, as they adhered to or receded from Augustine's doctrine. Both sides seem to allow that the grace of God affords some assistance; but the main thing in debate, is, Whether the grace of God bears only one part in this work, and the will of man the other; like two persons lifting at the same burden, and carrying it between them? Some have allowed that the divine concourse is necessary, and yet have not been willing to own that man bears no part in this work, or that 'it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' This the apostle asserts in so plain terms, that the most known sense of his words cannot well be evaded. Indeed, were it otherwise, it could hardly be said, that 'we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; a saying which, though immediately applied to ministers, is certainly, by a parity of reason, applicable to all Christians.q Nor would it be, in all respects, true, that we are 'born of God,' or that we, who formerly were dead in sin, are raised to a spiritual life, or made, with respect to the principle of spiritual actions, new creatures; all which is done in regeneration.

We might also take occasion, under this head, to notice what we often meet with in practical discourses and sermons, concerning preparatory works, or previous dispositions, which facilitate and lead to the work of conversion. Some assert that we must do what we can, and, by using our reasoning powers and faculties, endeavour to convert or turn ourselves; and that then God will do the rest, or finish the work which we have begun. Many things are often considered as the steps which men may take in the reformation of their lives,—such as abstaining from gross enormities which they

may have been guilty of, thinking on their ways, observing the tendency of their present course of life, and setting before themselves proper arguments which may induce them to repent and believe; and then, it is alleged, they may be said to have prepared themselves for the grace of God, the bestowal of which upon them will follow. It is added that, if there be any thing remaining, which is out of their power, God has engaged to give success to their endeavours; so that he will bring them into a state of regeneration and conversion.—Now, this method of accounting for the work of grace is liable to many exceptions; particularly as it supposes man to be the first mover in his own conversion, and the divine energy to be dependent upon our conduct. For the contrary is agreeable, not only to scripture, but to the divine perfections, as well as to the doctrine we have been maintaining as to effectual calling being, in the most proper sense, a divine work.—But that we may impartially consider this matter, and set what some call a preparatory work in a just light, let it be observed that preparatory works must either be considered as good in all those circumstances which are necessary to denominate them good, particularly they must proceed from a good principle, that is to say, a principle of regeneration; or else they are only such works as are materially good, which many perform who are never brought into a state of conversion. Or if, on the other hand, they are supposed to proceed from a principle of regeneration, they are works, from the nature of the thing, not preparatory to the first grace, but rather consequent upon it.—Again, it is one thing to assert that it is our duty to perform all those works which some call preparatory for conversion,—such as meditation, attendance on ordinances, duly weighing those arguments or motives which should lead us to repentance and the exercise of all other graces; and another thing to say that every one who performs these duties shall certainly have regenerating grace. Or, it is one thing to apply ourselves to the performance of those duties, as far as it is in our own

power, and, at the same time, to wait, pray, and hope for success to attend them; and another thing to assert that success shall always attend them, as if God had laid himself under an obligation to give special grace to those who, in this way, improve that which is common. For the contrary to this may be observed in many instances; and when we have done all, we must conclude that the grace of God, if he is pleased to give success to our endeavours, is free and sovereign.—Further, they who say that if we do all we can, God will do the rest, advance very little to support their argument; since there is no one who can pretend that he has done what he could. May we not suppose, too, that God, in a judicial way, as punishing us for the many sins we commit, may deny us success? How can it be said, then, that success will necessarily follow? When we perform any of those duties which some call preparatory to conversion, they are to be considered as the Spirit's preparing his own way, rather than as corrupt nature's preparing itself for grace. We are far from denying that there is a beautiful order in the divine dispensations. The Spirit of God first convinces of sin; and then shows the convinced sinner where his help is to be had, and enables him to close with Christ by faith. He first shows the soul its own corruption and nothingness; and then leads him to see Christ's fulness, or that all his salvation is reposed in his hands, and enables him to believe in him to the saving of the soul. One of these works, indeed, prepares the way for the other. None of them, however, can be said to prepare the way for regeneration; which is the work of the Spirit of God, and without which no other can be said to be a saving work.

It is objected that there are several scriptures which seem to speak of common grace, as being preparatory for special. Thus the scribe, mentioned in the gospel, who expressed himself 'discreetly,' in asserting that, 'to love God with all the heart, and with all the

understanding, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices,' is said to have been 'not far from the kingdom of God.' Elsewhere, too, we are exhorted 'to ask' and 'to seek;' and a promise is annexed, that 'it shall be given us, and we shall find.'s In another place, we are commanded 'to turn at God's reproof;' and it is said, 'he will pour out his Spirit' unto us, 'and make known his words unto us.' There are also several other scriptures, in which superadded grace is connected with duty enjoined; which duty is supposed to be in our own power, and to be preparatory for it.—Now, as to the first of these scriptures, in which our Saviour tells the scribe that he was 'not far from the kingdom of God,' he intends nothing else but that the profession he made, which he calls his 'answering discreetly,' was not very remote from that which was made by those who were the subjects of his kingdom. It is the doctrine the scribe mentions which Christ commends. It must hence not be inferred that he had regard to his state, as if his inward temper of mind, or moral conduct of life, were such as more immediately disposed him for a state of grace, so that he was hovering between a state of unregeneracy and conversion.—As for the instance in which persons are supposed to prepare themselves by prayer for that grace which God gives in answer to it, the meaning is not that he has obliged himself to give whatever they ask for relating to their salvation. Neither the scripture referred to, nor any other to the same purpose, can have this meaning, unless it be understood of the prayer of faith, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This, however, supposes regenerating grace, and therefore, is foreign to the argument in which man is considered as preparing himself for the grace of God, and not as expecting farther degrees of grace, upon his being inclined by the Spirit of God to seek them.—As for God's engaging 'to give the Spirit,' and to 'make known his words,' to those who 'turn at his reproof;' this, I conceive, contains nothing else but a promise of the Spirit, to carry on the work of grace

in all those in whom it is begun. Though 'turning,' in scripture, is some times taken for external reformation, which is in our own power, as it is our indispensable duty; yet, whenever a promise of saving blessings is, as in this scripture, annexed to it, it is to be understood as denoting the grace of repentance. If it be said that this is God's gift, and therefore cannot be the subject of an exhortation, it may be replied that saving grace is often represented, in scripture, as our act or duty; in order to the performance of which we ought to say, as the church is represented as doing, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned;' that is, 'I shall return unto thee with my whole heart, and not feignedly.'x—The same reply might be given to the objector's sense of several other scriptures brought to maintain the doctrine of preparatory works performed by us, as necessarily inferring our obtaining the special grace of God. But I shall close this head with a few hints taken from the excellent divine formerly mentioned. "Man cannot prepare himself for the new birth. He hath, indeed, a subjective capacity for grace, above any other creature in the inferior world; and this is a kind of natural preparation, which other creatures have not,—a capacity, in regard of the powers of the soul, though not in respect of the present disposition of them. He hath an understanding to know, and, when it is enlightened, to know God's law,—a will to move and run, and, when enlarged by grace, to run the ways of God's commandments; so that he stands in an immediate capacity to receive the life of grace upon the breath and touch of God, which a stone doth not; for in this it is necessary that rational faculties should be put as a foundation of spiritual motions. Though the soul is thus capable, as a subject, to receive the grace of God, yet it is not therefore capable, as an agent, to prepare itself for it, or produce it. It is capable to receive the truths of God; but, as the heart is stony, it is incapable to receive the impressions of those truths. Though some things which man may do by common grace, may be said to be preparations; yet they are not formally so,—as that there is

an absolute, causal connection between such preparations and regeneration. They are not disposing causes of grace. Grace is all in a way of reception by the soul, not of action from the soul. The highest morality in the world is not necessary to the first infusion of the divine nature. If there were any thing in the subject that was the cause of it, the tenderest and softest dispositions would be wrought upon; and the most intelligent men would soonest receive the gospel. Though we see them sometimes renewed, yet many times the roughest tempers are seized upon by grace. Though morality seems to set men at a greater nearness to the kingdom of God; yet, with all its own strength, it cannot bring it into the heart, unless the Spirit open the lock. Yea, sometimes it sets a man farther from the kingdom of God, as being a great enemy to the righteousness of the gospel, both imputed and inherent. And other operations upon the soul, which seem to be nearer preparations, such as convictions, &c., do not infer grace; for the heart, as a field, may be ploughed by terrors, and yet not planted with any good seed. Planting and watering are preparations, but not the cause of fruit. The increase depends upon God." Thus this learned author, who also proves that there is no obligation on God by any thing which may look like a preparation on man; and adds that, if any preparations were our own, and were pure, which they are not, yet they cannot oblige God to give supernatural grace.

III. We are now led to consider that this work is, in a peculiar manner, attributed to the Spirit of God; the only moving cause of it being his grace. That the Spirit is the author of this work, is not to be proved by experience, as the impressions of divine power in it are; but it is to be proved by scripture; and the scripture is very express on the subject. Thus, when God promises to 'give a new heart, to take away the heart of stone, and to give an heart of flesh, and to cause his people to walk in his statutes,' he tells them that, in order to his

doing so, he would 'put his Spirit within them.' Elsewhere they are said to have 'purified their souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit.'a Our Saviour also asserts the necessity of our being 'born of the Spirit,' in order to our entering into the kingdom of God. So that, from these and several other scriptures which might be referred to, it appears that effectual calling is the internal powerful work of the Holy Ghost.

It is objected by some, that this doctrine savours of enthusiasm; since it supposes that there is no difference between the Spirit's internal influences and his inspiration; and to pretend to this, now that the miraculous dispensation which was in the apostle's days has ceased, is vain and enthusiastic.—But the charge of enthusiasm is very unjustly deduced from this doctrine; for we must distinguish between the extraordinary and the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost. The former is allowed by all to have now ceased; so that they who pretend to it are liable to this charge. But it is a very great dishonour cast upon the Holy Ghost to deny his powerful influence or agency in the work of grace; and it renders the present condition of the church, in a very material circumstance, so much inferior to what it was of old, that it is incapable of attaining salvation,—unless it could be proved that salvation might be attained without the divine energy.—But, that we may farther reply to the objection, let it be considered that the Spirit's influence, as subservient to the work of grace, is evidently distinguished from inspiration. The latter was a peculiar honour conferred upon some persons, who either were to transmit to the church a rule of faith by the immediate dictates of the Holy Ghost, or were favoured with inspiration to answer some extraordinary ends which could not be attained without it, namely, their being furnished with wisdom, as well as courage and boldness, to maintain the cause which they were not otherwise furnished to defend, against the opposition that it met with from their persecuting

and malicious enemies, that so it might not suffer through their weakness. Hence our Saviour bids his disciples 'not take thought what they should say,' when brought before rulers, &c.; and promises that 'the Spirit should speak in them.' In some other particular instances, especially in the church at Corinth, we read that when ministers had not those advantages to qualify themselves to preach the gospel which they afterwards were favoured with, some had this extraordinary gift, so that they spake by the Spirit, but this was only conferred occasionally, and for some special reasons. Hence those scriptures which speak of the influences of the Spirit which were more common, and immediately subservient to the work of grace in the souls of those who were the subjects of them, were, at that time, the same with those that we are pleading for, and were designed to continue so in the church in all ages. Thus, when persons are said 'through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body,'e the language does not respect any extraordinary dispensation which they were then under; since it is the duty of all men, in all ages, without the extraordinary influences of the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body; so that we may expect this powerful energy as well as they, or else our condition would be very deplorable.—Besides, we never find that extraordinary gifts were immediately subservient to tho subduing of corruption, or, at least, that every one who had them did mortify sin, and so appear to be internally sanctified. Yet, to mortify sin, is a character of those who are under sanctifying influences; and not to have these influences, determines a person to be in an unregenerate state, or 'to live after the flesh,' and so to be liable to death. No one can suppose that when the apostle, in the foregoing verse, says, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,' he means, 'If ye are not under inspiration, ye shall die, as living after the flesh.' His reasoning, however, is strong and conclusive, if we understand the divine influence of which he speaks, as what is distinct from inspiration, and consequently a privilege necessary for the beginning

and carrying on of the work of grace, and so belonging to believers in all ages.—Again, when the Spirit is said 'to help our infirmities'g in prayer, is not prayer as much a duty now as it was when they had extraordinary gifts? and ought we not to hope for the assistance of the Spirit in all ages? The Spirit's help, therefore, is not confined to the age when there was a miraculous dispensation, or extraordinary inspiration.—Further, when it is said, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,' can we suppose that none were the sons of God but such as had extraordinary gifts? Does not this privilege belong to us as well as to them? Now, if we are the sons of God, as well as they, we have this evidence of our being so, that we are 'led by the Spirit of God;' though we pretend not to be led by him as a Spirit of inspiration.—We may add, that the apostle elsewhere speaks of some who were 'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance.' These are described as 'trusting in Christ, after they had heard the word of salvation,' and 'believing in him.'i But this character belongs to the church in all ages; so that the 'sealing' spoken of is not a privilege confined to those who had the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but one which belongs to believers as such.—Moreover, it is said, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' Therefore some persons may, in a way of self-examination, know themselves to be the children of God, by the witness of the Spirit which is common to all believers; they may do so without pretending to be inspired, which would be to know this matter without the concurring testimony of our own spirits.—Many things of a similar nature might be observed concerning other scriptures which are generally brought to prove that believers, in our day, though they pretend not to the Spirit of inspiration, are made partakers of the powerful influences of the Holy Ghost. But what we have stated is a sufficient Answer to the objection we have been considering.

It is farther objected, that, if the Spirit does work internally in the souls of men, we are not to suppose that he works a change in their wills, but only that he presents objects to them which they, by their own power, improve and make use of for their good; even as a finite spirit may suggest good or bad thoughts, without disposing us to comply with them; or, as the devil is said to work in men, and is called, 'The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' But an objective influence, properly speaking, is no influence at all; much less is it becoming the dignity of the Holy Ghost, to say that he has no more an hand in the work of conversion than that which a mere creature might have. I will not deny that the Greek word,m which signifies energy, or internal working, is sometimes taken for such a kind of influence as is not properly the effect of power, as in the instance stated in the objection. Yet, let it be considered that in other instances the same word is often used, in senses very different, when applied to God and the creature; the word, in itself, being indeterminate, while the application of it so determines the meaning as to leave no doubt as to the sense of it. Thus, when 'to make,' 'form,' or 'produce,' is applied to God, and the thing made, formed, or produced, is represented as a display of his almighty power which exceeds the limits of finite power, the sense is determined to be very different from making, forming, or producing, when applied to men, acting in their own sphere. So the apostle speaks of 'building,' in a very different sense, as applied to God and the creature, whieh no one is at a loss to understand: 'Every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.' Now, to apply this to our present purpose, we do not deny that a finite spirit has an energy in an objective way; but when the same word is applied to God's manner of acting, and, as was formerly observed, is used to denote a display of his almighty power, producing a change in the soul, and not only persuading but enabling a man to perform good works, from a principle of spiritual life implanted, it may easily be understood as

having a very different sense from the same word, when applied to the internal agency of a finite spirit. Tho objection in question, therefore, does not overthrow the argument we are maintaining.

It is farther objected against the illustration of the powerful work of the Spirit from a person's being raised from the dead, that this implies nothing supernatural, or out of the power of man; since the apostle says, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' If arising from the dead, it is said, be the effect of almighty power, when applied to the work of grace, it seems preposterous for this 'arising from the dead' to be recommended as our duty; and if it be not a work of almighty power, those scriptures which illustrate effectual calling by the resurrection of the dead, are nothing to the argument for which they have been brought. Now, some suppose that its being assigned as a matter of duty for sinners to rise from the dead, does not infer that their doing so is in their own power; but that it signifies only that none can expect eternal life except those who rise from the death of sin. Accordingly, as the promise here mentioned, relating to our 'having light,' is said to be 'Christ's gift;' so the power to perform that duty which is inseparably connected with it, namely, 'rising from the dead,' is to be sought for at his hand. But if this Answer be not reckoned sufficient, I see no absurdity in supposing that the two expressions, 'awake, thou that sleepest,' and 'arise from the dead,' import the same thing. Sleep is, as it were, the image of death, and, by a metaphorical way of speaking, may be here 'called death; and if so, the apostle commands believers to awake out of their carnal security, or shake off their stupid frames, as they expect the light of eternal life. Though, however, it be taken in this sense here; yet when we meet with the words 'quickened,' or 'raised from the dead,' elsewhere, they may be understood in a different sense, as denoting the implanting of a principle of grace in regeneration, as will appear by the context. Thus

when God is said to 'quicken those who were dead in trespasses and sins, who walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath;' and to do this with a design to show 'the exceeding riches of his grace, and kindness towards them;' and, in consequence, to work that faith which, accompanies salvation, and which is not of themselves, but is his gift; when God is said to do these things in our being 'quickened or raised from the dead,' the expressions certainly argue more than a stupid believer's awaking from the carnal security which he is under, who is supposed to have a principle of spiritual life, whereby he may be enabled so to do.

It is also objected to what has been said as to effectual calling being a work of divine power, that those scriptures which speak of it as such, denote nothing else but the power of working miracles; whereby they to whom the gospel was preached were induced to believe. Thus, when the apostle says, 'My preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,' his meaning is alleged to be that the doctrines he preached were confirmed, and the truth of them demonstrated, by the power of the Holy Ghost enabling him to work miracles. Again, the words, 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,'q are alleged to mean that the gospel was not only preached, but confirmed by miracles; and the words, 'Our gospel came to you in power and in the Holy Ghost,' are paraphrased,—'The gospel which we preach, was confirmed by the power and miraculous works of the Holy Ghost;' which, say the objectors, has no reference to the internal efficacious influences of the Spirit put forth in effectual calling.—Now, though we often read that the gospel was confirmed by miracles; yet I cannot see that this is the principal, much less the only sense of these scriptures, and some others which might have been produced to the same purpose.—As to the first of them, in which the apostle speaks of his preaching being 'in the

demonstration of the Spirit and of power,' it may be observed that, in the preceding chapter, he had been speaking concerning Christ preached, and his glory set forth among them, as 'the power of God;' that is to say, the power of God rendered the preaching of the doctrine of Christ effectual to the conversion of those who believed. Now, this the apostle concludes to contain no less a conviction of the truth of the Christian religion, than if he had wrought signs or miracles; which the Jews demanded, and which he had no design to work among them. Why, then, should we suppose that, when he speaks of his preaching being 'in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power,' he means the confirming of his doctrine by miracles, and not the confirming of it in the same sense he had just signified of Christ being the power of God.—As for the scripture in which it is said, 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,' it is to be understood by comparing it with what immediately goes before, in which he says, 'I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and know not the speech of them who are puffed up, but the power.' If we suppose that, by 'them who are puffed up,' he means some of their teachers, who, swelled either with pride or envy, probably were sowing some seeds of error among them, it does seem to be just to explain the following words, 'I will know not the speech of them who are puffed up, but the power,' to mean, 'I will not so much regard the doctrines they deliver, as I will inquire and be convinced that they have confirmed them by miracles.' For he would rather regard their doctrine than their pretence to miracles, or have said, 'I will not inquire whether they have wrought any miracles, but what efficacy their doctrine has had.' By 'knowing the power,' therefore, the apostle does not mean that of working miracles; but he intimates that he would know, not only what doctrines these persons taught, but what success attended their preaching. And then he adds, that 'the kingdom of God,' that is, the gospel-state, is advanced and promoted, not merely by the church's enjoying the means of grace,

such as the preaching of the word, but 'by the power of God,' which makes the word preached effectual to salvation, whereby sinners are converted, and many added to the church, such as shall be saved.—As to the last scripture mentioned, in which the apostle says, 'Our gospel came to you, not in word only, but in power,' I cannot think that he has any reference in it to the confirming of the gospel by miracles; because what it says is assigned as a mark of their election, 'Knowing, brethren, your election of God; for our gospel came unto you, not only in word, but in power,' &c. Now, whether we take election for God's eternal design to save them, for the execution of that design in his applying the graces of the Spirit to them, or, in the lowest sense which they on the other side of the question generally adopt, for their being a choice, religious, unblameable society of Christians, excelling many others in piety, it could not be evinced by the gospel being confirmed by miracles. This sense, then, seems not agreeable to the apostle's design. Hence, the objection founded on those scriptures which speak of the power of God in conversion, as implying nothing else but his power exerted in working miracles, will not, in the least, be sufficient to weaken the force of the argument we are maintaining. Thus, concerning effectual calling being a work of power attributed, in particular, to the Holy Spirit.

There is one thing more observed in the Answer we are explaining, which must be briefly considered, namely, that effectual calling is a work of grace, which was the internal moving cause of it, or the reason of God's exerting his divine power in it. Effectual calling must be a work of grace, without any motive taken from those who are its subjects; for they had nothing in them which could render them the objects of divine love, being described as 'dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God,' and 'enmity' itself 'against him.' Their condition, antecedent to effectual calling, cannot be supposed to be the moving cause of it; for that which is in itself altogether unlovely,

cannot afford a motive for love to any one who weighs the circumstances of persons and things, and acts accordingly.

But it is objected, that though the present condition of unregenerate persons cannot afford any motive inducing God to make them the subjects of effectual calling, yet the foresight of their future conduct might. We answer, that all the good which shall be found in believers is God's gift. He is the finisher as well as the author of faith; and therefore it cannot be said, that any thing out of himself was the moving cause of it. We may add that God foresaw the vile and unworthy behaviour of believers, proceeding from the remains of corrupt nature in them, as well as those graces which he would enable them to act; so that there is as much in them which might induce him to hate them, as there is to move him to love them. We must conclude, therefore, that his love proceeds from another cause, or that it is by the grace of God alone that we are what we are.

IV. We are now led to consider that the power and grace of God displayed in effectual calling, is irresistible, and consequently such as cannot but be effectual to produce that which is designed to be brought about by it. To deny this, would be to infer that the creature has an equal, if not a superior force to God. For, as in nature, every thing which impedes or stops a thing which is in motion must have an equal force to resist with that which is affected by it; so, in the work of grace, if the will of man can render the power of God of none effect, or stop the progress of divine grace, contrary to his design or purpose, the creature's power of resisting must be equal to that which is put forth by God, in order to the bringing of this work to perfection. This consequence is so derogatory to the divine glory, that no one who sees it to be just, will maintain the premises whence it is deduced. If it be said that God may suffer himself to be resisted, and his grace which would otherwise have been effectual to be

defeated, this will not much mend the matter, but will only, in order to the avoiding of one absurd consequence, bring in another; for if every one would have brought to pass what he purposes to be done, and would not be disappointed if he could help it, the same must be said of the great God. Now to say, that God could have prevented his purpose from being defeated, but would not, argues a defect of wisdom. If his own glory was designed by purposing to do that which the creature renders ineffectual, then he misses that end which cannot but be the most valuable, and consequently most desirable. Hence, for God to suffer a purpose of this nature to be defeated, supposing he could prevent it, is to suffer himself to be a loser of that glory which is due to his name. Moreover, the supposition is directly contrary to what the apostle says, 'Who hath resisted his will?' or, "Who hath rendered the grace which he designed should take effect, ineffectual?" or, which is the same thing, "Who can do it?"

The ground on which many have asserted that the grace of God may be resisted, is taken from some scriptures which speak of man's being in open hostility against him. Thus we read of a bold daring sinner as 'stretching out his hand against God, and strengthening himself against the Almighty, running upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers.' Stephen reproves the Jews as having 'always resisted the Holy Ghost, both they and their fathers.'u The Pharisees are said to 'have rejected,' or, as the wordy might have been rendered, 'disannulled the counsel of God against themselves.' And the prophet speaks of God's 'stretching out his hand all the day, unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' These, and similar scriptures, give occasion to some to suppose that the power and grace, as well as the purpose of God, may be resisted. But that we may understand the sense of these scriptures, and, at the same time, not relinquish the doctrine we are maintaining, and thereby infer the consequence above-mentioned, we must distinguish between our

opposition to God's revealed will contained in his word, which is the rule of duty to us, and resisting his secret will, which determines the event. Or, as it may be otherwise expressed, it is one thing to set ourselves against the objective grace of God, that is, the gospel; and another thing to defeat his subjective grace, that when he is about to work effectually in us, we should put a stop to his proceedings. The former no one denies; the latter we can by no means allow. Persons may express a great deal of reluctance and perverseness at the time when God is about to subdue their stubborn and obstinate wills; but the power of God will break through all this opposition, and the will of man shall not be able to make his work void, or without effect. The Jews, as above-mentioned, might 'resist the Holy Ghost,' that is, oppose the doctrines contained in scripture, which were given by the Spirit's inspiration; and they might make this revelation of no effect with respect to themselves; but had God designed that it should take effect, he would have prevented their resisting it. Israel might be 'a gainsaying people,' that is, they might oppose what God communicated to them by the prophets, which it was their duty and interest to have complied with; and so the offer of grace in God's revealed will might be in vain with respect to them; but it never was so with respect to those whom he designed to save. And if the hardened sinner, 'stretching out his hand against God,' may be said hereby to express his averseness to holiness, and his desire to be exempted from the divine government, he may be found in open rebellion against him, as hating and opposing his law, but he cannot offer any real injury to his divine perfections, so as to detract from his glory, or render his purpose of no effect. Moses, speaking concerning God's works of providence, says, 'They are perfect; for all his ways are judgment.' a Elsewhere, God, by the prophet Isaiah, says, 'I will work, and who shall let it;' whence he argues his eternal Deity and uncontrollable power, 'Before the day was, I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand;' so that if a stop might

be put to his works of providence, he would cease to be a God of infinite perfection. May we not infer, then, that his works of grace are not subject to any control; so that when he designs to call any effectually, nothing shall prevent this end from being answered? This is what we intend, when we speak of the power and grace of God as irresistible.

V. We are now to consider the season or time in which persons are effectually called. This, in the Answer under consideration, is said to be 'God's accepted time.' If the work be free and sovereign, without any motive in us, the time in which he does it must be that which he thinks most proper. Here we may observe that some are regenerated in their infancy, when the word can have no instrumentality in producing the least acts of grace. These have therefore the seeds of grace, which spring up and discover themselves when they are able to make use of the word. That persons are capable of regeneration from the womb, is no less evident, than that they are capable of having the seeds or principle of reason, which they certainly have; and if it be allowed that regeneration is connected with salvation, and that infants are capable of the latter, as our Saviour says that 'of such is the kingdom of God,' they must be certainly capable of the former. Not to suppose some infants regenerated from the womb, would, without scripture-warrant, be to exclude a very great part of mankind from salvation. Others are effectually called in their childhood, others in riper years, and some few in old age; that so no age of life may be an inducement to despair, or persons be discouraged from attending on the means of grace. Thus 'Josiah, in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, began to seek after the God of David his father.' David was converted when he was a youth, a stripling of a ruddy and beautiful countenance.'d Moses seems to have been effectually called, when he left Pharaoh's court, and 'it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel;'

at which time he was 'forty years old.' Abraham seems to have been made partaker of this grace, when he was called to leave his country, when he was seventy-five years old; before which it is probable that he, together with the rest of his family, served other gods.f We read also, in one instance, of a person converted in the very agonies of death, namely, the thief upon the cross. Sometimes when persons seem most disposed to conversion, and are under the greatest convictions, and more inclined to reform their lives than at other times, the work appears, by the issue of it, to be no more than that of common grace, which miscarries and leaves them worse than they were before; and it may be that afterwards, when they seem less inclined, God's accepted time will come, when he begins the work with power, which he afterwards carries on and completes. Some are suffered to run great lengths in sin, before they are effectually called; as the apostle 'Paul, in whom God was pleased to show forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.'h Hence the time and means being entirely in God's hand, as we ought not to presume, but to wait for the day of salvation in all his ordinances; so, whatever our age and circumstances, we are encouraged to hope for the mercy of God unto eternal life, or that he will save and call us with an holy calling.

[NOTE G. Common Grace——Dr. Ridgeley, in what he says respecting 'common grace,' 'restraining grace,' and 'common operations of the Spirit,' appears to have got so engaged in expounding the Catechism that he forgot duly to inquire, 'What saith the scripture?' Grace which does not 'bring salvation,' and a work of the Holy Spirit on the soul which does not renovate and savingly enlighten, must seem, to any person who has studied the scriptures apart from the theology of the schoolmen, very extraordinary ideas. Dr. Ridgeley himself appears not to understand them. He says, "Though the Spirit is considered as an external agent, inasmuch as

he never dwells in the heart of any but believers; yet the effect produced is internal in the mind and consciences of men, and, in smile degree, in the will, which is almost pervaded to comply." Now, if the Spirit is not an internal agent,—if he never dwells, or carries on a work, in the heart of any but believers; how can he be said to perform 'operations,' whether 'common' or otherwise, on the souls of persons who continue to reject the truth? 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' 'When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he leads into all truth.' 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned.' While the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, is 'known' to believers, and 'dwelleth with them, and shall be in them,' the world 'cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.' Nor is the case altered by saying that "effects are produced internal in the mind and consciences of men, and, in some degree, in the will." By the common occurrences of providence, bereavements, losses, public calamities, pestilences, and rumours of war, as truly as by direct appeals concerning 'temperance, and righteousness, and judgment to come,' many an unconverted sinner is occasionally made to 'tremble,' to stand self-convicted of guilt, to resolve upon amendment of conduct, and, in general, to experience strong internal effects upon his moral affections. Yet who would speak of the consternations, the moral panics, the temporary reformations of ordinary life as a work of grace, or the result of common operations of the Spirit? Impressions on the human mind, by means of the occurrences of providence, through the medium of natural conscience and reason, are, in all respects, perfectly distinct from impressions by means of the word of God and the ordinances of Christianity, through the divine Spirit's illuminating power or gracious operations; and these two classes of impressions seem to include all the varieties of moral feeling—of internal effect on the mind and consciences of men, or even upon the

will—which come within the limits of human experience on earth. To distinguish a middle class of impressions, and represent these as of higher quality than such as properly comport with man's fallen and unregenerated character, and yet of lower quality than such as are connected with the renewing of the heart and the spiritual illuminating of the understanding, appears to be just a breaking down of the lofty and broad line of demarcation between a work of natural conscience and a work of divine grace,—a work which belongs to the economy of God's general government, and a work which belongs to the sovereign and gracious economy of redemption.

Some sinners, it is true, experience, in coming under the saving work of the Holy Spirit, a concurrence of impressions by means of the divine word and by means of providential events; and other sinners, on the contrary, experience, while they continue in unregeneracy, a series of excitements as truly from the appeals of the Bible as from the general lessons of the divine government. It is not, however, the nature of the instrumentality employed, but the nature of the agency at work in the mind, which constitutes the difference between the effects produced. In the one class, the reason works with the aid merely of natural conscience, while, in the other class, it is enlightened, convinced, and directed by the Holy Spirit. Natural conscience, even in circumstances where the light of revelation is nearly extinct, achieves many a self-accusation; and, in circumstances where the full light of the gospel is enjoyed, may easily be supposed to work out, in thousands of instances, quite as strong moral excitements as those which were felt by Felix under the preaching of Paul. 'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another,'

Rom. 2:14, 15. Yet the strong workings of conscience even in the heathen, and its still stronger workings in unconverted men under the ordinances of the gospel, take place in connexion simply with God's general moral government, and are quite distinct from any results whatever of the dispensation of the economy of grace, or the redemptional operations of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Ridgeley vindicates what he calls "the Spirits common work of conviction," by an appeal to the text, 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin.' But this text clearly speaks of the demonstrative evidence which the Holy Spirit should furnish—not by transient impressions on the minds of the ungodly—but by the miraculous establishment of the gospel dispensation, and by the actual conversion to God of multitudes of unbelievers. When he descended on the day of Pentecost, and when he afterwards gave power to the ministry of his faithful servants, he demonstratively convinced thousands of 'the world' that they sinned in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, the only Saviour of sinners,—that they could become righteous, as to either their acceptance before God, or the purification of their hearts from defilement, only through the merits of Christ's sacrifice and intercession,—and that they could act safely for themselves and piously toward God, only by seeing that 'all judgment is committed to the Son,' that he is the King and the Lawgiver of the redeemed, and that he reigns 'the Lord of the living and the dead,' 'alive for evermore,' having 'the keys of hell and of death.' 'When the Paraclete is come,' says the Saviour, 'he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me: of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged,' John 16:8–11. The Divine Spirit began this work on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand 'gladly received the word and were baptized;' he carried it on in the ministry of the

apostles, who 'preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,'—whose 'preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;' and he continues still to conduct it both by the enduring attestation of those miracles by which he established the new dispensation, and by his gracious power upon men to enlighten them savingly in the knowledge of the gospel, and to turn them from the error of their ways to the wisdom and obedience of the just. But his thus 'reproving the world of sin,' is a work altogether different from his alleged 'common operations' as an agent acting 'externally' upon unbelievers.

Dr. Ridgeley refers also to the passage, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' But if the words be read in their connexion, they will be seen to have no reference whatever to the moral or economical work of the divine Spirit, but to refer entirely to the shortening of the period of human life upon earth. The chapter in which they lie, narrates simply the general wickedness into which the antediluvians had plunged, the longevity and physical strength for which they were distinguished, the tendency of their conduct to undermine all their well-being, and the denunciation against them of a suitable punishment for their luxurious profligacy. Just after their peculiar wickedness is mentioned, and immediately previous to a statement of their robustness and longevity, the words' occur: 'And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.' Even apart from the context, this passage may be distinctly seen to speak of the shortening of man's mortal life. He had hitherto lived, on the average, to upwards of nine hundred years; but he was mortal—he possessed that 'fleshly' and fallen nature which was doomed to return to its original dust; he had been upheld in his longevity by the special kindness of the Giver of life; and as he was now pursuing a

course which directly tended to debilitate his frame, and entail diseases on his posterity, and poison the stream of human generation at its fountain, he should no longer be maintained in his robustness and his extreme length of earthly existence;—'yet his days,' though no longer extending to eight or nine centuries, 'should be an hundred and twenty years.' What means this finishing clause, this exceptional or mitigating statement, if the passage does not entirely refer to the abridging of his longevity? Nor is it strange that the intimation of that event was made in the phrase, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' In transmuting chaos into the organized world, 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;' and in the whole process of calling away mortals from the earth and repeopling their places with successors, God 'takes away their spirit רוחם—they die and return to their dust; he sends forth his Spirit רוחך—they are created, and he renews the face of the earth,' Psalm 104:29, 30. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic versions, accordingly, appear to understand the clause in question as speaking of the animating principle, and all render it, 'My Spirit will not always dwell with man.'

A third passage is alluded to by Dr. Ridgeley—'Quench not the Spirit.' But as this text occurs in connexion with the commands, 'Despise not prophesyings,' 'Prove all things,' it seems beyond doubt to refer to the Holy Spirit's miraculous gifts. Both in the word σβεννυμι, here rendered 'quench,' and in the word αναζωπυρεω, signifying to 'revive a fire,' in the somewhat parallel passage, 2 Tim. 1:6, there appears, in the judgment of Macknight and other critics, to be an obvious allusion to the 'cloven tongues as of fire,' which rested on the disciples at the impartation of miraculous gifts on the day of Pentecost. These gifts, it is quite clear, were conferred on a principle altogether distinct from the grace of the Holy Spirit's economical operations; for, as appears by some examples, as well as by our

Lord's statement of what he shall say at the day of final accounts to many who have 'cast out devils and done wonderful works,' they were possessed, in some instances, by persons who were strangers to divine grace. Nothing, therefore, can be inferred from either the possession or the 'quenching' of the Spirit in the sense of miraculous gifts, to sanction the notion of 'common' as distinguished from 'special' operations of the Spirit in the economy of salvation.

In addition to the three texts at which I have glanced, I am not aware of any argument in favour of the doctrine in question, except appeal to the ordinary history of unregenerated hearers of the gospel. We are invited to observe how many of these persons are brought into temporary religious concern, and how all of them are more or less subjected to an influence for good, by means of the ordinances of Christianity; and we are then requested to say on what principle, different from that of 'common grace,' or 'common operations' of the Spirit, we can account for the phenomena we witness. Now, the beneficent tendency of the gospel, its humanizing influence, its power to awe and restrain and agitate even its enemies, are quite manifest. But, while it operates on all who come within its sphere, and is eventually to every one either a savour of life unto life or a savour of death unto death, it is the instrument of the Holy Spirit's economical work only in achieving salvation,—it is 'the law of the Spirit of life' only in making men 'free from the law of sin and death.' In every other respect, the results of its influence stand connected not with the covenant, not with the system of grace, but with the moral government of God,—with the beneficence and the equity of the divine general administration. All men have consciences, and are accountable beings, and experience movements of the moral affections; and when any two sections of them—one section sitting under the light of Christian ordinances, and the other section sitting in the darkness of dominant heathenism—experience kindred

emotions of self-accusation or religious concern, the former section are not, on account of these emotions being stronger or from a more influential instrumentality, to be viewed, any more than the latter, as the subjects of 'common grace,' or as possessing, in any degree or in any sense, the peculiar boons of sovereign favour which are bestowed on the renewed and justified. There hence comes to be no alternative but either unqualifiedly to reject the doctrine of 'common grace,' or to mould it into the latitudinarian form of the kindred but broader doctrine held by the Pelagians.—ED.]

[NOTE H. Regeneration—Dr. Ridgeley makes a distinction, to which he appears to attach considerable importance, between the implantation of the principle of grace, and the exciting of that principle into activity. This, however, is cither a distinction without a difference, or it distinguishes regeneration from sanctification. Regeneration, define it as we may, consists in the commencement of the work of holiness in the heart,—in the first breathing, the first experience, or the actual reception of spiritual life; and sanctification consists in the progressive advancement of the work of holiness,—the continued existence, the strengthening, the maturing, or, in one word, the activity of the spiritual life. Now, if the life conveyed to the renovated soul is at all to be viewed in itself, abstractedly from the same life viewed in its activity, there can be a distinction, not between two things constituting the commencement of the life, but only between the life as received and the life as performing its functions. We shall hence have a distinction, not between the implantation and the activity of the principle of renovation, but between renovation or regeneration itself, and the sequent work of sanctification.

What Dr. Ridgeley means by 'the principle of grace' can be easily conjectured and understood, but is n expressed by the phrase which

he employs. 'A new heart,' or desires different from any the soul experienced before,—'the seed of God,' or love to holiness, love to the divine service, love to whatever is divine,—'conformity to the divine image,' or moral affections kindred in character to those displayed in the divine word and government,—'eternal life,' or the begun experience of a spiritual vitality perfectly suited to the soul's capacities, and enduring as its own immortality,—'a new creation,' or the instantaneous but silent appearance of order, and light, and beauty, where all before was chaos, darkness, and deformity;—these are the graphic images, the illustrative descriptions, by which the inspired oracles exhibit the idea of regeneration. But they are clumsily, and not a little injuriously, epitomized in the phrase 'the principle of grace.' The word principle is too general, too abstract, too misty to bring vividly or fully before the view the glowing notion of transformation, creation, life. We usually think of a principle as something distinct from practice,—either as the precept or doctrine by which conduct is directed, or as the moral impression, the belief, the habitual conviction which the precept or doctrine produces. No such conception, however, is to be formed of the differentia—whatever it be—between a regenerated and an unregenerated man. Call it what we may, we must conceive of it as 'a heart,' 'a nature,' an animus, 'a life,'—something which has activity in its very essence, and which exists at all only as it thinks, and feels, and propels to conduct. When we reflect on the act of material creation—on God's speaking and it was done, on his commanding and it stood fast—we cannot conceive of the implanting of a principle of organization and order and beauty in our world, apart from the exciting of that principle into action; nor when we reflect on the communication of life to Adam—when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul—can we conceive of any commencement of his animated being, call it what we may, apart from the first actual movement of his vital organs, or any

commencement of his moral and intellectual existence, apart from his first act of consciousness, or his real capacity of rational and moral thinking. So with regard to 'the new creation,' or the spiritual life of regeneration, there is no abstraction,—no abstraction especially which is 'implanted,'—nothing but what is positive or what exists in an active state. Perception of divine truth, love to God, desire for holiness, or whatever else constitutes the spiritual life, is, in its essence, as truly active in regeneration as in sanctification. Indeed, sanctification is just the perpetuation and bringing to maturity of what is begun in regeneration,—a series, in progressive strength and growing fulness, of the same acts as that in which regeneration consists,—the development of that vitality, the confirming and enlarging exercise of those vital functions, which begin in regeneration, as the developing and growing life of an infant began in the first pulsation of the heart. As truly, therefore, might we speak of a principle of grace in sanctification apart from actual and active holiness, as we may speak of a principle of grace in regeneration apart from the active nature of the commencement of spiritual life.

Dr. Ridgeley's distinction seems to have been framed in order to support his notion that "the regenerating act is wrought in us without the instrumentality of the word, or of any of the ordinary means of grace." How he could have adopted this notion in the face of the texts which he himself quotes, is not very easy to conceive. These texts seem to be sufficiently explicit: 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.' 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.' Dr. Ridgeley discovers, however, that "this language respects not so much the implanting of the principle of grace, as our being enabled to act from that principle;" that is, he previously sets up a distinction

between the abstract being and the active nature of spiritual life, and then, on the faith of that distinction, perceives the texts of scripture in question to refer, not to 'the regenerating act,' but to the moral ability or activity which it imparts. Yet no words, in any part of scripture, would seem to speak more directly and even distinctively of 'the regenerating act,' than the phrases, 'We are born again,' 'Of his own will begat he us.' Where, if not in these phrases, as they occur here and in other texts, is inspired language to be found which describes even what Dr. Ridgeley calls 'the implanting of the principle of grace;' or where, if these phrases be otherwise explained, does authority exist for speaking, in any respect whatever, of regeneration? Yet the two passages in which they lie explicitly ascribe our being 'born again,' and our being 'begotten of God' to the instrumentality of 'the word of truth,' 'the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.'

Dr. Ridgeley states, as the ground of his opinion, that the regenerating act is effected without the instrumentality of the word, that "it is necessary, from the nature of the thing, to our receiving or improving the word of God, or reaping any saving advantage by it, that the Spirit should produce the principle of faith;" and he thus reasons: "Now to say that this is done by the word, is, in effect, to assert that the word produces the principle, and the principle gives efficacy to the word; which seems to me little less than arguing in a circle." But does not the vice of reasoning in a circle appear somewhat strongly to characterize his own argument? 'Saving advantage,' if the phrase have any due signification, must mean the advantage of obtaining or receiving salvation. Now, this advantage he very justly represents as received by faith in the divine record; while, at the same time, he represents it as 'from the nature of the thing,' previously received in a regenerating act which is wrought without the instrumentality of the word. In other words, saving advantage,

according to him, must be received in order to saving advantage being received; or while enjoyed by faith in the word, it must, nevertheless, be previously enjoyed without the instrumentality of the word. That I do not misstate his argument, seems certain from a remark which he makes respecting faith,—a remark of somewhat startling discord with his preceding context. "I am far from denying" says he, "that faith and all other graces, are wrought in us by the instrumentality of the word." Yet he had said, "It is necessary to our receiving or improving the word of God that the Spirit should produce the principle of faith." The word, that is to say, is the instrument in producing faith; and yet is of no saving use to us whatever, and, of course, of no use in producing faith, till faith be actually produced. Dr. Ridgeley may be alleged, indeed, to distinguish between 'the grace of faith' and 'the principle of faith,' for he uses the former phrase when admitting, and the latter, when denying that faith is wrought by the instrumentality of the word. But, if words have meaning, faith is a grace simply as it is of divine origin, and it is a principle simply as it prompts and regulates conduct; and, under the two names, it is strictly and entirely one thing, merely viewed in different aspects. Besides, he uses the word 'faith' without the adjunct of either 'grace' or 'principle,' in a sentence which exhibits even a larger circumference than that already noticed, of reasoning in a circle. He says, "The word cannot profit unless it be mixed with faith; faith cannot be put forth unless it proceed from a principle of grace implanted; therefore this principle of grace is not produced by the word!" Yet, while a principle of grace goes before faith, and faith goes before the instrumentality of the word, both "faith and all other graces are wrought in us by the instrumentality of the word." Such is the confusion of thought resulting from the distinction between the implantation and the activity of "the principle of regeneration."

'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' "We believe, not by possessing an abstract capacity, but by counting true the record which God has given concerning his Son. Our minds, by their own unaided efforts, will look in vain upon divine truth in order either to understand its spiritual import, or receive it in its evidence; yet they are necessarily turned toward it, and made to look on some of its declarations, when the divine Spirit gives them 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.' Just while he speaks in his word—while he discloses the truth in its real colours, its genuine glory, its perfect adaptation to man—he makes all things new. In the moral creation, as in the physical, 'he speaks and it is done, he commands and it stands fast.' Exhibiting the truth in its evidence, enlightening the understanding, affecting the heart, giving origin to faith, and renewing the spirit of the mind, are all but different phases of strictly one act. When the change which passes upon a sinner on his being made spiritually alive, is viewed in reference to the instrumentality employed, it is called his believing or receiving the truth; when it is viewed in reference to its result upon his understanding, it is called the enlightening of his mind; when it is viewed in reference to its result upon his heart or character, it is called regeneration; and when it is viewed in reference to its result on his condition, or in reference rather to the redemptional grounds on which it is effected, it is called justification. These constituent parts or different aspects of the impartation to a dead soul of eternal life, are exhibited in scripture, not as consecutive acts in a causational process,—not as separate events or separate things following one another in a given order,—but strictly as one great change, constituting the man who was dead in trespasses and sins alive unto God. Perfectly distinct, therefore, as the conceptions afforded us by the Bible are of our change of state, our change of character, and our change of views—our justification, our regeneration, and the saving enlightenment of our understanding—we are not to conceive of even these as arising out of

one another in the order of causation or the order of priority; and still less are we to conceive in this manner of any number of parts or aspects into which we may divide our notions either of believing, of being enlightened, or of becoming 'new creatures in Christ Jesus.' However much, in particular, we may, for the sake of clearness of conception, distribute our thoughts on regeneration into classes referring to the agency, the instrumentality, the concomitant circumstances, the results upon the will, the desires and the affections, we must carefully sum them all up in the one idea stated in the expressive phrase, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.

A dispute, then, in which some writers have indulged, as to whether, in regeneration, there is the implantation of a positive principle, or merely the communication of light to the understanding which acts reflexly on the heart, is—if the subject be viewed as we have stated it —a mere logomachy. What one party really mean by the reflex influence of communicated light, is probably just what the other party mean by the implantation of a positive principle. Both expressions—as all words must be which refer to matters of mere consciousness or abstract intelligence, and especially to matters of divine influence on the soul—are essentially figurative; and they differ from each other, if they differ at all, only in the strength and appropriateness of their respective tropes. Light, literally understood, is just as really positive as any palpable substance capable of being implanted; and light, understood metaphorically of what is conveyed to the understanding and impressed on the heart by the divine Spirit, can differ nothing from what is termed the implantation of a principle of grace. The metaphor of implanting, however,—especially when collocated with the very general and indefinite word 'principle'—falls far short, as to either fitness or force, of the expressive metaphors of the shining of light into

darkness, a resurrection from the dead, a new creation, and a being begotten of God, or begotten again, employed in the scriptures. Even the phrase, 'the new birth' or being 'born again,' so currently applied to regeneration and repeatedly occurring in our English version of the New Testament, is considerably less expressive than the phrase whose place it usurps, 'begotten anew,' or 'begotten from above.' Reading the passage as it ought to be translated, how doubly significant, for example, are the words: 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love ye one another with a pure heart fervently, ye having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.'

The great features of regeneration, additional to the grace and the divine agency of its origination, the instrumentality of the divine word in effecting it, and its connexion in identity of occurrence with justification through the merits of Christ, are its instantaneity, its moral nature, its totality, its incompleteness, and its imperceptibility to consciousness. Its instantaneity is its being, not a work or a process, but a single act; and appears from the character of the metaphors, especially those of creation, resurrection, and the impartation of life, which are employed to describe it. Its moral nature is its affecting only man's will, his affections, and his views or motives of action, and not his intellectual powers or the peculiar configuration of his mind; and appears both from the fact that regenerated men retain just the intellectual faculties and culture which they possessed when unregenerated, and from the statement that 'the old man' is crucified in the crucifixion of depraved 'affections and desires,' and that the new man is created after the image of God 'in righteousness and true holiness.' Its totality is its affecting all the moral faculties, leaving not one moral power, not one member of the heart, untouched; and appears from the idea of

entireness conveyed in the images of a new creation, a new heart, a new man, as well as from the declaration, 'Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.' Its incompleteness is its affecting the soul only in the way of begun holiness, of the commencement of a work of sanctification, of the impartation of what requires to be reared up to maturity; and appears both from the imperfect state in which regenerated persons continue while on earth, and from the image of 'a babe in Christ' employed to describe the comparative condition of a recent convert. Its imperceptibility to consciousness is its not being, by the mind of its subject, distinguishable, as to the very act in which it takes place, from those emotions of concern which precede or accompany it, or from the commencing growth of those fruits of inward holiness by which its reality is evinced; and it appears, both from the experimental testimony of men who afford eminent evidence of having been its subjects, and from the express declaration of our Lord: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' Such seem to be the characteristic features of regeneration. They are exhibited, however, not as separate things in the act, and still less as things which in any sense originate one another, but simply as different aspects of the same thing, conceived of separately, and viewed each by each, for the sake of distinctly conceiving the undivided whole.—ED.]

COMMUNION IN GRACE WITH CHRIST

QUESTION LXIX. What is the communion in grace, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?

ANSWER. The communion in grace, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is, their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him.

HAVING considered the vital union which the members of the invisible church have with Christ in their effectual calling, we are now led to speak concerning the communion in grace which they have with him.

Communion with Christ does not in the least import our being made partakers of any of the glories or privileges which belong to him as Mediator; but it consists in our participation of those benefits which he hath purchased for us. It implies, on his part, infinite condescension, that he will be pleased to communicate such blessings to us; and, on ours, unspeakable honours and privileges, which we enjoy from him. It is sometimes called 'fellowship;' which is the result of friendship, and proceeds from his love. Thus our Saviour speaks of his 'loving' his disciples, 'and manifesting himself to them.'k It also proceeds from union with him, and is the immediate effect and consequence of effectual calling. Hence, God is said to have 'called us unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.' It is farther said, in this Answer, to be a manifestation of our union with him. He has received those blessings for us which he purchased by his blood; and, accordingly, is the treasury, as well as the fountain of all grace; and we are therefore said to 'receive of his fulness, grace for grace.'m And the blessings which we are said to receive, by virtue of his mediation, are justification, adoption, and sanctification, with all other benefits which either accompany or flow from them. These are particularly explained in the following Answers.

JUSTIFICATION

QUESTION LXX. What is justification?

ANSWER. Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which be pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

QUESTION LXXI. How is justification an act of God's free grace?

ANSWER. Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice, in the behalf of them that are justified; yet, inasmuch as God accepteth the satisfaction from a Surety, which he might have demanded of them, did provide this Surety, his own only Son, imputing his righteousness to them, and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith; which also is his gift; their justification is, to them, of free grace.

The Importance of the Doctrine of Justification

Hitherto we have been led to consider that change of heart and life which is begun in effectual calling; whereby a dead sinner is made alive, and one who was wholly indisposed for good works, and averse to the performance of them, is enabled to perform them by the power of divine grace. Now we are to speak concerning that change of state which accompanies change of heart; whereby one who, being guilty

before God, was liable to the condemning sentence of the law, and expected no other than an eternal banishment from his presence, is pardoned, received into favour, and has a right to all the blessings which Christ has, by his obedience and sufferings, purchased for him. This is what we call justification; and it is placed immediately after the subject of effectual calling, agreeably to the method in which it is insisted on in the golden chain of salvation exhibited by the apostle, 'Whom he called, them he also justified.'

This is certainly a doctrine of the highest importance; inasmuch as it contains the way of peace, the foundation of all our hope, of the acceptance both of our persons and our services, and the beholding of the face of God, at last, with joy. Some have styled it the very basis of Christianity. Our forefathers thought it so necessary to be insisted on and maintained, according to the scripture account of it, that they reckoned it one of the principal doctrines of the Reformation. Indeed, the apostle Paul speaks of it as so necessary to be believed, that he concluded the denying or perverting of it to be the ground and reason of the Jews being rejected: 'Who being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' If, as many suppose, their call be meant in the account which we have of 'the marriage of the Lamb, and of his wife having made herself ready,' it is worth observing that she is described as 'arrayed in fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints,' or, Christ's righteousness by which they are justified. This is that in which they glory; and therefore they are represented as being convinced of the importance of that doctrine of which they were formerly ignorant.

This doctrine we have an account of in the two Answers which we are now to explain. In considering it, we shall endeavour to observe the following method. First, we shall consider what we are to understand

by the word 'justify.' Secondly, we shall inquire what the privileges are, which are contained in it, as reduced to two heads, namely, pardon of sin, and God's accounting those who are justified righteous in his sight. Thirdly, we shall inquire what the foundation is of our justification, namely, a righteousness wrought out for us. Fourthly, we shall show the utter inability of fallen man to perform any righteousness which can be the matter of his justification in the sight of God. Fifthly, we shall show that our Lord Jesus Christ has, as our surety, wrought out this righteousness for us, by performing active and passive obedience, which is imputed to us for our justification. Sixthly, we shall consider justification as an act of God's free grace. Lastly, we shall show the use of faith in justification, or in what respects faith is said to justify.

The Meaning of the Word 'Justify'

We shall first consider in what sense we are to understand the word 'justify.' As there are many disputes about the method of explaining the doctrine of justification; so there is a contest between us and the Papists about the sense of the word. They generally suppose that 'to justify,' is to make inherently righteous and holy; because righteousness and holiness sometimes import the same thing, and because both denote an internal change in the person who is so denominated. Accordingly, they argue that, as to magnity signifies to make great,—to fortify, to make strong,—so to justify, is to make just or holy. And they suppose that whatever we do to make ourselves so, or whatever good works are the ingredients of our sanctification, must be considered as the matter of our justification. Some Protestant divines have supposed that the difference between them and us is principally about the sense of a word. This favourable and charitable construction of their doctrine would have been less exceptionable, if the Papists had asserted no more than that

justification might be taken in the sense they contend for, when not considered as giving us a right to eternal life, or as being the foundation of that sentence of absolution which God passes upon us. But as this is the sense they give of it, when they say that we are justified by our inherent holiness, we are bound to conclude that it is very remote from the scripture sense of the word. We do not deny that justification is sometimes taken in a sense different from that in which it is understood when used to signify the doctrine we are explaining. Sometimes nothing more is intended by it, than our vindicating the divine perfections from any charge which is pretended to be brought against them. Thus the psalmist says, 'That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' And our Saviour is said to be justified, that is, his person or character vindicated or defended, from the reproaches which were cast on him. 'Wisdom,' it is said, 'is justified of her children.'q We frequently read in scripture, also, of the justification of the actions or conduct of persons; in which sense their own works may be said to justify or vindicate them from the charge of hypocrisy or unregeneracy. Again, to justify is sometimes taken, in scripture, for using endeavours to turn many to righteousness. Hence, the words, in the prophecy of Daniel, which signify, 'they who justify many,' are rendered by our translators, 'they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars.'. There are various other senses given of this word, which we pass over as not applicable to the doctrine we are maintaining.

We shall proceed to consider the sense in which it is used, when importing a sinner's justification in the sight of God. When thus used, it is to be taken only in a forensic sense; and accordingly signifies a person's being acquitted or discharged from guilt or a liability to condemnation, in such a way as is done in courts of judicature. Thus we read in the judicial law, 'If there be a controversy

between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.' Here 'to justify the righteous,' is to be understood for acquitting, or discharging from condemnation, one who appears to be righteous, or, not guilty; while 'the wicked,' that is, they who appear to be guilty, are to be 'condemned.' In this sense the word is used, when applied to the doctrine of justification, in the New Testament, and particularly in Paul's epistles, who largely insists on this subject. Now, that we may understand how a sinner may expect to be discharged at God's tribunal, let us consider the methods of proceeding used in human courts of judicature. In these, it is supposed that there is a law which forbids some actions which are deemed criminal; and also that a punishment is annexed to this law, which renders the person who violates it guilty. Next, persons are supposed to be charged with the violation of the law; and if the charge be not made good, they are said to be justified, that is, cleared from presumptive, not real guilt. But if the charge be made good, and if he who falls under it is liable to punishment, and actually suffers the punishment, he is justified; as in crimes which are not of a capital nature. Or if he be any otherwise cleared from the charge, so that his guilt be removed, he is deemed a justified person, and the law has nothing to lay to his charge, with respect to that which he was accused of. Thus, when a sinner, who had been charged with the violation of the divine law, found guilty before God, and exposed to a sentence of condemnation, is freed from it, he is said to be justified.

The Privileges contained in Justification

We are now led to consider the privileges contained in justification. These are forgiveness of sin, and a right and title to eternal life. They are sufficiently distinguished, though never separated; so that, when we find but one of them mentioned in a particular scripture which

treats on this subject, the other is not excluded. Forgiveness of sin is sometimes expressed in scripture, by not imputing sin; and a right to life, includes our being made partakers of the adoption of children, and a right to the inheritance prepared for them. The apostle mentions both when he speaks of our having 'redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins,' and of our being 'made meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Elsewhere, also, he speaks of Christ's 'redeeming them that were under the law,' which includes the former branch of justification; and of their 'receiving the adoption of children,' which includes the latter. Again, he considers justified persons as 'having peace with God,' which more especially respects pardon of sin; and of their 'having access to the grace wherein they stand,' and 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God,'u which is what we are to understand by, or includes, their right to life.

That justification consists of both these branches, we maintain against the Papists. They suppose that it includes nothing else but forgiveness of sin, which is founded on the blood of Christ; and they say that our right to life depends on our internal qualifications or sincere obedience. There are also some Protestant divines who suppose that it consists only in pardon of sin. This is asserted by them, with different views. Some assert it as most consistent with the doctrine of justification by works, which they plead for; while others assert it as most agreeable to another notion which they advance, namely, that we are justified only by Christ's passive obedience, which will be considered under a following Head. Again, there are others, whose views of the doctrine of justification are agreeable to scripture, who maintain that it includes both forgiveness of sins and a right to life; but who yet say that the former is founded on Christ's passive obedience, and the latter on his active. We cannot but think, however, that the whole of Christ's obedience, both active and

passive, is the foundation of each. But as this point will be considered when we come to speak concerning the procuring cause of our justification, all that we shall observe at present, is, that the two privileges in question are inseparably connected. As no one can have a right to life, but he whose sins are pardoned; so no one can obtain forgiveness of sin, without, in consequence, having a right to life. As by the fall man became guilty, and then lost that right to life which was promised in the event of his standing, so it is agreeable to the divine perfections, provided the guilt be removed, that he should be put in the same state as if it had not been contracted, and consequently he should have, not only forgiveness of sins, but a right to life. Forgiveness of sin, without a right to eternal life, would render our justification incomplete. Hence, when any one is pardoned by an act of grace, he is put in possession of that which, by his rebellion, he had forfeited; he is considered, not only as released out of prison, but as one who has the privileges of a subject, such as those which he had before he committed the crime. Without this he would be like Absalom, when, upon Joab's intercession with David, the guilt of murder, which he had contracted, was remitted so far as that he had liberty to return from Geshur, whither he had fled; but who, nevertheless, reckons himself not fully discharged from the guilt he had contracted, and concludes his return to Jerusalem, as it were an insignificant privilege, unless by being admitted to see the king's face, and enjoy the privileges which he was possessed of before, he might be dealt with as one who was taken into favour, as well as forgiven; which was accordingly granted. This leads us to a particular consideration of the two branches of justification.

1. Forgiveness of sin. Sin is sometimes represented as containing moral impurity, as opposed to holiness of heart and life. Accordingly, it is said to 'defile a man;' and it is set forth in scripture by several metaphorical expressions which tend to beget an abhorrence of it as

of things impure. In this sense it is removed in sanctification, rather than in justification. Not but that divines sometimes speak of Christ's redeeming us from the filth and the dominion of sin, and our deliverance from it in justification. But when the filth and the dominion of sin are thus spoken of, they are to be understood as rendering us guilty; inasmuch as all moral pollutions are criminal, as contrary to the law of God. For, were they not so viewed, our deliverance from them would not be a branch of justification. In speaking on this subject, therefore, we shall consider sin as that which renders men guilty before God, and so show what we are to understand by guilt.

Guilt supposes a person to be under a law, and to have violated it. Accordingly, sin is described as 'the transgression of the law.' The law of God, in common with all other laws, is primarily designed to be the rule of obedience; and, in order to its being so, it is a declaration of the divine will which, as creatures and subjects, we are under a natural obligation to comply with. Moreover, God, as a God of infinite holiness and sovereignty, cannot but signify his displeasure in case of disobedience; and therefore he has annexed a threatening to his law, or passed a condemning sentence, as what is due for every transgression. This, divines sometimes call the sanction of the law, or a fence with which it is guarded, that so, through the corruption of our nature, we may not conclude that we may rebel against him with impunity. The scripture styles it, 'the curse of the law;'a so that guilt is a liableness to the curse, or condemning sentence of the law, for our violation of it. It is sometimes called a debt of punishment which we owe to the justice of God for not paying that debt of obedience which was due from us to his law. Thus, when our Saviour advises us to pray that our sins may be forgiven, he expresses it by 'forgiving us our debts;' so that forgiveness, as it is a freeing us from guilt, discharges us from the debt of punishment to which we were liable.

There is a twofold debt which man owes to God. One he owes to him as a creature under a law. This is that debt of obedience which he cannot be discharged from; and therefore a justified person is, in this sense, as much a debtor as any other. There is also a debt which man contracts as a criminal, whereby he is liable to suffer punishment. This alone is removed in justification. Moreover, we must carefully distinguish between the demerit of sin, or its desert of punishment, and the sinner's obligation to suffer punishment for it. The former is inseparable from sin, and not removed, or in the least lessened, by pardoning mercy. For sin is no less the object of the divine detestation, nor is its intrinsic evil or demerit abated, by its being forgiven. Hence, a justified person remaining still a sinner, as transgressing the law of God, has as much reason to condemn himself in this respect as if he had not been forgiven. The psalmist, speaking concerning a person who is actually forgiven or justified, says, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?'c He was in a justified state, but yet concludes that there is a demerit of punishment in every sin which he committed; though, when it is pardoned, the obligation to suffer punishment is taken away. Hence, the apostle speaking of such, says, 'There is no condemnation to them.'e We must farther distinguish between our having matter of condemnation in us,—which a justified person has; and there being no condemnation to us, which is the immediate result of being pardoned.

There are several expressions in scripture whereby forgiveness is set forth. It is called God's covering sin. Thus the psalmist says, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' It is called, also, his hiding his face from it, and blotting it out; its 'not being found'g 'when it is sought for;' and 'casting our sins into the depths of the sea.'i Elsewhere it is said that, when God had pardoned the sins of his people, 'he did not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor see

perverseness in Israel.' This amounts to the same thing as the foregoing expressions, as to sin being covered, hid, blotted out, &c. I am sensible there have been many contests about the sense of this scripture, which might, without much difficulty, have been compromised, had the contending parties been desirous to know one another's opinion without prejudice or partiality. It is not to be thought that, when God forgives sin, he does not know or suppose that the person forgiven had contracted guilt by sins committed; for without this he could not be the object of forgiveness. When God is said not to look upon his people's sins, or to hide his face from them, it is not to be supposed that he knows not what they have done, or what iniquities they daily commit against him; for that would be subversive of his omniscience. When, again, he is said not to mark our iniquities, we are not to understand it as if he did not look upon the sins we commit, though in a justified state, with abhorrence; for the sinner may be pardoned, and yet the crime forgiven be detested. God's not seeing sin in his people, is to be understood in a forensic sense. Accordingly, when an atonement is made for sin, and the guilt of it is taken away, the criminal is, in the eye of the law, as if he had not sinned. He is as fully discharged from the indictment which was brought in against him, as if he had been innocent,—not liable to any charge founded upon it. Hence, the apostle says, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.'l It is the same thing as for God 'not to enter into judgment,' as the psalmist elsewhere expresses it; or to 'punish us less than our iniquities have deserved.' In this sense, the indictment which was brought against the sinner is cancelled, the sentence reversed, and prosecution stopped; so that whatever evils are endured as the consequence of sin, or with a design to humble the transgressor for it, as bringing sin to his remembrance with all its aggravating circumstances, he is encouraged to hope that these are inflicted, not in a judicial way by the vindictive justice of God demanding satisfaction, but to display

and set forth the holiness of his nature as infinitely opposed to all sin, and also the holiness of the dispensations of his providence, and that with a design to bring the transgressor to repentance.

That the privilege of forgiveness may appear to be most conducive to our happiness and comfort, let it be considered that, wherever God forgives sin, he forgives all sin, cancels every debt which rendered the sinner liable to punishment. Were it otherwise, our condition would be very miserable, and our salvation impossible. Our condition would be like that of a person who has several indictments brought in against him, every one of which contains an intimation that his life is forfeited; and whom it would avail very little for one indictment to be superseded, while the sentence due to him for the others should be executed. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of 'the free gift' being 'of many,' that is, of the multitude of our 'offences unto justification.' Elsewhere, too, he speaks of God's forgiving his people 'all trespasses.'o And as he forgives all past sins, so he gives the pardoned ground to conclude that iniquity shall not be their ruin; so that the same grace which now abounds towards them in forgiveness, together with the virtue of the atonement made for sin, shall prevent future crimes from being charged upon them to their condemnation. Thus concerning forgiveness of sin.

The other privilege which they who are justified are made partakers of, is the acceptance of their persons as righteous in the sight of God. They are said to be 'made accepted in the Beloved.' And as their persons are accepted, so are their performances, notwithstanding the many defects which adhere to them. Thus God is said to have 'had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.'q Besides, they have a right and title to eternal life; which is that inheritance which Christ has purchased for them, and which God, in his covenant of grace, has promised to them. This is a very comprehensive blessing; for it

contains a right to all those great and precious promises which God has made respecting their happiness both here and hereafter. But we shall have occasion to insist on it under a following Answer, when speaking on the subject of adoption, which some divines, not without good reason, conclude to be a branch of justification, or at least to contain those positive privileges which they who are justified partake of, either here or hereafter.

The Foundation of Justification

We now proceed to consider what is the foundation of our justification. This must be some righteousness wrought out either by us or for us. Since justification is a person's being 'made righteous,' as the apostle styles it, we must consider what we are to understand by this phrase. A person is said to be righteous who never violated the law of God, or exposed himself to its condemning sentence. In this respect, man, while in a state of innocency, was righteous. His perfect obedience was the righteousness which, according to the tenor of the covenant he was under, gave him a right to eternal life; and it would especially have done so, had it been persisted in till he became possessed of that life. But such a righteousness as this cannot be the foundation of our justification; for the apostle says, 'By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.'s The righteousness we are now speaking of must be something wrought out for us by one who stood in our room and stead, and was able to pay that debt of obedience and endure those sufferings which were due for sin. This debt the law of God might have exacted of us, and insisted on the payment of in our own persons; and, as paid by Christ for us, it is, as will be considered under a following Head, that which we generally call Christ's righteousness, or what he did and suffered in our stead in conformity to the law of God; whereby its honour was secured and

vindicated, and justice satisfied, so that God appears to be, as the apostle says, 'just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'

Man's inability to work out a justifying Righteousness

We are now to consider the utter inability of fallen man to perform any righteousness which can be the matter of his justification in the sight of God; whereby it will appear, as is observed in this Answer, that we are not accounted righteous in his sight for any thing wrought in us or done by us. That we cannot be justified by suffering the punishment which was due to sin, appears from the infinite evil of it, and the eternal duration of the punishment which it deserves. Thus our Saviour observes in the parable concerning the debtor who did not 'agree with his adversary while in the way,' but was 'delivered to the officer, and cast into prison,' that he should not come out 'till he had paid the uttermost farthing,' that is to say, he should never be discharged. A criminal who is sentenced to endure some punishments short of death, or which are to continue but for a term of years, is discharged or justified when he has suffered them. But it is far otherwise with man, when fallen into the hands of the vindictive justice of God. Hence, the psalmist says, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant,' or do not punish me according to the demerit of sin; 'for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.'—Nor can any one be justified by performing active obedience to the law of God. Nothing is sufficient to answer that end, but what is perfect in all respects. It must be sinless obedience; and that not only as to what concerns the time to come, but as respecting the time past. But this is impossible from the nature of the thing, to be affirmed of a sinner; for to affirm it implies a contradiction in terms. Besides, the holiness of God cannot but detest the least defect, and therefore will not deal with a sinful creature as though he had been innocent. As for sins which are past, they render us equally liable to a debt of

punishment with those which are committed at present, or shall be hereafter, in the sight of God. Moreover, the honour of the law cannot be secured, unless it be perfectly fulfilled; and it cannot be so if there be any defect of obedience.

As for works which are done by us without the assistance of the Spirit of God, they proceed from a wrong principle, and have many other blemishes attending them, on account of which they have only a partial goodness. For that reason Augustine gives them no better a character than that of shining sins. But whatever terms we give them, they are certainly very far from coming up to a conformity to the divine law. And as for good works which are said to be wrought in us, and are the effect of the power and grace of God, and the consequence of our being regenerated and converted, they fall far short of perfection; there is a great deal of sin attending them, which, if God should mark, none could stand. This is expressed by Job, in a very humble manner: 'How should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.' 'If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.'y When God is said to 'work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight,' we are not to understand that the grace which he works in us renders us accepted in his sight, in a forensic sense, or that it justifies us; for in this respect we are 'made accepted' only 'in the Beloved,' that is, in Christ.a—Moreover, as what is wrought in us has many defects; so it is not from ourselves, and therefore cannot be accepted as a payment of that debt of obedience which we owe to the justice of God; and consequently we cannot be justified by it. Some, indeed, make the terms of acceptance or justification in the sight of God as low as if nothing were demanded of us but our sincere endeavours to yield

obedience, whatever imperfections it be chargeable with. Others pretend that our confessing our sins will be conducive to our justification, and assert that our tears are sufficient to wash away the guilt of sin. The Papists add that some penances, or acts of self-denial, will satisfy his justice, and procure a pardon for us; yea, they go farther than this, and maintain that persons may perform works of supererogation, or pay more than the debt which 'is owing from them, or than what the law of God requires, and thereby not only satisfy his justice, but render him a debtor to them; and they put them into a capacity of transferring these arrears of debt to those who stand in need of them, and thereby lay an obligation on them in gratitude to pay them honours next to divine. Such absurdities do men run into who plead for human satisfactions, and the merit of good works, as the matter of our justification. Indeed, nothing can tend more to depreciate Christ's satisfaction, on the one hand, and stupify the conscience on the other; and therefore, it is so far from being an expedient for justification, that it is destructive to the souls of men.—As for our sincere endeavours or imperfect obedience, these cannot be placed, by the justice of God, in the room of perfect; for to do so is contrary to the nature of justice. We cannot suppose that he who pays a peppercorn or a few mites, instead of a large sum, really pays the debt which was due from him. Justice cannot account this to be a payment; and a discharge from condemnation on the ground of it, cannot be styled a justification. To say that it is esteemed so by an act of grace, is to advance the glory of one divine perfection, and, at the same time, detract from that of another. Nothing, therefore, can be our righteousness, but that which the justice of God may, in honour, accept of for our justification; and our own righteousness is so small and inconsiderable a thing, that it is a dishonour for him to accept of it in this respect; so that we cannot be justified by works done by us or wrought in us.—This will farther appear, if we consider the properties of this righteousness, and in particular, that it must

not only be perfect, and therefore such as a sinful creature cannot perform, but also be of infinite value, otherwise it could not give satisfaction to the infinite justice of God, and consequently cannot be performed by any other than a divine person. It must also bear some resemblance to that debt which was due from us; inasmuch as it was designed to satisfy for the debt which we had contracted; and therefore it must be performed by one who is really man. But as this has been insisted on elsewhere, under the head of Christ's priestly office, we shall not farther enlarge on it.

Christ's Righteousness as the ground of Justification

We now proceed to observe that our Lord Jesus Christ has wrought out this righteousness for us, as our surety, by performing active and passive obedience; which is imputed to us for our justification. We have already shown that it is impossible that such a righteousness as is sufficient to be the matter of our justification, should be wrought out by us in our own persons. It must hence be wrought out for us by one who bears the character of a surety, and performs every thing which is necessary to our justification. Such an one is our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Here we must show what we are to understand by 'a surety;' since it is the righteousness of Christ under this relation to us, which is the matter of our justification. A surety is one who submits to be charged with, and undertakes to pay, a debt contracted by another, to the end that the debtor may be discharged. Thus the apostle Paul engages to be surety to Philemon for Onesimus, who had fled from Philemon whom he had wronged or injured, and to whom he was in consequence indebted. Concerning Onesimus, the apostle says, 'If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.' We read

also of Judah's overture to be surety for his brother Benjamin that he should return to his father, as a motive to induce the latter to give his consent that he should go with him into Egypt: 'I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.'d Suretiship is so commonly known in civil transactions of a similar nature between man and man, that it needs no farther explication.—It may be observed, however, that a person's becoming surety for another, must be a free and voluntary act. For to force any one to bind himself to pay a debt which he has not contracted, is as much an act of injustice as it is in any other instance to exact a debt where it is not due.—Again, he who engages to be surety for another, must be in a capacity to pay the debt; otherwise he is unjust to the creditor, as well as brings ruin upon himself. Hence, it is said, 'Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts, if thou hast nothing to pay; why should he take away thy bed from under thee?'—Further, he who engages to be surety for another, is supposed not to have contracted the debt himself; and therefore the creditor must have no demands upon him, as being involved together with the debtor, and so becoming engaged antecedent to his being surety. Yet after he has become surety he is deemed, in the eye of the law, to stand in the debtor's room and to be charged with his debt, and to be as much obliged to pay it as if he had contracted it, especially if the creditor be resolved to exact the payment of him rather than of the original debtor.f—Further, as debts are of different kinds, so the obligation of a surety admits of different circumstances. Thus there are pecuniary debts resulting from those dealings or contracts which pass between man and man in civil affairs; and there are debts of service or obedience; as also debts of punishment, as was formerly observed, for crimes committed. In all these cases, as the nature of the debt differs, so there are some things peculiar in the nature of suretiship for it. In pecuniary debts the creditor is obliged to accept

of payment at the hand of any one who, at the request of the debtor, is willing to discharge the debt which he has contracted, especially if what he pays be his own; but in debts of service or punishment, when the surety offers himself to perform or suffer what was due from another, the creditor is at liberty to accept or refuse satisfaction from him, and might insist on the payment of the debt in his own person by him from whom it is due.

2. Christ was a surety for us, or substituted in our room, with a design to pay the debt which was due to the justice of God from us.—Here, that we may resume the ideas of a surety just mentioned, and apply them to Christ as our surety, let it be considered that what he did and suffered for us was free and voluntary. This appears from his readiness to engage in the work, expressed by his saying, 'Lo, I come to do thy will.' Hence, whatever he suffered for us did not infer the least injustice in God who inflicted it.h—Again, he was able to pay the debt; so that there was not the least injury offered to the justice of God by his undertaking. This is evident, from his being God incarnate. In the one nature, he was able to do and suffer whatever was demanded of us; and in the other nature, he was able to add an infinite value to what he performed.—Further, he was not rendered incapable of paying our debt, or of answering for the guilt which we had contracted, by any debt of his own, which involved him in the same guilt and rendered him liable to the same punishment with us. This is evident from what the prophet says concerning him, that he was charged with our guilt, though 'he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.' What the prophet calls 'doing no violence,' the apostle Peter, referring to and explaining it, styles 'doing' or committing 'no sin' of any kind. He was not involved in the guilt of Adam's sin, which would have rendered him incapable of being a surety to pay that debt for us; nor had he the least degree of corruption of nature, being conceived in an extraordinary way, and

sanctified from the womb;k nor did he ever commit actual sin, for 'he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'—Another thing observed in the character of a surety, which corresponds very much with Christ's being our surety, is that what he engaged to pay was his own, or at his own disposal. He did not offer any injury to justice, by paying a debt which was before due to it, or by performing any service which he had no warrant to do. It is true, he gave his life a ransom; but consider him as a divine Person, and he had an undoubted right to dispose of or lay down that life which he had as man. Did he consent, in the eternal transaction between the Father and him, to be incarnate, and in our nature to perform the work of a surety? This was an act of his sovereign will; so that whatever he paid as a ransom for us, was, in the highest sense, his own. The case was not the same as if one man who has no power to dispose of his life at pleasure, should offer to lay down his life for another. We are not lords of our own lives. As we do not come into the world by our own wills, we are not to go out of it when we please. But Christ as God, was, if I may so express myself, lord of himself, of all that he did and suffered as man; by which I understand that he had a right as God to consent or determine to do and suffer whatever he did and suffered as man. The debt, therefore, which he paid in the human nature, was his own.—Further, as in some cases he who is willing to substitute himself as a surety in the room of the debtor, must be accepted and approved by him to whom the debt is due; so our Saviour's substitution as our surety in our room, had a sanction from God the Father; who gave many undeniable evidences that what Christ did and suffered for us, was accepted by him as really as if it had been done by us in our own persons. This, as was formerly observed, might have been refused by him, it being the payment of a debt of obedience and sufferings. But that God the Father testified his acceptance of Christ as our surety, appears from his well-pleasedness with him, both before and after his incarnation. Before he came into

the world, God seems to speak with pleasure in the forethought of what he would be and do, as Mediator, when he says, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.' He is also said to be 'well-pleased for his righteousness' sake,'m or in his determining beforehand that he should, as Mediator, bring in that righteousness which would tend to magnify the law and make it honourable. Moreover, his having anointed him by a previous designation to his work, as the prophet intimates, speaking of him before his incarnation, is certainly an evidence of his being approved to be our surety. And when he was incarnate, God approved of him, when engaged in the work which he came into the world to perform. Thus, when he was solemnly set apart by baptism to the discharge of his public ministry, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.' We may add, that there was the most undeniable proof of God's well-pleasedness with him, as having accomplished this work, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places. Again, that the Father testified his acceptance of Christ as our surety, may be argued from his justifying and saving those for whom he undertook to be a surety, before the debt was actually paid, and from his applying the same blessings to his people since the work of redemption was finished. The application of what Christ undertook to purchase, is an evidence of the acceptableness of the price. This may be considered, either as respects those who were saved before his incarnation and death, or those who are, from that time, in all succeeding ages, made partakers of the saving benefits of redemption. Before the actual accomplishment of what he undertook to do and suffer as our surety, God the Father trusted him; and, by virtue of his promising to pay the debt, discharged the Old Testament saints from condemnation, as effectually as if it had been actually paid. There are some cases in which a surety's undertaking to pay a debt, is reckoned equivalent to the actual payment of it; namely, when it is impossible that he should

make a failure in the payment, either through mutability or fickleness of temper inducing him to change his purpose, or from unfaithfulness, which might render him regardless of his engagement, or from some change in his circumstances, whereby, though he once was able to pay, he afterwards becomes unable: I say, if none of these things can take place, and especially, if the creditor, by not demanding present payment, receives some advantage, which is an argument that he does not stand in need of payment, then the promise to pay a debt is equivalent to the payment of it. Now these things may well be applied to Christ's undertaking to pay our debt. It was impossible that he should fail in the accomplishment of what he had undertaken; or change his purpose, and so, though he designed to execute his work, enter into other measures; or, though he had promised to execute it, be unfaithful in the accomplishment of it;—these things are all inconsistent with the character of his person; for though he suffered for us in the human nature, it was his divine nature that undertook to do the work in the human nature; and the divine nature is infinitely free from the least imputation of weakness, mutability, or unfaithfulness. While, too, the present payment was not immediately demanded, nor designed to be made till the fulness of time was come, the delay of it was compensated by the revenue of glory which accrued to the divine name, and by the honour which redounded to the Mediator, in the salvation of the elect before his incarnation. This, then, was certainly an undeniable evidence of God's approving his undertaking. Moreover, since the work of redemption has been completed, all those who are or shall be brought to glory, have, in themselves, a convincing proof of God's being well-pleased with Christ, as substituted in their room and stead, to pay the debt which was due from them to his justice, and so to lay the foundation of their justification. It hence plainly appears, that Christ was substituted as a surety in our room and stead, to do that for us which was necessary for our justification. We have also

sufficient ground to conclude that he was so from scripture, whence alone this point can be proved, it being a matter of pure revelation. Thus it is said, in express terms, that he was 'made a surety of a better testament.'p And that, as our surety, he paid the debt of sufferings which was due from us, is evident from its being said that 'he offered himself a sacrifice for our sins,' and that he was 'once offered to bear the sins of many.'r From his being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, the apostle argues that he had no occasion to offer a sacrifice for himself, or that he had no sin of his own to be charged with; so that, when he suffered, he bore or answered for our sins. Thus the apostle Peter says, 'He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; by whose stripes ye were healed.' And elsewhere we read of 'his being made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;'t that is, he who had no guilt of his own to answer for, submitted to be charged with our guilt, to stand in our room and stead, and accordingly to be made a sacrifice for sin. Now all this implies his having been made a surety for us. But on this point we particularly insisted elsewhere when speaking concerning Christ's satisfaction, which could not be explained without taking occasion to mention his being substituted in the room and stead of those for whom he paid a price of redemption; and we also considered the meaning of those scriptures which speak of his 'bearing our sins.'

3. We shall now proceed, then, to consider what Christ did as our surety, in his paying all that debt which the justice of God demanded from us, and which consisted in active and passive obedience. There was a debt of active obedience demanded of man as a creature; and upon his failing to pay it, when he sinned, it became an outstanding debt due from us, but such as could never be paid by us. God determines not to justify any, unless this outstanding debt be paid. Christ, as our surety, engages to take the payment of it on himself.

While, too, this defect of obedience, together with all actual transgressions, which proceed from the corruption of our nature, render us guilty or liable to the stroke of vindictive justice, Christ, as our surety, undertakes to bear that also. This we generally call the imputation of our sin to Christ, the placing of our debt to his account, and the transferring to him of the debt of punishment which was due from us. On this account he is said to yield obedience, and suffer in our room and stead, or to perform active and passive obedience for us. These two ideas the apostle joins in one expression, when he says that he 'became obedient unto death.' But this having been insisted on elsewhere, under the head of Christ's satisfaction,y where we not only showed that Christ performed active as well as passive obedience for us, but endeavoured to answer the objections which are generally brought against Christ's active obedience being part of that debt which he engaged to pay for us, we shall pass it by at present.—Again, that our sin and guilt was imputed to him, may be argued from his having been 'made a curse for us,' in order to his redeeming us from the curse of the law; from his having been 'made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;'a and from other scriptures which speak of him as suffering, though innocent,—punished for sin, though he was the Lamb of God without spot or blemish,—dealt with as guilty, though he had never contracted any guilt,—and made a sacrifice for sin, though sinless. These things could not have been done consistently with the justice of God, had not our sins been placed to his account, or imputed to him.—It is indeed a very difficult thing to convince some persons, how Christ could be charged with sin or have sin imputed to him, in consistency with the sinless purity of his nature. This some think to be no better than a contradiction; though it is agreeable to the scripture mode of speaking, as 'he was made sin for us,' and yet 'knew no sin.' When, however, we speak of sin being imputed to him, we are far from insinuating that he committed any acts of sin, or that

his human nature was, in the least, inclined to or defiled by it. We choose, therefore, to use the scripture phrase, in which he is said to have 'borne our sins,' rather than to say that he was a sinner. Much less would I give countenance to the expression which some make use of, that he was the greatest sinner in the world; for I do not desire to apply a word to him, which is often taken in a sense not in the least applicable to the holy Jesus. We cannot be too cautious in our expressions, lest the most common sense in which we understand 'the greatest sinner' when applied to men, should give any one a wrong idea of him, as though he had committed sin, or were defiled with it. All we assert is, that he was charged with our sins when he suffered for them,—not with having committed them, but with the guilt of them, which, by his own consent, was imputed to him. For had it been otherwise, his sufferings could not have been a punishment for sin, nor could our sin have been expiated, or his sufferings have been the ground of our justification.

4. We are thus led to consider the reference which Christ's suretiship-righteousness has to our justification. This is generally styled its being imputed, which is a word very much used by those who plead for the scripture sense of the doctrine of justification, and as much opposed by those who deny it. We are obliged to defend the use of it; otherwise Christ's righteousness, how glorious soever it be in itself, would not avail for our justification.

Here it is necessary for us to explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. There are some who oppose this doctrine by calling it a putative righteousness, the shadow or appearance of what has no reality; or our being accounted what we are not, whereby a wrong judgment is passed on persons and things. We are not, however, to deny the doctrine because it is thus misrepresented, and thereby unfairly opposed. It is certain that there

are words used in scripture and often applied to this doctrine, which, without any ambiguity or strain on the sense of them, may be translated 'to reckon,' 'to account,' or to place a thing done by another to our account, or as we express it, 'to impute.' This respects either what is done by us, or something done by another for us. Imputation in the former of these senses, our adversaries do not oppose. Thus, it is said, that 'Phinehas executed judgment, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,'d that is, it was approved by God as a righteous action. This expression seems to obviate an objection which some might make against imputation. They might suppose that Phinehas did that which more properly belonged to the civil magistrate, or that his judicial act was done without a formal trial, and, it may be, too hastily. God, however, owns the action, and, in a way of approbation, places it to his account for righteousness, that it should be reckoned a righteous action throughout all generations.—Again, sometimes that which is done by a person, is imputed to him or charged upon him so that he must answer for it, or suffer the punishment due to it. Thus Shimei says to David, 'Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me;' that is, 'Do not charge upon me that sin which I committed, so as to put me to death for it, which thou mightest justly do.' And Stephen prays, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;'f that is, impute it not to them, or inflict not the punishment on them which it deserves. No one can deny that what is done by a person himself may be placed to his own account; so that he may be rewarded or punished for it, or that it may be approved or disapproved. This, however, is not the sense in which we understand imputation, when speaking concerning the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us; for this supposes that what was done by another is placed to our account. This is the main thing which is denied by those who have other sentiments of the doctrine we are maintaining. They pretend that, for God to account Christ's righteousness ours, is to take a wrong estimate of things, to reckon that done by us which

was not. This, they say, is contrary to the wisdom of God, who can, by no means, entertain any false ideas of things; and they add, that, if the action be reckoned ours, the character of the person performing it must also be applied to us,—which is to make us sharers in Christ's mediatorial office and glory. But this is the most perverse sense which can be put on the words, and a setting of this doctrine in such a light as no one takes it in who pleads for it. We do not suppose that God looks upon man with his all-seeing eye, as having done that which Christ did, or as sustaining the character which belonged to him in doing it. We are always reckoned by him as offenders, or as contracting guilt, and unable to do any thing which can make an atonement for it. Hence, what interest soever we have in what Christ did, is not reputed our action. God's imputing Christ's righteousness to us, is to be understood in a forensic sense; which is agreeable to the idea of a debt being paid by a surety. It is not supposed that the debtor paid the debt which the surety paid; yet the payment of it is placed to his account, or imputed to him as really as if he had made it himself. So what Christ did and suffered in our room and stead, is as much placed to our account as if we had done and suffered it ourselves; so that we are, in consequence, discharged from condemnation.

This is the sense in which we understand the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us; and it is agreeable to the account we have in scripture. Thus we are said to be 'made the righteousness of God in him;' that is, the abstract being put for the concrete, we are denominated and dealt with as righteous persons, acquitted and discharged from condemnation in virtue of what was done by him. Elsewhere, also, he is styled 'the Lord our righteousness.' The apostle, too, speaks of his 'having Christ's righteousness;' that is, having it imputed to him, or having an interest in it, or being dealt with according to the tenor of it. In this respect, he opposes it to that

righteousness which was in himself as the result of his own performances. Again, Christ is said to be 'made of God unto us righteousness;' that is, his fulfilling the law is placed to our account. Further, the apostle speaks of 'Christ being the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;'i which is the same as what he asserts in other words elsewhere, concerning 'the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us,' who could not be justified by our own obedience to it, 'in that it was weak through the flesh,' or by reason of our fallen state. Christ, therefore, performed obedience for us, and accordingly God deals with us as if we had fulfilled the law in our own persons, inasmuch as it was fulfilled by him as our surety.—This may farther be illustrated, by what we generally understand by Adam's sin being imputed to us, as one contrary may illustrate another. As sin and death entered into the world by 'the offence of one,' namely, the first Adam, 'in whom all have sinned; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift,'l that is, eternal life, 'came upon all men,' namely, those who shall be saved, 'unto justification of life.' For this reason the apostle speaks of Adam as 'the figure of him that was to come.' Now, as Adam's sin was imputed to us as our public head and representative, so that we are involved in the guilt of it, or fall in him; so Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, as he was our public head and surety. Accordingly, in the eye of the law, that which was done by him was the same as if it had been done by us; so that, as the effect and consequence of it, we are justified. This is what we call Christ's righteousness being imputed to us, or placed to our account; and it is very agreeable to the acceptation of the word, in dealings between man and man. When one has contracted a debt, and desires that it may be placed to the account of his surety, who undertakes for the payment of it, it is said to be imputed to him; and the debtor's consequent discharge is as valid as if he had paid it in his own person.

Justification an Act of God's Free Grace

We shall now consider justification as an act of God's free grace. This point is particularly insisted on in one of the Answers we are explaining. We are not to suppose, however, that our being justified by an act of grace, is opposed to our being justified on account of a full satisfaction made by our surety to the justice of God; in which respect we consider our discharge from condemnation as an act of justice. The debtor is, indeed, beholden to the grace of God for this privilege; but the surety who paid the debt, had not the least abatement made, but was obliged to glorify the justice of God to the utmost, which accordingly he did. Yet, there are several things in which the grace of God is eminently displayed.

1. It is displayed in God's willingness to accept satisfaction from the hands of our surety. He might have demanded the satisfaction of ourselves. The debt which we had contracted was not of the same nature with pecuniary debts; in which case the creditor is obliged to accept payment, though the offer of it is made by another and not by him who contracted the debt. But, in debts of obedience to be performed or of punishment to be endured, he to whom satisfaction is to be given, must of his free choice accept one to be substituted in the room of him from whom the obedience or sufferings were originally due, otherwise the overture made, or what is done and suffered by the substitute, is not regarded, or available to procure a discharge for him in whose room he substituted himself. God might have exacted the debt of us, in our own persons; and then our condition would have been equally miserable with that of fallen angels, for whom no mediator was accepted, no more than provided.

2. The grace of God farther appears in having provided a surety for us. We could not have provided a surety for ourselves, nor have

engaged Him to be so who was the only person that could bring about the great work of our redemption. The only creatures who are capable of performing perfect obedience are the holy angels. These, however, could not be our surety; for, as was formerly observed, whoever performs it must be incarnate, that he may be capable of paying, in some respects in kind, the debt which was due from us. He requires, therefore, to suffer death, and consequently to have a nature which is capable of dying. But this the angels had not, and could not have, but by the divine will. Besides, if God should have dispensed with that part of satisfaction which consists in subjection to death, and have declared that active obedience should be sufficient to procure our justification, the angels, though capable of performing active obedience, would, notwithstanding, have been defective in it; so that justice could not, in honour, have accepted it, any more than it could have dispensed with the obligation to perform obedience in general. It would not have been of infinite value; and it is the value of things which justice regards, and not merely the matter or perfection of them in other respects. Hence, the obedience must have had in it something infinitely valuable, else it could not have been accepted by God, as a price of redemption, in order to the procuring of our justification; and such an obedience could be performed by none but our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious author and procurer of this privilege.

It was impossible for man to have found out this Mediator or surety. The appointment of him had its origin with God, and not with us. It is he who found a ransom, and laid help upon one that is mighty. This was the result of his will. Hence, our Saviour is represented as saying, 'Lo, I come to do thy will.' That we could not, by any means, have found out this surety, or engaged him to have done that for us which was necessary for our justification, will evidently appear if we consider that, when man fell, the Son of God was not incarnate. Even

if we allow that fallen man had some idea of a trinity of persons, in the unity of the divine essence,—and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he had, since it was necessary that this doctrine should be revealed to him in order to his performing acceptable worship; yet, can any one suppose that man could have asked such a, favour of a divine person, as to take his nature, and put himself in his room and stead, and expose himself to the curse of that law which he had violated? Such a thing could never have entered into his heart; yea, the very thought, if it had taken its rise from him, would have savoured of more presumption than had he entreated that God would pardon his sin without a satisfaction. 'But if he had supposed it possible for the Son of God to be incarnate, or had conjectured that there had been the least probability of his being willing to express this instance of condescending goodness, how could he have known that God would accept the payment of our debt at the hands of another, or commend his love to us who were such enemies to him, in not sparing him but delivering him up for us? If God's accepting a satisfaction, as well as the perfection or infinite value of it, be necessary in order to its taking effect; it is certain, man could not have known that he would have done it, for this was a matter of pure revelation. Moreover, should we suppose even this possible, or that man might have expected that God would be moved by entreaty to appoint and accept the satisfaction; yet such was the corruption, perverseness, and rebellion of man's nature as fallen, and so great was his inability to perform any act of worship, that he could not have addressed himself to God in a right manner, to entreat that he would admit of a surety. Besides, God cannot hear any prayer but that which is offered to him by faith; which supposes a Mediator, whose purchase and gift it is. Now, as the sinful creature could not plead with God by faith that he would send his Son to be a Mediator, how could he hope to obtain this blessing? It evidently follows, then, that, as man could not give satisfaction for himself, so he could not

find out any one who could or would give it for him. Hence, the grace of God, in the provision which he has made of such a surety as his own Son, unasked for, unthought of, as well as undeserved, is very illustrious.

3. It was a very great display of grace in our Saviour, that he was pleased to consent to perform this work for us. Without his consent the justice of God could not have exacted the debt of him. He being perfectly innocent, could not be obliged to suffer punishment; and it would have been unjust in God to have inflicted it, had he not been willing to be charged with our guilt, and to stand in our room and stead. Though, too, he knew beforehand all the difficulties, sorrows, and temptations which he was to meet with in the discharge of this work, he was not discouraged from undertaking it. Nor was he unapprized of the character of those for whom he undertook it. He knew their rebellion and the guilt contracted by it, which rendered satisfaction necessary in order to their salvation. He knew also that they would, notwithstanding all the engagements he might lay on them to the contrary, discover the greatest ingratitude toward him; that, instead of improving so great a display of condescending goodness, they would neglect the great salvation when purchased by him; and that, in consequence, they would appear to be his greatest enemies, notwithstanding his friendship to them, unless he engaged not only to purchase redemption for them, but to apply it to them, and to work those graces in them whereby they might be enabled to give him the glory which is due to him for his great undertaking.

We are next led to consider the use of faith in justification, and how, notwithstanding what has been said concerning our being justified by Christ's righteousness, we may, in other respects, be said to be justified by faith; and also to show what this faith is, whereby we are

justified. These subjects being particularly insisted on in the two following Answers, we proceed to consider them.

THE CONNECTION OF FAITH WITH JUSTIFICATION

QUESTION LXXII. What is justifying Faith?

ANSWER. Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself, and all other creatures, to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.

QUESTION LXXIII. How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?

ANSWER. Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God; not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it; nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument, by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness.

As the latter of these Answers, in which faith is considered as that whereby a sinner is justified, seems better connected with what has been before insisted on in explaining the doctrine of justification, we choose to discuss it before discussing the former. In considering the

account which it gives of justifying faith, there are two things which may be taken notice of. First, it is observed that, though there are other graces which always accompany faith and the good works which flow from it, none of these are said to justify a sinner in the sight of God. Next, we have a statement of how faith justifies, or what it is to be justified by faith.

Other Graces than Faith do not Justify

We observe, then, that though there are other graces which always accompany faith and the good works which flow from it, none of these are said to justify a sinner in the sight of God. There is an inseparable connection between faith and all other graces; and, though it is distinguished, it is never separate from them. They are all considered as 'fruits of the Spirit.' The apostle reckons up several graces which are connected with faith and proceed from the same Spirit, such as 'love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance.' The same apostle commends the church at Thessalonica for their 'work of faith;' and considers this as connected with a 'labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.' The apostle Peter exhorts the church to which he writes to 'add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity;'q which supposes that all these graces ought to be connected together. The apostle James calls that a 'dead faith' which has not other works or graces joined with it. Indeed, these graces not only are connected with it, but flow from it, or are the fruits of it. Thus we read of 'the heart being purified by faith;'s that is, this grace, when exercised in a right manner, will have a tendency, in some degree, to purge the soul from that moral impurity which proceeds out of the heart of man, and is inconsistent with saving faith. Elsewhere, also, we read of faith

as 'working by love,' that is, exciting those acts of love, both to God and man, which contain a summary of practical religion. It is likewise said to 'overcome the world;'u and it enables Christians to do or suffer great things for Christ's sake, of which the apostle gives various instances in the Old Testament saints. But notwithstanding the connection of other graces with faith, and with those works which flow from it, we are never said in scripture to be justified by these graces,—not by love to God, nor by any acts of obedience to him, which can be called no other than works. On the contrary, when the apostle speaks of our justification by faith, he puts it in opposition to works. 'A man,' says he, 'is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.'y

It is objected that the apostle here speaks concerning the ceremonial law, which he excludes from being the matter of our justification; and not the moral law, or any evangelical duty, such as love and sincere obedience, which, together with faith, is the matter of our justification. We reply that, when the apostle speaks of our justification by faith, without the deeds of the law, he does not intend the ceremonial law; for those whom he describes as justified persons are said, in a following verse, to be not Jews only, but Gentiles who were converted to the Christian faith. The former, indeed, were under a temptation to seek to be justified by the ceremonial law, and so to conclude that they had a right to eternal life because of their being distinguished from the world, by the external privileges of the covenant which they were under, many of which were contained in or signified by that law; but the Gentiles had nothing to do with it, and therefore never expected to be justified by the ceremonial law. Accordingly, when the apostle speaks of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, he cannot be supposed to intend the ceremonial law. Besides, if we look a little farther into the context, we shall find by his reasoning, that he excludes all works in general, and opposes

faith to them. He argues that we are justified in such a way as tends to exclude boasting. But he who insists on any works performed by himself as the matter of his justification, cannot do so any otherwise than in a boasting way, valuing himself, and founding his right to eternal life, upon them. We are justified therefore, not by them, but by faith; that is, we are justified in such a way that, while we lay claim to the greatest privileges from Christ, we are disposed to give him all the glory, or to renounce our own righteousness at the same time that we have recourse by faith to his righteousness for justification.

That it may farther appear that our justification by faith is opposed to justification by works, either those which accompany or those which flow from it, we may apply to this argument what was formerly suggested, in considering the matter of our justification. If we consider the demands of justice, or what it may in honour reckon a sufficient compensation for the dishonour which has been brought to the divine name by sin, or what may be deemed a satisfactory payment of the outstanding debt of perfect obedience which was due from us, or of punishment to which we were liable according to the sanction of the divine law; we may easily infer that no obedience performed by us, though including the utmost perfection which a fallen creature is capable of attaining, is a sufficient satisfaction; and if there can be no justification without satisfaction, we cannot be justified by such obedience. It is a vain thing, therefore, for persons to distinguish between works done before and after faith, as though the former only were excluded from being the matter of our justification; or to say, as some do, that we are justified not indeed by obedience to the moral law, but by our obeying the precepts which our Saviour has laid down in the gospel, such as faith, repentance, &c., which they call obedience to the gospel as a new law. Let it be observed that these evangelical duties are supposed to be performed

as the result of a divine command, which has the formal nature of a law, whether they be contained in the moral law or not; so that, when we are justified by faith in opposition to the works of the law, obedience of any kind performed by us must be excluded. This point appears farther from the nature of faith, to which justification by the works of the law is opposed. For faith is a soul-humbling grace, and includes a renouncing of all merit, or inducement taken from ourselves as a reason why God should bestow upon us the blessings we stand in need of. It trusts in Christ for righteousness, and in him alone; and therefore turns itself from any thing which may have the least tendency to eclipse his glory, as the only foundation of our justification. Hence, when we are said to be justified by faith, and not by the works of the law, the meaning is, that we are justified in such a way as tends to set the crown upon Christ's head, acknowledging him to be the only fountain whence this privilege is derived.

From what has been said, it follows that our justification cannot be founded on our repentance. That it is founded on repentance, is often maintained by those who are on the other side of the question. They suppose that justification contains nothing else but forgiveness of sin; and that, if offences are to be forgiven by men upon their repentance or confessing their fault, then forgiveness may be expected from God on our repentance. Some use a very unsavoury way of speaking, when they say that our tears have a virtue to wash away our sins. That they may gain farther countenance to their opinions, they refer to the scripture in which it is said, 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out;' and to other scriptures of a similar nature. We are not to suppose, however, that, in the text just quoted, the apostle means that forgiveness of sin is founded on our repentance, as the matter of our justification in the sight of God; but we are to understand him as teaching that there is an inseparable connection between our claim to forgiveness of sin, together with all

the fruits and effects of the death of Christ whereby this blessing was procured, and repentance,—so that the one is not to be expected without the other. While men are to forgive injuries when the offender acknowledges his fault and makes sufficient restitution, they may do so as far as the offence is committed only against a creature,—especially if the offence be of a private nature. But in juridical and forensic cases, will any one say that the prince is obliged to forgive the criminal who is under a sentence of condemnation, because he is sorry for what he has done, or confesses his fault? Would his doing so secure his honour as a lawgiver? And if, upon his pardoning the offender, the latter were to be discharged from his guilt, would there not be a defect in the administration of the legislature? How, then, can the principle of pardoning on the ground of repentance be applied to forgiveness as expected at the hand of God? Here justice as well as mercy is to have the glory which is due to it; and we are to be not only acquitted, but justified, or pronounced guiltless. How, then, can forgiveness be expected, when our acknowledgment of our offence cannot be reckoned a sufficient satisfaction to the justice of God?

It is objected by those on the other side of the question, that, though repentance be not in itself a sufficient compensation to the justice of God, for the crimes which we have committed; yet God may, by an act of grace, accept it as if it had been sufficient. This they illustrate by a similitude taken from a person's selling an estate of a considerable value, to one who has no money to buy it, provided he will pay a peppercorn of acknowledgment. Thus, say they, how insignificant soever repentance, or any other grace which is deemed the matter of our justification, be in itself, it is by an act of favour, deemed a sufficient price. Now, I would observe, that the objection which was formerly brought against the doctrine we have been maintaining, concerning the imputation of Christ's righteousness,

namely, that it is a putative righteousness, a not judging of things according to truth, and the like, seems to be of no weight when it affects their own cause; otherwise we might turn their argument against themselves, and ask them whether it be for God to judge according to truth, when that is accepted as a sufficient payment, by his justice, which is in itself of no value? But passing this by, we may farther observe that their supposition wholly sets aside the necessity of satisfaction, as the Socinians do; so that it is no wonder that the latter make use of the supposition. As for others who do not altogether deny the doctrine of satisfaction, yet think that a small price may be deemed satisfactory for sin committed, it may be replied to them, that if justification, as tending to advance the glory of divine justice in taking away the guilt of sin, depends upon a price paid which is equivalent to the debt contracted, and if nothing short of a price of infinite value can be reckoned such an equivalent, then certainly that which is performed by men cannot be deemed a sufficient payment, or accepted as such. It is a vain thing for persons to pretend that there is a difference between satisfying God, and satisfying his justice, or that to satisfy God is to pay a price which he demands, be it never so small, while satisfying justice is paying a price equal to the thing purchased; for we must conclude that God cannot deem any thing satisfactory to himself, which is not so to his justice. This distinction, therefore, will not avail to free their argument from the absurdity which attends it.

We might here observe, that as some speak of pardon of sin being founded on our repentance, others speak of our justification being by the act of faith, or by faith considered as a work. In defending justification by works, as if, contrary to what has been already proved, it were not opposed to justification by faith, they argue that we are often said in scripture to be justified by faith, that faith is a work, and that, therefore, it cannot be denied that we are justified by

works. But it is one thing to say, that we are justified by faith, that is, a work, and another thing to say, that we are justified by it as a work; or, it is one thing to say, that we are justified for our faith, and another thing to say, that we are justified by it. This will more evidently appear under the following Head.

How Faith Justifies

We therefore proceed to consider what it is for us to be justified by faith, or how faith justifies. None can, with the least shadow of reason, deny that justification by faith is a scripture mode of speaking. Some, indeed, have questioned whether the apostle's words, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' give countenance to the doctrine of justification by faith; for they observe that, by putting a stop immediately after the word justified, the sense would be, that they who are justified by Christ's righteousness, have peace with God by faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ. But though this will a little alter the reading of the text; it will not overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith as contained in it. For if we understand our 'having peace with God,' as importing, not merely peace of conscience, but that peace which they have a right to who are interested in Christ's righteousness, it will follow that to have this peace by faith, is, in effect, the same as to be justified by faith. This farther appears from the following words, 'By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.' The 'grace wherein we stand' is that grace which is the foundation of our justification, and not merely peace of conscience. When, therefore, we have access by faith into this grace, it is the same as for us to be justified by faith.—Moreover, this is not the only place in which we are said to be justified by faith. The apostle says elsewhere, 'We are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ,' or, by faith in Jesus Christ. Again, he says, 'The just shall live by faith;' which, agreeably

to the context, must be understood of their being justified by faith; in which sense he particularly explains the words elsewhere.d In another place he speaks of 'the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ;' and also of a believer's 'waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith.'f We must, therefore, not deny that justification is by faith; but rather explain the sense of those scriptures which establish this doctrine, agreeably to the mind of the Holy Ghost in them.

There are various methods taken to explain the doctrine of justification by faith; particularly one which we think subversive of justification by Christ's righteousness; and another, that which is contained in the Answer which we are explaining.

1. As to the former of these, namely, that which is inconsistent with the doctrine of justification by Christ's righteousness, it is maintained by those who plead for justification by works. They say that we are justified by faith and all other graces; and these they call the conditions of our justification in the sight of God. Indeed, to be justified by faith, according to them, is little other than to be justified for faith. Whether they reckon it a meritorious condition or not, they must own it to be a pleadable condition, otherwise it would have no reference to justification; and if it be understood in this sense, our justification depends as much upon it as if it had been meritorious. This is the account which some give of justification. To prepare the way for their opinion, they suppose that the terms of salvation in the gospel, which are substituted for those which were required under the first covenant made with Adam, are faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, instead of perfect; that God, in justifying a penitent, believing sinner, pursuant to the performance of those conditions, declares his willingness that there should be a relaxation of that law which man was at first obliged to obey; and, accordingly,

that sincerity is demanded by him instead of perfection, or is substituted in the room of it. This some of them call the new law, and others a remedial law. Hence, according to their opinion, instead of being justified by Christ's yielding perfect obedience, or paying the outstanding debt which we were obliged, by reason of the violation of the first covenant, to pay; we are to be justified by our own imperfect obedience. What may be objected to this reasoning, is, that it is inconsistent with the holiness of the divine nature, and the glory of the justice of God, detracts from the honour of his law, and is, in effect, to maintain that we are justified without satisfaction given. For though the alleged terms of our justification and acceptance in the sight of God may be falsely styled a valuable consideration; yet none will pretend to assert that they are an infinite price; and nothing short of such a price, which is no other than Christ's righteousness, is sufficient to answer the end of satisfaction. I am sensible that they who lay down this plan of justification allege in defence of it, that, though the terms of acceptance are of small value in themselves, yet God, by an act of grace, reckons the payment of a small debt equivalent to that of a greater, as was formerly observed. They also speak of faith and repentance as having a value set upon them by their reference to the blood of Christ, who merited the privilege for us of our being justified in such a way, or upon these conditions performed. They call them indeed easier terms or conditions, and include them all in the general word sincerity, instead of perfection. Yet they are somewhat divided in their method of explaining themselves. Some suppose these conditions to be wholly in our own power, without the aids of divine grace, as much as perfect obedience was in the power of our first parents. Others, though they do not suppose that these conditions are altogether out of our own power, ascribe a little more to the grace of God, according as they explain the doctrine of effectual calling; and they so far lay a foundation for the sinner's glorying, as to suppose that our right to

justification and eternal life are founded on performing the conditions.

I cannot but think that this method of explaining the doctrine of justification is subversive of the gospel; and that it is highly derogatory to the glory of God to assert that he can dispense with the demand of perfect obedience, and justify a person on easier terms. To say this is little better than what the apostle calls 'making void the law.' This, says he, we are far from doing 'by faith,' or by our asserting the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness; 'but we rather establish it' hereby. Moreover, to say that God sets such a value on our performing these conditions of the new covenant that they are deemed equivalent to Christ's performing perfect obedience for us, reflects on his glory, as set forth to be a propitiation for sin to declare God's righteousness in the remission of it, and detracts from the obligation which we are laid under to him for what he did and suffered in our behalf for our justification.—Again, to assert that God sets this value on our performances pursuant to Christ's merit, or that they are highly esteemed by him because they are tinctured with his blood, is contrary to the design of Christ's death. For that design was, not that such an estimate might be set on what is done by us, but rather that the iniquities which attend our best performances may be forgiven,—that, though, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, we may be made accepted in the Beloved,—and that, having no justifying righteousness of our own, we may be justified by that which he hath wrought out for us, and glory in it.—As to the supposition that faith, repentance, and new obedience are not only conditions of justification, but conditions easy to be performed, it plainly discovers that they who maintain it, either think too lightly of man's impotency and aversion to what is good, and of his alienation from the life of God, or are strangers to their own hearts, and not duly sensible that

it is God that works in his people both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.—The only thing which I shall add, in opposition to the doctrine of justification by works, is, that whatever is the matter or ground of our justification in the sight of God, must be pleadable at his bar. For we cannot be justified without a plea; and if any plea taken from our own works be thought sufficient, how much soever the proud and deluded heart of man may set too great a value upon them, God will not reckon the plea valid, so as to discharge us from guilt, and give us on account of it a right and title to eternal life.

2. We now proceed to consider the method taken in the Answer before us, to explain the doctrine of justification by faith. This method, we think, is agreeable to the divine perfections, and contains a true state of the doctrine in question. We formerly considered justification as a forensic act, that we might understand what is meant by our sins being imputed to Christ our head and surety, and his righteousness imputed to us, or placed to our account. And we are now to speak of this righteousness as pleaded by or applied to us, as the foundation of our claim to all the blessings which were purchased by it. Here we must consider a sinner as bringing in his plea, in order to his discharge; and he does this either with the view of being declared innocent, or with the view of being justified on the ground of Christ's righteousness.

If he be charged by men or by Satan with crimes not committed, he pleads his own innocency; if charged with hypocrisy, he pleads his own sincerity. In this sense, we are to understand several expressions in scripture. When, for example, a charge of the kind mentioned was brought against Job, Satan having suggested that he did not serve God for nought, and that, if God would touch his bone and his flesh, he would curse him to his face, and his friends having often applied to him the character they give of the hypocrite, and so concluded him

to be a wicked person, he said, 'God forbid that I should justify you,' that is, that I should acknowledge your charge to be just. 'Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live;' that is, 'I never will own what you insinuate, that my heart is not right with God.' David, also, when complaining of the ill treatment which he met with from his enemies and persecutors, who desired not only to 'tread down his life upon the earth,' but to 'lay his honour in the dust,' to murder his name as well as his person, prays, 'Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.' What could he plead against malicious and false insinuations, but his righteousness or his integrity? Elsewhere, also, when he says, 'The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me; for I have kept the ways of the Lord; his judgments were before me; I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity,'k his words are nothing else but an intimation that, how much soever he might be charged with the contrary vices, he was, as regarded them, innocent. Though God did not justify him at his tribunal for his personal righteousness; yet, in the course of his providence, he seemed so far to approve his plea, that, whatever the world thought of him, he plainly dealt with him as one who was highly favoured by him, or as one whom, by his dealings with him, he evidently distinguished from those whose hearts were not right with him. It is true, some who plead for justification by our own righteousness, allege these scriptures as a proof of it; but they do not distinguish between the justification of our persons in the sight of God, and the justification of our righteous cause, or between our being justified when accused at God's tribunal, and our being justified or vindicated from those charges which are brought against us at man's.

When a person stands at God's tribunal, as we must suppose the sinner to do, when bringing in his plea for justification in his sight, he has nothing to plead but Christ's righteousness; and faith is the grace which pleads it. On this account, we are said to be justified by faith, or in a way of believing. Faith does not justify by presenting or pleading itself, or any other grace which accompanies or flows from it, as the cause why God should forgive sin, or give us a right to eternal life; for no grace has a sufficient worth or excellency to procure these blessings. When we are said to be justified by faith, it is by faith as apprehending, pleading, or laying hold on Christ's righteousness. This gives occasion to divines to call it the instrument of our justification. Christ's righteousness is the thing claimed or apprehended; and faith is that by which it is claimed or apprehended. Agreeably to the idea of an instrument, we are said to be justified, not for faith, but by it. Christ's righteousness is that which procures a discharge from condemnation for all for whom it was wrought out; and faith is the hand which receives it, whereby a person has a right to conclude that it was wrought out for him. Christ's righteousness is that which has a tendency to enrich and adorn the soul; and faith is the hand which receives it, whereby it becomes ours in a way of fiducial application. As the righteousness of Christ is compared, in scripture, to a glorious robe which renders the soul beautiful, or is its highest and chief ornament; so it is by faith that this robe is put on. Thus its beauty, as the prophet says, is rendered 'perfect through his comeliness, which is put upon him.' Hence, Christ's righteousness justifies, as it is the cause of our discharge; faith justifies as the instrument which applies this discharge to us. Accordingly, when it is said, 'The just shall live by faith,' faith is considered as that which seeks and finds life in him. The effect is, by a metonymy, applied to the instrument; as when the husbandman is said to live or be maintained by his plough, and the artist to live by his hands, or the beggar by his empty hand which

receives the donative. If a person were in a dungeon, as the prophet Jeremiah was, and a rope were let down to draw him out, his laying hold on it is the instrument, but the hand which draws him out is the principal cause of his release. Or, that we may make use of a similitude which more directly illustrates the doctrine we are maintaining, suppose a condemned malefactor had a pardon procured for him, which gives him a right to liberty or a discharge from the place of his confinement, this pardon must be pleaded, and his claim be rendered visible; and afterwards he is no longer deemed a guilty person, but discharged, in open court, from the sentence which he was under. Thus, Christ procures forgiveness by his blood; the gospel holds it forth, and describes those who have a right to claim it as believers; faith pleads it, and claims it as belonging to him in particular; and hence arises a visible discharge from condemnation, and a right to claim the benefits which attend it. If we understand justification by faith in this sense, we do not attribute too much to faith, on the one hand, nor too little to Christ's righteousness on the other. [See Note I, page 121.]

We choose to call faith an instrument rather than a condition of our justification, as we are sensible that the word 'condition' is generally used to signify that for the sake of which a benefit is conferred, rather than the instrument by which it is applied. Not but that the word may be explained in such a way as is consistent with the doctrine of justification by faith. We do not deny that faith is the condition of our claim to Christ's righteousness; or that it is God's ordinance without which we have no ground to conclude our interest in it. We must distinguish between its being a condition of forgiveness, and its being a condition of our visible and apparent right to forgiveness. This privilege cannot be said to belong to us, unless we receive it; nor can we conclude that we have an interest in Christ's redemption, any more than they for whom he did not lay down his life, but by this

medium. We must first consider Christ's righteousness as wrought out for all those who were given him by the Father; and then consider faith as that which gives us ground to conclude that the privilege belongs in particular to us. This account of the use of faith in justification, we cannot but think sufficient to obviate the most material ojections which are brought against our way of maintaining the doctrine of justification, namely, by Christ's righteousness, in one respect, and by faith in another. It is an injurious suggestion to suppose that we deny the necessity of faith in any sense, or to conclude that we may lay claim to justification without it; for we strenuously assert, on the one hand, the necessity of Christ's righteousness being wrought out for us, and of forgiveness being thereby procured,—and, on the other hand, the necessity of our receiving it. Each of these points is true in its respective place. Christ must have the glory which is due to him; and faith the work or office which belongs to it.

We have thus considered Christ's righteousness as applied by faith. It may be observed, also, that there is one scripture in which it is said to be 'imputed by faith.' The apostle Paul, when speaking concerning Abraham's justification by faith in this righteousness, says, 'It was imputed to him for righteousness;' and adds, that 'it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe.' In this scripture, I conceive, imputation is taken for application. Accordingly, the meaning is, the righteousness of Christ is so imputed that we have ground to place it to our own account, if we believe. This is the same as applying it by faith. It must be allowed, indeed, that while the apostle speaks elsewhere of 'faith being counted for righteousness;'n there is a great deal of difficulty in the mode of expression. If we assert that the act of believing is imputed for righteousness, as they do who establish the doctrine of justification by works, or by faith as a work, we

overthrow what we have been maintaining. If, on the other hand, we understand faith for the object of faith, namely, what was wrought out by Christ, which faith is conversant about, and conclude, as I conceive we ought to do, that this is imputed for righteousness, we are supposed by some to deviate too much from the common sense of words. But if there be such a figurative way of speaking used in other scriptures, why may we not suppose that it is used in the text under consideration? If other graces are sometimes taken for the object of them, why may not faith be taken, by a metonymy, for its object? Thus the apostle calls those to whom he writes, 'his joy,' that is, the object or matter of his joy. In the book of Canticles, the church calls Christ 'her love,'p that is, the object of her love. Hope also is plainly taken for the object of it, when the apostle says, 'Hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' He here plainly intends that whatever is the object of hope, cannot be in our present possession. Christ, moreover, is styled, 'the blessed hope,'r that is, the person whose appearance we hope for. Jacob, too, speaks of God as 'the fear of his father Isaac,' that is, the person whom he worshipped with reverential fear. Now, in all these cases the phraseology is equally difficult with that of the text under consideration.

Inferences from the Doctrine of Justification

We have thus spoken concerning Christ's righteousness as wrought out for us, and applied by faith. This doctrine is the foundation of all our peace and comfort, both in life and in death; and cannot but be reckoned a doctrine of the highest importance. We shall now consider some things which may be inferred from it.

1. From what has been said concerning justification, as founded in Christ's suretiship-righteousness, wrought out for us by what was

done and suffered by him in his human nature, and having infinite value as depending on the glory of the divine nature to which the human is united, we cannot but infer the absurdity of two contrary opinions, namely, that of those who have asserted that we are justified by the essential righteousness of Christ as God, and that of others who pretend that, because all mediatorial acts are performed by Christ only as man, the infinite dignity of the divine nature has no reference to their being satisfactory to divine justice. This is what they mean when they say that we are justified by Christ's righteousness as man, in opposition to our being justified by his essential righteousness as God.'u I think, however, that the truth lies in a medium between these extremes. On the one hand, we must suppose that Christ's engagement to become a surety for us, to stand in our room and stead, and to pay the debt which we had contracted to the justice of God, could not be done in any other than the human nature; for the divine nature is not capable of being under a law, of fulfilling it, or, in any instance, of obeying or suffering; so that we cannot be justified by Christ's essential righteousness, as God. On the other hand, what Christ did and suffered as man, would not have been sufficient for our justification, had it not had an infinite value put upon it, arising from the union of the nature which suffered with the divine nature, agreeably to the apostle's expression, 'The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.'

2. From what has been said concerning the fruits and effects of justification, that our sins are pardoned and we made accepted in the Beloved, we infer that it is not only an unscriptural way of speaking, but has a tendency to overthrow the doctrine we are maintaining, to assert, as some do, that God is only rendered reconcilable by what was done and suffered by Christ. This seems to be maintained by different parties with different views. Some speak of God's being rendered reconcilable by Christ's righteousness, that they may make

way for what they have farther to advance, namely, that God's being reconciled to a sinner is the result of his own repentance, or the amendment of his life, whereby he makes his peace with him. This is to make repentance or reformation the matter of our justification, and to substitute it for Christ's righteousness. They, therefore, who speak of God's being made reconcilable in this sense by his blood, are so far from giving a true account of the doctrine of justification, that, in reality, they overthrow it.—But there are others who speak of God's being reconcilable as the consequence of Christ's satisfaction, that they may not be thought to assert that God is actually reconciled by the blood of Christ, to those who are in an unconverted state,—a state which is inconsistent with a state of reconciliation. They hence use this mode of expression, lest they should be thought to give countenance to the doctrine of actual justification before faith. But certainly we are under no necessity of advancing one absurdity to avoid another. Let it be here considered, therefore, that the scripture speaks expressly of God's being reconciled by the death of Christ. He is said, as a God of peace, to have 'brought him again from the dead.' Elsewhere the apostle speaks not of God becoming reconcilable to us, but of his 'having reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.'z Again, he says, 'If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved,' that is, shall obtain the saving effects of this reconciliation, 'by his life.' Again, 'Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself. And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight.'b Here he describes those who were reconciled as once enemies; and speaks of their reconciliation as having been procured by the death of Christ, and of holiness here and salvation hereafter as the consequence. What he speaks of, therefore, is such a reconciliation as

is contained in our justification.—But though this appears very agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost in scripture, it must be understood in consistency with those scriptures which represent persons in an unconverted state as 'children of wrath,' and as being 'hateful,'d that is, not only deserving to be hated by God, but actually hated, as appears by the many threatenings which are denounced against them, and by their being in a condemned state. We must understand the doctrine of reconciliation consistently with what the scriptures say respecting such persons, that we may not give countenance to the doctrine of some who, not distinguishing between God's secret and revealed will, maintain that we are not only virtually but actually justified before we believe; as though we had a right to claim Christ's righteousness before we have any ground to conclude that it was wrought out for us. But what has been already suggested concerning justification by faith, will, I think, sufficiently remove this difficulty.—The only thing which remains to be explained is, how God may be said to be reconciled by the blood of Christ, to a person who is in an unconverted state, and as such, is represented as a child of wrath. Now so long as a person is an unbeliever, he has no ground to conclude, according to the tenor of God's revealed will, that he is reconciled to him, or that he is any other than a child of wrath. Yet, when we speak of God's being reconciled to his elect, according to the tenor of his secret will, before they believe, we in effect say that justification, as it is an immanent act in God, is antecedent to faith,—which is a certain truth, inasmuch as faith is a fruit and consequence; and we add, that God does not declare that he is reconciled to us, or give us ground to conclude that he is, so as to make it appear that we are no longer the children of wrath, till we believe. If this be duly considered, we have no reason to assert that God is reconcilable rather than reconciled by the death of Christ, lest we should be thought to maintain the doctrine of justification, or deliverance from wrath, as a declared act, before we

believe. We may add that God was reconcilable to his elect, that is, willing to be reconciled to them, before Christ died for them; otherwise he would never have sent him into the world to make reconciliation for the sins of his people. He was reconcilable, and therefore designed to turn from the fierceness of his wrath; and, in order to this, he appointed Christ to make satisfaction for sin, and procure peace for them.

3. There is not the least inconsistency between those scriptures which speak of justification as an act of God's free grace, and others which speak of it as by faith founded on Christ's righteousness; or between God's pardoning sin freely, without regard to any thing done by us to procure it, and his insisting on and receiving a full satisfaction, as the meritorious and procuring cause of it. It is sometimes objected against what we have advanced in explaining the doctrine we maintain, that it represents justification, as, in some respects, an act of justice, and in others an act of grace; as though the doctrine were inconsistent with itself, and our method of explaining it were liable to an absurdity; or as though two contradictory propositions could be both true, namely, that justification is an act of the strictest justice, without any abatement of the debt demanded, and yet an act of free grace, without insisting on the payment of the debt. But this seeming contradiction may be easily reconciled. For the debt was not paid by us in our own persons. Had this been done, it would have been inconsistent with forgiveness being an act of grace. But the debt was paid by our surety; and as paid by him, there was no abatement of it. He did not receive a discharge by an act of grace, but was justified as our head or surety, by his own righteousness, or works performed by him; while we are justified by his suretiship-righteousness, without works performed by us. Moreover, as was formerly observed, this surety was provided for us. Hence when we speak of justification as an act of grace, we

distinguish between the justification of our surety, after he had given full satisfaction for the debt which we had contracted; and the payment being placed to our account by God's gracious imputation of it to us, and our consequently obtaining forgiveness, which can be no other than an act of the highest grace.

4. From what has been said concerning justification by faith, we infer the method, order, and time in which God justifies his people. There are some who speak of justification, not only before faith, but from eternity; and consider it as an immanent act in God in the same sense as election is said to be. I will not deny eternal justification, provided it be considered as contained in God's secret will, and not made the rule by which we are to determine ourselves to be in a justified state, and as such to have a right and title to eternal life, before it is revealed or apprehended by faith. If we understand it in this sense, it is beyond dispute that justification is not by faith. But as the most known, yea, the only sense in which justification is spoken of, as applied to particular persons, is, that it is by faith, we must suppose that it is a declared act. That which is hid in God, and not declared, cannot be said to be applied; and that which is not applied cannot be the rule by which particular persons may judge of their state. Thus, to speak of eternal election, and say that God has peremptorily determined the state of those who shall be saved so that they shall not perish, is nothing to particular persons, unless they have ground to conclude themselves elected. So if we say that God has, from all eternity, given his elect into Christ's hands; that he undertook before the foundation of the world to redeem them; and that, in consequence, God promised that he would give eternal life unto them; or, if we consider Christ as having fulfilled what he undertook from all eternity, finished transgression, brought in everlasting righteousness, and fully paid the debt which he undertook; consider him as being discharged, and receiving an

acquittance, when raised from the dead; and all this as done in the name of the elect, as their head and representative; and if we farther consider them, in terms of an expression often used, as virtually justified in him; all this is nothing to them, with respect to their peace and comfort; they have no more a right to claim an interest in the privilege or relation of being justified persons than if he had not paid a price for them. We suppose, therefore, that justification, as it is the foundation of our claim to eternal life, is a declared act. Now, if justification be a declared act, there must be some method which God uses, whereby he declares it or makes it known. Yet it is certain that he nowhere in scripture tells an unbeliever that he has an interest in Christ's righteousness, or that his sins are pardoned, or gives him any warrant to take comfort from any such conclusion. On the contrary, such an one has no ground to conclude otherwise concerning himself than that he is a child of wrath; for he is to judge of things according to the tenor of God's revealed will. Christ's righteousness is nothing to him in point of application. He is guilty of bold presumption if he lays claim to it, or takes comfort from it; as much so as he would be were he to say, 'Some are elected, therefore I am.' When a person believes, however, he has a right to conclude that he is justified, or to claim all the privileges which result from justification. This is what we call justification by faith; which, therefore, cannot be before faith. That which gives a person a right to claim a privilege, must be antecedent to this claim; or, that which is the foundation of a person's concluding himself to be justified, must be antecedent to his making this conclusion. Hence, all who duly consider what they affirm, must conclude that justification is not before faith.

5. From what has been said concerning the office or use of faith in justification, as an instrument which applies Christ's righteousness to ourselves, we infer that it is more than an evidence of our

justification. We do not indeed deny it to be an evidence that we were virtually justified in Christ as our head and representative, when he was raised from the dead; in the same sense as it is an evidence of our eternal election. But this is equally applicable to all other graces; and therefore cannot be a true description of justifying faith. If we are justified by faith, only as it is an evidence of our right to Christ's righteousness, we are as much justified by love, patience, and submission to the divine will, or any other grace which accompanies salvation. But they who speak of faith as only an evidence, will not say that we are justified by all other graces, in the same sense as we are justified by faith. Indeed the scripture gives us no warrant so to do.

6. From what has been said concerning faith, as giving us a right to claim Christ's righteousness, we infer that a person is justified before he has what we call the faith of assurance; of which more shall be said hereafter. We hence consider the grace of faith as justifying us, or giving us a right to claim Christ's righteousness, whether we have an actual claim or not. If this were not allowed, the loss of assurance would infer the suspension or loss of our justification; and consequently would render our state as uncertain as our frames, and our peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, as liable to be lost as that peace and joy which we sometimes have in believing, and at other times are destitute of.

7. From what has been said concerning justifying faith being accompanied with all other graces, we infer that that faith which is justifying, is also a saving grace, or a grace which accompanies salvation. Yet there is this difference between saving faith, as we generally call it, and justifying faith,—the former respects Christ in all his offices, the latter considers him only in his priestly office, or as set forth to be a propitiation for sin.

The Nature, Kinds, Objects, Degrees, and Uses of Faith

We are now led to consider the grace of faith in its larger extent, with respect to both its acts and its objects, as stated in the former of the Answers we are explaining. We shall here examine the nature of faith in general, or of that faith which, as already explained, we call justifying. There are some things in this grace which are common to it with other graces. In particular, it is styled a saving grace, not as being the cause of our salvation, but as it accompanies it, or is connected with it. Again, it is said to be wrought in the heart of a sinner, to distinguish it from other habits of a lower nature, which are acquired by us. It is also said to be wrought by the Spirit and word of God,—by his Spirit, as the principal efficient, who, in order to work it in us, exerts his divine power,—and by the word, as the instrument which he makes use of. The word presents to us the object of faith; and it is God's ordinance in our attending to which he works and excites it. Moreover, there are several things supposed or contained in this grace of faith, which are common to it with other graces. When we speak of a believer, or one who has faith, being convinced of sin and misery, of his being unable to recover himself out of the lost condition in which he is by nature, and of the impossibility of his being recovered out of it by any other creature, we view faith as containing several things in common with other graces, particularly with conversion, effectual calling, and repentance unto life. These things, therefore, we shall pass over as having been considered elsewhere, and confine ourselves to what is peculiar to this grace mentioned in this Answer. Yet a few things may be observed concerning it, as it is styled a saving grace, and wrought in the heart of man by the Spirit and word of God. We shall add also some other things of which we have no particular account in this Answer, and which may contain a full explanation of this grace. In discussing the subject, we shall observe the following method. First,

we shall consider the meaning of the word 'faith,' in the more general idea of it. Secondly, we shall speak particularly concerning the various kinds of faith. Thirdly, we shall speak concerning the various objects and acts of saving faith; especially as it assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, and receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness held forth therein. Fourthly, we shall consider it as a grace which accompanies salvation, and is wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit, and instrumentality of the word. Fifthly, we shall consider it as strong or weak, increasing or declining; and also the various marks and evidences of its being in these respective states. Sixthly, we shall speak of the use of faith in the whole conduct of our lives; as every thing we do in an acceptable manner is said to be done by it. Lastly, we shall show how it is to be attained or increased, and what are the means conducive to these ends.

The General Nature of Faith

As to the meaning of the word 'faith,' in its more general idea, it is either an assent to a truth, founded on sufficient evidence, or a confiding or relying on the word or power of one who is able and willing to afford us sufficient help or relief.

1. As an assent to a truth proposed and supported by sufficient evidence, it is more especially an act of the understanding. In order to its existing, it is necessary that, as the matter of our belief, something be discovered to us which demands or calls for our assent; and this is considered either as only true, or as both true and good. If it be considered as only true, the faith or assent which is required is speculative; but if we consider it not only as true but as good, or as containing something redounding to our advantage, the faith resulting from it is practical, and is seated partly in the understanding and partly in the will, or, at least, the will is

influenced and inclined to embrace what the understanding not only assents to as true, but proposes to us as what, if enjoyed, would tend very much to our advantage.—As to this general description of faith, as an assent to what is reported, founded upon sufficient evidence, we may farther consider that it is not in our power to believe a thing, unless the judgment be convinced, and we have ground to conclude it to be true. Accordingly, there must be something which has a tendency to give conviction; and this is what we call evidence. Every thing which is reported is not to be credited; for it has very often no appearance of truth in it. Besides, it is reasonable for the understanding to demand a proof before it yields an assent. If the matter be one of report, we are to consider the nature of the evidence, whether it be sufficient or insufficient to persuade us to believe what is reported; and according to the strength or credibility of the evidence, we believe it, hesitate about it, or utterly reject it. If, according to our present view of things, it may be true or false, we hardly call it the object of faith; we can only say concerning it, that it is probable. If, on the other hand, it be attested by such evidence as cannot without scepticism be denied, there arises what we call certainty, or an assurance of faith supported by the strongest evidence.—Moreover, according to the nature of the evidence or testimony on which faith is founded, it is distinguished into human and divine. Both of these are referred to in the apostle's words, 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.'g As to human testimony, though it may not be termed false, yet it can hardly be deemed any other than fallible; for it cannot be said concerning sinful man, that it is impossible for him to lie or deceive, or to be deceived himself. But when we believe a thing on the divine testimony, our faith is infallible. It is as impossible for us to be deceived, as it is for God to impart that to us which is contrary to his infinite holiness and veracity. It is in the latter sense that we consider the word 'faith,' when we speak of it as an act of religious worship, or

as included or supposed in our idea of saving faith. Accordingly, we style it a firm assent to every thing which God has revealed as founded on the divine veracity.

Let us now consider faith as an assent to a thing, not only as true, but as good. On this account, we call it a practical assent. It is first seated in the understanding; and then the will embraces what the understanding discovers to be conducive to our happiness. We first believe the truth presented to us, and then regulate our conduct agreeably to it. When a criminal hears a report of an act of grace being issued forth by the king, he does not rest in a mere assent to its truth, but puts in his claim to it. Or when a merchant is credibly informed that there are great advantages to be obtained by trading into foreign countries, he receives the report with a design to use all proper methods to partake of the advantage. 'The kingdom of heaven,' says our Saviour, 'is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.' We have sufficient evidence to support our faith, that there is forgiveness of sin through the blood of Christ, and that all spiritual blessings are treasured up in him for the heirs of salvation. In this respect faith does not contain a mere speculative assent to the truth of these propositions; but it excites in us an endeavour to obtain the blessings in the way which is prescribed by him who is the giver of them.

2. Faith may be farther considered as an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object. This is very distinct from the former sense of the word. For though it supposes, indeed, an assent of the understanding to some truth proposed; yet this truth is of such a nature that it produces in us a resting or reliance on one who is able and has expressed a willingness to do us good, and whose promise is such as we have ground to depend on. This supposes in him who is

the subject of faith, a sense of his own weakness or indigence; and in him who is the object of it, a fitness to be the object of trust for giving relief. Thus, the sick man depends upon the skill and faithfulness of the physician, and determines to look no farther for help, but relies on his prescriptions, and uses the means which he appoints for the restoring of his health. Or when a person is assaulted by one who threatens to ruin him, and is able to do it as being an overmatch for him, he has recourse to and depends on the assistance of one who is able to secure and defend him, and thereby prevent the danger which he feared. Thus Jehoshaphat, when his country was invaded by a great multitude of foreign troops, being apprehensive that he was not able to withstand them, exercised the faith of reliance on the divine power, when he said, 'We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.' God is very often in scripture represented as the object of trust. The church says, 'I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength.'k Elsewhere, 'he that walketh in darkness and hath no light,' that is, knows not which way to turn, and is helpless and destitute of all comfort, is encouraged to 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' This is truly and properly a divine faith; and, accordingly, an act of religious worship. It is opposed to a 'trusting in man, and making flesh his arm;'m and it supposes a firm persuasion that God is able to do all for us which we stand in need of, that he has promised to do us good, and that he will never fail nor forsake those who repose their trust or confidence in him. With this view the believer relies on his perfections, seeks to him for comfort, and lays the whole stress of his hope of salvation on him, not doubting concerning the event, but concluding himself safe if he can say that 'the eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' [See Note K, page 124.]

The Various Kinds of Faith

We are now led to consider the various kinds of faith mentioned in scripture. We read of a faith which was adapted to that extraordinary dispensation of providence in which God was pleased to confirm some great and important truths by miracles. This faith is styled a faith in miracles. There is also a faith which has no reference to a supernatural event, and is not confined to any particular age or state of the church in which miracles are expected, but is founded on the gospel revelation; which, how much soever it may resemble saving faith, yet falls short of it. There is likewise a faith which is inseparably connected with salvation.

1. We shall speak first concerning the faith of miracles. This is what our Saviour intends, when he tells his disciples that, 'if they had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, they should say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it should remove; and nothing should be impossible unto them.' It is a faith which many had who were not in a state of salvation; as is plain from what our Saviour says, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'p The apostle Paul supposes that a person might have 'all faith,' that is, this kind of faith, 'so that he could remove mountains,' which is a proverbial expression, denoting that extraordinary and miraculous events might attend it; and yet, at the same time, be destitute of 'charity' or love to God, and consequently without saving grace, and so appear in the end to 'be nothing.' Some have questioned whether this faith of miracles was peculiar to the gospel dispensation in the time of our Saviour and the apostles, and so was not required in those who wrought miracles under the Old Testament dispensation. Others suppose that, from the nature of the thing, it was always necessary that faith should be exercised when a

miracle was wrought. We have little or no account, however, of this faith as exercised by those who wrought miracles before our Saviour's time; and, therefore, we cannot peremptorily determine this matter.

According to the account we have in the New Testament, there were several things necessary to or included in this faith of miracles. First, some important article of revealed religion required to be proposed for confirmation; and, in order to this, an explicit appeal was made to God, in expectation of his immediate interposition in working a miracle for that end. Everything which was the object of faith, was not, indeed, to be proved true by a miracle; but only those things which could not be sufficiently evinced without it, so as to beget a divine faith in those who were the subjects of conviction. We never read that miracles were wrought to convince the world that there was a God or a providence, or to persuade men concerning the truth of those things which might be sufficiently proved by rational arguments. But when there could not be proof given without the finger of God being rendered visible by a miracle wrought, then those who had the faith of miracles depended on such an instance of divine condescension, and the people who were to receive conviction were to expect such an extraordinary event.—Again, it was necessary that there should, in him who wrought the miracles, be a firm persuasion of the truth of the doctrine to be confirmed by it, together with an explicit appeal to it for the conviction of those whose faith was to be confirmed. Sometimes we read that, when miracles were to be wrought in favour of those who before had a sufficient proof that our Saviour was the Messiah, it was necessary that they should have a strong persuasion of this truth, and that he was able to work a miracle; otherwise they had no ground to expect that a miracle should be wrought. In the former case, we read of Christ's disciples working miracles for the conviction of the Jews, and exercising, at

the same time, the faith of miracles; and in the latter, a general faith was demanded that our Saviour was the Messiah, before the miracle was wrought. In this sense we are to understand our Lord's reply to the man who desired that he would cast the devil out of his son, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;' which is as if he had said, 'Thou hast had sufficient conviction by other miracles that I am the Messiah, and consequently hast no reason to doubt that I can cast the devil out of thy son; therefore, if thou hast a strong persuasion of this truth, the thing that thou desirest shall be granted.' Elsewhere also it is said, 'He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.'s—Further, how much soever a person might exercise this strong persuasion that a miracle should be wrought, which we generally call a faith of miracles, I cannot think that this event always ensued without exception. For sometimes God might refuse to work a miracle, that he might cast contempt on some vile persons who pretended to the faith of miracles; who, though they professed their faith in Christ as the Messiah, yet contradicted their profession by their conduct. Hence, God would not put the honour upon them to work a miracle at their desire. Much less are we to suppose that he would work a miracle at the pleasure of any, if they were persuaded that he would do so. Again, sometimes God might, in judgment, refuse to exert his divine power in working a miracle, when persons had had sufficient means for their conviction by other miracles, but believed not. Finally, when the truth of the Christian religion had been sufficiently confirmed by miracles, they were less common; and then we read nothing more of that faith which took its denomination from them.

2. There is another kind of faith, which has some things in common with saving faith, and is sometimes mistaken for it, but is vastly different from it. This, in some, is called an historical faith; and in others, by reason of the short continuance of it, a temporary faith. An

historical faith is that whereby persons are convinced of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel, though it has very little influence on their conduct. Such have right notions of divine things, but do not entertain a suitable regard to them. Religion with them is little more than a matter of speculation. They do not doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel, but are able and ready to defend them by proper arguments; yet, though in words they profess their faith in Christ, in works they deny him. Such as these the apostle intends when he says, 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble.' He charges them with a vain presumption, in expecting to be justified by their faith; it being without works, or those fruits which were necessary to justify it, or evince its sincerity, or to prove that it was such a grace as accompanies salvation; and therefore he gives it no better a character than that of a dead faith.

As for that which is called a temporary faith, it differs little from the former; unless we consider it as having a tendency, in some measure, to excite the affections, and so far to regulate the conduct as to produce in those who have it a form of godliness; and it continues as long as this form comports with or is subservient to their secular interest. But it is not such a faith as will enable them to pass through fiery trials, or to part with all things for Christ's sake, or to rejoice in him as their portion, when they meet with little but tribulation and persecution in the world for the sake of the gospel. Trials and persecutions will evidently discover its insincerity; for it will wither like a plant which is without a root. Our Saviour speaks of it in the parable, of the 'seed that fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no, root, they withered away.' This he explains of him 'who heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath

he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.' This parable had a particular relation to the Jews, who heard John the Baptist gladly, rejoicing in his light for a season, and seemed to be convinced by his doctrine concerning the Messiah who was shortly to appear; but who, when they apprehended that his kingdom, instead of advancing them to great honours in the world, was likely to expose them to tribulations and persecution, were offended in him. It is applicable also to all those who think themselves something, and are thought so by others, as to the profession they make of Christ and his gospel; but who afterwards appear to be nothing, deceiving their own souls.

3. We are next to consider faith as a grace inseparably connected with salvation. This is called 'justifying faith,' and also 'a saving grace,' in this Answer in which the nature of it is explained. What may be farther said concerning it will be considered under the following Heads, which we propose to insist on in the general method before laid down. [See Note L, p. 126.]

The Objects and Acts of Saving Faith

We proceed, therefore, to speak concerning the various objects and acts of saving faith.

1. Concerning its objects. Every thing which is the object of it must take its rise from God. We are now speaking concerning a divine faith; and inasmuch as saving faith supposes and includes an assent to the truth of divine revelation, we are bound to believe whatever God has revealed in his word; so that as all scripture is the rule of faith, the matter which it contains is the object of faith. As scripture contains an historical relation of things, these are the objects of faith, and we are to yield an assent to what God reveals, as being of

infallible verity. As it is a rule of duty and obedience, we are bound to believe so as to adore the sovereignty of God, commanding us to submit to his authority, and having a right to give laws to our consciences; and we are bound also to acknowledge ourselves his subjects and servants, under an indispensable obligation to yield the obedience of faith to him. As scripture contains many great and precious promises, these are the objects of faith; as we are to desire and hope for the accomplishment of them, and to depend on the faithfulness of God for bringing it about,—particularly, we are to consider the promises as they are all yea and amen in Christ to the glory of God. As for the threatenings which relate to the wrath of God due to sin, and warnings to guard the soul against it, and induce us to abhor and hate it; these are objects of faith, so far as that we must believe and tremble, and see the need we stand in of grace, which we receive by faith, to enable us to improve them, that, through the virtue of Christ's righteousness, we may hope to escape his wrath, and by his strength be fortified against the prevalence of corruption which has proved destructive to multitudes. But the principal object of faith is God in Christ, our great Mediator. Thus our Saviour says, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' This is sometimes styled coming to the Father by him, as it is elsewhere said, 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me;' or it is styled coming to him as Mediator immediately, that in him we may obtain whatever he has purchased for us, and thereby may have access to God as our reconciled God and Father, and in so doing, obtain eternal life. Accordingly, he says, 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.'y

2. We are now led to consider the particular acts of saving faith in which we have to do with Christ as Mediator, whereby we have access to God through him. There are several expressions in scripture, by which these acts of saving faith are set forth. Some of

these are metaphorical. In particular, faith is called a looking to him. Thus he is represented by the prophet as saying, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' Sometimes it is called coming to him, pursuant to the invitation he gives, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'a This coming is elsewhere explained, as in the scripture formerly mentioned, by 'believing in him.' Moreover, as we hope for refreshment and comfort in believing, faith is set forth by the metaphorical expression of 'coming to the waters, and buying wine and milk without money, and without price,'c that is, receiving from him those blessings which tend to satisfy and exhilarate the soul, and which are given to such as have nothing to offer for them. Sometimes also faith is represented by fleeing to him; or, as the apostle expresses it, 'fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us,'—alluding to the eminent type of faith contained in the manslayer's fleeing to the city of refuge from the avenger of blood, and therein finding protection and safety. This is a description more especially of faith as justifying. In this respect it is elsewhere described, as a 'putting on the Lord Jesus Christ,'e or the glorious robe of his righteousness; on which account we are said to be 'clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness.' Again, when we are enabled to apprehend our interest in him by faith, together with the blessings which are the result, we are said to rejoice in Christ Jesus. There are many other expressions by which this grace is set forth in scripture. But those acts of it which we shall more especially consider, are our receiving Christ, giving up ourselves to him, and trusting in or relying on him.

Faith is that grace whereby we receive Christ. It is said, 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' This contains the application of an overture made by him, not merely of something he has to bestow which might contribute to our happiness, but of himself. Christ has

many things to bestow upon his people, but he first gives himself; that is, he expresses a willingness to be their Prince and Saviour, their Prophet, Priest, and King, that, being thus related and adhering to him, they may be made partakers of his benefits. Accordingly, the soul by faith applies itself to him, and embraces the overture. Hereupon he is said to be ours; and, as the consequence, we lay claim to those benefits which he has purchased for us as our Redeemer. Christ is considered as the first promised blessing in the covenant of grace; and 'with him' God 'freely gives' his people 'all things' they stand in need of which respect their everlasting salvation. This supposes the person receiving him to be indigent and destitute of every thing which may tend to make him happy, brought into the greatest straits and difficulties, and standing in need of one who is able to afford relief to him. He has heard in the gospel that Christ is able to supply his wants, and that he is willing to come and take up his abode with him. Accordingly, the heart is open to embrace him, esteeming him altogether lovely and desirable,—and beholding that excellency and glory in his person which renders him the object of his delight, as he is said to be precious to them that believe.i Looking upon him as God-man Mediator, he concludes that he is 'able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him,' and that all the treasures of grace and glory are purchased by him, and given into his hand to apply to those who have an interest in him. He expects to find them all in Christ, as the result of his being made partaker of him. Accordingly, he adheres to him by this which is called an appropriating act of faith; whereby he who was before represented in the gospel as the Saviour and Redeemer of his people, the fountain of all they enjoy or hope for, and by whom they have access to God as their reconciled God and Father, is applied by the soul to itself, as the spring of all its present and future comfort and happiness.

Another act of faith is giving up ourselves to Christ. As, in the covenant of grace, God says, 'I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people,' so faith builds on this foundation. It first apprehends that he is able and willing to do his people good, and make them happy in the enjoyment of himself; and with this encouragement the soul, as has just been observed, receives him, and in consequence devotes itself to him, as desiring to be amongst the number of his faithful servants and followers. God sanctifies or separates his people to himself as the objects of his discriminating grace and love; and they desire, as the consequence of this, to give up themselves to him. Two things are supposed in this act of self-dedication. It supposes, first, a firm persuasion and acknowledgment of his right to us. It not only supposes him to have this right as the possessor of all things, or as God,—for as the potter has a right to his clay, so has the Creator to the work of his hands; but it supposes that he has a right to us by purchase as Mediator,—in which character, faith, particularly saving faith, of which we are now speaking, has more especially an eye to him. 'Ye are not your own,' says the apostle, 'for ye are bought with a price.' Hence, this act of faith is an ascribing to him of that glory to which he lays claim by right of redemption. And as God has constituted him heir of all things, more especially of those who are called his peculiar treasure; so the believer gives up himself to him. Before this, the matter in dispute was, Who is Lord over us? whether ought we to be at our own disposal or at his? whether it be expedient to serve divers lusts and pleasures, or to be subject to him as our supreme Lord and Lawgiver? But the soul is thoroughly convinced, by the internal efficacious work of the Spirit, that our great Mediator is made of God both Lord and Christ, that no one has a right to stand in competition with him, and that we owe not only what we can do but even ourselves unto him; and as the result of this conviction, it devotes itself to him by faith.—Again, our giving our-selves up by faith to Christ, supposes that we are sensible

of the many blessings which he has in store for his people. We hence give up ourselves to him in hope of his doing all that for us, and working all that grace in us, which is necessary to our salvation. More, however, shall be said on this subject, when we consider him as the object of trust. All that I shall add at present is, that, having this view of the person of Christ, as one who demands obedience, love, and gratitude from us, we give up ourselves entirely and without reserve to him. Thus the apostle says, 'They first gave their ownselves to the Lord;' and he exhorts the church to 'yield themselves unto God, as those that were alive from the dead,'m and to 'present their bodies,' that is, themselves, and not merely the lower or meaner part of themselves, 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service.' As the result of thus giving up ourselves to Christ, we say by faith, 'Lord, truly I am thy servant, and desire to be so for ever. Work in me what thou requirest, and then command what thou pleasest. I am entirely at thy disposal; do with me as seemeth good in thy sight; only let all the dispensations of thy providence be displays of thy love, and be made subservient to my salvation.' This is represented as our solemn act and deed; whereby, with the most mature deliberation, we make a surrender of ourselves to him. The prophet speaks of it as if it wore done by an instrument or deed of conveyance; and our consent to be his, is represented as a giving up our names to him: 'One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.'o This is done with the highest veneration, as an act of religious worship, and with the greatest humility, as being sensible that we give him nothing more than his own, that he is not profited hereby, and that the advantage redounds entirely to us. We do it with judgment. As faith always supposes a conviction of the judgment, it considers those relations which Christ stands in to his people, and endeavours to behave itself

in conformity to them. We are desirous hereby to give up ourselves to him as a prophet, to be led and guided by him in the way of salvation; as a priest, to give us a right to eternal life as the purchase of his blood; as an advocate, to plead our cause; and as a king, to give laws to us, and defend us from the insults of our spiritual enemies, and advance us to those honours which he has laid up for his faithful subjects. We give up ourselves to him to worship him in all his ordinances, in hope of his presence and blessing to attend them, in order to our spiritual and eternal advantage; and we do all this without the least reserve, and without desire to have any will separate from or contrary to his.

Another act of faith consists in a fixed, unshaken trust and reliance upon him. This, as was formerly observed, is a very common and known acceptation of the word 'faith.' As we depend on his promise as a God that cannot lie, and give up ourselves to him as one who has a right to us; so we trust him as one in whom we can safely confide, and on whom we can lay the whole stress of our salvation. This act of faith is more frequently insisted on in scripture than any other, it being a main ingredient in all other graces which accompany salvation, and there being nothing by which God is more glorified. It is not one single perfection of the divine nature which is the object of it; but every thing which he has made known concerning himself, as conducive to our blessedness. We trust him with all we have, and for all we want or hope for. This implies a sense of our own insufficiency and nothingness, and a sense of his all-sufficient fulness. The former of these is what is sometimes styled a soul-emptying act of faith. It is that whereby we see ourselves to be nothing, not only as we cannot be profitable to God, or lay him under any obligations to us, as those who pretend to merit any good at his hand, but as unable to perform any good action without his assistance. In this respect it says, 'Surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Nothing tends more

than this to humble and abase the soul before him. Hereby also we are led to another act, which more immediately contains the formal nature of faith; in which it depends on the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of God, to supply our wants and bestow the blessings which he has promised. God the Father is the object of this trust or dependence, as the divine all-sufficiency is glorified, grace imparted, and the promises fulfilled by him, through a Mediator; and Christ is the object of it, as the soul apprehends him to be full of grace and truth, and sees the infinite value of his merit, and his ability to make good all the promises of the covenant of grace, and thereby to render us completely blessed. Our trusting Christ with all we have or hope for, supposes that there is something valuable which we either enjoy or expect; and that we are in danger of losing it, unless it be maintained by him who has undertaken to 'keep' his people 'by his power through faith unto salvation,' and to perfect what concerns them. We have souls more valuable than the whole world; and we 'commit the keeping of them to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator,'r and merciful Redeemer, being assured that 'none shall' be able to 'pluck them out of his hand.' We also commit all the graces which he has wrought in us to him, to be maintained and carried on to perfection. And since we are assured that all the promises are in his hand, and that he has engaged to make them good to us, we are encouraged to trust him for all that we expect, namely, that he will conduct us safely and comfortably through this world, and at last receive us to glory. In so doing, we have the highest satisfaction, or, as the apostle expresses it, 'We know whom we have believed,' or trusted, 'and are persuaded that he is able to keep what we have committed unto him against that day,'t or the day of his second coming, when grace shall be consummated in glory.

These acts of faith are generally styled, by divines, direct. In performing them, we have more immediately to do with Christ, as

our great Mediator, or God the Father in him. As they are, properly speaking, acts of religious worship, the object of them must be a divine person. But there is another sense of the word 'faith,' which as it does not imply any act of trust or dependence as the former does, so it has not God for its immediate object as that has. This is what we call the reflex act of faith, or the soul's being persuaded that it believes, or that those acts of faith which have God or Christ for their object are true and genuine. This every one cannot conclude at all times, who is really enabled to put forth those direct acts of faith, which we have been speaking of; and it is the result of self-examination, accompanied with the testimony of the Holy Spirit to his own work. Some indeed have questioned the propriety of the expression which styles this an act of faith; supposing that nothing can be so called, but what has a divine person for its object. But we have already considered that faith, in a sense different from that in which we have now explained it, may be conversant about divine things. Hence, as we may be said, by a direct act of faith, to trust in Christ; so we may be persuaded, by this reflex act, that we do so. And this is more immediately necessary to assurance, together with that joy and peace which we are said to have in believing. [See Note M, page 130.] But this we shall have occasion to insist on under a following Answer.

How Faith is Produced

We are now to consider the grace of faith as that which accompanies salvation, on which account it is called 'a saving grace;' and also that it is wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit, and by the instrumentality of the word. We do not suppose that every act of faith denominates a person to be in a state of salvation; for there is a mere assent to, the truth of divine revelation, which may, in a proper sense, be styled faith; and there may be an external dedication to

God, a professed subjection to him, which falls short of that faith which has been described, as it does not proceed from a renewed nature or a principle of spiritual life implanted in the soul. There may be a willingness and a desire to be saved, when the heart is not purified by faith,—a hearing of the word with gladness, a rejoicing for a season, in the light which is imparted by it, and a doing of many things pursuant to this, in persons who shall not be saved. But faith is often described as referring to and ending in salvation. Thus we are said to 'believe to the saying of the soul,' and to 'receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our sonls.'y This consists more especially in those acts of faith which contain an entire subjection of all the powers and faculties of the soul to Christ, arising from the views which it has of his glory, and its experience of his almighty power. This is not only the way to everlasting salvation, but the first-fruits of it. It is such a receiving and resting on Christ for salvation as has been already described.

This grace is farther said to be wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit. We formerly considered effectual calling as a work of divine power, and proved that the Spirit is the author of it, and that they who are effectually called are enabled to accept of and embrace the grace offered in the gospel. From this it is evident that faith is the fruit and consequence of our effectual calling; and that, therefore, it must be a work of the almighty power and grace of the Holy Spirit. That it is so, farther appears from the account which we have of it in several scriptures. Thus the apostle Peter, describing those to whom he writes as having 'obtained like precious faith, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' and also as having 'all things that pertain unto godliness,' in which faith is certainly included, ascribes this to 'the divine power.'a Elsewhere also we read of 'the exceeding greatness of the power' of God exerted 'in them that believe.' When the work of faith is carried on, or

fulfilled in the souls of those in whom it was begun, it is considered as an effect of the same power.c And as all that grace which is the effect of divine power is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, when he is said, as acting in subserviency to the Father and Son, to demonstrate his personal glory; so the work of faith, as included in that grace, is represented as his work. On this account he is called 'the Spirit of faith.'

But what we shall more particularly consider is, that the grace of faith is wrought by the instrumentality of the word. We have already observed that the principle of grace, implanted in regeneration, is the immediate effect of the divine power, without the instrumentality of the word; but that when the Spirit works faith, and all other graces which proceed from that principle, then he makes use of the word. Thus the apostle says, 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' As it is necessary, in order to our seeing any object, that the eye be rightly disposed and fitted for sight, and that the object be presented to it; so there are two things necessary to faith, namely, the soul's being changed, renewed, quickened, and so prepared to act this grace, and the object's being presented to it, about which it is to be conversant. The latter is done by the word of God. Hence, the soul is first internally disposed to receive what God is pleased to reveal relating to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ before it believes; and what he is pleased to reveal is contained in the gospel, which is adapted to the various acts of faith, as before described.

As faith implies a coming to Christ, or receiving him; the word of God reveals him to us as giving an invitation to sinners, encouraging them to come to him. Thus our Saviour says, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' As a farther inducement to come to him, it sets forth the advantages that will attend it, namely, that he

will not reject them, hew unworthy soever they be. He says, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'g There are also many other privileges which he will bestow on these who come to him, namely, the blessings of both worlds, grace here, and glory hereafter, all which contain the very sum and substance of the gospel.—Again, if we consider faith as including a giving up ourselves to Christ to be entirely his; the word of God represents him as having an undoubted right to all who do so, inasmuch as they are bought with the price of his blood, given to him as his own by the Father. And as they devote themselves to him to be his servants, it sets before them the privileges which attend his service, as they are delivered from the dominion of sin, and a servile fear and dread of his wrath; and lets them know the case, pleasure, and delight which there is in bearing his yoke, and the blessed consequences in their having 'their fruit unto holiness, and the end life everlasting.'—Further, as faith looks to Christ for forgiveness of sin, in which respect it is called justifying faith; so the word of God represents him to us, as having made atonement for sin,—as set forth to be a propitiation to secure us from the guilt to which we were liable, and from the condemning sentence of the law,—as bearing the curse, and, in consequence, giving us a right to all the privileges of his children. It also represents this forgiveness as full, free, and irreversible; and the soul, by faith, rejoices in its freedom from condemnation, and in that right and title to eternal life which is inseparably connected with it.—Again, as faith includes a trusting or relying on Christ, the gospel represents him as an all-sufficient Saviour, 'able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;' and as faith trusts him for the accomplishment of all the promises, it considers him as having engaged to make them good, inasmuch as 'in him they are yea and in him amen, unto the glory of God.'k The believer, therefore, runs no risk, or is at no uncertainty as to this matter; for Christ's mediatorial glory lies at stake. If there be the least failure in the accomplishment of any

promise, or any blessing made over to his people in the covenant of grace which shall be conferred upon them, he is content to bear the blame for ever. But this is altogether impossible, since he who has undertaken to apply the blessings promised, is faithful and true, as well as the Father who gave them. This affords these 'strong consolation who are fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set-before them' in the gospel. Thus Christ is set forth; and agreeably to this discovery made of him, faith takes up its rest in him, and therein finds safety and peace.

The Degrees of Faith

We shall now consider faith as strong or weak, increasing or declining; and also the various marks and signs of its being in these respective states. As habits of sin are stronger or weaker, the same may be said concerning habits of grace. It is one thing for them to be entirely lost; and another thing to be in a declining state. Their strength and vigour may be much abated, and their energy frequently interrupted; yet God will maintain the principle of grace, as we shall endeavour to prove under a following Answer. Grace is not always equally strong and lively. The prophet supposes it to be declining, when he says, 'Revive thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years.'n Our Saviour's advice to the churches at Sardis and Ephesus implies as much, when he exhorts the former to 'strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die;' and when he bids the church at Ephesus 'remember from whence they were fallen, and repent and do their first works.'p Some are said, as Abraham, to be 'strong in faith, giving glory to God;' and others are reproved, as our Saviour does his disciples, when he says, 'O ye of little faith.'r As our natural constitution is not always equally healthy and vigorous, nor our condition in the world equally prosperous; the same may be said concerning the habits of grace. Sometimes they are strong, and then,

as the apostle says concerning his beloved Gaius, 'the soul prospereth,' and we 'go from strength to strength,'t from one degree of grace to another; but at other times, we are ready to 'faint in the day of adversity,' and our 'strength is small.' This cannot but be observed by all who are not strangers to themselves, or who take notice of the various frames of spirit which are visible in those whom they converse with.

But it will be inquired, By what marks or evidences may we discern the strength or weakness of faith? Though this will more evidently appear from what will be said under a following Answer, when we are led to speak concerning the reason of the imperfection of sanctification in believers; yet we shall not wholly pass it over in this place. Let it be observed, then, that the strength or weakness of faith, is to be judged of by the degree of esteem and value which the soul has for Christ, and the steadiness or abatement of its dependence on him. The greater diffidence or distrust we have of self, and the more we see of our own emptiness and nothingness, the stronger is our faith. On the other hand, self-confidence, or relying on our own strength, is a certain sign of the weakness of our faith.—Again, strong faith is that which carries the soul through difficult duties. Thus the apostle says, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'y Weak faith, on the contrary, is ready to sink under the discouragements which it meets with. The former is 'steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;' the latter is like a reed shaken with the wind. Strong faith, as it is said of Job,a blesses God when he strips him of all earthly enjoyments, and rejoices that the soul is 'counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;' and it carries the believer above those fears which have a tendency to deject and dishearten him. 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.'c Weak faith, on the contrary, is borne down with discouragements. The believer under

its influence finds it hard to hold on in the performance of his duty; and sees mountains of difficulties in his way, in consequence of which he is ready to conclude that he shall not be able to get safely to his journey's end. He does not rightly improve the consideration of the almighty power of God, and his faithfulness to his promise, in which he has engaged that 'the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' When we sustain losses and disappointments in the world, or things go contrary to our expectation, we are ready to say with the psalmist, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?e We sometimes conclude also, that we have no interest in the love of God, because the dispensations of his providence are afflictive, and fill us with great uneasiness. In this case, fear looks upon every adverse providence, as it were, through a magnifying glass, and apprehends it to be but the beginning of sorrows; for it cannot say with the prophet, 'I will trust and not be afraid; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.'g—Moreover, the strength or weakness of faith may farther be discerned by our enjoying or being destitute of communion with God,—our conversing with him in ordinances, or being deprived of this privilege. We may conclude our faith to be strong, when we can say as the apostle does, 'Our conversation is in heaven,' or we live above. But when, on the other hand, we have too great an anxiety or solicitude about earthly things, and an immoderate love to the present world, we may conclude our faith to be weak.—The difference between strong and weak faith may also be discerned by the frame of our spirit in prayer. When faith is strong, the soul has a great degree of boldness or liberty of access to the throne of grace,—a greater measure of importunity and fervency, accompanied with an expectation of the blessings prayed for, by a secret and powerful intimation from the Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplication; whence it infers that he who excites this grace will encourage it, as he 'says not to the seed of

Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.'—We might add, that strong faith may likewise be discerned, when it is accompanied with an assurance of an interest in Christ's righteousness, and of our right and title to eternal life founded thereon, or that God will guide us by his counsel and afterwards receive us to glory, and a persuasion wrought in the soul by the Spirit that nothing shall separate us from his love. Weak faith is attended with many doubts concerning our interest in Christ; sometimes fearing that our former hope was no other than a delusion, our present experiences not real. The ground we stand on sinks under us; and we are ready to conclude that we shall one day fall by the hands of our spiritual enemies. When I speak of these doubts and fears as an evidence of weak faith, I do not say that they are ingredients in faith; for they are to be considered rather as a burden and encumbrance which attends it. Hence, though there be some good thing in us towards the Lord our God, or a small degree of faith like a grain of mustard-seed, these doubts proceed from the weakness of faith, as opposed to that which is strong, and which would denote the soul to be in a happy and flourishing condition.

The Use of Faith in a Believer's Life

We are now led to speak concerning the use of faith in the whole conduct of our lives; as every thing which we do in an acceptable manner, is said to be done by it. It is one thing occasionally to put forth some acts of faith, and another thing to live by faith. As the latter is the most noble and excellent life; so nothing short of it can, properly speaking, be called a good life, how much soever many are styled good livers who are wholly strangers to the grace of faith. The apostle Paul speaks of this way of living, and considers it as exemplified in himself, when he says, 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' He speaks of faith as his constant work, or that which ran through the whole business of his

life. Whether we are engaged in civil or in religious duties, they are all to be performed by faith.

1. Here we shall consider the life of faith, first, as it discovers itself in all the common actions of life. In these we act as men; but the faith which is the principal ingredient in them, and their chief ornament, denotes us to walk as Christians. This we are said to do when we receive every outward mercy as the purchase of the blood of Christ, as well as the gift of his grace, and consider it as a blessing bestowed by a covenant-God, who, together with outward things, is pleased to give himself to us; which infinitely enhances the value of the blessing, and induces us to receive it with a proportionable degree of thankfulness.—Again, we live by faith when we sit loose from all the enjoyments of this world, not taking up our rest in them as if they were our portion or chief good; so that the esteem and value we have for them is very much below that which we have for things divine and heavenly. When we use the things of this lie to the glory of God, and account the best outward enjoyments nothing if compared with Christ; or when, as the apostle says, 'we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and do count them but dung, that we may win Christ;' our exercising faith in this way will quiet our spirits under afflictions, and induce us to submit to the disposing providence of God when our best outward enjoyments are removed, or we called to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake, or by his sovereign will.—Further, we live by faith when all the success which we hope for in our secular employments, is considered as a display of that care which Christ takes of his people, in which he overrules and orders all things for his own glory, and their welfare. We are, in consequence, persuaded that he will cause whatever we take in hand to prosper, provided he sees that it is best for us; and if not, we are disposed to acquiesce in his will. This is such an instance of faith as will put us upon doing every thing in the name and to the

glory of Christ, and fortify us against any disappointment which may attend our expectation in every employment wherein we are engaged.—Further, we live by faith when outward blessings, instead of proving a snare and temptation to draw off our hearts from Christ, are a means to bring us nearer to him; so that if our circumstances are easy and comfortable in the world, and we have more frequent opportunities offered to us to engage in religious duties than others, we are accordingly inclined to embrace them; while every thing we enjoy, as an instance of distinguishing favour from God, above what many in the world do, excites in us a due sense of gratitude, and an earnest desire and endeavour to use the world to his glory.—Again, we live by faith when adverse providences, which sometimes have a tendency to drive the soul from Christ, and occasion repining thoughts, as though the divine distributions were not equal, are made of use to bring us nearer to him, so that whatever we lose in the creature, we look for and endeavour to find in him; when, with a submissive spirit, we can say that he does all things well for us, as we hope and trust that he will make even these things which run counter to our secular interests subservient to our eternal welfare; and when, in consequence, we endeavour to keep up a becoming frame of spirit, in such a condition of life as has a tendency to cast the soul down and fill it with great disquietude.—Again, we live by faith when we devote and consecrate all we have in the world to God, considering that, as we are not our own but his, so all we have is his; when, in consequence, we are endowed with a public spirit, desirous to approve ourselves blessings to mankind in general, to the utmost of our power; and when, after having done all, we not only say with David, 'Of thine own we have given thee,'l but say as our Saviour taught his disciples to do, 'We are unprofitable servants.'—Finally, the life of faith discovers itself in the government of our affections, namely, as they are kept within due bounds, set upon right objects, and rendered subservient to promote Christ's glory and interest. We

are prevented from setting our affections immoderately on the things of this world, when faith shows us that there are far better things to draw them forth, which deserve our highest love. It also prevents our being worldly and carnal; as though we were swallowed up with the things of sense, and had nothing else to mind, and religion were only to be occasionally engaged in; or as though an holy, humble, self-denying frame of spirit were inconsistent with worldly business. Faith suggests the contrary; it puts us upon making religion our great business, and engaging in secular affairs rather as a necessary avocation than as the chief end of living. It also puts us upon glorifying Christ in our secular concerns, as we manage them in such a way as he ordains. By faith the believer is kept in a spiritual frame, while abiding with God in the calling to which he is called. This we attribute more especially to the grace of faith, not only as it is connected with other graces, and, as will be observed under our next Head, excites them, but as it has its eye constantly fixed on Christ as its object, and by this steers its course; and takes an estimate of the valuableness and importance of all the affairs of this life by their subserviency to our salvation, and the advancement of his glory.

2. Faith discovers itself in the performance of all religious duties, and in the exercise of all other graces. Thus, we read of the prayer of faith, whereby a soul has access to God as to a father, in the name of Christ, firmly relies on the promises which are established in him, and has a liberty to plead with him, and a hope of acceptance in his sight. Moreover, when we wait on God to hear what he has to impart to us in his word, faith, having experienced some degree of communion with him already, and had some displays of his love, puts the soul upon desiring more. Accordingly, the psalmist says, 'My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' And whatever other ordinances of divine appointment we are engaged in, we are

encouraged by faith to hope for his presence and draw nigh to him in them, with a reverential fear, and delight in him.—Faith also puts us upon the exercise of those graces which are necessary for the right performance of gospel-worship in general. These are not only joined with it, but may be said to be excited by it; so that faith is, as it were, the principle of all other graces. Thus, when the heart is drawn forth in love to Christ, it may be said that 'faith worketh by love.'n When this love is accompanied with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' this we have in a way of 'believing.' What tends to excite the grace of love, is the view which faith takes of Christ's mediatorial glory and excellencies, and of the obligations we are under to love him from his love to us. This is a strong motive, inducing us to express our love to him by universal obedience; which is called 'the obedience of faith.'p —Again, when we exercise the grace of repentance, and thereby hate and turn from all sins, and are, in a peculiar manner, sensible, as we ought to be, or the sin of unbelief, it is faith which gives us this sense of unbelief, as it is best able to see its own defects. When we confess sin, or humble ourselves before God for it, faith views it not only as a violation of the divine law, but as a display of the highest ingratitude. When we desire, in the exercise of repentance, to forsake sin, faith makes us sensible of our own weakness, and puts us upon a firm and steadfast dependence on Christ to enable us to do so. When, in the further exercise of repentance, our consciences are burdened with a sense of guilt, and unbelief is ready to suggest that our sins are so heinously aggravated that there is no room to hope for pardoning mercy, faith relieves us against these despairing thoughts, and encourages us to wait for the mercy of God, who will 'abundantly pardon,' and with whom there is 'forgiveness, that he may be feared.'r—Again, when we use endeavours to mortify sin, we are to do so by a fidncial view of Christ crucified; and when we encourage ourselves to hope that the indictment brought against us for it was nailed to the cross of Christ, that there is 'no condemnation to us' as

being in him, and that, as the apostle says, 'our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should no longer serve sin,' all this is to be done by faith.—We might observe, also, that the grace of patience is connected with and is incited by faith. The apostleu joins faith and patience together, as supposing that faith affords a motive to patience. Elsewhere, too, in the account which we have of the great things which the Old Testament saints did and suffered by this grace, we read of what great things patience enables us not only to do but to bear. Hence, whatever graces are exercised under the afflictions of the present life, faith excites in us a resignation to the will of God, and considers them as the chastisements of a merciful Father, and as 'bringing forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby; and we are encouraged to bear them with such a composed frame of spirit that they seem light, and not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. This, faith has constantly in view, setting one against the other; so that what would otherwise be a hinderance to us in our way, is improved by us to our spiritual advantage; and we are enabled to go on, not only safely, but comfortably, till we arrive at the full fruition of what we now behold at a distance, and rejoice in the fiducial expectation of.

How Faith is Attained or Increased

We are now brought to consider how faith is to be attained or increased, and what are the means conducive to these ends. Though faith, in common with all other graces, is wrought in us by the power of God, yet we are far from asserting that there is no duty incumbent on us, in the performing of which we are to hope and wait for the divine blessing, upon which all the success of it depends. To deny this, would give just occasion to charge the doctrine of efficacious grace with leading to carnal security or licentiousness; a charge

which many bring against it without ground. Though grace and duty are very distinct, they are not inconsistent with each other; the former is God's work, the latter our act.

The duties required of us, considered as expecting the divine grace and blessing to attend them, are a diligent waiting on God in all his ordinances,—looking into the state of our souls, by impartial self-examination,—calling to mind our past miscarriages, and what matter of humiliation we have for them in the sight of God, as also our natural aversion and inability to do what is good, our need of Christ's righteousness to take away the guilt we have contracted, and of his strength to subdue our corruptions and enable us to plead earnestly with him for these privileges. As for the unregenerate, they must pray and wait on him for the first grace, and say with Ephraim, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.' They must be earnest with him that he would bestow upon them the grace of faith, which is styled his gift; that he would remove everything which is at present an obstacle or hinderance to this grace, and also all the prejudices which corrupt nature has entertained against Christ and the way of salvation by him; and that he would shine into their souls, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ, reveal his arm, and incline them, by the internal working of his power, to receive the grace which is held forth in the gospel. These are duties incumbent on persons who are not called effectually, being destitute of regenerating grace. But, on the other hand, they who have ground to conclude that they have experienced this grace, though at present they apprehend that their faith is weak and on the decline, must be found waiting on God in his own way, and be importunate with him in prayer for the revival of his work, that so they may recover their former experiences. They must bless him for the privileges they once enjoyed, and be humbled for their past backslidings, whereby they have provoked him to withdraw from them. They must say with the

church, 'I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now;'z and, as it is elsewhere expressed, 'Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.' They must lament the dishonour which they have brought to God; and consider how, by means of it, they have grieved the Holy Spirit, wounded their own consciences, and made work for a bitter repentance and humiliation before God. They must be sensible that it is the same hand which wrought grace in them at first, which must now recover them from their fallen state, and, by exciting the principle of grace implanted, bring them into a lively frame. And when he has done this, they must still depend on him to maintain this frame of spirit; considering that as the beginning so the progress of grace is owing to him who is the author and finisher of faith, who worketh in us that which is pleasing in his sight, and carries on his own work to perfection.

NOTE I. The connexion of Faith with Justification.—If there were a necessity for calling faith 'the hand of the soul,' 'the appropriating act,' or 'the medium,' the condition,' or 'the instrument of justification,' or for applying to it any other name or description whatever not used in scripture, there would he intense interest in the discussions of theological writers as to which name or description is the most proper. All evangelical divines discard at once such names as obviously assign to faith a meritorious character, or represent it either as the sinner's own act, or as the reason of his obtaining justification; but while, for the most part, they retain or select terms not found in scripture, and apparently to them somewhat expressive, they seem, in a considerable degree, embarrassed to harmonize the use of them with strict notions of the immediate connexion of justification with the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and of its being an act of God extraneous to the sinner, and affecting not his understanding or his heart, but his condition in reference to the

divine law. In one instant the sinner lives, or passes from death to life: he lives as to both his acceptance with God, and his experiencing the commencement of personal holiness. On the grounds of Christ's merits he passes from under condemnation, and by the power of the Divine Spirit, he passes from under the uncontrolled dominion of depravity; in the former respect, he begins to live in his position towards the divine law, and in the latter, he begins to live in his experience of personal holiness; in the one view, he becomes alive to God, in being accepted in the Beloved, and in the other view, he becomes alive to God, in being a subject of the work of the life-giving, the sanctifying Spirit. In other words, he is at once justified and regenerated: he, at the same instant, is accepted of him who justifies the ungodly, and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. He is not first regenerated and then justified, or first justified and then regenerated; but, in one change, in one transition, in one event, he begins to live both from the death of condemnation and the death of sin. What he receives is life; and this, though widely different in its aspect as to his relation to the divine law and its aspect as to his personal character, is strictly one in its nature, and one in its commencement—it is eternal life—life together with Christ; not for one instant, or in any circumstances, can we conceive of the life of acceptance with God existing apart from the life of begun personal holiness, or the life of begun personal holiness existing apart from the life of acceptance with God. The two are not distinct or separate lives, but the one life of the soul viewed respectively in its enjoyment of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and in its being the subject of the operations of the Divine Spirit.

Now, if there is, in point of fact, no priority in the order of justification and regeneration, and if the two, however different in their aspects and references, constitute jointly the instantaneous commencement of one spiritual life, there can be neither wisdom nor

correctness of thinking in setting up and advocating doctrines based on the assumption, not only of the priority of the one to the other, but of the priority of occurrences belonging respectively to each. Yet it is a taking for granted of the latter sort of priority which occasions all speculations and disputes as to the relative connexion which faith has with justification. Most theological writers assume that faith goes before justification, and, in consequence, institute an inquiry as to whether it is the condition, the instrument, or the medium of our being justified; and a few assume it to follow justification, and become divided in opinion as to whether it appropriates the righteousness of Christ, or, as the hand of the soul, receives the pardon which has been granted, or as to whether there are not even two justifications,—one going before faith, and constituting the sinner righteous by union to the Saviour, and another following faith, and constituting him happy in the reception of the peace which results from his acceptance. These opinions all indicate embarrassment in so adjusting the position and describing the character of faith, as strictly and clearly to maintain that justification is altogether of grace, an act of God, and based on the righteousness or sacrificial merits of the Saviour. Evangelical writers justly regard the exhibition of this doctrine in its integrity and in perfect lucidness as of essential importance; but they see, at the same time, that faith has a connexion with justification altogether inseparable,—that wherever a sinner is justified he is necessarily a believer,—and they endeavour, each class in his own way, so to speak of the act of believing and the event of being justified, that while the latter is viewed as wholly of grace, the former shall be regarded as indispensable or co-existent. Most of them, however, lose sight of justification being strictly an act, and not a process, or a series of acts; and in proportion as they do this, they depart from the simple phraseology of scripture, and involve their ideas in obscurity. Every epithet, every mode of discussion, in particular, which represents a

priority of a sinner's believing to his being justified, entails consequences which, if not directly at war with the doctrine of grace, can be kept in apparent amity with it only by means of manifold and not very luminous explanations.

Dr. Ridgeley justly objects to faith being called the condition of justification, because, as he observes, "the word condition is generally used to signify that for the sake of which a benefit is conferred" Yet he adds, that "the word may be explained in such a way as is consistent with the doctrine of justification by faith;" and he afterwards proceeds to speak of faith both as "the condition of our claim to Christ's righteousness," and as "the medium of our concluding that we have an interest in Christ's redemption." What he maintains is that, in speaking of the forgiveness of sin, the putting on of Christ's righteousness, or the receiving of discharge from condemnation, the word 'condition' as applied to faith is wrong, and that the word then proper to be used is instrument. He would hence appear to make faith an instrument before the act of acquittal, and a condition or a medium after that act,—the instrument of our receiving or having imputed to us Christ's righteousness, and the condition or medium of our concluding ourselves to have an interest in it, or experiencing a sense of acceptance. If I do not mistake the import and tendency of his distinction, he thus exhibits faith as both anterior and subsequent to the justifying act; so that, to be consistent, he must be viewed as exhibiting two acts of faith, each distinct in quality and office from the other, and holding a different place in the order of priority. I am quite convinced, indeed, that he never would have adopted any such consequence; and I mention it, only to show the confusion of idea occasioned by instituting distinctions of consecutiveness in the parts or connexions of justification, and applying to them epithets unsanctioned by scripture.

Even the word 'instrument' which Dr. Ridgeley prefers to express the main connexion of faith with justification, and which, if any distinction of priority were allowable, is probably the least objectionable term which can be found, is defined and illustrated by him in such a manner as to become but in a small degree less offensive than the phraseology which he rejects. "When we are said," he observes, "to be justified by faith, it is by faith as apprehending, pleading, or laying hold on Christ's righteousness;" and to illustrate what he means by it as an instrument, he says, "If a person were in a dungeon, as the prophet Jeremiah was, and a rope were let down to draw him out, his laying hold on it is the instrument, but the hand which draws him out is the principal cause of his release." Now, there is a life, an activity, a conditional connexion, a concurrent agency, in the idea of the endungeoned person seizing a rope and clinging to it while another person draws him from his dungeon, which is utterly repugnant to the doctrine of the sovereign and entirely divine agency of justification. So very much, in fact, of the idea of concurrent agency or concurrent causation is involved in the so-called instrumentality, that Dr. Ridgeley speaks of the hand which draws the prisoner out as 'the principal cause of his release,'—clearly implying that what he terms 'the instrument' is, in reality, a cause, and a cause not the less necessary and active that it is merely subordinate. He obviously does not mean to teach what his language imports; yet, in nearly all he says respecting faith as an instrument—not only in his illustration of it from a pardoned criminal pleading his pardon and rendering his claim to it visible in open court before he obtains his discharge, but even in his very definitions—he makes more or less of an impression upon the mind, that it is really more a precurrent though subordinate cause than what may strictly be termed an instrument. The reason of this impression is obvious: an instrument is what is employed by an agent, and faith, when spoken of as the instrument in justification, is represented as employed by

the sinner, or as that by which he lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, or by which he pleads that righteousness and receives acquittal. The idea of an instrument is therefore quite as embarrassing to correct notions of the entire sovereignty and divine agency of justification, as that either of medium, of condition, or of anything else on the part of man which is represented as connected with the divine act of acquitting the sinner, and as preceding it; and both it and all kindred ideas—if we would have distinct conceptions of that all-important doctrine—would need either to be better expounded than they usually are, or laid entirely aside.

Yet the invariable, the necessary connexion of faith with justification requires to be fully and prominently stated. But in what terms is the statement so to be made as to be free from objection? Obviously in the very terms of scripture,—in a translation or paraphrase of the expression, δικαιοσυνη εκ πιστεως or δικαιωθεντες εκ πιστεως, as literal, or as faithfully representative of the sense of the Greek words, as English vocables can frame. As regards the connexion of faith with justification, the entire force of either phrase depends upon the preposition εκ. Now, this word is ill represented in English by the word 'by,' and very rarely, if ever, denotes the relation of strict instrumentality, and still less that of agency or causation. Its literal or primitive meaning is 'of,' or 'out of.' In a figurative sense, or in expressing a moral or abstract relation, its prevailing signification ranges through almost every variety of mode which can be expressed by 'in connexion with,' 'in relation to,' 'out of,' 'from,' 'of.' But what may be regarded as its distinctive or chief use is to give explicitness and energy to the expression of the principal idea conveyed—whether after a noun or after a verb—by the genitive or possessive case of nouns. This idea, according to the definition of Moses Stuart, in his Grammar of the New Testament Dialect, "seems to be that of an essential and immediate relation or connexion of objects;" and is

so expansive as to include, besides the ideas of other subordinate relations or connexions, these of possession, source, occasion, object, subject, material, quality, place, time, and value. So many of these and other connexions as may be expressed by 'of,' or 'out of,' are just those, or at least are peculiarly or specially those which, with added distinctness and energy, are designated by the preposition εκ. If any one of them, to the exclusion of every other, were necessarily supposed to be intended in the phrase, δικαιοσυνη εκ πιστεως, it would seem to be that of quality,—justification εκ πιστεως being distinguished, qualifyingly or adjectively, from justification εκ εργων. The phrase, however, appears to take εκ, not in the sense of any one subordinate relation of the possessive case, but in the general sense, or in a sense approaching the general one, of essential and immediate connexion. Justification, in other words, seems to be represented in it, not as by faith, or on the condition of faith, or through the instrumentality of faith; but simply as of faith,—as inseparably connected with faith. Two texts of scripture—and to these other quotations might be added—will place in a strong light the use of εκ in so general yet definite a sense of essential connexion as cannot justly be identified with any one subordinate relation designated by the possessive case. In this 'tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with το οικητηριον ἡμων το εξ ουρανου our habitation which is of heaven.' 'If ye, then, being evil, know hew to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall ὲ πατηρ ὸ εξ ουρανου the Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' 2 Cor. 5:2; Luke 11:13. Now, in what specific sense of the possessive case can a relation be affirmed between heaven and the glorified body of believers, or between heaven and the Giver of the blessings of salvation? If any specific or subordinate sense whatever can be understood, must it not be one of the dative case,—not that of 'from' or 'of,' but that of 'in?' But, as the case used is actually the possessive, and as εκ belongs in its

invariable use and in all its meanings to that case, what other relation can be intended but the general one—made by its particular application to be expressly specific—of necessary connexion? The glorified bodies of believers are necessarily connected with heaven,—they can be enjoyed or can exist only in the heavenly state—they are strictly, as to inseparable relation, οικητηρια εξ ουρανου. This idea is not only distinct but graphic, and manifestly would be utterly impaired by any attempt to fuse it into the notion of medium, quality, condition, object, instrumentality, or any other subordinate relation designated by the possessive case.

If, then, the general but emphatic idea of inseparable connexion be a sense of the preposition εκ, and a sense, from the nature of the case, less secondary than any subordinate idea of possession, quality, or instrumentality, persons who speak in the usual way of the relation between faith and justification, must feel themselves bound to show cause for departing from this sense in interpreting the phrase δικαιοσυνη εκ πιστεως. Is there anything in any statement of scripture, or in the scriptural view of the abstract nature either of faith or of justification, to show that the relation between these is one of condition, medium, or instrumentality? Does not every scriptural statement, on the contrary, and every scriptural view, exhibit faith and justification as related simply in the emphatic sense of inseparable connexion? He who believes is justified; and he who is justified believes. A sinner is 'saved by grace, through faith; and that not of himself: it is the gift of God.' His believing is as truly a phasis of his salvation as his being justified. He believes through the operation upon his mind of the divine Spirit; and is justified by God's imputing to him the righteousness of Christ. Both his faith and his justification are of God: the former a gift or grace of the Holy Spirit, and the latter an act of God in Christ,—of the Father imputing the sacrificial merits of the Saviour, and accepting into his sovereign and

complacent favour. Nor though differently viewed in the economy of salvation, do they seem, as respects their experience by the sinner, to be otherwise regarded than as constituting, along with regeneration, one event,—as related simply by such inseparable connexion as to be the commencement of his spiritual life. If, by a distinction based upon supposed analogies in human operations, faith may be supposed to go before the imputation of Christ's righteousness; then, by a similar distinction, life, on the other hand, may be supposed to go before faith, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to go before life. One man, on the footing of human analogies and distinctions, may as truly say that he cannot conceive of the soul's believing before it be made alive, as another man, on the same footing, may say that he cannot conceive of its being acquitted from condemnation before believing. Hence, to suppose a priority either in the one way or in the other, not only goes beyond the simple statements of the Bible, but tends to produce confusion of idea. Believing, being acquitted on the ground of Christ's righteousness, and becoming a new creature, occur as one event; and believing and being acquitted are exhibited prominently and constantly as related in inseparable and essential connexion, because faith looks at that truth which both discloses the redemptional work of the Saviour on the ground of which the sinner is made alive, and is the instrument of the divine Spirit in operating upon the soul. The gospel unfolded by the Holy Spirit is 'the power of God unto salvation;' it comes in demonstration and in power and in much assurance; it carries with it its own evidence, and cannot be seen without being believed. In the very act, therefore, of the Holy Spirit's unfolding it, he works faith in the soul. But, in the same instant that the sinner believes he lives,—lives as to both the imputation to him of the righteousness of Christ, and the commencement of personal holiness in his own heart. 'Faith is the assured expectation ὑποστασις of things hoped for, the conviction ελεγχος of things not seen.' It is the act of a living soul,

while the act in which the soul begins to live; it realizes, both in conviction as to what he has accomplished, and in confident expectation of glorious and eternal results, the redemptional work of the Saviour; and, if an order of priority could be contended for, it might be viewed both as actually laying hold of Christ's righteousness, and as exulting or even as existing in a sense of that righteousness being already imputed. So close, so essential, so unique is its connexion with the soul's acquittal from condemnation, its union to Christ, its resting on his righteousness, its being an object of sovereign favour, that the two cannot be viewed apart in their occurrence or existence. How forcible, then, the apostle's declaration: 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.' The believing soul is necessarily, from the essential connexion of faith, a soul spiritually alive,—alive in union to Christ, in position toward the divine law, in enjoyment of the divine favour, in experience of the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, and in the commencement of personal and persevering holiness; it is alive in the begun enjoyment of 'life with Christ in God,' having its fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. How, then, could the apostles, by preaching faith do otherwise than establish the law? How forcible, too, is the metonymy employed in describing the case of Abraham,—'his faith was counted to him for righteousness!' Whether that righteousness be viewed as the righteousness of Christ imputed in justification or as the commencement of personal holiness in regeneration, faith has so essential a connexion with the former, and is so identified with the perception of the truth which the Holy Spirit employs as the instrument of the latter, that wherever it exists, and in the very act of its existing, the one righteousness is imputed and the other righteousness is experienced. A believer is both a justified and a regenerated man: he who has faith in the record which God has given concerning his Son, has eternal life,—he lives both by the imputation

to him of the righteousness of his great Surety, and the working of personal righteousness in his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The metonyme is hence peculiarly emphatic: 'Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.'

Before concluding this note, I may remark how very different the idea of instrumentality is applied to the connexion which faith has with justification, and as applied to the relation which the divine word has to regeneration. An instrument, as was already observed, is that which an agent employs in producing an effect, or that in the use of which an agent does or acts. Now the person who is justified is he who believes: he it is who has faith, and who, in popular language on the subject of justification, is said to lay hold by faith on Christ's righteousness, or to receive by faith his acquittal from condemnation, or the pardon of his sins and the acceptance of his person. But this receiving, this laying hold of, this believing, is not the act of justifying. 'It is God that justifieth.' Justification is directly, altogether, and in every sense, God's act. The sinner himself, then, being in no respect the agent in justification, and yet being the party who exercises faith, faith cannot be the instrument in justification. But in regeneration, on the contrary, the Holy Spirit is both the agent who regenerates, and he who employs the word in connexion with regenerating. The word regenerates, not as used by man, but as used by the Holy Spirit: it is employed directly and altogether by the Holy Spirit in making man a new creature; and, wielded by him in his own personal agency, it is with propriety regarded as his instrument. Accordingly, the two passages which connect the word with regeneration, (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18.) represent the relation of the former to the latter to be that of instrumentality. In the one the preposition διὰ with a possessive case is used; and in the other the dative case is used without any preposition. Now διὰ, when governing in the possessive a noun which does not designate a cause

or an agent, peculiarly denotes instrumentality; and the dative case in construction with a prior clause designating causation or agency, conveys, without a preposition, emphatically the idea of an instrument. The two passages read, 'Αναγεγεννημενοι * * διαλογου ζωντος Θεον και μενοντος.' 'Βουληθεις απεκυησεν ἡμας λογῳ αληθειας;' and are translated in the authorized version, 'Being born again by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever,' 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.'—ED.]

[NOTE K. What is Faith?—Faith is exhibited by Dr. Ridgeley under two phases,—as assent to what is true and good, and as an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object. Both these views of faith appear to be entertained with special reference to the faith of the gospel, but at the same time with comprehensive reference to faith in general. Dr. Ridgeley talks of the influences which affect faith,—the kinds and degrees of evidence by which the quality or strength of it is determined; and, while settling what faith is as resting on divine testimony, he glances at its nature as exercised about matters of abstract science or merely human.

Now faith or belief, understand it as we may and apply it as we will, seems to be just assent to evidence,—counting true propositions or statements submitted to the judgment. But though in matters of revelation it is necessarily an assent to what is true and good,—every portion of divine testimony being essentially in the highest sense both good and true; it may, in other matters, particularly in those of human testimony or of flippant report, be an assent to what is both false and mischievous. Men often believe a lie, a malign and insidious falsehood, as really as they believe a truth; and they are affected in their heart and conduct by what they believe, as sensibly for evil if they believe a pestiferous error, as for good if they believe an infallible moral doctrine. Faith, in its own proper nature, is simply

assent, opening up the avenues of the soul to have all its affections acted upon, and all its faculties propelled by the moral influences, be they evil or good, human or divine, of the statements believed. Every statement, be it what it may, has power to affect either the intellect or the heart, to modify the ideas, to act upon the faculties, to touch the intellectual or moral habits; and it wields this power immediately over the heart and will, and propels to practical results in the conduct, just in the proportion of its being of a moral nature, addressing itself to the conscience, and unfolding motives to deter from one action and incite to another. Whatever is believed affects man according to the nature of the proposition or statement,—intellectually if it be purely intellectual, morally if it be purely moral, moving the particular power or inciting the particular affection to which it specially appeals. Faith or belief lays hold upon the statement as a matter hitherto extraneous to the man, and brings it to bear upon his intellectual or moral nature as a matter internal to him, or a matter in contact with his mind. So long as any statement is not believed, it is as if it did not exist; but whenever it is assented to, or counted true, or made a matter of faith, it ceases to be a matter of indifference, and operates in a way suited to its own nature, and with a force proportioned to the amount of evidence which sustains it or the degree of faith with which it is received.

The distinction, then, between faith in a statement as simply true, and faith in a statement as both true and good,—a distinction followed out to the result of a speculative assent, in the former case, and a practical assent seated partly in the understanding and partly in the will, in the latter,—seems to be without foundation. Some statements, such as the axioms and elements of mathematical science, contain in themselves nothing which appeals to the moral feelings, and of course do not excite them; yet, whenever they are believed, they affect the mind to the whole amount of their influence,

and, so far as they bear upon practice either in thinking or in conduct —in imparting ideas of mental calculation, or furnishing materials and motives for mathematical experiment—even they are really practical. Absolutely speculative believing, or believing which does not modify the thoughts and propel and influence mental or concrete action, seems, in a being constituted like man, an utter impossibility. One statement, indeed, has a practical influence, especially in reference to the will and affections, tenfold, or an hundredfold, or a thousandfold, more than another; but the statement of higher influence differs from the statement of lower influence, not on account of the manner in which it is believed, or on account of its being both true and good while the other is merely true, but on account of its moral nature, or of its containing matter which directly appeals to the conscience or to the fears or desires of the heart. In proportion to the magnitude of moral import in a statement, or to the amount of motive and consideration affecting personal interest which it discloses, combined with the degree of evidence in which it is seen, or the strength of faith with which it is received, will be the energy with which it moves and incites and propels the affections and will. But with regard to even a statement in the highest degree good and true, or disclosing the loftiest considerations to affect the heart and the conduct, assent to the truth of it or the act of believing it, is immediately the affair, not of the will, but altogether of the understanding. The act of assent is the act of counting true—it is an intellectual act; and simply brings the statement believed into contact with the affections and will, there to incite the one, and influence the decisions of the other. Except as the statement is counted true, or is brought by belief to disclose its moral influence, it exists entirely apart from the mind, and, as regards the individual, is a mere abstraction. But the counting of it true is not an act of volition, nor an act of desire, nor an act of any affection, but an act of the same intellectual kind as that in which a judgment is formed, or a

relation discerned between one object and another. The understanding, discerning something to be affirmed, and perceiving the evidence on which it rests, counts the affirmation to be true; just as the judgment, discerning a substance to exhibit a given quality, affirms the quality and the substance to be related. While the act of judging concerns the relation of ideas in an affirmation or a proposition; the act of believing quite as intellectually concerns the relation of evidence and affirmation in a statement. But an act of the will, on the contrary, has reference only to conduct. A man believes, not because he wills a statement to be true, but because he discerns evidence of its being true. His will may act negatively in effectually indisposing him either to examine the statement or to consider the evidence which supports it; but it does not act positively in reference to the relation between them when they come to be examined. A statement is understood, not by an act of volition, but by being made plain to the understanding; and it is believed or counted true, not because a man wills its truth, but because he discerns evidence which convinces his judgment. 'With the heart,' indeed, we are told, 'man believeth unto righteousness.' But the correlative phrases 'heart' and 'bowels' had the same force in Hebrew idiom, which the correlative phrases 'head' and 'heart' have among us,—the former, in many connexions, designating the understanding, and the latter the will and affections. Among other passages, in which 'the heart' has the sense of 'the understanding,' see Matt. 13:15; Luke 24:25; 1 Cor. 2:9; Isaiah 10:7. and 44:19; Matt. 13:19; Eccl. 1:17; Luke 9:47; John 12:40; 2 Cor. 3:15; Eph. 4:18; Prov. 2:2, 10; Dan. 10:12.

I may perhaps be reminded, that to regard the belief of divine truth as distinct from any act of the will, is to exhibit faith as prior in occurrence to any renovating influence on the moral powers, and, in consequence, to speak inconsistently with the doctrine maintained in a former note, that faith and regeneration, and whatever things

constitute the commencement of spiritual or eternal life in the soul, are of simultaneous origin. But if the view I have now given of faith may, in one respect, be construed to exhibit the exercise or first act of it as prior, it may, in another respect, be construed to exhibit it as posterior, to the influencing of the moral powers. Man's will, while he is in an unrenewed state, is utterly averse—indeed, without the operation of divine grace upon him, is unconquerably averse—to contemplate the truths of the gospel in their spiritual or only true light; nor is it less averse to let his understanding glance at those high and demonstrative, but spiritual, evidences by which they are evinced to be infallibly free from error and truly divine. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God:' it performs volitions or acts of the will all in opposition both to the glorious gospel and its claims. Hence, a person who should construe distinctness of ideas into priority of occurrence, might allege just as reasonably that the removal of man's aversion to contemplate the gospel and its intrinsic evidences must go before faith as that faith must go before the removal of his aversion to holiness. All which fairly follows from regarding faith as an act of the understanding apart from the will, is the distinctness merely, and not the consecutiveness, of the idea of believing the truth and the idea of the moral influence of the truth affecting the heart. In any ease, perhaps, a truth, correspondingly to its nature, affects the moral powers in the very act of its commending itself by its evidence to the assent of the understanding; or, while it discloses its claims in such a manner as to drive unbelief or doubt from the mind, it at the same time puts forth its moral influence to make its appropriate impressions on the will and the heart. But, at all events, the distinctness of assent to truth from the effect of truth on the moral powers, affords no reason for conceiving of any priority of one thing to another in the commencement of spiritual life in the soul—in that wondrous work of the divine grace and power upon man in which a

creature who was dead in trespasses and sins becomes alive unto God.

As to faith being "an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object," Dr. Ridgeley uses language inconsistent with himself. The object of faith is not a person but a proposition or a statement; nor is it necessarily or always such a statement or proposition as has a person for its subject. The faith of the gospel, indeed, has for its object statements which all reveal the character of God, and the person respectively of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the economy of redemption. But faith in its own nature—and it is of this Dr. Ridgeley speaks—may deal with statements respecting things as well as with statements respecting persons. A man may believe what is both true and good in science, in human laws, in measures for working out practical results, without reference to any persons by whom the science is elucidated, the laws framed, or the measures constructed. In some instances he is not able, even if he tried, to institute a connexion between what he believes and such views of any person as should modify and still less constitute his faith. Trust, on the other hand, has reference entirely to a person. The difference between it and faith, in fact, is just that the one has a person and the other has a statement for its object. The two are quite distinct in their nature,—faith being an act of the understanding, and trust an act of the heart; and they exist together, and become inseparably connected, only when the statement believed exhibits a person in the relation of a superior, a protector, a benefactor, or a deliverer. A man may believe that certain principles of nursery discipline will tend to form good habits in his children, or he may believe that some neighbour with whom he has dealings possesses inclination and power to thwart him in his well-being; but, in the former case, he has no person brought before the view of his mind by his belief who can be the object of either trust or any other moral affection, and, in the

latter case, he regards the person whom his belief exhibits to his view, not with trust, but with distrust and aversion. When, however, the statement which we believe places ourselves in the attitude of inferiors, sufferers, or needy, helpless, guilty, or ruined individuals, and exhibits to us a Being who has inclination and power to protect, deliver, succour, pardon, or bless us, our faith becomes necessarily associated with trust,—faith in the statement, with trust in the person. A belief of the gospel, in particular, is essentially and inseparably accompanied with trust in God. We cannot, on the one hand, know the truth of the gospel, in its genuine light or heavenly evidence, without believing it; nor can we know God in his true character, or as the gospel reveals him, without confiding in his love and depending on his sovereign favour. Yet faith in the divine testimony and trust in the divine character, though inseparable, are perfectly distinct. Dr. Ridgeley himself says, "Though faith," as an act of trust or dependence on him who is its object, "supposes, indeed, an assent of the understanding to some truth proposed; yet this truth is of such a nature that it produces in us a resting or reliance on one who is able, and has expressed a willingness, to do us good, and whose promise is such as we have ground to depend on." He thus, very justly, connects trust, not like faith with the force of the evidence by which a statement is supported, but with the quality of the truth to which the understanding assents—not with its being a truth which dissipates doubt and produces conviction, but with its being a truth which addresses the moral powers, exhibits us in the condition of dependent beings, and displays to us a Being who has power, inclination, and faithfulness, to do us good. While faith reposes on the gospel as evinced by divine evidence of its truth, trust reposes on God as revealed in that gospel, our gracious benefactor, our deliverer from all evil, and the author of eternal salvation. We trust when we believe, and we believe when we trust; yet, in the one case, we exercise our understanding, and, in the other case, we

exercise our will and affections. Hence, faith in the gospel, though always and inseparably accompanied with trust, is no more to be viewed as identical with it, than it is to be viewed as identical with love to God, adoration of his perfections, gratitude for the wondrous displays of his grace, hope of beholding his glory, peace or satisfaction in a sense of his complacency, and desire to be conformed to his image and to act obediently to his holy will. These are as truly elements of spiritual life, and as really inseparable from faith in the gospel, as trust or dependence; and they are also as emphatically exhibited in the divine word as possessed or exercised by every regenerated, every savingly enlightened soul; yet they are not faith itself, but, like trust or dependence, are separately inculcated, and exhibited as matters of distinct conception. Whatever may be said respecting the inculcation of trust, and its existing inseparably with faith, may also be said respecting the inculcation and inseparableness of love or of any other element of renovated character. To speak of trust, therefore, as identical with faith, is to confound distinctions which are at once taught in the Bible, based on correct analyses, and conducive to clearness of conception.

An objection may possibly be stated against the simple view which I have given of the faith of the gospel, that, by exhibiting faith as an act simply of the understanding, and as necessarily connected with the perception of the truth and its evidence, it would seem to make believing altogether human, and not the result of divine operation on the mind. The objection, however, is unfounded. For if man has, without divine influence, an unconquerable aversion to examine the gospel in its spirituality, or to look upon its intrinsic and divine evidences of being true, and if, in connexion with this aversion, he, as a natural man, 'receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' it clearly follows that, how purely intellectual

soever the act of believing may be, he can perform it only by having the aversion of his will subdued and the darkness of his mind illuminated by the power of the Holy Spirit. The act of believing is indeed his own—it is not the Holy Spirit but the man himself who believes; yet his faith—as springing from a spiritual exhibition of truth and a convincing display of intrinsic evidence which only God can make to a mind deterred by a perverse will and a depraved heart from contemplating what is spiritual—is truly and emphatically 'the faith of the operation of God.'—ED.]

[NOTE L. Are there several kinds of Faith?—The varieties of character described by Dr. Ridgeley, in his discussion of the various kinds of faith, unquestionably exist, and differ from one another by very obvious, and, in some instances, opposite peculiarities. But what saith the scripture as to the origin and nature of the varieties which respectively distinguish them? Do these varieties consist in the kinds of their faith, or in the kinds of their knowledge, their notions, and their moral feelings? Do the various classes believe in different ways the same thing, or believe in the same way different things or things differently modified and understood? This question—if we consider how grievously perplexed many a religious inquirer has been, and how agitated with suspense and anxiety many a sincere Christian, by discussions respecting different kinds of faith—is well worthy of investigation, and ought to be examined with care.

The faith of miracles, even according to Dr. Ridgeley's own showing, was a variety, not in the way of believing, but in the thing believed. All his illustrations of it have reference, not to the faith itself, but to the kind of truths with which it was conversant. Without attempting, then, to disturb or dispute any part of the account which he gives of it,—an account which, though questionable perhaps in some subordinate particulars, seems in the main inexpugnable; we may

firmly ask on what pretence it is exhibited as a peculiar kind of faith? If variety in the nature or classification of truths believed constitutes variety in the species or modes of believing, there must, in reference to the doctrines of the Bible, be a doctrinal faith,—in reference to its precepts, a preceptive faith,—in reference to its promises, a promissory faith,—in reference to its prophecies, a prophetic faith—in reference to its histories, a historiographical faith,—in reference to its mysteries, a mysterious faith; and there must also, in reference to the respective sciences and avocational pursuits of ordinary life, be a geographical, a geological, a mathematical, an astronomical, a chemical, a botanical, a mineralogical, a conchological, a mercantile, a commercial, an agricultural, a mechanical, and a political faith. But every one sees that these instances, and in a multitude of others, the varieties which exist, are varieties, not in the mode of believing, or in the nature, species, or kind of faith, but simply and entirely in the things believed,—the classes of truths or principles to which assent is given. Why, then, should a variety in one set of truths only—in those which were concerned with the working of miracles—be regarded as belonging, not to the peculiarity of the truths, but to the peculiar way of believing them?

If the account which Dr. Ridgeley gives of what he calls historical faith, or of what some writers call speculative faith, were true, it would certainly present us with a variety in the mode of believing. "An historical faith is that," he says, "whereby persons are convinced of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel, though it has very little influence on their conduct. Such have right notions of divine things, but do not entertain a suitable regard to them. Religion with them is little more than a matter of speculation. They do not doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel, but are able and ready to defend them by proper arguments; yet though, in words, they profess their faith in Christ, in works they deny him."

How remarkably does this short description differ in tone at the commencement and at the close! The persons described are said at the outset to be 'convinced of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel,'—to have 'no doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel;' and yet, before the description closes, they come down from their soarings of 'right notions' and assured faith of divine things, and are believers only in words and in profession,—'in words they profess their faith in Christ, but in works they deny him.' So palpable an inconsistency in statement may surely suggest that the entire idea of the persons, or at least of their faith, is erroneous. To profess faith,—to 'profess faith in words,' is as different as can he from 'having no doubt of doctrines,' and being 'convinced of the truth.' But as, in the latter expressions, Dr. Ridgeley entirely over-estimates what he calls historical faith, and seems almost, if not altogether, to identify it with what he calls saving faith; so, in the former expression, he quite as much under-estimates it, and seems to represent it as no faith whatever. The persons whom he describes, or rather means to describe, do much more than 'profess' faith or believe merely 'in words:' they unquestionably believe something respecting revealed truth, and believe it just as really and intellectually as any other matter to which they yield their assent. But what do they believe? This is the question of true importance, and the only one of real meaning, respecting them. Do they, as Dr. Ridgeley represents them, believe 'the truth of what is revealed in the scripture?' Have they 'no doubt concerning any of the important doctrines of the gospel?' Do they possess 'right notions of divine things?' Far otherwise; for, in this case, they must have been taught of God, and cannot fail to be genuine believers in the Saviour. Wrong notions of divine things, crude and carnal conceptions of the truth revealed in the scripture, positive ignorance and unbelief as to the important doctrines, the true spiritual saving doctrines of the gospel, are what constitute the very peculiarity of their character. If they

knew and thought aright respecting the truths of Christianity; if they had right notions, spiritual, genuine, realizing conceptions of divine things; if they saw the great doctrines of the gospel in their true light, and understood them in their momentous and awfully impressive connexion with their own highest interests for time and eternity; they would cease to be spoken of as historical or speculative believers, and be certainly regarded as undoubted Christians. Their conceptions, their notions, their knowledge of the gospel, and not their mode of believing it, is the source of their religious indifference, and the reason of their cold formality. They are to be set right by questioning them, not how they believe, but what they believe,—not whether they believe in the right way, but whether they believe the right thing. 'This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Let those who in words acknowledge Christ but in works deny him, come to the knowledge of the truth, let them obtain correct views of the great salvation, let them understand the things of the Spirit of God, and see in the light of heaven—the only light which can disclose it to them in its true colours—the glorious gospel of Christ; and, simply in the correcting of their notions and the enlightening of their understanding, they will possess faith to the saving of the soul. Any man who was once a formal professor, but now, through divine grace, is a sincere and devoted follower of Christ, may most distinctly trace in his own experience a change, a glorious, gorgeous, wondrous change of views, in the transition he made from formality to spiritual life; but he will search long and vainly to trace any difference which occurred in his mode of believing, or in the nature of his intellectual act of faith. Either totally new ideas were presented to his mind, or old ideas were presented in connexions so novel and so solemnly impressive, that a stream of animating, strange, engrossive emotions burst upon his heart and deposited in his affections the germs of all holy thinking and acting. But beyond the reception of new and

heavenly light,—a light which shone in upon his mind, and showed all its former notions to be darkness,—and a light which exhibited the gospel as he now saw it in such intrinsic and commanding evidence as to constrain his belief of all its disclosures;—beyond the breaking in of this light, and the glow of abiding emotion which it kindled in his heart, he has no recollection, no consciousness of any change affecting his intellect,—still less of such a change as made him believe in a different manner, or with a different sort of intellectual act, from what he did before.

Some writers regard what they call 'the faith of devils' as another and distinct kind of faith. Dr. Ridgeley, however, views the possessors of 'historical faith' and devils as believing in the same way. "Such as these," says he, referring to the former, "the apostle intends when he says, 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble.' He charges them with a vain presumption, in expecting to be justified by their faith; it being without works, or those fruits which were necessary to justify or evince its sincerity, or to prove that it was such a grace as accompanies salvation; and, therefore, he gives it no better a character than that of a dead faith." Now, a man's believing that there is one God, if he at the same time believe that he himself is a transgressor, obnoxious to the divine anger, and without any means of escape or hope of obtaining pardon, will, like the belief of any other moral statement, work its appropriate effect, and produce in him terror and dismay. 'The devils also believe, and tremble.' On their mind as well as on man's, a moral statement, when believed, makes impressions corresponding to its nature. They believe that there is one God, but they know, at the same time, that they have incurred his wrath by their wickedness, that they cannot make amends for their iniquities, that they have no refuge from his righteous indignation; and well may they tremble. But here is no idle, speculative, uninfluential, believing; here is no

distinctiveness or peculiarity in the kind of intellectual act performed, here simply is believing accompanied with the common phenomena of all faith,—that the mind which believes is affected in a manner corresponding to the nature of the thing believe Let a man, while he believes that there is one God, believe at the same time that there is 'one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;' let him have distinct conceptions and corresponding belief, on the one hand, of his own ruined and helpless state as a sinner, and, on the other hand, of the fulness, freeness, and glorious adaptation of the divine plan of mercy to save him with an everlasting salvation; and, while pangs of sorrow will rend his heart on account of the number and foulness and aggravations of his sins, he will experience hope toward God, and joy and peace in believing,—he will 'rejoice in Christ Jesus, and serve God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh.' Let another man, on the contrary, believe that the Creator of the universe and the Judge of all the earth is not God infinite,—that he takes very slender notice of human conduct, and has promulged over his creatures a law of not very rigid holiness,—that his claims upon the religious homage of men do not amount to more than the exaction of attendance on public ordinances on Sabbath, or at most a routine observance of formal worship in the family,—that Christian discipleship includes nothing higher than scientific or didactic acquaintance with the narratives and doctrines of the Bible, —and that the work of redemption secures salvation to all who come up to this standard of discipleship, and are free from offensive wickedness; and this man, correspondingly to the nature of the principles which he believes, will be a formalist, a merely nominal Christian, 'having the form of godliness and denying its power.' But the difference between him and the former character, is a difference, not in the manner of believing, but in the things believed; it is not that the one has a historical faith or a faith of devils, while the other has a faith of totally another kind, but that the one believes principles

which his depraved mind has transmuted and falsified from the statements of the Bible, while the other believes the very doctrines of the gospel, made plain to his understanding by light from heaven, and unfolded to him in their evidence and impressed upon him in their power by the operation of the Holy Spirit; and both persons, while believing widely different things, exemplify in their respective experience that every man, believe what he may, is affected in his heart and conduct according, not to the manner of his believing, but to the nature and moral influence of the principles which he believes.

The apostle James' distinction, then, between dead faith and living faith, has reference entirely to the nature of the results which follow, or to the kind and amount of moral influence exerted on the heart. A man who calls himself a believer in the gospel, but does not feel and act like a converted man, has a faith which, as to all the activities of Christian character, is 'dead,' and which, therefore, falls far short of resting on those words which are 'spirit and life,'—'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Such a man may 'say' that he believes the testimony which God has given concerning his Son; but he no more really believes it, than a man who says to a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, yet gives them not those things which are needful to the body,' is really possessed of Christian benevolence. As, in the latter case, there is an utter destitution of the fraternal sympathy pretended; so, in the former, there is an utter destitution of the faith professed. The character described is not one who believes the gospel, but believes it in a wrong way; but he is one who does not believe it at all, or who believes only such caricatures and falsifications of it as make it quite 'another gospel,' and not the gospel of the grace of God,—not 'the truth as it is in Jesus.'

In addition to the faith of miracles and historical faith—with the appendages which some writers make to the latter, of the faith of devils and dead faith—Dr. Ridgeley speaks also of temporary faith. This, he says, "differs from historical faith, only in being of short and uncertain duration, and in having a tendency, in some measure, to excite the affections, and so far to regulate the conduct as to produce in those who have it a form of godliness." He quotes, however, only one text in which he alleges it to be mentioned, and not one in which it is called faith or believing the gospel. Our blessed Lord speaks of a class of persons who 'hear the word, and anon with joy receive it, yet who have not root in themselves, but endure for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended.' These are the persons who, it is alleged, have temporary faith, or believe the gospel in a different manner or by a different sort of act from both historical and saved believers. But is it not apparent, at a glance, that they actually do not believe the gospel, —that 'they have no root in themselves,'—that, strangers to divine grace, they want that spiritual illumination, those correct notions of divine things, which are essential to a belief of 'the truth as it is in Jesus,'—that, while they 'receive the word,' and receive it 'with joy,' they have mistaken views of its import, and cherish very different hopes, or hopes based on very different foundations, from those which it sanctions,—that, therefore, like all formal or hypocritical professors of Christian discipleship, they are distinguished, not by believing right principles in a wrong way, but by believing principles which come far short of those spiritual, realizing views which are included in a real knowledge of the gospel? A conception that the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary atonement opens a more luxurious way to heaven, than the doctrine of penance and self-mortification; a notion that the gospel relaxes the severity of the law, and substitutes a sincere or a well intended for a perfect obedience; an idea that Christianity conceals every awful manifestation of the

divine character, and reveals God in an aspect of general or indiscriminate mercy; even the low and grovelling fancy so powerful over many pretended followers of Christ in the days of his personal ministry, and so powerful still over multitudes living in circumstances where Christianity is fashionable or a matter of conventional propriety, that important temporal benefits, a good name in the world, social advantage, prosperity in temporal interests, may be attained by professing Christian discipleship;—any of these may, and all of them often have been, quite sufficient to stamp upon men the character of the persons described in our Lord's parable,—to make them men who 'hear the word and anon with joy receive it,' but who have no root in themselves, and who, 'when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by are offended.' But do I need to point out that what ruins them is not wrong faith, but wrong principles,—that they err, not by believing the truth in a wrong way, but by transmuting the truth into error, and resting their faith upon the latter?

The last kind of faith of which Dr. Ridgeley speaks is what he calls 'saving faith,' and what some writers call 'evangelical faith.' What is thus denominated is the faith of a true disciple,—a subject of divine grace, or of the operations of the Holy Spirit,—a believer of the gospel rightly understood, and experienced in its power. Now the faith of such a man is unquestionably a grace; it springs from the special work of the Divine Spirit on the soul, and cannot be produced or attained by man's own efforts. But is it therefore different as to the mode in which it is performed, or as to the kind of intellectual act in which it is exercised, from faith as directed to other statements than those of the gospel? A natural man cannot of himself believe, just because he cannot of himself know, the things of the Spirit of God. He is unable to attain faith in spiritual, correct, realizing views of the gospel, not because they must be believed by a mode of intellectual

acting to which he is a stranger, but because 'they are foolishness to him, and are spiritually discerned.' He cannot of himself see either the reality or the intrinsic evidence of the gospel; and, hence, must owe the faith which he may afterwards possess in it to the grace of God, to the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, who alone can disclose it in that reality and evidence to his mind. He, accordingly, differs from a merely nominal or hypocritical professor of Christianity, not by the peculiar manner in which his mind operates or acts when believing, but by the divine illumination which he enjoys,—by his perception, in heavenly light, of the doctrines of salvation, and the evidences which demonstrate them to he true. The apostles, when contrasting the natural and the spiritual state of true Christians, or when speaking of the transition in which they became believers in Christ, make no allusion to the commencement in them of a new and peculiar way of believing, but describe them as having been formerly in darkness, but now light in the Lord,—as having received the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus,—as having had the eyes of their understanding enlightened,—as having been called into God's marvellous light. Whatever change is effected by grace on the intellect or understanding, they describe, not once as consisting in any new capacity imparted to it, or in its commencing to believe in a different manner or with a different sort of acting from before, but always as consisting in its being enlightened by heavenly teaching and convinced by heavenly evidence,—in its acquiring spiritual knowledge or correct ideas of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Nor, when they addressed the ungodly and called on them to believe in Christ, do they ever seem to have entertained their hearers with discussions respecting kinds of faith, or to have once hinted that believing the gospel was a different sort of intellectual act from believing ordinary statements. They appear, on the contrary, to have expended their whole concern in getting men to believe the right thing,—in placing luminously and impressively before them the

great truths which were requisite to be believed; and whether preaching these truths to Jews or to Gentiles, whether calling upon Greeks or barbarians, upon bond or free, upon the philosophers of Athens or the savages of the wilderness to believe them as the truths of salvation, they seem to have always taken for granted that their hearers knew well what believing of faith was. When men were duly instructed as to the doctrines they should believe, and as to the absolute necessity of looking to the Holy Spirit to explain and enforce them, their apostolic instructors, without adding a word respecting the nature of believing, seem to have declared to them what they esteemed 'the whole counsel of God.' One text, indeed, though only one, has the appearance of defining faith: 'Now faith is the confident expectation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,' Heb. 11:1. These words, however, are not a definition of faith, but a description; and they describe it, not in itself, but in its results. By a metonymy—one of the most common rhetorical figures either in ordinary language or in the sacred scriptures—they speak of faith, not in the act of performance, but in the habit of mind and state of moral feeling which that act induces, and represent it as a settled conviction of unseen realities and a confident hope of blessings hereafter to be enjoyed. They thus exhibit faith in the divine and life-giving and saving doctrines of the gospel, like faith in all the variety of sphere in which it is exercised, as affecting the heart and all the powers of the soul in exact accordance with the nature of the statements believed.

Dr. Ridgeley makes still another distinction as to kinds of faith—he distinguishes between 'saving faith' and 'justifying faith.' "There is this difference," says he, (last sentence of the section, "Inferences from the doctrine of Justification,") "between saving faith, as we generally call it, and justifying faith,—the former respects Christ in all his offices, the latter considers him only in his priestly office, or as

set forth to be a propitiation for sin." Now, the real distinction in this case is, that justification is correlative with our Lord's work of atonement, while salvation is correlative with his whole work as mediator. But if, for this reason, faith in connexion with entire salvation is to be distinguished from faith in connexion with justification, it must also, for reasons exactly similar and of equal strength, be distinguished from faith in connexion with sanctification, with prayer, with consolation, with hope, with resistance of temptation, and with triumph over the last enemy; or if belief of the doctrines which have reference to our Lord's entire mediatorial work must be distinguished from belief of the doctrines which have reference to his work of atonement, it must also be distinguished from belief of those doctrines which have reference to his intercessory work, to his character as the head of the church, to his kingly government, to his second advent and judging the world, to the various works of the Holy Spirit, to the characters in which the Father is revealed in the economy of redemption, and to all the various manifestations of Deity, by prophecy, promise, teaching, or miracle, made or narrated in the divine word. The varieties, kinds, or subdivisions of saving faith, would, in consequence, be unmanageable in their number and perfectly bewildering in their affinities. But the oracles of truth,—'majestic in their own simplicity,' and gloriously alien in their manner from the 'complex' and mystifying conceptions of human reason—speak of the faith of the gospels, in all its parts, in all its offices, from its commencement in justification till its being matured into vision in the perfecting of the soul at death, in uniform phraseology, and under the one unqualified epithet of faith. They represent the sinner, when made alive to God, as justified by faith,—when conflicting with the world, as overcoming it by faith,—when sanctified by the Divine Spirit, as having their hearts purified by faith,—when approaching the throne of God in prayer, as drawing nigh in the full assurance of faith,—when standing

in the grace of God, and rejoicing in the hope of his glory, as having access to it by faith,—when experiencing communion with Christ, as having him dwelling in their hearts by faith,—when walking with God, and living in union with the Saviour, as walking and living in faith,—when working righteousness, obtaining promises, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, becoming strong out of weakness, waxing valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the aliens, seeing the promises afar off and being persuaded of them and embracing them, as doing all and embracing all through faith. In every part of salvation, whether justification or whatever else, they are simply said to believe. Though the particular truths on which their minds rest are different in different epochs, emergencies, relations, or works, their faith, as regards both its intrinsic nature and the divine illumination which exhibits to it the truth and its evidence, is strictly one.—ED.]

[NOTE M. Acts of Faith, Direct and Reflex.]—What is the impression which Dr. Ridgeley's account of the various acts of saving faith would have upon the mind of a perplexed religious enquirer, or a young and feeble believer? Would he not conclude that all the acts, in the distinctness with which they are described, are performed in the instant of the commencement of spiritual life,—that receiving Christ as a Prophet, Priest, and King, a persuasion and an acknowledgment of his right to us by his purchase as Mediator, a surrender of ourselves to him in the way of solemn dedication to his service and animated hope of his working out our entire well-being, a soul-emptying sense of our own nothingness, a dependence on the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of God, and an assured reliance or confidence in him for perfecting all which concerns us, are consciously experienced in the first moment of believing, or are all ingredients in the faith of a Christian in what circumstances or degree soever it is exercised? He would next think of his own

experience; and, though for a while he might feel merely bewildered, agitated, or alarmed, he would be in hazard of sooner or later settling down into despondency, and writing bitter things respecting his soul. "If faith," he would be apt to say, "has so many acts, and these so distinct, so comprehensive, and involving such enlarged views of the divine character, and such emotions and purposes of self-emptying, hope, and holy confidence, I cannot, no, I cannot think otherwise than that I am an unbeliever,—just as much a stranger to faith as the most ungodly man who lives." How reviving to such a smitten soul would be the somewhat startling question, "Then, since you are an unbeliever, it is a matter of perfect indifference to you whether Christ is God or a mere man, or whether he died for you on the cross and intercedes for you in heaven, or not?" "O, no!" he might exclaim; "any thing is indifferent rather than the glorious truths of the gospel. But for Christ's being just what the Bible represents him, the Great God our Saviour who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, I am certainly and eternally ruined. No, no; the truth respecting Christ is not and cannot be a matter of indifference." The man would thus evince that he really believes, that Christ is precious to him; that he rejoices in Christ Jesus, serves God in the spirit and has no confidence in the flesh. Yet he is thrown into bewilderment and despondency by a systematic exhibition to him of 'the various acts of faith.' Talk to him of the ingredients, and acts, and exercises, and excursions of believing—telling him that faith is identical with all —and he sits down in darkness and sorrow; but talk to him of the life-giving doctrines of the gospel, the exhibitions they give of the divine character and the statements they make of the grace and love and mediatorial work of the Redeemer, and he walks abroad in the light of heaven, and goes on his way rejoicing.

What Dr. Ridgeley writes respecting the various acts of faith—apart from his identifying it with faith itself, or with faith in its own nature

as distinguished from other graces—is clearly unobjectionable. Another man, entertaining simple views on the subject of faith, and throwing away the distinctions and refinements of the scholastic theology, would, in most instances, have said the same things in the same words, and in other instances similar things in somewhat different language, in describing the internal or experimental character of a Christian. A believer, even at the commencement of his spiritual life, and much more in the course of its progress, has substantially all the experiences which Dr. Ridgeley describes. Some of them, however, he possesses so slenderly that he cannot sec a portraiture of them in a full-tinted description; and most of them he is unable to identify with his act of believing, or with the exercise of the specific grace of faith. If believing alone include all the hope, confidence, self-renunciation, and various emotions, and holy habits represented, he must be utterly in a difficulty to discover how he is to add to his faith the numerous graces enjoined in the divine word, all as inherent as faith itself in the character of genuine discipleship. Let us be told simply that a man who believes the gospel receives Christ, renounces self-dependence, trusts in God, and hopes to become matured in every good word and work, and we feel no perplexity; but, let us be told that self-renunciation, confidence in God, living hope and other emotions, and habits of the spiritual life are faith itself—faith regarded apart from every other Christian grace, or viewed in its own peculiar and distinguishing nature—and we either lie stunned from the infliction of a blow, or dash aside the uplifted wand, and request to have the texts of scripture pointed out which warrant the representation we have heard.

But if we are liable to be perplexed by what is said respecting 'the direct acts of faith,' we may possibly—if our minds should happen to be untainted with scholasticism—regard with unmixed wonder the account which is given of the reflex act of faith.' This act, as Dr.

Ridgeley defines it, consists in "the soul's being persuaded that it believes, or that those acts of faith which have God or Christ for their object, are true and genuine." He, in other words, who performs the reflex act of faith believes that he has believes, or he has faith in his faith. Now, Dr. Ridgeley himself very justly remarks, "that as all scripture is the rule of faith, the matter which it contains is the object of faith." [See First subdivision of the section, "The Objects and Acts of Saving Faith."] But where does scripture say, respecting any living man whatever, that he believes or is a believer? Such a proposition as "I, A. B., believe in Christ," or "Those acts of faith which I, A. B., perform, and which have God or Christ for their object, are true and genuine," is entirely beyond the record; and cannot, therefore, be a legitimate or a real object of a faith which rests entirely on the divine word. A man may believe that the blessings of redemption are divinely sufficient for him, divinely free for his acceptance, and divinely adapted to every need and capacity of his soul,—he may believe that he is in exactly the predicament to need such a Saviour as the gospel reveals, and that Christ is exactly such a Saviour as will deliver him from all his evils,—he may believe that his heart and mind and body are in just the condition to require the manifestations of the gracious character of Deity and the internal operations of the Holy Spirit described in the scriptures, and that those manifestations and operations are divinely competent to work in him both to will and to do of God's good pleasure,—and he may even believe so firmly as to be assured of these truths, or to enjoy as really 'the assurance of faith,' as 'the assurance of understanding,' or 'the assurance of hope,'—he may do all this, while he looks simply on the Bible, seeing there, on the one hand, direct statements as to every matter relating to the divine character and the work of redemption, and, on the other, descriptions of the conduct, moral affections, ignorance and helplessness, of those whom Christ died to save, which hold up such a mirror to his mind that he sees the reflection of his likeness, just as

'a natural man beholdeth his face in a glass;' but if he believe more,—if he so individualize his feelings and condition as to make them, distinctively and characteristically of himself, a matter of revelation,—if he set up, not the truths respecting the gracious character of God and the mediatorial work of Christ and the peculiar offices of the Holy Spirit, but a proposition respecting the genuineness of his own believing, as the object of his faith,—if he fix his belief, not on statements of the divine word respecting the class or character of beings whom Christ died to save, but on a statement of his own making respecting himself as an individual,—he goes entirely beyond the limits of what God has commanded us to believe, and runs no small hazard of losing the true comfort of an assured or strong and unwavering faith in the Redeemer, of deluding himself with the false comfort derived from resting on his own experience, and even of substituting his own acts of believing for the work of the Saviour, and building his hopes of eternal well-being, not solely and immediately upon Christ, but chiefly or altogether upon his own faith. These consequences are far, very far, from having been intended or glanced at by Dr. Ridgeley; yet they appear fairly to follow from the account he gives of the reflex act of believing.—ED.]

ADOPTION

QUESTION LXXIV. What is Adoption?

ANSWER. Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ; whereby all those that are justified, are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory.

IN discussing this Answer, we shall observe the following method. First, we shall consider the various senses in which persons are the sons of God; and particularly, how they are so called by adoption. Secondly, we shall show the difference between adoption as understood by men, and as it is applied in this Answer to God's taking persons into the relation of being his children; whence it will appear to be an act of his free grace. Thirdly, we shall consider the reference the sonship of believers has to the superior and more glorious Sonship of Jesus Christ, and how it is said to be for his sake. Lastly, we shall consider the privileges conferred on or reserved for those, who are the sons of God by adoption.

The Various Senses of the name 'Sons of God'

We shall here consider, then, the various senses in which persons are called the sons of God.

1. Some are called the sons of God, as they are invested with many honours or prerogatives from God as a part of his image. Thus

magistrates are called 'the children of the Most High.'

2. Others are called God's children, by an external federal relation, as members of the visible church. In this sense we are to understand the scripture in which it is said, 'the sons of God saw the daughters of men,' &c. When Moses went in to Pharaoh to demand liberty for the Israelites, he was ordered to say, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born.'d "Though this privilege, by which the church is distinguished from the world, is high and honourable; yet it is not inseparably connected with salvation. For God says concerning Israel, when revolting and backsliding from him, 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.' Many of those also who are called 'the children of the kingdom, shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'f

3. The name 'sons of God' is sometimes taken in a more large sense, as applicable to all mankind. Thus the prophet says, 'Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?' And the apostle Paul, when disputing with the Athenians, speaks in their own language, and quotes a saying taken from one of their poets, which he applies to the great God, as 'giving to all life and breath, and all things;' on which account men are called 'his offspring.'h

4. Those are called the sons of God who are endowed with his supernatural image, and admitted to the highest honours and privileges conferred upon creatures. Thus the angels are called 'the sons of God.'

5. Our Lord Jesus Christ is called the Son of God, in a sense not applicable to any other. His Sonship includes his deity, and his having, in his human nature, received a commission from the Father, to engage in the great work of our redemption, as becoming surety

for us; which is the foundation of all those saving blessings which we enjoy or hope for.

6. Believers are called the sons of God, by a special adoption. This is to be particularly considered, as it is the subject of the present Answer. Adoption is a word taken from the civil law. The practice which it denotes was much in use among the Romans in the apostles' time; in which it was a custom for persons who had no children of their own, and were possessed of an estate, to prevent its being divided, or descending to strangers, to make choice of such as were agreeable to them and beloved by them, whom they took into the political relation of children, obliging them to take their name upon them and to pay respect to them as if they had been their natural parents, engaging to deal with them as if they had been so, and accordingly giving them a right to their estates as an inheritance. This new relation, founded in mutual consent, is a bond of affection; and the privilege arising from it is, that he who is in this sense a father, takes care of and provides for the person whom he adopts, as if he were his son by nature. Hence, civilians call adoption an act of legitimation, imitating nature, or supplying the place of it.

The Difference between Divine and Human Adoption

We are now led to consider the difference between, adoption as understood by men, and as it is applied in this Answer to God's taking persons into the relation of being his children.

1. When men adopt persons, or take them into the relation of children, they do it because they are destitute of children of their own to possess their estates, and so fix their love on strangers. But God was under no obligation to do this; for if he designed to manifest his glory to any creatures, the holy angels were subjects capable of receiving the displays of it; and his own Son, who had all the

perfections of the divine nature, was infinitely the object of his delight, and in all respects fitted to be as he is styled, 'the heir of all things.'

2. When men adopt, they are generally inclined to do it by seeing some excellency or amiableness in the persons whom they fix their love upon. Thus Pharaoh's daughter took up Moses, and nourished him as her own son, because he was 'exceeding fair.' Or it may be, she was moved by a natural compassion she had for him, besides the motive of his beauty; as it is said, 'the babe wept, and she had compassion on him.'m Mordecai also adopted Esther, or took her as his own daughter, 'for she was his uncle's daughter, and was fair and beautiful,' and an orphan, 'having neither father nor mother.' But when God takes any into the relation of children, they have no beauty or comeliness, and might justly have been for ever the object of his abhorrence. Thus he says concerning the church of Israel, when he first took them into this relation, 'None eye pitied thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live,'o &c. It might indeed be said concerning man, when admitted to this favour and privilege, that he was miserable; but misery, how much soever it may render the soul an object of pity, cannot, properly speaking, be said to be a motive or inducement whence the divine compassion took its rise. This appears from the account we have of the mercy of God, as founded only on his sovereign will or pleasure, as he says, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;' and also from the consideration of man's being exposed to misery by sin, which rendered him an object rather of vindictive justice than of mercy. His misery, therefore, cannot be the ground of God's giving him a right to an inheritance. Hence, adoption is truly said, in this Answer, to be an act of the free grace of God.

3. When men adopt, their taking persons into the relation of children, is not necessarily attended with any change of disposition or temper in the persons adopted. A person may be admitted to this privilege, and yet remain the same, in that respect, as he was before. But when God takes his people into the relation of children, he gives them not only those other privileges which arise thence, but also that temper and disposition which becomes those who are thus related to him.

The Reference of the Sonship of Believers to the Sonship of Christ

We are next to consider the reference which the sonship of believers has to the superior and more glorious Sonship of Jesus Christ; and how it is said to be for his sake. Here we must suppose that there is a sense in which Christ is said to be the Son of God, as the result of the divine decree. This contains an idea very distinct from his being a divine person. For that was not the result of the will of the Father; whereas it is said concerning him, 'I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' Elsewhere, also, it is said, 'He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than' the angels; and this is represented as the consequence of God's saying to him, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' and 'I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son;'r which plainly refers to Christ as Mediator. Now, when we consider this mediatorial Sonship of Christ, if I may so 'express it, we are far from asserting that Christ's Sonship and that of believers is of the same kind; for, as much as he exceeds them as Mediator, as to the glory of his person and office, so much is his Sonship superior to theirs.

This being premised, we may now better understand the reference which the sonship of believers has to Christ's being the Son of God as Mediator. Let it be considered, then, that it is a prerogative and glory of Christ as the Son of God, that he has all things which relate to the salvation of his elect put into his hand. Hence, whatever the saints enjoy or hope for, which is sometimes called in scripture their inheritance, agreeably to their character as the children of God by adoption, is considered as first purchased by Christ and then put into his hand. On this account it is styled his inheritance; he being, pursuant to his having accomplished the work of redemption, constituted heir of all things; and as such, not only having a right to his people, but being put in possession of all those spiritual blessings in heavenly places, wherewith they are 'blessed in him.' It hence follows that the sonship of believers, and their right to that inheritance which God has reserved for them, depends upon the sonship of Christ, which is infinitely more glorious and excellent. As God's adopted sons, they have the honour conferred upon them of being 'made kings and priests' to him. These honours are conferred by Christ; and, in order to their being so, they are first given to him to bestow upon them. Thus he says, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.'x Christ is first appointed heir of all things as Mediator; and then his people, or his children, are considered as 'heirs of God,' as the apostle expresses it, 'and joint-heirs with Christ.' Not that they have any share in his personal or mediatorial glory; but when they are styled 'joint-heirs' with him, we must consider them as having a right to that inheritance which he is possessed of in their name as Mediator. In this sense we are to understand those scriptures which speak of God being first the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then, in him, our Father. Thus Christ says, 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'z Elsewhere God is styled 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and then 'the Father of mercies,' or our merciful

Father. Again, the apostle says, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself.'b And inasmuch as he designed to 'bring many sons to glory,' they being 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' he first 'made the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' In this respect, our right to the inheritance of children is founded in the eternal purpose of God relating to that right, and in the purchase of Christ as having obtained this inheritance for us.

The Privileges of Adoption

We are now to consider the privileges conferred on or reserved for those who are the sons of God by adoption. These are summed up in a very comprehensive expression which contains an amazing display of divine grace: 'He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.' It is a very large grant which God is pleased to make to them: 'they shall inherit all things.' God is not ashamed to be called their God; and in having him, they are said to possess all things, which are eminently and transcendently in him. They have a right to all the blessings which he had designed for them, and which have a tendency to make them completely happy. In this sense we are to understand our Saviour's words in the parable: 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.'e Nothing greater than this can be desired or enjoyed by creatures whom the Lord delights to honour. Let us, however, be a little more particular in considering the privileges which God confers on or has reserved for his children.

1. They are all emancipated, or freed from the slavery which they were before under either to sin or Satan. They who were once 'the

servants of sin,' are, by adoption, 'made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness,' or become 'servants to God, have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' 'The Son makes them free;' and therefore, 'they are free indeed.'g They are described as having formerly 'served divers lusts and pleasures;' and are said to have been 'of their father, the devil,' and to 'have done his works,' or followed his suggestions,i ensnared and 'taken captive by him at his will;' and, in consequence, they were in perpetual bondage, arising from a dread of the wrath of God, and from a 'fear of death' impressed on their spirits by him who is said to have 'the power of death.'l But they have now deliverance from these evils; which cannot but be reckoned a glorious privilege.

2. They have God's name put upon them, and accordingly are described as 'his people, called by his name.' This is an high and honourable character, denoting their relation to him as a peculiar people; and it belongs to them alone. Thus the church says, 'We are thine; thou never bearest rule over them,'n namely, thine adversaries; 'they were not called by thy name.' God's adopted children have also Christ's name put on them. 'Of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' This signifies not only that propriety which he has in them as Mediator, but their relation to him as the ransomed of the Lord,—his sheep, whom he leads and feeds like a shepherd. They are also styled his children, when he says, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.'p Indeed, when he is called a surety, or an advocate, or is said to execute certain offices as a Saviour or Redeemer, these are all relative terms; and whatever he does in the capacities which they denote is in the name of his people, and for their advantage. Accordingly, it is said, 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.'

3. They are taken into God's family, and dealt with as members of it; and accordingly are styled 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' As the consequence of this, they have protection, provision, and communion with him. First, they have safe protection. As the master of a family thinks himself obliged to secure and defend from danger all who are under his roof, whose house is, as it were, their castle; so Christ is his people's defence. Accordingly, it is said concerning him, 'A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'s As the consequence of this, it is added, 'My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.' 'They dwell on high; their place of defence is the munition of rocks.'u He who has subdued their enemies, and will, in his own time, bruise them under their feet, will take care that they shall not meet with that disturbance from them which may hinder their repose or rest in him, or render their state unsafe, so as to endanger their perishing or falling from it.—Again, they enjoy the plentiful provisions of God's house. Hence, Christ is called their 'shepherd,' not only as leading and defending them, but as providing for them. 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.'y As all grace is treasured up in him, and there is a fulness of it which he has to impart to the heirs of salvation which is sufficient to supply all their wants; so they shall never have reason to complain that they are straitened in him. The blessings of his house are not only exhilarating but satisfying, and such as have a tendency to make them completely happy.—Further, they are admitted to the greatest intimacy with Christ, and have sweet communion with him: 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.' He deals with them as with 'friends:' particularly, as he tells his disciples, in that 'all that he has heard of the Father,'a that is, whatever he had a commission to impart for their direction or comfort, he 'makes known unto them;' which must needs be

reckoned a very great privilege. If the queen of Sheba, when beholding the advantages which they who were in Solomon's presence enjoyed, could not but with an ecstasy of admiration say, 'Happy are thy men; happy are thy servants, which stand continually before thee, that hear thy wisdom;' much more may they be said to be happy who are admitted into his presence in whom 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'c

4. Another privilege which they enjoy, is access to God, as a reconciled Father, through Christ. They have liberty to 'come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' Whatever their straits and difficulties are, God holds forth his golden sceptre, invites them to come to him, asks, 'What is thy petition?' and gives them ground to hope that it shall be granted, so far as it may redound to his glory and their good. And inasmuch as they are often straitened in their spirits, and unprepared to draw nigh to him, they have the promise of the Spirit to assist them; on which account he is called 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.'e This privilege is said to be a consequence of their being sons: 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' By this means they have becoming conceptions of the Divine Majesty, a reverential fear of him, a love to him, earnest desires of communion with him, and of being made partakers of what he has to impart. They have a right to plead the promises; and in so doing, are encouraged to hope for the blessings they contain.

5. As God's children are prone to backslide from him, and so have need of restoring grace, he will recover and humble them, and thereby prevent their total apostasy. This he sometimes does by afflictions, which the apostle calls fatherly chastisements, and which he reckons not only consistent with his love, but evidences of it.

'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;' and 'if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.' The apostle speaks here, of afflictions, not as considered absolutely in themselves, but as proceeding from the love of God, as designed to do them good, and as adapted to the present state, in which they are training up for the glorious inheritance reserved for them in heaven, and need some trying dispensations which may put them in mind of that state of perfect blessedness which is laid up for them. These afflictions are rendered subservient to their present and future advantage. In the present life, they 'bring forth the peaceful fruits of righteousness' to them; and when they are in the end perfectly freed from them, they will tend to enhance their joy and praise. This leads us to consider another privilege, which is so great that it crowns all those they are now possessed of.

6. They shall, at last, be brought into God's immediate presence, and satisfied with his likeness. The apostle, speaking of the perfect blessedness of the saints, when raised from the dead, and delivered from the bondage of corruption, and made partakers of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, calls it by way of eminence, 'the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies.' This signifies, not only the full manifestation of their adoption, but their taking possession of their inheritance, which they are now waiting and hoping for, and which is too great for the heart of man to conceive of in this present state. 'Now,' says the apostle, 'are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Hence, all the blessings which we have either in hand or in hope, the blessings of both worlds, the blessings which are conferred upon us from our conversion to our glorification, are the privileges which God bestows on those who are his adopted children.

The Connection between Adoption and Justification

From what has been said concerning adoption, we may take occasion to observe how, in some respects, it agrees with justification, or may indeed be reckoned a branch of it, and, in other respects, includes something which is an ingredient in sanctification. We formerly observed, when treating of justification, that, when God forgives sin, he confers on his people a right to life, or to all the blessings of the covenant of grace, in which are contained the promises which belong to the life that now is, and that which is to come. These are the privileges which God's adopted children are made partakers of; and in this respect some divines suppose that adoption is included in our justification.

If justification be explained as denoting an immanent act in God, whereby the elect are considered, in the covenant between the Father and the Son, as in Christ their federal head; they are then considered as the adopted children of God in Christ. Accordingly, when described as chosen in Christ unto eternal life, they are said to be 'predestinated unto the adoption of children;' which is a privilege to be obtained by Jesus Christ. In this respect all the elect are called Christ's 'seed that shall serve him,'l whom he had a special regard to, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and concerning whom he had the promise made to him in the covenant which passed between the Father and him, that 'he should see them, and the pleasure of the Lord,' with respect to their everlasting salvation, 'should prosper in his hand.' Now, when Christ is considered as the head of the elect, who are in this sense called his sons whom he has engaged to bring to glory, faith is the fruit and consequence of adoption. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'

But as justification is a declared act, and is said to be by faith; so adoption, agreeing with it, is of the same nature. Accordingly we are said to be the 'children of God by faith;' that is, it is by faith that we have a right to claim the relation of children, together with the privileges which are the result of it.

Moreover, as adoption includes a person's being made meet for the inheritance which God has reserved for him, and his being endowed with the temper and disposition of his children, consisting in humility, heavenly-mindedness, love to him, dependence upon him, a zeal for his glory, a likeness to Christ, a having in some measure the same mind in us which was in him, it in this respect agrees with sanctification,—which is what we are next to consider.

SANCTIFICATION

QUESTION LXXV. What is sanctification?

ANSWER. Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit, applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man, after the image of God, having the seeds of repentance unto life, and of all other saving graces, put into their hearts; and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

The meaning of the word 'Sanctify'

WE shall show what we are to understand by the word 'sanctify.' Sanctifying is sometimes considered as what has God for its object.

Thus he is said to 'sanctify himself,' when he appears in the glory of his holiness, and gives occasion to the world to adore that perfection. This he is sometimes represented as doing, when he punishes sin in a visible and exemplary manner. Thus, when God threatens to call for 'a sword,' and to 'plead against' a rebellious people 'with pestilence and with blood,' he is said, by this means, to 'magnify and sanctify himself,' so as to be 'known,' that is, as a holy God, 'in the eyes of many nations.' Likewise, when he fulfils his promises, and thereby advances his holiness, as when he brought his people out of captivity, and gathered them out of the countries in which they had been scattered, he is said to be 'sanctified in them.' And he is sanctified by his people, when they give him the glory which is due to his holiness, as thus displayed and magnified by him. Thus, God's people are said to 'sanctify the Lord of hosts,' when they make him the object of their 'fear and of their dread.'q

This, however, is not the sense in which we are here to understand the word 'sanctify.' But we are to consider it as applied to men. In this respect it is taken in various senses. Sometimes it is used to denote their consecration or separation to God. Thus, our Saviour says, when devoting and applying himself to the work for which he came into the world, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself.' But this is not the sense in which it is to be understood in this Answer. Moreover, it is often taken in scripture for persons being devoted to God to minister in holy things. Thus, Aaron and his sons were 'sanctified, that they might minister unto him in the priest's office.'s It is sometimes taken also for an external federal dedication to God, to walk before him as a peculiar people in observance of his holy institutions. Thus, when Israel consented to be God's people, they are styled, "holiness unto the Lord,' 'the holy seed,'u and 'a holy nation.' And the church under the gospel-dispensation, as consecrated and professing subjection to Christ, or as separated to

his service and waiting for his presence while engaged in all those ordinances which he has appointed in the gospel, is described as 'called to be saints;' and, as thus sanctified, they are related to him in an external and visible way. Neither is this, however, the sense in which the word is understood in this Answer.

We are here to understand sanctification as a special discriminating grace, whereby persons are, not externally only, but really devoted to Christ by faith. It is the internal beauty of the soul; whereby all the faculties being renewed, and a powerful effectual change wrought in them, they are enabled to turn from sin unto God, and exercise all those graces by which they 'walk in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their lives,' till this work, which is gradually carried on here, shall be brought to perfection hereafter.

What Sanctification includes

Sanctification, as described in this Answer, may be considered as including several graces which have been already insisted on, namely, regeneration, effectual calling, and faith. There is also another grace connected with it, which will be particularly insisted on under the next Answer, namely, repentance unto life. All these graces are said to be wrought by the powerful operation of the Spirit in those who were, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy. Regeneration is styled by some 'initial sanctification,' as all graces take their rise from the principle which is therein implanted. Effectual calling, or conversion, is that whereby we are brought into the way of holiness, and internally disposed to walk in it. Faith is that grace whereby this work is promoted; as all holy actions proceed from it, as deriving strength from Christ to perform them. Repentance is that whereby the work of sanctification discovers itself in the soul's abhorring and fleeing from everything which tends to

defile it, and approves itself to God as one who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without the greatest detestation. But as these graces either have been or will be particularly insisted on in their proper place, we shall more especially consider sanctification as a progressive work. As such it is distinguished from them; and, as the subject of it, we daily consecrate or devote ourselves to God, our actions have all a tendency to advance his glory, and, by the Spirit, we are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. It is therefore not merely one act of grace, but includes the whole progress of the work of grace, as gradually carried on till perfected in glory. This is what we are particularly to consider.

I. Sanctification includes a continual devotedness to God. As the first act of faith consists in making a surrender of ourselves to Christ, depending on his assistance in beginning the work of obedience in the exercise of all Christian graces; so sanctification is the continuance of this surrender and dependence. When we are converted, we receive Christ Jesus the Lord; and in sanctification we walk in him, exercise a daily dependence on him in the execution of all his offices, make his word our rule, and delight in it after the inward man. How difficult soever the duties are which he commands, we take pleasure in the performance of them, make religion our great business, and, in order to this, conclude that every thing we receive from him is to be improved to his glory. And as every duty is to be performed by faith; so what was formerly observed concerning the life of faith, is to be considered as an expedient to promote the work of sanctification.

II. In the carrying on of the work of sanctification, we are to endeavour, to our utmost, to guard against the prevailing power of sin, by all those methods which are prescribed in the gospel; that so it may not have dominion over us. This is generally styled the work of

mortification. The apostle speaks of 'our old man being crucified with Christ, and the body of sin destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;' of our 'crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts;' and of our 'mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit,'b—that is, by his assistance and grace, which is necessary to our success. This is a very difficult work, especially considering the prevalence of corruption,—the multitude of temptations to which we are exposed,—the subtilty and watchfulness of Satan, who walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,—the treachery of our own hearts, which are so prone to depart from God,—the fickleness and instability of our resolutions,—the irregularity of our affections, and the constant efforts made by corrupt nature to gain the ascendency over them, and turn them aside from God. Corrupt nature sometimes gains the ascendency by presenting things in a false view, calling evil good, and good evil; representing some things as harmless and not displeasing to God, which are most pernicious and offensive; endeavouring to lead us into mistakes as to the matter of sin or duty, and to persuade us that those things will issue well which are likely to prove bitterness in the end; and attempting to make us believe that we are in a right and safe way, when in reality we are walking contrary to God, and corrupt nature is gaining strength. This, however, will be farther considered, when we speak concerning the imperfection of sanctification in believers. Now, the difficulties which we have stated render it necessary for us to make use of those methods which God has prescribed for the mortification of sin.

1. We must endeavour to maintain a constant sense of the heinous nature of sin, as it is contrary to the holiness of God, a stain which cannot be washed away but by the blood of Jesus, the highest display of ingratitude for all the benefits which we have received, a bitter and an only evil, the abominable thing that God hates. It is to be considered not only as condemning, but as defiling; that, by so

considering it, we may maintain a constant abhorrence of it,—and that not only of those sins which expose us to scorn and reproach in the eye of the world, but of every thing which is in itself sinful, as contrary to the law of God.

2. We must be watchful against the breakings forth of corrupt nature; observe the frame and disposition of our spirits, and the deceitfulness of sin, which has a tendency to harden us; and avoid all occasions of or incentives to it, 'hating even the garment spotted by the flesh,' 'abstaining from all appearance of evil.'f We may add, that we are frequently to examine ourselves with respect to our behaviour in every state of life; whether sin be gaining or losing ground in us; whether we make conscience of performing every duty, both personal and relative; what guilt we contract by sins of omission, or the want of that fervency of spirit which has a tendency to beget a formal, dead, and stupid frame and temper of mind, and thereby hinder the progress of the work of sanctification. But that which is the principal if not the only expedient which will prove effectual for the mortifying of sin, is our seeking help against it from him who is able to give us the victory over it.

3. Whatever attempts we use against the prevailing power of sin, in order to the mortifying of it, must be performed by faith; seeking and deriving that help from Christ which is necessary to our success. Hence, as the dominion of sin consists in its rendering us guilty in the sight of God, so that the conscience is burdened by reason of the dread which it has of the punishment which is due to us, and of the condemning sentence of the law to which we are liable; and as its mortification, in this respect, consists in our deliverance from that which makes us so uneasy; no expedient can be used to mortify it, but our looking by faith to Christ as a propitiation for sin, whereby we are enabled to behold the debt which we had contracted

cancelled, the indictment superseded, and the condemning sentence repealed, whence the soul concludes that iniquity shall not be its ruin. This is the only method we are to take when oppressed with a sense of the guilt of sin, which is daily committed by us. It was shadowed forth by the Israelites looking to the brazen serpent, a type of Christ crucified, when they were stung with fiery serpents, which occasioned exquisite pain, and would, without this expedient, have brought immediate death. Thus the deadly wound of sin is healed by the sovereign balm of Christ's blood applied by faith; and we, by his having fulfilled the law, may be said to be dead to it, as freed from its curse and from all the sad consequences which would follow.

Again, sin is said to have dominion over us, in all the powers and faculties of our souls being enslaved by it, whereby, as the apostle expresses it, 'we are carnal, sold under sin;' in our being weak and unable to perform what is good; and in the corruption of nature being so predominant, that we are, as it were, carried down the stream, which we strive against, but in vain. Now, in this respect, sin is to be mortified by a fiducial application to Christ for help against it. We are to consider him as having undertaken to deliver not only from the condemning, but from the prevailing power of sin. His delivering us from this is a part of the work which he is now engaged in; wherein he applies the redemption he purchased, by the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, and the soul seeks to him for them. As it is natural for us, when we are in imminent danger of present ruin, or are assaulted by an enemy whose superior force we are not able to withstand, to cry out to some kind friend for help; or when we are in danger of death, by some disease which nature is ready to sink under, to apply ourselves to the physician for relief; so the believer is to apply to Christ for strength against the prevailing power of indwelling sin, and for grace to make him more than a conqueror over it; and Christ, by his Spirit, enables us, as the apostle says, 'to

mortify the deeds of the body.'h In order to our thus applying to Christ, we take encouragement from the promises of God, and from the connection which there is between Christ's having made satisfaction for sin, and his delivering his redeemed people from the power of it. The apostle says, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law,' that is, under the condemning sentence of it, 'but under grace,' as having an interest in that grace which has engaged to deliver from sin. In both these respects, we consider Christ, not only as able, but as having undertaken, to deliver his people from all their spiritual enemies, to relieve them in all their straits and exigencies, and to bring them off safe and victorious. This is the method which we are to take to mortify sin; and it is a never-failing remedy. What was observed under the foregoing Heads, concerning our endeavouring to see the evil of sin, and exercising watchfulness against the occasions of it, are necessary duties, without which sin will gain strength. The victory over it, however, is principally owing to our deriving righteousness and strength, by faith, from Christ; whereby he has the glory of a conqueror over it, and we have the advantage of receiving this privilege as applying ourselves to him, and relying upon him, for it.

Having considered the way in which sin is to be mortified agreeably to the gospel-rule, we shall, before we close this Head, take notice of some other methods which many rest in, thinking thereby to free themselves from the dominion of sin, which will not answer that end. Some, who do not duly consider the spirituality of the law of God, have no other notion of sin than as it discovers itself in those gross enormities which are matter of public scandal or reproach in the eye of the world. Such sentiments of moral evil the apostle Paul had before his conversion; he says, 'I was alive without the law once;' and, 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.' 'Sin' did not 'appear to be sin;'l that is, nothing was thought

sin by him but that which was openly scandalous, and deemed so by universal consent. He hence says elsewhere, that 'touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless.' Ephraim also is represented as saying, 'In all my labour they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.'n Persons of the class to which we refer think they shall come off well, if they can say that they are not guilty of some enormous crimes; so that none can charge them with those open debaucheries or other sins which are not to be mentioned among Christians. Or if, through any change in their condition of life, or by being delivered from those temptations which gave occasion to them, or by their natural temper being less inclined to them than before, they abstain from such crimes, they call their abstinence a mortifying of sin; though the most that can be said of it is, that sin is only curbed or confined, and their natural inclinations to it abated, while it is far from being dead. Others who will allow that sin is of a far larger extent, and includes that which prevails in the heart, as well as that which renders itself visible in the life, and contains the omission of duties, as well as the actual commission of known sins, often take a preposterous method to mortify it. If they are sensible of the guilt which is contracted, they use no other method to be discharged from it, but to pretend to make atonement, either by confessing their sins, by using endeavours to abstain from them, or by the performance of some duties of religion by which they think to make God amends for the injuries they have offered to him. This, however, is so far from mortifying sin, that it increases its guilt, and causes it to take deeper root, and afterwards to break forth in a greater degree; or it tends to stupify the conscience, so that they afterwards go on in the way of sin, with carnal security, and without remorse. Others think, that to mortify sin, is nothing else but to subdue and keep under their passions, at least to such a degree that they may not, through the irregularity and impetuous violence of them, commit those sins which they cannot but reflect upon with

shame when brought into a more calm and considerate temper of mind. In order to this, they subject themselves to certain rules, which the light of nature will suggest, and the wiser heathen have laid down, to induce persons to lead a virtuous life. They argue with themselves, that it is below the dignity of human nature for men to suffer their passions to lead their reason captive, or to do that which betrays a want of wisdom as well as temper. If by this means the exorbitancy of their passions is abated, and many sins which it occasions are prevented, they conclude their lives to be unblemished, and sin subdued. Yet all they do is nothing but a restraining of the fury of their temper, or the giving of a check to some sins, while sin in general remains unmortified.

As to the methods prescribed by some Popish casuists, of emaciating the body, or keeping it under by physic or a sparing diet, and submitting to hard penances, not only to atone for past sins, but to prevent them for the future; these have not a tendency to strike at the root of sin, and therefore are unjustly called a mortifying of it. For though an abstemious regular way of living is conducive to some valuable ends, and though without it, men are led to the commission of many sins; yet it is no expedient to take away guilt, nor does it sufficiently subdue the enslaving, captivating, and prevailing power of indwelling sin, which discovers itself in various shapes, and attends every condition and circumstance of life. Equally useless are those common methods which many others take, and which are of a different nature. When persons resolve, though in their own strength, to break off their sins by repentance, or when they endeavour to strengthen their resolutions to lead a virtuous life, when these are weak and not much regarded by them, their efforts will not answer the designed end. Sin will be too strong for all their resolutions; and the engagements with which they bind themselves will be but like the cords with which Sampson was bound, which

were broken by him like threads. If we rely on our own strength, how much soever we may be resolved to abstain from sin at present, God will make us sensible of our weakness by leaving us to ourselves; and then how much soever we resolve to abstain from sin, it will appear that it is far from being mortified or subdued by us. We conclude, therefore, that mortification of sin cannot be performed, but by going forth in the name and strength of Christ, who is able to keep us from falling, or, when fallen, to recover us. This will be found in the end to be the best expedient for promoting this branch of our sanctification.

III. In carrying on the work of sanctification, we are enabled to walk with God, or before him, in holiness and righteousness. We are first made alive in regeneration; and then we put forth living actions. The experience of this some call vivification, as distinguished from that part of sanctification which has been already considered, namely, mortification of sin. This is what we may call leading an holy life; and we are to understand by it much more than many do. They suppose that it consists only in the performance of some moral duties which contain the external part of religion, without which there would not be the least shadow of holiness; in performing those duties which we owe to men in the various relations which we stand in to them; or, at least, in keeping ourselves clear of those 'pollutions which are in the world through lust.' The Pharisee, in the gospel, thought himself an extraordinarily holy person, because he was no extortioner, nor unjust, nor adulterer, but fasted, paid tithes, and performed several works of charity. Many also are great pretenders to holiness, who have no other than a form of godliness without the power of it, or who are more than ordinarily diligent in their attendance on the ordinances of God's appointment, though they are far from giving that attendance in a right way, and are like those whom the prophet speaks of, who are said to 'seek God daily, and to delight to know his ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the

ordinance of their God,' though at the same time, they are said to 'fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.'

That we may consider several other things which are contained in a person's leading an holy life, let it be observed that our natures must be changed. Sanctification always supposes and flows from regeneration. There must be grace in the heart, else it can never discover itself in the life. The root must be good, else the tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The spring of action must be cleansed, otherwise the actions themselves will be impure. Some persons, who are generally strangers to the internal work of grace, are very apt to insist much on the goodness of their hearts; and they sometimes plead this in excuse for the badness of their lives; while, in reality, they never had a due sense of the plague and perverseness of their own hearts. Good actions must proceed from a good principle, otherwise persons are in an unsanctified state. And, as these actions must be conformable to the rule laid down in the word of God, and performed in a right manner, and to the glory of God as the end designed by them; so they must be performed by faith, whereby we, being sensible of our own weakness and unworthiness, depend on Christ for assistance and acceptance. This exercise of faith and dependence must be our constant work and business; whereby we are said to walk with God, as well as to live to him.

Again, in order to our leading a holy life, we must make use of those motives and inducements which are contained in the gospel. In particular, we are to have in our view that perfect pattern of holiness which Christ has given us. He has 'left us an example that we should follow his steps.' Whatever we find in the life of Christ, prescribed for our imitation, should be improved to promote the work of sanctification. His humility, meekness, patience, submission to the divine will, his zeal for the glory of God and the good of mankind,

and his unfainting perseverance in pursuing the end for which he came into the world, are all mentioned in scripture, not merely that we should yield an assent to the account we have of them in the gospel-history, but that 'the same mind should be in us, which was also in him.'r 'He,' says the apostle, 'that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked.' We may add, that we ought to set before us the example of others, and be followers of them so far as they followed him. Their example, indeed, is as much inferior to Christ's, as imperfect holiness is to that which is perfect; yet it is an encouragement to us, that, in following the footsteps of the flock, we have many bright examples of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.—Another motive to holiness is the love of Christ, expressed in the great work of our redemption, and in that care and compassion which he has extended towards us in the application of it, in all the methods he has used in beginning and carrying on the work of grace; in regard to which we may say, 'Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.' The love of Christ ought to be improved so as to 'constrain us,'t as he has hereby laid us under the highest obligation to live to him. And as love to Christ is the main ingredient in sanctification; so when by faith we behold him as the most engaging and desirable object, it will afford a constant inducement to holiness.—Another motive to holiness, is our relation to God as his children, and our professed subjection to him. As we gave up ourselves to him when first we believed, avouched him to be our God, and, since then, have experienced many instances of his condescending goodness and faithfulness; as he has been pleased to grant us some degrees of communion with him, through Christ; as he has given us many great and precious promises, and, in various instances, made them good to us; and as he has reserved an inheritance for all that are sanctified, in that better world to which they shall at last be brought; so, on all these grounds, we should be induced to lead a life of holiness. 'Having these promises,' says the

apostle, 'let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of Sanctification

1. From what has been said in explaining the doctrine of sanctification, we may infer the difference that there is between moral virtue, so far as it may be attained by the light of nature and the improvement of human reason, and that holiness of heart and life which includes all Christian virtues, and is inseparably connected with salvation. All who are conversant with the writings of the heathen moralists will find in some of them a great many things which tend to regulate the conduct of life, and precepts laid down which, if followed, bear a great resemblance to the grace of sanctification. In this matter, some who have been destitute of the light of the gospel have very much excelled many who bear the Christian name. When we find a lively representation of the universal corruption and degeneracy of human nature, the disorder and irregularity of the affections, and man's natural propensity to vice; rules laid down for the attaining of virtue, by means of which men are directed how to free themselves from that slavery which they are under to their lusts; and advice given to press after a resemblance and conformity to God; these things carry in them a great show of holiness. A late writer has collected several passages out of their writings with a design to prove that, though they were destitute of gospel-light, yet they might attain salvation; inasmuch as they use many expressions which very much resemble the grace of sanctification. One of them, for example, speaking concerning contentment in the station of life in which providence had fixed him, says, "A servant of God should not be solicitous for the morrow. Can any good man fear that he should want food? Doth God so neglect his servants, and his witnesses, as that they should be destitute of his

care and providence?" And he adds, "Did I ever, Lord, accuse thee, or complain of thy government? Was I not always willing to be sick when it was thy pleasure that I should be so? Did I ever desire to be what thou wouldst not have me to be? Am I not always ready to do what thou commandest? Wilt thou have me to continue here? I will freely do as thou willest. Or, wouldst thou have me depart hence? I will freely do it at thy command. I have always had my will subject to that of God. Deal with me according to thy pleasure. I am always of the same mind with thee. I refuse nothing which thou art pleased to lay upon me. Lead me whither thou wilt; clothe me as thou pleasest. I will be a magistrate, or private person; continue me in my country, or in exile; I will not only submit to but defend thy proceedings in all things." We might also produce quotations out of other writings, whereby it appears that some of the heathen excelled many Christians in the consistency of their sentiments about religious matters with the divine perfections; as when they say, "Whatever endowment of the mind has a tendency to make a man truly great and excellent, is owing to an internal divine influence."y Others, speaking of the natural propensity which there is in mankind to vice, maintained that, to guard against it, there is a necessity of their having assistance from God in order to their leading a virtuous life; and that virtue is not attained by instruction, that is, not only by that means, but that it is from God, and is to be sought for at his hands by faith and prayer. Much to this purpose may be seen in the writings of Plato, Maximus Tyrius, Hierocles, and several others.

The principal use which I would make of the fact I have been illustrating, is to observe that it should humble many Christians, who are far from coming up to the Heathen in the practice of moral virtue. As for the sentiments of those who deny the necessity of our having divine influence in order to our performing in a right manner the duties which God requires of us, they fall very short of what the

light of nature has suggested to those who have duly attended to it, though destitute of divine revelation. When I meet with such expressions as I have quoted, and many other divine things, in the writings of Plato, and what he says of the conversation of his master Socrates, both in his life and at his death, I cannot but apply in this case what our Saviour says to the Scribe in the gospel who answered him discreetly, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' These things, it is true, very much resemble the grace of sanctification; yet, in many respects, they fall short of it; inasmuch as those who maintained them had no acts of faith in a Mediator, whom they were altogether strangers to, being destitute of divine revelation. It is not my design, at present, to inquire whether they had any hope of salvation, this subject having been considered under a former Answer.b All that I shall here observe is, that some of the best of them were charged with notorious crimes, which a Christian would hardly reckon consistent with the truth of grace. Plato was charged with flattering tyrants, and too much indulging pride and luxury; Socrates, with pleading for fornication and incest, and practising sodomy; if what some have reported concerning them be true.d But, without laying any stress on the character of particular persons, who, in other respects, have said and done many excellent things; it is evident, that whatever appearance of holiness there may be in the writings or conversation of those who are strangers to Christ and his gospel, falls short of the grace of sanctification. There is a vast difference between recommending or practising moral virtues, as agreeable to the nature of man, and the dictates of reason; and a person's being led in that way of holiness which our Saviour has prescribed in the gospel. This takes its rise from a change of nature wrought in regeneration, is excited by gospel-motives, is encouraged by promises of holy attainments, and proceeds from the grace of faith, without which all pretensions to holiness are vain and defective. What advances soever the heathen moralists may have

made, in endeavouring to free themselves from the slavery of sin, they were very deficient as to its mortification. Being ignorant of that great atonement which is made by Christ, as the only expedient to take away the guilt of sin, they could not by any method attain a conscience void of offence, or any degree of hope concerning the forgiveness of sin, and the way of acceptance in the sight of God. Moreover, their using endeavours to stop the current of vice, and to subdue their inordinate affections, could not be effectual to answer that end, inasmuch as they were destitute of the Spirit of God, who affords his divine assistance in order to the attainment of it, in no other way than what is prescribed in the gospel. Hence, as 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' this grace is to be expected in that way which God has prescribed; and every one who is holy is made so by the Spirit, who glorifies himself in rendering men fruitful in every good work, they being raised by him from the death of sin to the life of faith in Christ; which is a blessing peculiar to the gospel.

2. Since holiness is required of all persons, as what is absolutely necessary to salvation, and is also recommended as that which God works in those in whom the gospel is made effectual to salvation; we may infer that no gospel doctrine has the least tendency to lead to licentiousness. The grace of God may indeed be abused; and men who are strangers to it may take occasion, from 'the abounding' of that grace, to 'continue in sin,' as some did in the apostle's days; but this is not the genuine tendency of the gospel, which is to lead men to holiness. Whatever duties it engages to, are all designed to answer this end; and whatever privileges are offered in it, are all inducements to holiness. Are we 'delivered out of the hands of our' spiritual 'enemies?' It is 'that we should serve him in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.' As for the promises, they are an inducement to us, as the apostle expresses it, to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,

perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'g And every ordinance and providence should be improved by us, to promote the work of sanctification.

3. Let us examine ourselves whether this work be begun and the grace of God wrought in us in truth, and, if so, whether it be increasing or declining in our souls. As to the truth of grace, let us take heed that we do not think we are something when we are nothing, deceiving our own souls; or rest in a form of godliness, while denying the power of it, or in a name to live, while we are dead. Let us think that it is not enough to abstain from grosser enormities, or engage in some external duties of religion, with wrong ends. If, upon inquiry into ourselves, we find that we are destitute of a principle of spiritual life and grace, let us not think that, because we have escaped some of the pollutions which are in the world, or do not run with others in all excess of riot, we therefore lead holy lives. But rather let us inquire whether the life we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, under the influence of his Spirit, with great diffidence of our own righteousness and strength, and firm dependence upon Christ; and whether, as the result of this, we are found in the practice of universal holiness, and hate and avoid all appearance of evil, using all those endeavours which are prescribed in the gospel, to glorify him in our spirits, souls, and bodies, which are his. If we have ground to hope that the work of sanctification is begun, let us inquire whether it be advancing or declining; whether we go from strength to strength, or make improvements in proportion to the privileges we enjoy. Many have reason to complain that it is not with them as in months past; that grace is languishing, the frame of their spirits in holy duties stupid, and they destitute of that communion with God which they once enjoyed. Such ought to remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works; and beg of God, from whom alone our fruit is derived, that he

would revive the work of grace in them, and cause their souls to flourish in the courts of his house, and to bring forth much fruit unto holiness, to the glory of his own name and their spiritual peace and comfort. As for those who are frequently complaining of and bewailing their declensions in grace, who seem to others to be making a very considerable progress in it, let them not give way to unbelief, so far as to deny or set aside the experiences which they have had of God's presence with them; for sometimes grace grows, though without our own observation. If they are destitute of the comforts of it or of the fruits of righteousness, which are peace, assurance, and joy in the Holy Ghost, let them consider that the work of sanctification, in the present state, is, at best, but growing up towards that perfection to which it has not yet arrived. If it does not spring up and flourish, as to those fruits and effects of it which they are pressing after but have not attained, let them bless God if grace is taking root downward, and is attended with an humble sense of their own weakness and imperfection, and an earnest desire for those spiritual blessings which they are labouring after. This ought to afford matter of thankfulness, rather than have a tendency to weaken their hands, or induce them to conclude that they are in an unsanctified state because of the many hinderances and discouragements which attend their progress in holiness.

REPENTANCE

QUESTION LXXVI. What is Repentance unto life?

ANSWER. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God; whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the

> filthiness and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieves for, and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavouring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.

IN discussing this Answer we shall consider that the subject of repentance is a sinful fallen creature; that, though this is his condition, he is naturally averse to the exercise of repentance, till God is pleased to bring him to it; that the Spirit of God brings him to repent; and what are the various acts and effects of repentance.

The Subjects of Repentance

No one can be said to repent but a sinner. Whatever other graces might be exercised by man in a state of innocency, or shall be exercised by him when brought to a state of perfection; there cannot, properly speaking, be any room for repentance. Some, indeed, have queried whether there shall be repentance in heaven. But it may easily be determined, that, though that hatred of sin in general and opposition to it which is contained in true repentance, is not inconsistent with a state of perfect blessedness, as it is inseparably connected with perfection of holiness; yet a sense of sin, which is afflictive, and is attended with grief and sorrow of heart for the guilt and consequences of sin, is altogether inconsistent with a state of perfection; and these are some ingredients in that repentance which comes under our present consideration. We must conclude, therefore, that the subject of repentance is a sinner.

Man's Natural Aversion to Repentance

Though all sinners contract guilt, expose themselves to misery, and will sooner or later be filled with distress and sorrow for what they

have done against God; yet many have no sense of it at present, nor repentance or remorse for it. These are described as 'past feeling,' as 'hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,'i as obstinate, and having 'their neck as an iron sinew, and their brow as brass.' There are several methods which they take to ward off the force of convictions. Sometimes they are stupid, and hardly give themselves the liberty to consider the difference which there is between moral good and evil, or the natural obligation we are under to pursue the one and avoid the other. They consider not the all-seeing eye of God, which observes all their actions, nor the power of his anger, who will take vengeance on impenitent sinners. They regard not the various aggravations of sin, nor consider that God will, for those things, bring them to judgment. Hence, impenitency is generally attended with presumption; whereby the person concludes, though without ground, that it shall go well with him in the end. Such an one is represented as blessing himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination,' or as it is in the margin, in the stubbornness 'of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.'l Or if, on the other hand, he cannot but conclude that with God is terrible majesty, that he is a consuming fire, and that none ever hardened themselves against him and prospered, and if he does not fall down before him with humble confession of sin and repentance for it, he will certainly be broken with his rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel,—broken with a tempest, and utterly destroyed, when his wrath is kindled. Then he resolves that some time or other he will repent, but still delays and puts off repentance for a more convenient season; and though God gives him space to do it, he repenteth not. Thus he goes on in the greatness of his way, till God visits him with the blessings of his goodness, and brings him to repentance.

Repentance wrought by the Divine Spirit

We are thus led to consider that repentance is God's work; or, as is observed in this Answer, that it is wrought by the Spirit of God. Whether we consider it as a common or as a saving grace, it is the Spirit that convinces or reproves the world of sin. If it be of the same kind as that which Pharaoh, Ahab, or Judas had, it is excited by a dread of God's judgments, and his wrath breaking in upon conscience, when he reproves for sin, and sets it in order before their eyes. If they are touched with a sense of guilt, and, in consequence, stopped for the present, or obliged to make a retreat, and desist from pursuing their former methods, it is God, in the course of his providence, that gives a check to them. But this comes short of that repentance which is said to be unto life, or which is styled a saving grace; which is wrought by the Spirit of God, as the beginning of that saving work which is a branch of sanctification, and shall end in complete salvation.

This is expressly styled, in scripture, 'repentance unto life,' inasmuch as every one who is favoured with it shall obtain eternal life; and it is connected with conversion and remission of sins, which will certainly end in eternal salvation. Thus it is said, 'Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'o For this reason it is called a saving grace, or a grace which accompanies salvation; on which account it is distinguished from that repentance which some have who yet remain in a state of unregeneracy. It is also called 'repentance to salvation, not to be repented of;' that is, it shall issue well; and he who thus repents, shall, in the end, have reason to bless God, and rejoice in his grace, who has made him partaker of it.

The Means of Repentance

We shall now consider the instrument or means whereby the Spirit works this grace. It is said to be 'wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the word of God,' as all other graces are, except regeneration, as was formerly observed. We must first suppose the principle of grace implanted, and the word presenting motives and arguments leading to repentance; and then the understanding is enlightened and disposed to receive what is imparted. The word 'calls sinners to repentance.' Hence, when this grace is wrought, we are not only turned by the power of God, but 'instructed'r by the Spirit's setting home what is contained in the word, whereby we are led into the knowledge of those things which are necessary to repentance. The word contains a display of the holiness of the divine nature and law, and of our obligation, in conformity to it, to exercise holiness of heart and life; as God says, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' It contains also a display of the holiness of God in his threatenings, which he has denounced against every transgression and disobedience, which shall receive a just recompence of reward; and in all the instances of his punishing sin in those who have exposed themselves to its penalty, that hereby he might deter men from it, and lead them to repentance. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of the law of God as 'holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good;'t and of its leading him into the knowledge of sin, by which means it appeared to be sin, that is, opposite to an holy God, and, as he expresses it, 'became exceeding sinful.'—Moreover, by the word of God persons are led into themselves; and by comparing their hearts and lives with it, are enabled to see their own vileness and want of conformity to the rule which he has given them, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of their hearts, and what occasion there is to abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Thus the apostle, in the place just mentioned, speaks of himself as 'once alive without the law; but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died,' and he concluded himself to be 'carnal, sold under sin.' This is a necessary

means leading to repentance.—We may add that God makes use, not only of the word, but of his providences to answer this end. Hence, he speaks of a sinning people, when 'carried away captive into the land of the enemy,' as 'bethinking' themselves, and afterwards 'repenting and making supplication to him.'x We read also of sickness and bodily diseases as ordained by God to bring persons to repentance. Thus Elihu speaks of a person being 'chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; his soul drawing nigh to the grave, and his life to the destroyers;' and then represents the person thus chastened, and afterwards recovered from his sickness, as acknowledging that he had 'sinned and perverted that which is right, and that it profited him not.' The apostle likewise speaks of 'the goodness of God' in the various dispensations of his providence, as 'leading to repentance.'z But these dispensations are always to be considered in conjunction with the word, and as impressed on the consciences of men by the Spirit, in order to their attaining this desirable end.—In order, however, that we may insist on this matter more particularly, we must take an estimate of repentance, either as it is a common or a special grace. In both these respects it is from the Spirit, and wrought by the instrumentality of the word, applied to the consciences of men; but there is a vast difference between the one and the other in the application of the word, as well as in the effects and consequences.

1. As to those who are brought under convictions, but not made partakers of the saving grace of repentance, the Holy Spirit awakens them, and fills them with the terrors of God, and the dread of his vengeance, 'by the law,' by which 'is the knowledge of sin,' and 'all the world becomes guilty before God.' These are what we call legal convictions; whereby the wound is opened, but no healing medicine applied. The sinner apprehends himself under a sentence of condemnation, but at the same time cannot apply any promise which

may afford hope and relief to him; groans under his burden, and knows not where to find ease or comfort, and dreads the consequences as what would sink him into hell. God appears to him as a consuming fire; his arrows stick fast in his soul; the poison of them drinketh up his spirits. If he endeavour to shake off his fears, and to relieve himself against his despairing thoughts, he is, notwithstanding, described as being like 'the troubled sea,' when it 'cannot rest,' which 'casts forth mire and dirt.'b This is a most afflictive case; concerning which it is said, that though 'the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, a wounded spirit who can bear?' [See Note N, page 152.] Thus it is with some when convinced of sin by the law. But there are others who endeavour to quiet their consciences by using indirect methods, thinking to make atonement for their sin, and by some instances of external reformation to make God amends, and thereby procure his favour, but to no purpose; for 'sin taking occasion by the commandment, works in them all manner of concupiscence.' And if they grow stupid, which is often the consequence, their sense of sin is entirely lost, and their repentance ends in presumption, and a great degree of boldness in the commission of all manner of wickedness.

2. We shall now consider how the Spirit works repentance unto life, which is principally insisted on in this Answer. This is said to be done by the word of God; not by the law without the gospel, but by them both, the one being made subservient to the other. The law shows the sinner his sin, and the gospel directs him where he may find a remedy. The one wounds and the other heals. 'The law enters,' as the apostle expresses it, 'that the offence might abound;' but the gospel shows him how 'grace does much more abound,' and where he may obtain forgiveness. By this means he is kept from sinking under the weight of guilt which lies on his conscience. The gospel also leads

him, from motives which are truly excellent, to hate and abstain from sin; for which reason his repentance is called evangelical.

The Difference between Legal and Evangelical Repentance

That we may better understand the nature of this repentance, we shall consider how it differs from that which we before described, which arises only from conviction of sin by the law, which a person may have who is destitute of this grace of repentance which we are speaking of. Repentance, of what kind soever it be, includes a sense of sin. But if the sense of sin be such as an unregenerate person may have, it includes little more than a sense of the danger and misery which he has exposed himself to by sins committed. The principal motives leading to it are the threatenings which the law of God denounces against those who violate it. Destruction from God is a terror to him who has such a sense of sin; and if this were not the consequence of sin, he would be so far from repenting of it, that it would be the object of his chief delight. Besides, that guilt which he charges himself with is principally such as arises from the commission of the most notorious crimes, which expose him to the greatest degree of punishment. Repentance unto life, on the contrary, brings a soul under a sense of the guilt of sin, as it is contrary to the holy nature and law of God, which the least, as well as the greatest sins, are opposed to, and contain a violation of. He, therefore, who has this repentance, charges himself not only with open sins which are detestable in the eyes of men, but with secret sins which others have little or no sense of,—sins of omission as well as sins of commission; and he is particularly affected with the sin of unbelief, inasmuch as it contains a contempt of Christ and of the grace of the gospel. He is sensible not only of those sins which break forth in his life, but of that propensity of nature whereby he is inclined to rebel against God. Hence, the sense of guilt which he

entertains differs, in some respects, from that which those are brought under who are destitute of saving repentance. But that in which they more especially differ is, that saving repentance includes a sense of the filth and odious nature of sin, and so considers it as defiling, or contrary to the holiness of God, and rendering the soul worthy to be abhorred by him. Hence, as the sense of guilt excites fear, and a dread of the wrath of God; so this sense of the odious nature of sin fills him with shame, confusion of face, and self-abhorrence. These are inseparably connected with the grace of repentance. Accordingly, they are joined together, as Job says, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;' or as God describes his people when he promises that he will bestow this blessing on them, 'Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.'g Before this they set too high a value upon themselves, and were ready to palliate and excuse their crimes, or insist on their innocence, though their iniquity was written in legible characters, as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, and to say with Ephraim, 'In all my labour they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin,' and resembled the rebellious people concerning whom the prophet Jeremiah says, that 'though in their skirts were found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents,' they had the front to say, 'Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me.'i When, however, God brings them to repentance, and heals their backslidings, they express themselves in a very different way: 'We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God.' Now, this is such an ingredient in true repentance as is not be found in that which falls short of being a saving grace. In the latter case, the sinner is afraid of punishment indeed, or perhaps he may be filled with shame because of the reproach which attends his vile and notorious crimes in the eyes of the world; yet he is not ashamed or confounded,

as considering how vile he has rendered himself in the eye of a holy God.

There is another thing observed in this Answer which is an ingredient in repentance unto life. This repentance is connected with faith, inasmuch as he who is the subject of it apprehends the mercy of God in Christ to such as are penitent; and this effectually secures him from that despair which sometimes, as was before observed, attends a legal repentance, as well as affords him relief against the sense of guilt with which this grace is attended. The difference between legal and evangelical repentance does not so much consist in the former representing sin as more aggravated, or in inducing him who is the subject of it to think himself a greater sinner than the other; for the true penitent is ready to confess himself the chief of sinners. He is far from extenuating his sin; being ready on all occasions to charge himself with more guilt than others are generally sensible of. But that which he depends upon as his only comfort and support is the mercy of God in Christ, or the consideration that there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared. This is what affords the principal motive and encouragement to repentance, and has a tendency to excite the various acts of it.

The Various Acts of Evangelical Repentance

We are thus led to consider what are the various acts of repentance unto life, or what are the fruits and effects produced by it.

1. The soul is filled with hatred of sin. When he who truly repents looks back on his past life, he bewails what cannot now be avoided, charges himself with folly and madness, and wishes, though to no purpose, that he had done many things which he has omitted, and avoided those sins, together with the occasions of them, which he has committed, the guilt of which lies with great weight upon him. How

glad would he be if lost seasons and opportunities of grace might be recalled, and the talents which were once put into his hand, though misimproved, regained! But all these wishes are in vain. These, however, are the after-thoughts which will arise in the minds of those who are brought under a sense of sin. Sin wounds the soul. The Spirit of God, when convincing of it, opens the wound, and causes a person to feel the smart of it, and gives him to know that 'it is an evil thing, and bitter, that he has forsaken the Lord his God.' This sometimes depresses the spirits, and causes him to walk softly, to 'sit alone and keep silence,'m being filled with an uneasiness which is very afflictive to him. At other times it gives vent to itself in tears, 'I am weary,' says the psalmist, 'with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.' In this case, the only thing which gives the penitent relief or comfort is, that the guilt of sin is removed by the blood of Christ, which tends to quiet his spirit, which would otherwise be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. We may add that sin is always the object of his detestation, even when there is an abatement of that grief which, by the divine supports and comforts, he is protected against. He hates sin, not merely because of the sad consequences of it, but as it is in itself the object of abhorrence. His heart is hence set against all sin; as the psalmist says, 'I hate every false way.'o This hatred discovers itself by putting him upon fleeing from it, together with all the occasions of it, or incentives to it. He not only abstains from those sins which they who have little more than the remains of moral virtue are ashamed of and afraid to commit, but hates every thing which has the appearance of sin; and this hatred is irreconcilable. As forgiveness does not make sin less odious in its own nature; so whatever experience he has of the grace of God in forgiveness, or whatever measure of peace he enjoys, whereby his grief and sorrow are assuaged, his hatred of sin not only remains but increases.

2. He, therefore, turns from sin unto God. He first hates sin, and then flees from it; seeing it to be the spring of all his grief and fears,—that which separates between him and his God. Thus Ephraim, when brought to repentance, and reflecting with a kind of indignation on his past conduct, when addicted to idols, is represented as saying, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' So the true penitent, who has hitherto been walking in those paths which lead to death and destruction, now inquires after the way of holiness, and the paths of peace. As he has hitherto walked contrary to God, now he desires to walk with him; and having wearied himself in the greatness of his way, and seeing no fruit in those things whereof he is now ashamed, and being brought into the utmost straits, he determines to return to his God and Father. In doing this he purposes and endeavours to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts those who had received good by his ministry that, 'with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.' This purpose is not like those hasty resolutions which unconverted sinners make, when God is hedging up their way with thorns, and they are under the most distressing apprehensions of his wrath. Then they say as the people did to Joshua, 'We will serve the Lord;'r though they are not sensible how difficult it is to fulfil the engagements which they lay themselves under, or of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and the need they stand in of grace from God to enable them so to do. This purpose to walk with God does not so much respect what a person will do hereafter; but it contains a resolution which is immediately put in execution; and so is opposed to the penitent's former obstinacy, when determining to go on in the way of his own heart. Thus the prodigal son, in the parable, no sooner resolved that he would 'arise and go to his Father,' than he arose and went. True repentance is always attended with endeavours after new obedience; so that a person lays aside that sloth and indolence which was inconsistent with his setting a due

value on or improving the means of grace. As the result of this, he now exerts himself, with all his might, in pursuing after those things by which he may approve himself God's faithful servant. And hereby he discovers the sincerity of his repentance. This he does, or rather is enabled to do, by that grace which at first began and then carries on this work in the soul, and by which he 'has his fruit unto holiness, and the end' thereof 'everlasting life.'t

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of Repentance

1. From what has been said we may infer that, since repentance is a grace which accompanies salvation, and consequently is absolutely necessary to it, it is an instance of unwarrantable and bold presumption, for impenitent sinners to expect that they shall be made partakers of the benefits which Christ has purchased, while they continue in a state of enmity, opposition, and rebellion against him, or that they shall be saved by him in their sins, without being saved from them. For 'he that covereth his sins, shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.'

2. Since repentance is the work of the Spirit, and his gift, we infer that whatever endeavours we are obliged to use, or whatever motives or inducements are given to lead us to it, we must not conclude that it is in our own power to repent when we please. It should, therefore, be the matter of our earnest and constant prayer to God, that he would turn our hearts, give us a true sight and sense of sin, accompanied with faith in Christ; as Ephraim is represented, saying, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.'

3. Let not those who have a distressing sense of their former sins, how great soever they have been, give way to despairing thoughts; but let them lay hold on the mercy of God in Christ, extended to the chief of sinners, and improve it to encourage them, from evangelical

motives, to hate sin, and forsake it. There will be a tendency to remove their fears while they look on God, not as a sin-revenging judge, but a reconciled Father, ready and willing to receive those who return to him with unfeigned repentance.

4. Since we daily commit sin, it follows that we stand in need of daily repentance. Moreover, repentance being a branch of sanctification, as the latter is a progressive work, so is the former. We are not to expect that sin should be wholly extirpated while we are in this imperfect state; and therefore it is constantly to be bewailed, and by the grace of God working effectually in us avoided; that, in consequence, we may have a comfortable hope that the promise shall be fulfilled, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.'

[NOTE N. Legal Convictions of Sin.—That there are "persons brought under convictions of sin, but not made partakers of the saving grace of repentance," is beyond doubt. But are we to believe that their convictions result from the work of the Holy Spirit on their soul, or, in other words, that, like all convictions which the Divine Spirit produces, they spring up in connexion with an exhibition to the mind of the work of Christ and the plan of mercy? To discuss this question here would only be to repeat in substance what was said in a former note, under the title "Common Grace." But I may remark that when the Saviour spake of the Comforter coming to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, he added, 'He will guide you into all truth; *** he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you,'—that when, through the prophet Zechariah, he promised to pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, he said, 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him,'—that the inspired comment upon the declaration, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,' points

us to the scenes of the day of Pentecost when 'all were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance,' and when, in connexion with the exhibition of Christ as the Saviour, men not only were 'goaded in their heart,' but 'received the word gladly,'—and that, in general throughout the scriptures, the economical work of the Divine Spirit is represented as a work of grace and a work connected with salvation, while such conviction of sin as he produces is exhibited as resulting by means of a disclosure to the mind, not only of the claims of the divine law, but of the mediatorial work of the Redeemer. Convictions of sin, therefore, which are not attended with the saving grace of repentance, would seem to arise wholly from the effects of God's general moral administration, making impression upon man's natural conscience. They are, accordingly, found to be experienced by men in all varieties of circumstances,—not only as enjoying the ministration of the gospel and its ordinances, but as living amidst the ignorance and stupidities of heathenism. Mere conscience, when roused by peculiar occurrences, has proverbially an agitating and even terrific power; and it produces or entertains convictions of sin, self-accusations of guilt, which, whether weak or strong, are distinguished from the hallowing convictions produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit, just by their being unaccompanied with 'the saving grace of repentance.' While conviction accompanied with grace is just repentance, or a part of it, conviction unaccompanied with grace is unmingled self-accusation or remorse. Hence, persons who experience the latter may be to the full as miserable as Dr. Ridgeley describes. It is doubtful, however, whether the passage which he quotes has reference to the misery arising from their convictions: 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' The words would rather seem to describe the wretchedness arising from the depravity of their nature,—the turbulence and tempestuousness of their unholy

passions,—the tumult and agitation of proud and angry tempers, and of ungovernable and rabid lusts, which continually cast up, in the thoughts and conduct, pollution and vileness and every thing at war with tranquillity or repose.—ED.]

THE CONNECTION AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

QUESTION LXXVII. Wherein do Justification and Sanctification differ?

ANSWER. Although Sanctification be inseparably joined with Justification; yet they differ, in that God, in Justification, imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in Sanctification, his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former sin is pardoned, in the other it is subdued; the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation, the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.

THIS Answer being principally a recapitulation of what is contained in those which have been already insisted on, wherein the doctrine of justification and sanctification are particularly explained, we shall not much enlarge on it. But as there are some who suppose that one of these graces may be attained without the other; and as others confound them, as though to be justified and to be sanctified implied the same thing; we shall briefly consider, first, what is supposed in this Answer, namely, that justification and sanctification are inseparably joined together, and next, what is directly contained in

the Answer, namely, some things in which justification and sanctification differ.

The Connection between Justification and Sanctification

Sanctification and justification are inseparably joined together; so that no one has a warrant to claim the one without the other. This appears from the fact that they are graces which accompany salvation, "When the apostle connects justification and effectual calling together in the golden chain of our salvation, he includes sanctification in this calling. Elsewhere, when Christ is said to be 'made righteousness and redemption' to us for our justification, he is, at the same time, said to be made 'wisdom and sanctification.'a We are also said to be 'saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' which is the beginning of the work of sanctification, 'that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' Speaking of some who were once great sinners, and afterwards made true believers, the apostle says, that they were 'washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'c And when God promises to pardon and 'pass by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage,' he also gives them ground to expect that he would 'subdue their iniquities.' The former of these he does in justification; the latter, in sanctification.

From the connection which there is between justification and sanctification, we infer that no one has ground to conclude that his sins are pardoned, and that he shall be saved, while he is in an unsanctified state. For as such a supposition tends to turn the grace of God into wantonness; so it separates what he has joined together, and, in those who entertain it, is a certain evidence that they are neither justified nor sanctified. Let us therefore give diligence to

evince the truth of our justification, by our sanctification; or that we have a right and title to Christ's righteousness, by the life of faith, and the exercise of all those other graces which accompany or flow from it.

The Difference between Justification and Sanctification

We have, in this Answer, an account of some things in which justification and sanctification differ.

1. 'In justification God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us; whereas, in sanctification the Spirit infuseth grace and enableth to the exercise thereof.' What it is for God to impute Christ's righteousness has been already considered. We shall at present, therefore, make only one additional remark. The righteousness whereby we are justified is, without us, wrought out by Christ for us, —so that it is 'by his obedience,' as the apostle expresses it, that 'we are made righteous;' and that which Christ did as our surety, is placed to our account and accepted by the justice of God as if it had been done by us. In sanctification, on the other hand, the graces of the Spirit are wrought and excited in us; and we are denominated holy, and our right to eternal life is evinced, though not procured.

2. In justification sin is pardoned; in sanctification it is subdued. The former takes away its guilt; the latter its reigning power. When sin is pardoned, it shall not be our ruin; yet it gives us daily disturbance and uneasiness, makes work for repentance, and is to be opposed by our dying to it, and living to righteousness. This is, therefore, sufficiently distinguished from justification; which is also to be considered as a motive or inducement leading to it.

3. Justification equally frees all believers from the avenging wrath of God, in which respect it is perfect in this life, so that a justified

person shall never fall into condemnation; whereas, the work of sanctification is not equal in all, not perfect in this life, but growing up to perfection. For understanding this, let us consider that when we speak of justification as perfect in this life, or say that all are equally justified, we mean that when God forgives one sin, he forgives all; so that, as the apostle says, 'there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' And he adds, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died.'g Were it not so, a person might be said to be justified, and not have a right to eternal life, which implies a contradiction; for though he might be acquitted, as to the guilt charged upon him by one indictment, he would be condemned by that which is contained in another. We may hence infer, that all justified persons have an equal right to conclude themselves discharged from guilt, and the condemning sentence of the law of God; though all cannot see their right to claim this privilege by reason of the weakness of their faith. Sanctification, on the other hand, is far from being equal in all; for the best of believers have reason to complain of the weakness of their faith, and the imperfection of all other graces which are wrought in them by the Spirit. If it be inquired whence this imperfection of sanctification arises, a reply will be given under the following Answer.

THE IMPERFECTION OF SANCTIFICATION

QUESTION LXXVIII. Whence ariseth the imperfection of sanctification in believers?

ANSWER. The imperfection of sanctification in believers ariseth from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit, whereby they are often foiled with temptations, and fall into many sins, are hindered in all their spiritual services, and their best works are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God.

IN this Answer, we may consider, first, that there is something supposed, namely, that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life, or that there are the remnants of sin still abiding in the best of men; secondly, in what the imperfection of sanctification more especially discovers itself, and in particular, what we are to understand by the lusting of the flesh against the spirit; and thirdly, the consequences of this, namely, their being foiled with temptations, falling into many sins, and being hindered in their spiritual services.

The Imperfection of Believers

The thing supposed in this Answer, that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life, must be allowed by all who are not strangers to themselves. It is said, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' Fine gold is not without a mixture of some baser metal or alloy; even so, our best frames of spirit, when we think ourselves nearest heaven, or when we have most communion with

God, are not without a tincture of indwelling sin, which is easy to be discerned in us. Whatever grace we exercise, there are some defects attending it, with respect either to the manner of its exerting itself, or to the degree of it. Perfection, therefore, how desirable soever it be, is a blessing which we cannot at present attain to. And if it be thus with us when at the best, we shall find that, at other times, corrupt nature not only discovers itself, but gives us great interruption and disturbance; so that the work of sanctification seems to be, as it were, at a stand, and we are induced to question the truth and sincerity of our graces. If, notwithstanding this, we have sufficient ground to conclude that our hearts are right with God; we are still obliged to say with the apostle, that we are 'carnal, sold under sin,' and that, 'when we would do good, evil is present with us.'i This is an undeniable proof of the imperfection of the work of sanctification.

The contrary opinion is maintained by many; who pretend that perfection is attainable in this life. To gain countenance to their opinion, they refer to some scriptures in which persons are characterized as 'perfect' men, and to others in which perfection is represented as a duty incumbent on us. Thus our Saviour says, 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;' and the apostle, in his valedictory exhortation to the church, advises them to 'be perfect,' as well as 'of one mind,' as they expected that the God of love and peace should be with them.l These scriptures, however, speak not of a sinless perfection, but of such a perfection as is opposed to hypocrisy; as Hezekiah says concerning himself, that he had 'walked before the Lord in truth, and with a perfect heart.' The perfection of those who are thus described in scripture, is explained as denoting their uprightness. Thus Job is described as 'a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil;' though he elsewhere disclaims any pretensions to a sinless perfection, and says, 'If I say I am perfect, mine own mouth shall prove me perverse.'o So

when Noah is said to have been 'perfect in his generations,' the statement is explained as denoting that he was a 'just' or an 'holy man,' and one that 'walked with God.' As for scriptures which speak of perfection as a duty incumbent on us, they are to be understood, not concerning a perfection of degrees, but concerning the perfection of grace, as to those essential parts of it without which it could not be denominated true and genuine. True grace is perfect indeed, as it contains those necessary ingredients whereby an action is denominated good in all its circumstances, in opposition to that which is so only in some respects; and therefore it must proceed from a good principle, a heart renewed by regenerating grace; it must be agreeable to the rule which God has prescribed in the gospel, and be performed in a right manner and for right ends. Thus a person may be said to be a perfect man, just as a new-born infant is denominated a man, as having all the essential perfections of the human nature, though not arrived at that perfection, in other respects, to which it shall afterwards attain. Accordingly, grace, when described in scripture as perfect, is sometimes explained by a metaphorical allusion to a state of perfect manhood, in opposition to that of children. In this manner the apostle speaks of some, whom he represents as 'being of full age,'—where the same word is usedq which is elsewhere rendered 'perfect;' and these he opposes to others whom he had been speaking of as weak believers, or 'babes' in Christ. Elsewhere also he speaks of the church, which he styles 'the body of Christ,' as arrived at a state of manhood, and so calls it 'a perfect man,' which had attained 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ'—still alluding to that stature at which persons arrive when they are adult; and these he opposes in the following words, to children, who, through the weakness of their faith, were liable to be 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.'s Moreover, in other places where Christians are described as perfect, there is a word used which signifies their having that internal

furniture whereby they are prepared or disposed to do what is good. Thus the apostle speaks of 'the man of God' being 'perfect,' that is, 'throughly furnished unto all good works.'u Elsewhere also he prays for those to whom he writes, that God would 'make them perfect in,' or for, 'every good work,' to the end 'that they may do his will.' This is such a perfection as is necessary to our putting forth any act of grace; and therefore does not in the least infer that perfection which they plead for whom we are now opposing.

Indeed, they take occasion to defend their doctrine, not merely from the sense they give of those scriptures which speak of persons being perfect,—which they cannot but suppose may be otherwise understood; but the main thing from which they defend it is the opinion that God does not require sinless perfection of fallen man, inasmuch as that is impossible,—and that therefore he calls that perfection which includes our using those endeavours to lead a good life which are in our own power. This opinion is agreeable to the Pelagian scheme, and to that which the Papists maintain; who make farther advances on the Pelagian hypothesis, and assert, not only that men may attain perfection in this life, but that they may arrive at such a degree of it as exceeds the demands of the law, and perform works of supererogation. This doctrine is calculated to establish that of justification by works. What may be alleged in opposition to it is, that it is disagreeable to the divine perfections, and a notorious making void of the law of God, to assert that our obligation to yield perfect obedience ceases, because we have lost our power to perform it; as though a person's being insolvent, were a sufficient excuse for his not paying a just debt. We must distinguish between God's demanding perfect obedience as an outstanding debt, which is consistent with the glory of his holiness and sovereignty as a law-giver; and his determining that we shall not be saved, unless we perform it in our own persons. We also distinguish between his

connecting a right to eternal life with our performing perfect obedience, as what he might justly insist on according to the tenor of the first covenant, as our Saviour tells the young man in the gospel 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;' and his resolving that we shall not be saved, unless we are able to perform it. The gospel proposes another expedient, namely, that they who were obliged to yield perfect obedience, and ought to be humbled for their inability to perform it, should depend on Christ's righteousness, which is the foundation of their right to eternal life; in which respect they are said to be perfect or 'complete in him.'z This is the only just notion of perfection, as attainable in this life. To conclude this Head, it is very unreasonable for a person to suppose that God will abate some part of the debt of perfect obedience, and so to call our performing those works which have many imperfections adhering to them, a state of perfection. To do this, is to make it an easier matter to be a Christian than God has made it. Thus concerning the thing supposed in this Answer, namely, that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life.

Why Believers are allowed to be Imperfect

But before we pass to another subject, we shall inquire why God does not bring this work to perfection at once; which he could easily have done, and, as is certain, will do when he brings the soul to heaven. Now, let it be considered in general, that it is not meet for us to say unto God, Why dost thou thus? especially considering that this, as well as many of his other works, is designed to display the glory of his sovereignty; which very eminently appears in the beginning, carrying on, and perfecting the work of grace. We may as well ask the reason, why he did not begin the work of sanctification sooner, or why he makes use of this or that instrument or means rather than another to effect it. These things are to be resolved into his own

pleasure. But as it is evident that he does not bring this work to perfection in this world, we may adore his wisdom in this arrangement, as well as his sovereignty.

1. Hereby he gives his people occasion to exercise repentance and godly sorrow for their former sins committed before they were converted. Perfect holiness would admit of no occasion to bring past sins to remembrance; but when we sin daily, and have daily need of the exercise of repentance and godly sorrow, we have occasion to entertain a more sensible view of past sins. When corrupt nature discovers itself in those who are converted, they take occasion to consider how they have been transgressors from the womb. Thus David, when he repented of his sin in the matter of Uriah, at the same time that he aggravated the guilt of this crime as it justly deserved, he called to mind his former sins from his very infancy, and charged that guilt upon himself which he brought into the world: 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' And when Job considers God's afflictive providences towards him, as designed to bring sin to remembrance, and desires that he would 'make him to know his transgression and his sin;' he adds, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'b Sins committed after conversion were brought to mind, and ordered as a means to humble him for those which were committed before it. As for sins committed before conversion, they cannot, till he who has committed them be converted, be said to be truly repented of; for to say that they can would be to suppose the grace of repentance antecedent to conversion. Hence, if the work of sanctification were to be immediately brought to perfection, perfect holiness would here be as much attended with perfect happiness as it is in heaven, and consequently godly sorrow would be no more exercised on earth than it is there. But God, in ordering the gradual progress of the work of

sanctification, attended with the remains of sin, gives occasion to many humbling reflections, tending to excite unfeigned repentance, not only for sins committed after they had experienced the grace of God, but for those great lengths they ran in sin before they tasted that the Lord was gracious. On this account, he does not bring the work of sanctification to perfection in this present world.

2. Another reason of this dispensation of providence is, that believers, from their own experience of the breakings forth of corruption, together with the guilt they contract thereby, and the advantage they receive in gaining any victory over it, may be qualified to administer suitable advice and warning to those who are in a state of unregeneracy, that they may be persuaded to see the evil of sin, which at present they do not.

3. God farther orders this, that he may give occasion to his people to exercise a daily conflict with indwelling sin. He suffers it to give them great disturbance and uneasiness, that they may be induced to endeavour to mortify it, and be found in the exercise of such graces as are adapted to an imperfect state. These graces cannot be exercised in heaven; nor could they be exercised on earth, were believers to be brought into a sinless state and remain in it while here; particularly there could not be any acts of faith, in managing that conflict whereby they endeavour to stand their ground while exposed to the difficulties which arise from the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit.

How the Imperfection of Sanctification is displayed

We are now led to inquire in what the imperfection of sanctification more especially discovers itself. This it does in the weakness of every grace which we are at any time enabled to act, and in the many failures we are chargeable with in the performance of every duty

incumbent upon us; so that, as appears from what was said under a former Head concerning perfection as not attainable in this life, if an exact scrutiny were made into our best actions, and they weighed in the balance, they would be found very defective. But the imperfection of sanctification more particularly appears, as is observed in this Answer, from the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit. Thus the apostle speaks of 'the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,' and of the contrariety of the one to the other, 'so that we cannot do the things that we would;' and he points himself out as an instance when he says, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.'d This reluctance and opposition to what is good, he lays to the charge of sin which dwelt in him, which he considers as having, as it were, the force of a law. In particular, he styles it 'the law of his members warring against the law of his mind;' which is the same thing as the lusting of the flesh against the spirit. It hence appears that, when God implants a principle of grace in regeneration, and carries on the work of sanctification in believers, he does not wholly destroy or root out those habits of sin which were formerly in the soul, but enables us to militate against and overcome them by his implanting and exciting a principle of grace. Hence arises this conflict which we are to consider.

Indwelling sin is constantly opposing the principle of grace; but it does not always prevail against it. The event or success of this combat is various, at different times. When corrupt nature prevails, the principle of grace, though not wholly extinguished, remains inactive, or does not exert itself as at other times. All grace becomes languid, and there appears but little difference between the believer and an unbeliever. He falls into very great sins, whereby he wounds

his own conscience, grieves the Holy Spirit, and makes sad work for a bitter repentance, which will afterwards follow. But as the principle of spiritual life and grace is not wholly lost, it will some time or other be excited, and then will oppose the flesh or the corruption of nature, and maintain its ground against it; and, as the result, those acts of grace will be again put forth which were before suspended.

Having thus given an account of the conflict between indwelling sin and grace, we shall now more particularly show how the habits of sin exert themselves in those who are unregenerate, where there is no principle of grace to oppose them, and then how they exert themselves in believers, what opposition is made to them by the principle of grace in them, and how it comes to pass that sometimes the one prevails, and sometimes the other.

1. We shall consider those violent efforts which are made by corrupt nature, in those who are unregenerate. Though there is no principle of grace in such persons to enable them to withstand these; yet they have a conflict in their own spirits. There is something in nature which, for a time, keeps them from complying with temptations to the greatest sins; though the flesh, or that propensity which is in them to sin, will prevail at last, and lead them from one degree of impiety to another, unless prevented by the grace of God. Here the conflict is between corrupt nature and an enlightened conscience. This is the case more especially in those who have had the advantage of a religious education, and the good example of some whom they have conversed with, whereby they have contracted some habits of moral virtue which are not immediately extinguished. It is not an easy matter to persuade them to commit those gross and scandalous sins which others, whose minds are blinded, and whose hearts are hardened to a greater degree by the deceitfulness of sin, commit with greediness and without remorse. The principles of education are not

immediately broken through; for in this case men meet with a great struggle in their own breasts, before they entirely lose them; and they proceed, by various steps, from one degree of wickedness to another. A breach is first made in the fence, and afterwards widened by a continuance in the same sins, or by committing new ones, especially such as have in them a greater degree of presumption. The individual is hence disposed to comply with temptations to greater sins; though it would be to no purpose to tempt him to be openly profane, blaspheme the name of God, or cast off all external forms of religion, and abandon himself to those immoralities which the most notoriously wicked and profligate sinners commit without shame, till he has paved the way to them by the commission of other sins which lead to them.

That which at first prevents or restrains him from the commission of them, is something short of a principle of grace: we call it the dictates of natural conscience, which often checks and reproves him. His natural temper or disposition is not at present so far vitiated as to allow of anything which is openly vile and scandalous, or to incline him to pursue it. He abhors it, and, as it were, trembles at the thought of it. Thus, when Hazael was told by the prophet Elisha of all the evil which he would do to the children of Israel, that he would 'set their strongholds on fire, slay their young men with the sword, dash their children, and rip up their women with child,' he entertained the thought with a kind of abhorrence, and said, 'But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?' Yet afterwards, when king of Syria, we find him of another mind; for he was a greater scourge to the people of God than any of the neighbouring princes, and 'smote them in all the coasts of Israel.'g Now, that which prevents these greater sins is generally fear or shame. Men's consciences terrify them with the thoughts of the wrath of God to which they would expose themselves by committing them; or they are apprehensive

that such a course of life would blast their reputation amongst men, and be altogether inconsistent with that form of godliness which they have had a liking to from their childhood. But as these restraints do not proceed from the internal and powerful influence of regenerating grace, being excited by lower motives than those which the Spirit of God suggests in those who are converted,—as natural conscience is the main restraint, corrupt nature first endeavours to counteract its dictates, and by degrees gets the mastery over them. When conscience reproves the transgressors, they first offer a bribe to it by performing some moral duties to silence its accusations for presumptuous sins, and pretend that their crime falls short of those Committed by many others. At other times, they complain of its being too strict in its demands of duty, or severe in its reproofs for sin. If all this will not prevail against it, and if it still perform the office of a faithful reprover, the sinner resolves to stop his ears against convictions. If even this will not altogether prevent his being made uneasy, he betakes himself to those diversions which may give another turn to his thoughts; he will not allow himself time for serious reflection; he associates with those whose conversation will effectually tend to extinguish all his former impressions of moral virtue. By this means he at last stupifies his conscience, so that it becomes, as the apostle expresses it, 'seared with a hot iron;' and so he gets, as I may express it, a fatal victory over himself, and henceforth meets with no reluctance or opposition in his own breast, while, 'being past feeling, he gives himself over unto lasciviousness, to work uncleanness' and all manner of 'iniquity with greediness.'i

2. We are now led to consider the conflict which is between the flesh and the spirit in those in whom the work of sanctification is begun. Here we shall first observe the lustings of the flesh; and then the opposition it meets with from the principle of grace implanted and excited in them, which is called the lusting of the spirit against it.

Now, as to corrupt nature exerting itself in believers to prevent the actings of grace, what gives occasion to it is the Spirit's withdrawing his powerful influences; which, when the soul is favoured with them, have a tendency to prevent those pernicious consequences which otherwise ensue. God withdraws these powerful influences sometimes in a way of sovereignty, to show the believer that it is not in his own power to avoid sin when he will, or that he cannot, without the aids of divine grace, withstand those temptations which are offered to him to commit it. Or God withdraws these influences with a design to let him know what is in his heart, to give him occasion to humble him for past sins or present miscarriages, and to make him more watchful for the future.—Again, there are some things which present themselves in an objective way, which are as so many snares laid to entangle him. Corrupt nature makes a bad improvement of these; so that his natural constitution is more and more vitiated by giving way to sin, and defiled by the remains of sin which dwelleth in him. The temptation is generally adapted to the corrupt inclination of his nature, and Satan has a hand in it. Thus, if his natural temper incline him to be proud or ambitious, immediately the honours and applause of the world are presented to him; and he never wants examples of those who, in an unlawful way, have gained a great measure of esteem in the world, and made themselves considerable in the stations in which they have been placed. If he is naturally addicted to pleasures, of what kind soever they be, something is offered which is agreeable to corrupt nature, and which seems delightful to it, though it is in itself sinful. If he is more than ordinarily addicted to covetousness, the profits and advantages of the world are presented as a bait to corrupt nature, and groundless fears are raised in him of being reduced to poverty, which, by an immoderate pursuit after the world, he is tempted to guard against. If his natural constitution inclines him to resent injuries, Satan has always his instruments ready at hand to stir up

his corruption and provoke him to wrath, by offering either real or supposed injuries; magnifying the former beyond their due bounds, or inferring the latter without duly considering the design of those whose innocent behaviour sometimes gives occasion to them, and, at the same time, overcharging his thoughts with them as though no expedient could be found to atone for them. If his natural constitution inclines him to sloth and inactivity, the difficulties of religion are set before him to discourage him from the exercise of that diligence which is necessary to surmount them. If, on the other hand, his natural temper leads him to be courageous and resolute, corrupt nature endeavours to make him self-confident, and thereby to weaken his trust in God. Or if he is naturally inclined to fear, something is offered to him which may tend to his discouragement, and to sink him into despair. These are the methods used by the flesh, when lusting against the spirit.

Let us next consider the opposition of the spirit to the flesh, or how the principle of grace in believers inclines them to make a stand against indwelling sin, which is called the lusting of the spirit against the flesh. The grace of God, when wrought in the heart in regeneration, is not an inactive principle; for it soon exerts itself, being excited by the power of the Spirit, who implanted it. There henceforth is, or ought to be, a constant opposition made by it to corrupt nature. This is the case, not only as the believer, with unfeigned repentance, mourns on account of corrupt nature, and exercises that self-abhorrence which the too great prevalence of it calls for; but as it leads him to implore help from God against it, by whose assistance he endeavours to subdue the corrupt motions of the flesh, or, as the apostle expresses it, to 'mortify the deeds of the body,' that, in consequence, they may not be entertained, or prove injurious and destructive to him. Moreover, as there is something objective, as well as subjective, in this work, since the power of God

never excites the principle of grace without presenting objects for it to be conversant about; so there are several things suggested to the soul which, if duly weighed and improved, are a means conducive to its being preserved from a compliance with the corrupt motions of indwelling sin. These are of a superior nature to those made use of by an enlightened conscience, in unregenerate persons, to prevent their committing the vilest abominations. Indeed, they are such—especially some of them—as, from the nature of the thing, can be used by none but those in whom the work of grace is begun. Accordingly, a believer considers not only the glorious excellencies and perfections of Christ, which he is now duly sensible of, as he is said to be precious to them that believe; but he is also affected with the manifold engagements which he has been laid under to love him, and to hate and oppose every thing which is contrary to his glory and interest. The love of Christ constraineth him; and therefore he abhors the thoughts of being so ungrateful and disingenuous as he would appear to be, should he fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The sense of redeeming love and grace is deeply impressed on his soul. He calls to mind how he has been quickened, effectually called, and brought into the way of peace and holiness; and therefore cannot entertain any thoughts of relapsing or returning again to folly. Here he considers the great advantage which he has received; which he would not lose on any terms. The delight which he has had in the ways of God and godliness, has been so great, that corrupt nature cannot produce any thing which may be an equivalent for the loss of it. He is very sensible that the more closely he has walked with God, the more comfortably he has walked. Besides, he looks forward, and, by faith, takes a view of the blessed issue of the life of grace, or of those reserves of glory which are laid up for him in another world; and he is, in consequence, inclined to cast the utmost contempt on every thing which has the least tendency to induce him to relinquish or abandon his interest in them.—Again, he considers and improves the

bright examples which are set before him to encourage him to go on in the way of holiness; takes Christ himself for a pattern, endeavouring, so far as he is able, to follow him; walks as they have done who have not only stood their ground, but come off victorious in the conflict, and are reaping the blessed fruits and effects of victory. He also considers as an inducement to him to oppose the corrupt motions of the flesh, that he has by faith, as his own act and deed, in the most solemn manner, given up himself to Christ entirely, and without reserve, and professed his obligation to obey him in all things, and to avoid whatever has a tendency to displease him. He hence reckons that he is not his own, or at his own disposal, but Christ's, whose he is, by a double right, not only as purchased by him, but as devoted and consecrated to him. He therefore says with the apostle, 'How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?'l He communes with himself to this effect: 'I have given up my name to Christ; and I have not, since doing so, seen the least reason to repent of what I did. I have not found the least iniquity in him, neither has he been a hard master; but, on the other hand, he has expressed the greatest tenderness and compassion to me; and to his grace alone it is owing that I am what I am. Shall I, then, abandon his interest, or prove a deserter at last, and turn aside into the enemy's camp? Is there any thing which can be proposed as a sufficient motive for my doing so?' Such thoughts as these, through the prevailing influence of the principle of grace implanted and excited by the Spirit, are an effectual means to keep him from a sinful compliance with the motions of the flesh, and to excite him to make the greatest resistance against them.

We have thus considered the opposition which there is between the flesh and the spirit, and how each of these prevails by turns. We might now observe the consequence of the victory obtained on either side. When grace prevails, all things tend to promote our spiritual

peace and joy; and we are fortified against temptations, and not only enabled to stand our ground, but made more than conquerors through him that loved us. But it is not always so with a believer. He sometimes finds that corrupt nature prevails; and then many sad consequences follow, which not only occasion the loss of the peace and joy which he had before, but expose him to many troubles which render his life very uncomfortable.

The Consequences of the Prevailing Power of Indwelling Sin

We are thus led to consider what are the consequences of the prevailing power of indwelling sin. When the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and God is pleased to withhold his grace, the soul is subjected to many evils. These are mentioned in the remaining part of this Answer.

1. A believer is foiled with temptation. Satan, by this means, gains ground against him, and pursues the victory which the flesh has obtained against the spirit. His conflicts are now doubled, arising, as the apostle expresses it, not only from 'flesh and blood,' but from 'the rulers of the darkness of this world.' His difficulties increase upon him; his enemies are more insulting, and he less able to stand his ground against them; his faith is weakened, and his fears are increasing, so that he is perpetually subject to bondage. Sometimes he is inclined to think that he shall one day fall, and that whatever he formerly thought he had gained will be lost by the assaults of his spiritual enemies. At other times he is disposed to question whether ever he had the truth of grace or not. In this case his spirit must needs be filled with the greatest perplexity, and almost overwhelmed within him. He is destitute of that boldness or liberty of access to the throne of grace, and that comfortable sense of his interest in Christ,

which once he had; and he finds it very difficult to recover those lively frames which he has lost, or to stand his ground against the great opposition made by corrupt nature, which still increases as faith grows weaker.

2. Another consequence of the power of indwelling sin, is the believer's falling into many sins. We are not to suppose, indeed, that he shall be so far left as to fall into a state of unregeneracy, or lose the principle of grace which was implanted in regeneration. Yet when this principle does not exert itself, and corrupt nature, on the other hand, is prevalent, it is hard to say how far he will run into the commission of known and wilful sins. As for sins of infirmity, they cannot be avoided, when we are in the best frame. But in this case we shall find a person committing presumptuous sins, so that if we were to judge of his state by his present frames, without considering the former experiences which he had of the grace of God, we should be ready to question whether his heart were right with God. Sins of omission generally follow. He cannot draw nigh to God with that frame of spirit which he once had, and therefore is ready to say, 'What profit should I have if I pray unto him?' and sometimes concludes that he contracts guilt by attempting to engage in holy duties. We may add, as is farther observed in this. Answer, that he is hindered in all his spiritual services. Thus the apostle says, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.'o He finds his heart disposed to wander from God, and his thoughts taken up with vanity. On this account it may be truly said, that his best works are not only imperfect, but defiled in the sight of God, who searcheth the heart, and observes the various steps by which it treacherously departs from him. Nor can the believer find any way to recover himself till God is pleased to revive his work, take away the guilt which he has contracted, recover him out of the snare into which he has fallen, and so cause the work on grace again to flourish in the soul as it once did.

Practical Inferences from the Imperfect State of Believers

We shall conclude with some inferences from what has been said concerning the imperfection of sanctification in believers, together with the reasons and consequences of it.

1. Since sinless perfection is not attainable in this life, we should take occasion to give a check to our censorious thoughts concerning persons or things, so as not to determine persons to be in an unconverted state, because they are chargeable with many sinful infirmities, which are not inconsistent with the truth of grace. Some abatements are to be made for their being sanctified but in part, and having the remnants of sin in them. Indeed, the greatest degree of grace which can be attained here, comes far short of that which the saints have arrived at in heaven. Accordingly, the difference between a believer and an unregenerate sinner does not consist in the one being perfect and the other imperfect; for when we consider the brightest characters given of any in scripture, their blemishes as well as their graces are recorded, so that none but our Saviour could challenge the world to convict or reprove them of sin. The apostle speaks of Elias, as 'a man subject to like passions as we are;' and he might have spoken similarly of many others. Hence, when we are sensible of our own imperfections, we ought to inquire whether the spots we find in ourselves are like the spots of God's children? or whether our infirmities may be reckoned consistent with the truth of grace? Should we be able to draw a favourable conclusion, then, though it affords matter for humiliation that we are liable to any sinful failures or defects, it will be some encouragement to us, and matter of thanksgiving to God, that notwithstanding this our hearts are right with him.

That we may be, in some measure, satisfied as to this matter, we must distinguish between a person's being tempted to the greatest sins which are inconsistent with the truth of grace, and his complying with the temptation. A temptation of this kind may offer itself; and, at the same time, grace may exert itself in an eminent degree, by the opposition which it makes to it, whether it arises from indwelling sin or from Satan.—Again, when we read of some sins which are inconsistent with the truth of grace, such as those which the apostle speaks of, when he says that 'neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God,' and elsewhere, that 'the fearful and unbelieving,' as well as those who are guilty of other notorious crimes, shall 'have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,'r we must distinguish between those who are guilty of these sins in a less degree than what is intended, when they are said to exclude from the kingdom of heaven; and others who are guilty of them, in a notorious degree, with greater aggravations. Thus unbelieving fears in those who are called to suffer for Christ's sake, if they do not issue in a denial of him, are not altogether inconsistent with the truth of grace, though they render a person guilty before God. The least degree of covetousness, in the same way, though it is not to be excused, does not exclude from the kingdom of heaven; but the prevailing love of the world, or the immoderate pursuit of it in those who use unlawful means to attain it, or have a rooted habitual desire after it more than after Christ, or put it in his room, is to be reckoned a mark of unregeneracy.—Further, we must distinguish between sinful infirmities, and allowed infirmities, or those who sin through surprise, being assaulted by an unforeseen temptation, when not on their guard, and those who commit the same sin with deliberation. The latter gives greater ground to fear that a person is in a state of unregeneracy than the

former.—We must also distinguish between sins committed and repented of, with that degree of godly sorrow which is proportioned to their respective aggravations; and the same sins committed and continued in with impenitency. The latter gives ground to conclude that a person is in an unconverted state, though not the former. The difference arises not merely from the nature of the crimes, for we suppose the sins in themselves to be the same; but from other evidences which a person has or has not of his being in a state of grace.

2. From what has been said concerning the opposition which there is between natural conscience and corrupt nature in the unregenerate, we may infer that it is a great blessing to have a religious education, as it has a tendency to prevent many enormities which others who are destitute of it run into. They who have had this privilege ought to bless God for it, and make a right improvement of it. But as those principles which take their rise from it are liable, unless the grace of God prevent, to be overcome and lost; let us press after something more than this, and be importunate with God, whose providence has favoured us thus far, that he would give us a better preservative against sin, or that its prevailing power may be prevented by converting grace.

3. From the opposition which corrupt nature makes in believers to the work of grace, we may infer that the standing of the best of men, or their not being chargeable with the greatest sins, is owing not so much to themselves as to the grace of God, by which we are what we are; that therefore the glory of our being preserved from such sins belongs entirely to him; that we have reason, when we are praying against our spiritual enemies, to beg that God would deliver us from the greatest of them, namely, ourselves; and that he who has a sovereignty over the hearts of all men, and can govern and sanctify

their natural tempers and dispositions, would keep us from being drawn away by these; and that we ought to walk watchfully, and be always on our guard, depending on the grace of God for help, that indwelling sin may not so far prevail as to turn aside and alienate our affections from him.

4. From what has been said concerning the flesh and the spirit prevailing by turns, we infer the uncertainty of the frame of our spirits, and what changes we are liable to, with respect to the actings of grace or the comforts which result from it. This somewhat resembles the state of man as subject to various changes with respect to the dispensations of providence; sometimes lifted up, at other times cast down, and not abiding long in the same condition. Thus we are enabled at some times to gain advantage over indwelling sin, and enjoy the comforts which arise thence; at other times, when the flesh prevails, the acts of grace are interrupted, and its comforts almost, if not entirely, lost. What reason have we, therefore, to bless God that, though our graces are far from being brought to perfection, and our frames so various, yet he has given us ground to conclude that grace shall not wholly be lost, and that our state, as we are justified, is not liable to the same uncertainty, so that that which interrupts the progress of sanctification does not bring us into an unjustified state, or render us liable to condemnation?

5. From the inconveniences we sustain by the flesh prevailing against the spirit, as we are foiled by temptation, fall into sins, and are hindered in spiritual services, we infer the great hurt which sin does to those who are in a justified and sanctified state, as well as to those who are under the dominion of it. It is hence a vile and unwarrantable way of speaking to say, as some do, that because nothing shall separate them from the love of Christ, or bring those who are justified back again into an unjustified state, therefore sin

can do them no hurt; as though all the consequences of the prevalency of corrupt nature, and the dishonour we bring to God, and the guilt we contract, could hardly be reckoned prejudicial. This is such a way of speaking as confutes itself in the opinion of all judicious and sober Christians.—Again, we might infer from the consequences of the prevalence of corruption, as we are liable hereby to be discouraged from duty or hindered in the performance of it, that we ought, if we find it thus with us, to take occasion to inquire whether some secret sin be not indulged and entertained by us, which gives occasion to the prevalence of corrupt nature, and for which we ought to be humbled. Or if we have lived in the omission of those duties which are incumbent on us, or have provoked God to leave us to ourselves, and so have had a hand in our present evils, we have occasion for great humiliation. And we ought to be very importunate with God for restoring grace, not only that our faith may not fail, but that we may be recovered out of the snare in which we are entangled, and may be brought off victorious over all our spiritual enemies.

PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE

QUESTION LXXIX. May not true believers, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace?

ANSWER. True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, his continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can

neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

General View of the Doctrine of Perseverance

IT is natural for persons, when they enjoy any blessing, to be solicitous about their retaining it; otherwise the pleasure which arises from it, if it is likely to be short and transitory, is rather an amusement than a solid and substantial happiness. The same may be said of those graces and privileges which believers are made partakers of, as the fruits and effects of the death of Christ. These are undoubtedly the most valuable blessings. It hence highly concerns us to inquire whether we may assuredly conclude that we shall not lose them, and so fail of that future blessedness which we have had so delightful a prospect of.

The saints' perseverance has been denied not only by many since the Reformation, and, in particular, by Papists, Socinians, and Remonstrants, but also by the Pelagians of old, and by all those whose sentiments bear some affinity to their scheme, or are derived from it. Indeed, when persons endeavour to establish the doctrines of conditional election, universal redemption, &c.; or when they explain the nature of human liberty so as to make the grace of God to be dependent on it for its efficacy in the beginning and carrying on of the work of conversion and sanctification; and accordingly assert, that the will has an equal power to determine itself to good or evil,—that the grace of God affords no other assistance to promote the one or guard against the other than what is objective, or, at least, than by supporting our natural faculties,—and, if there be any divine concourse, that it consists only in what respects the external dispensations of providence, as a remote means conducive to the end, the event depending on our own conduct or disposition to

improve these means; I say, when persons maintain these and similar doctrines, it is not to be wondered if we find them pleading for the possibility of a believer's falling totally and finally from the grace of God. They who have brought themselves into a state of grace, may apostatize or fall from it. If a man's free-will first inclined itself to exercise those graces which we call special, such as faith, repentance, love to God, &c., it follows that he may lose them and relapse to the contrary vices, and may plunge himself into the same depths of sin and misery whence he had escaped. According to this scheme, there may be, in the course of our lives, a great many instances of defection from the grace of God, and recovery to it, and finally, a drawing back unto perdition. Or if a person be so happy as to recover himself out of his last apostacy before he leaves the world, he is saved; otherwise, he finally perishes. This is a doctrine which some defend; but the contrary to it we shall endeavour to maintain, as being the subject insisted on in this Answer.

But before we proceed to the defence of it, it may not be amiss to premise something which may have, at least, a remote tendency to dispose us to receive conviction from the arguments which may be brought to prove it. We may consider that the contrary side of the question is in itself less desirable, if it could be defended. It is certain that the doctrine of the possibility of the saints falling from grace, tends very much to abate that delight and comfort which the believer has in the fore-views of the issue and event of his present state. It is a very melancholy thought to consider that he who has now advanced to the very borders of heaven, may be cast down into hell; that though he has at present an interest in the special and discriminating love of God, he may afterwards become the object of his hatred, so as never to behold his face with joy in a future world; that, though his feet are set upon a rock, his goings are not established; that, though he is walking in a plain and safe path, he may be ensnared,

entangled, and fall, so as never to rise again; that though God is his friend, he may suffer him to fall into the hands of his enemies, and be in consequence ruined and undone, as though his own glory were not concerned in his coming off victorious over them, or connected with the salvation of his people. Hence, as this doctrine renders the state of believers very precarious and uncertain, it tends effectually to damp their joys, and blast their expectations, and subject them to perpetual bondage; and it is a great hinderance to their offering praise and thanksgiving to God, whose grace is not so much magnified towards them as it would be, had they ground to conclude that the work which is now begun should certainly be brought to perfection. On the other hand, the doctrine which we are to maintain is in itself so very comfortable that, if we were at present in suspense concerning its truth, we cannot but desire that it may appear to be agreeable to the mind of God. It is certainly a very delightful thing for us to be assured, that what is at present well, shall end well; that they who are brought to believe in Christ, shall for ever abide with him; and that the work of grace which, at present, affords so fair and pleasing a prospect of its being at last perfected in glory, shall not miscarry. This will have a tendency to enhance our joy in proportion to the ground we have to conclude that the work is true and genuine; and it will excite our thankfulness to God, when we consider that he who is the author will also be the finisher of faith. It is certain, therefore, that this doctrine deserves confirmation.

We shall endeavour to establish our faith in it according to the following method:—First, we shall consider what we are to understand by persevering in grace, or falling from it. Secondly, we shall prove that the best believers would certainly fall from grace, were they left to themselves; so that their perseverance in grace is principally to be ascribed to the power of God, which keeps them through faith unto salvation. Thirdly, we shall consider what ground

we have to conclude that the saints shall persevere in grace; and so explain and illustrate the several arguments insisted on in this Answer, and add some others taken from several scriptures by which this doctrine may be defended. Lastly, we shall endeavour to answer some objections which are generally brought against it.

Explanation of the Doctrine of Perseverance

We shall consider what we are to understand by persevering in grace, or falling from it.

1. When we speak of a person as persevering in grace, we suppose that he has the truth of grace. We do not mean that a person may not fall away from a profession of faith; or that no one can lose that which we generally call common grace, which, in many things, bears a resemblance to that which is saving. We have already shown that there is a temporary faith whereby persons appear religious while their doing so comports with their secular interests; but when they are called by reason of persecution or tribulation, which may arise for the sake of the gospel, to forego their worldly interests, or quit their pretensions to religion, they fall away, or lose that grace which, as the evangelist says, they 'seemed to have.' We read of some whose hope of salvation is like the spider's web, or the giving up of the ghost; but these are described not as true believers, but as hypocrites. It is beyond dispute that such may apostatize, and not only lay aside the external practice of some religious duties, but deny and oppose the doctrines of the gospel, which they once assented to the truth of.

2. It is certain that true believers may fall into very great sins; but yet they shall be recovered and brought again to repentance. We must distinguish, therefore, between their dishonouring Christ, disobeying his commands, and thereby provoking him to be angry with them;

and their falling away totally from him. We formerly considered, when we proved that perfection is not attainable in this life, that the best men are sometimes chargeable with great failings and defects. Indeed, sometimes their sins are very heinously aggravated, their conversation in the mean while discovering that they are destitute of the actings of grace, and that to such a degree that they can hardly be distinguished from those who are in an unregenerate state. It is hence one thing for a believer not to be able to put forth those acts of grace which he once did; and another thing for him to lose the principle of grace. It would be a very preposterous thing to say, that, when David sinned in the matter of Uriah, the principle of grace exerted itself; yet it was not wholly lost. It is not the same in this case as in the more common instances of the saints' infirmities, which they are daily chargeable with, and in which the conflict which there is between the flesh and the spirit appears; for when corrupt nature exerts itself to such a degree as to lead persons to the commission of deliberate and presumptuous sins, they hardly appear at the time to be believers. Yet if we compare what they were before they fell, with what they shall be when brought to repentance, we may conclude that they did not, by their fall, bring themselves altogether into a state of unregeneracy.

3. It is beyond dispute that, as a believer may be destitute of the acts of grace, so he may lose the comforts of it, and sink into the depths of despair. Of this we have several instances recorded in scripture, which correspond with the experiences of many in our day. Thus the psalmist at one time says, that he was 'cast down,' and 'his soul disquieted within him.' At another time he says, 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me.' Elsewhere also he complains, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath

he in anger shut up his tender mercies?'u Again, a believer is represented as being altogether destitute of a comfortable sense of the divine love, when complaining, 'Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction? Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off.' It is certain, too, that when at any time he falls into very great sins, which seem inconsistent with a state of grace, he has no present evidence that he is a believer, and is never favoured with a comfortable sense of his interest in Christ. Nor is the joy of God's salvation restored to him, till he is brought unfeignedly to repent of his sin. Former experiences will not evince the truth of grace, while he remains impenitent. It is a bad sign when any one, who formerly appeared to have the truth of grace, but is now fallen into great sins, thinks himself to be in a state of grace, without the exercise of true repentance; for his thinking so can be deemed little better than presumption. Yet God, whose mercy is infinitely above our deserts, will, in the end, recover him; though, at present, he does not look like one of his children.

4. There are some who suppose that a believer may totally, though not finally, fall from grace. They hold this opinion because they conclude, as they have sufficient warrant to do from scripture, that believers shall not fall finally, inasmuch as the purpose of God concerning election must stand; and that if they had not been chosen to salvation they would never have been brought into a state of grace. They suppose that persons, before they fell, were in a state of sanctification, and thus were partakers of a blessing which is inseparably connected with salvation. Hence, though they consider them, in their present state, as having lost the grace of sanctification,

and so to have fallen totally; yet they believe that they shall be recovered, and therefore not fall finally. Sanctification is Christ's purchase; and where grace is purchased for any one, a price of redemption is paid for his deliverance from condemnation; and consequently he shall be recovered and saved at last, though, at present, he is, according to their opinion, totally fallen. These suppose that, not only the acts of grace, but the very principle and the reason of it may be lost, because they cannot see how great and notorious sins, such as those committed by David, Peter, Solomon, and some others, can consist with a principle of grace. This opinion indeed cuts the knot of some difficulties which seem to attend the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, though falling into great sins. I think it may easily be proved, however, and we shall endeavour to do so, that believers shall be preserved from a total as well as from a final apostasy; or that, when they fall into great sins, they do not lose the principle of grace, though it be at the time inactive. This we shall take occasion to insist on more particularly under a following Head, when we consider the argument mentioned in this Answer for the proof of the doctrine of perseverance taken from the Spirit and seed of God abiding in a believer, as that which preserves him from a total as well as a final apostasy.

Perseverance the result of the Divine Power and Will

We shall now consider that the best believers would certainly fall from grace, were they left to themselves; so that their perseverance in grace is principally to be ascribed to the power of God, which keeps them through faith unto salvation. This is particularly observed in this Answer; which lays down several arguments to prove the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in grace, and supposes that perseverance to be founded on God's power and will to maintain it. God is styled 'the preserver of men,' inasmuch as he upholds all

things by the word of his power, so that independency on him is inconsistent with the idea of our being creatures; and we have no less ground to conclude that his power maintains the new creature, or that grace which took its rise from him. Should he fail or forsake us, we could not put forth the least act of grace, much less persevere in grace. When man at first came out of the hands of God, he was endowed with a greater ability to stand than any one, excepting our Saviour, has been favoured with since sin entered into the world; yet he apostatized, not from any necessity of nature, but by adhering to that temptation which he might have withstood. Then how unable is he to stand in his present state, having become weak, and, though brought into a state of grace, having been renewed and sanctified only in part, and having still the remains of corruption, which maintain a constant opposition to the principle of grace? Our perseverance in grace, therefore, cannot be owing to ourselves. Accordingly, the apostle ascribes it to a divine hand, when he says, 'we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'z

A late celebrated writer, on the other side of the question, attempts to evade the force of this argument to prove the doctrine of perseverance, though, I think, without much strength of reasoning. He says that all who are preserved to salvation are kept by the power of God, but not that all believers are so kept. We reply, that all believers whose character answers that of the church to which the apostle writes, shall be saved, namely, all who are 'begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them;' whose 'faith,' after it has been tried, shall be 'found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'b I say, these shall certainly be saved; and if all who are thus preserved to salvation are kept by the power of God, every thing is conceded which we contend for. But the writer referred to

adds, that when they are said to be kept through faith, the meaning is, they are kept if they continue in the faith. Now, their continuance in the faith was put out of all dispute, by what is said concerning them in the words going before and following, as now referred to. Besides, the writer's argument amounts to no more than this; they shall be kept by the power of God, if they keep themselves; or they shall persevere if they persevere. To this argument I need make no reply.

But as our main design in this Head is not to prove that believers shall persevere, a point which we reserve to our next, but to show that whatever we assert concerning their perseverance takes its rise from God; we shall consider this as plainly contained in scripture. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of the Lord's 'delivering him from every evil work, and preserving him to his heavenly kingdom.' The apostle Jude speaks of believers as 'sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called,' or as being first called, and then preserved by God the Father, through the intervention of Christ, our great Mediator, till they are brought to glory. And our Saviour, in his affectionate prayer for his church, a little before he left the world, says, 'Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me.' These words not only prove that the perseverance of the saints is owing to God, but that the glory of his own name is concerned in it; so that it is not from ourselves, but from him. There is also a scripture in which our Saviour speaks of the perseverance of his 'sheep' in grace, and of his giving them eternal life; and he adds, 'They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'e It is owing, therefore, to his care, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, and to his power, which is superior to that of all those who attempt to destroy them, that they shall persevere in grace.

Proofs of the Doctrine of Perseverance

We shall now consider what ground we have to conclude that the saints shall persevere in grace, and so explain and illustrate the arguments insisted on in this Answer, together with some others which may be taken from the sense of several scriptures, by which this doctrine may be defended.

1. The saints' perseverance in grace may be proved from the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and purpose, relating to their salvation, in which it is discovered and executed. That God loved them with a love of good-will, before they were inclined to express any love to him, is evident; because their love to him is assigned as the effect and consequence of his love to them, as the apostle says, 'We love him because he first loved us.' The love of God to his people, therefore, must be considered as an immanent act; whence it follows, that it was from eternity, since all God's immanent acts are eternal. This is particularly expressed by the prophet when he says, 'The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.'g Were this language meant of a love that shall never have an end, it would plainly prove the doctrine we are defending; but as the words which immediately follow, 'Therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,' seem to intimate that the love is that which was from everlasting, his drawing them or bringing them into a converted state being the result of it, it follows that this everlasting love is the same as his eternal purpose or design to save them. Now, if there be such an eternal purpose relating to their salvation, it necessarily infers their perseverance; and that there was such a design in God was proved under a former Answer. Besides, they who are the objects of this eternal purpose of grace are frequently described in scripture as believers, inasmuch as faith and salvation are inseparably connected together. Hence, the execution of God's purpose in giving faith, necessarily infers the execution of it in saving those who believe. That the purpose of grace is

unchangeable, was formerly proved;i and may be farther argued from what the apostle says concerning 'the immutability of his counsel,' shown to 'the heirs of promise,' as the ground of that 'strong consolation' which they have 'who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.' Now, if God cannot change his purpose relating to the salvation of believers, it necessarily follows that they shall certainly attain salvation, and consequently shall persevere in grace.

It will be objected that, though God may be said to love his people while they retain their integrity, yet they may provoke him by their sins to cast them off; so that the present exercise of divine love to them is no certain argument that it shall be extended to the end, or that, by virtue of it, he will enable them to persevere, and then bring them to glory. Now, we do not deny that believers, by their sins, may so far provoke God, that, if he should mark their iniquities, or deal with them according to the demerit of them, he would cast them off for ever. Still he will not do this, because his doing it would be inconsistent with his purpose to recover them from their backslidings, and forgive their iniquities. Moreover, it cannot be denied that, notwithstanding God's eternal love to them, there are many instances of his hatred and displeasure expressed in the external dispensations of his providence, which are as often changed as their conduct towards him is changed. But this fact does not infer a change in God's purpose. He may testify his displeasure against them, or, as the psalmist expresses it, 'visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes;' and yet he cannot change his resolution to save them, but will, by some methods of grace, recover them from their backslidings, and enable them to persevere in grace, since 'his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.'

2. Another argument to prove the saints' perseverance, may be taken from the covenant of grace, and the many promises respecting their salvation which are contained in it. That this may appear, let it be considered that, as was observed under a former Answer, Christ was appointed to be the head of this covenant. Accordingly, there was an eternal transaction between the Father and him, in which all things relating to the everlasting salvation of the elect, whom he therein represented, were stipulated in their behalf. In this covenant, God the Father promised, not only that Christ should 'have a seed to serve him,'n but that he 'should see his seed,' that 'the pleasure of the Lord,' with relation to them, 'should prosper in his hand,' and that he should 'see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied,' which implies that he should see the fruits and effects of all that he had done and suffered for them in order to their salvation. Nor is this said respecting some of them, but respecting all; and it could not have had its accomplishment, were it possible for them not to persevere in grace.

Again, in this covenant Christ has undertaken to keep them, as the result of his becoming a surety for them; in doing which, he not only engaged to pay the debt of obedience and sufferings which was due from them, which he has already done, but that he would work all that grace in them which he purchased by his blood. Now, he has already begun this work in them; though it is not yet accomplished. Can we suppose, then, that he will not bring it to perfection, or that he will not enable them to endure to the end, that they may be saved? This would argue the greatest unfaithfulness in him, who is styled 'faithful and true.' Moreover, as there are engagements on Christ's part relating to this matter, and as, in pursuance of these, they are said to be in his hand; so the Father has given them an additional security, that they shall be preserved from apostacy. They are hence said to be also 'in his hand,' whence 'none can pluck them out;' and it

is thence argued that 'they shall never perish.' We may observe, too, that the life which Christ is said to give them is not only the beginning of life, in the first grace which they are made partakers of in conversion, but is called 'eternal life,' which certainly denotes the completing of the work of grace in their everlasting salvation.

Further, the promises contained in the covenant of grace, relate not only to their sanctification here, but to their salvation hereafter. On this account it is called 'an everlasting covenant,' and the mercies of it, 'the sure mercies of David;' that is, either those mercies which David, who had an interest in this covenant, was given to expect, or mercies which Christ had engaged to purchase and bestow, who is here, as elsewhere,r called David, inasmuch as David was an eminent type of him, as well as because he was his seed according to the flesh. That the latter is the more probable sense of the two, appears from the following words, in which he is said to be 'given for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.' Now, if these mercies are in Christ's hand to be applied, it is no wonder that they are styled 'sure mercies.' We might here consider the covenant of grace as containing all the promises which respect the beginning, carrying on, or completing of the salvation of his people. These relate, not only to what God will do for them, but to what he will enable them to be and do, in those things which concern their faithfulness to him; whereby they have the highest security that they shall behave themselves as becomes a covenant-people. Thus he assures them that he will be to them a God, that is, that he will glorify his divine perfections in bestowing on them the special and distinguishing blessings of the covenant; and that they shall be to him a people, that is, shall so behave themselves that they shall not, by apostacy from him, oblige him to disown his relation to them or exclude them from his covenant. He has encouraged them to expect, not only those great things which he would do for them provided

they yielded obedience to his law, but also that he would 'put his law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,' whereby they might be disposed to obey him. And when he says that they 'shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord,' he gives them to understand that they should not only teach or instruct one another in the knowledge of God, which respects their being favoured with the external means of grace, but that they 'should all know him, from the least of them unto the greatest.' This denotes that they should have, not only a speculative knowledge of divine truth, but a saving knowledge of it, such as is inseparably connected with 'life eternal.' That this knowledge is intended appears from its being accompanied with or flowing from forgiveness of sin; for it is immediately added, 'I will forgive their iniquity,' and this is expressed with a peculiar emphasis. Now, their enjoying forgiveness of sins, connected with a saving knowledge of divine truth, is certainly inconsistent with their falling from a justified state, especially as it is said, 'I will remember their sin no more.'t Elsewhere, also, when God speaks of his 'making an everlasting covenant' with his people, he promises that 'he will not turn away from them to do them good;' and, inasmuch as they are prone, by reason of the deceitfulness of their hearts, to turn aside from him, he adds, 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' Here it is not only said that he will not turn from them, if they fear him; but he gives them security in this covenant, that they shall fear him. Can we conclude, then, that they, in whom this covenant is so far made good that God has put his fear in their hearts, which is supposed in their being believers, shall not attain the other blessing promised, namely, that of their not departing from him? Moreover, the stability of this covenant, as a foundation of the saints' perseverance, is set forth by a metaphor, taken from the most fixed and stable parts of nature; and it is said to exceed these in stability, 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills

be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.'x

The principal objection which is brought to enervate the force of the argument taken from those promises of the covenant which respect the saints' perseverance, is, that either these promises are to be considered as conditional, and the conditions of them as not fulfilled, in which case they are not obligatory, so that God is not bound to give salvation to those to whom he has promised it on these conditions; or else they are to be considered as made to a political body, namely, the Jewish nation, in which case they respect, not their eternal salvation, but only some temporal deliverances of which they were to be made partakers, and which belonged to them generally as a church,—everlasting salvation never being considered as a blessing which shall be applied to whole nations, how much soever a whole nation may partake of the common gifts of divine bounty which are bestowed in this world.—In answer to this objection, in both its branches, I need only refer to what has been said elsewhere. As to the former branch of it, we have endeavoured to show how those scriptures are to be understood which are laid down in a conditional form, without supposing that they militate against the absoluteness of God's purpose, or its unchangeableness, and independency on the conduct of men. As to the latter branch of it, what has been said in answer to an objection of a similar nature, brought against the doctrine of election by Dr. Whitby, and others, who suppose that the blessings which the elect are said in scripture to be made partakers of respect the nation of the Jews or the church in general, and not a particular number chosen out of them to salvation, and that the promises which are directed to them are only such as they were given to expect as a church or political body of men, may well be applied to

our present purpose, and serve as an answer to this objection. In this place, therefore, I shall add but a few remarks by way of reply.

If any expressions are annexed to the promises of the covenant which give occasion to some to conclude that they are conditional, we must take heed that we do not understand them as denoting the dependence of God's determinations on the arbitrary will of man; as though his purpose relating to the salvation of his people were indeterminate, and it were a matter of doubt with him, as well as with us, whether he should fulfil it or not, because it is uncertain whether the conditions of it shall be performed. To suppose this is inconsistent with the divine perfections. But if, on the other hand, we suppose that the grace or duty annexed to the promise must have some idea of a condition contained in it, this may be understood according to the tenor of God's revealed will, as denoting nothing else but a condition of our expectation, or of our claim to the blessing promised; and then nothing can be inferred from it, but that some who lay claim to or expect salvation, without performing the condition of it, may apostatize, and miss it; which does not in the least militate against the doctrine we are defending. We may add that, when such a condition is annexed to a promise, (for I will not decline to call it so in the sense just stated,) and there is another promise added, in which God engages that he will enable his people to perform it, the condition is then equivalent to an absolute promise. Of this kind are those conditions which are mentioned in the scriptures formerly referred to. When God promises that he will be a God to his people, that he will forgive their iniquities, and never reverse the sentence of forgiveness, or remember their sins any more, and that he will never turn away from them to do them good, he, at the same time, promises that he will put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and put his fear in their hearts, and so enable them to behave themselves as his people, or to be to him a

people. When, again, God sets forth the stability of his covenant, and intimates that it should not be removed, he adds that his kindness shall not depart from them. Nor does this kindness respect merely some temporal blessings which he would bestow upon them, but his extending that grace to them which should keep them faithful to him. Hence, he says that 'in righteousness they should be established;' words which contain a promise that he would maintain grace in them, without which they could hardly be said to be established in righteousness, as well as that he would perform the other things promised to them in this covenant.

The other branch of the objection we are examining, considers that the promises are given to the church in general, or to the Jews as a political body of men; and that they cannot be supposed to respect their everlasting salvation, but only some temporal blessings which they should enjoy. Now, this point is to be determined by the express words contained in the promise. If God tells those to whom the promises are made that he will do that for them which includes more than the blessings which they are supposed to enjoy of a temporal nature, we are not to conclude that there is nothing of salvation referred to in them, when the words thus seem to imply the contrary. Besides, though these promises are said to be given to the Jews as a political body of men, and there are some circumstances in them which have an immediate and particular relation to that people; yet the promises of special grace and salvation were to be applied only by those among them who believed. Moreover, the same promises are to be applied by believers in all ages; else we must understand the texts which contain them as only an historical relation of things which do not belong to us,—an interpretation which would tend very much to detract from the spirituality and usefulness of many parts of scripture. To make this appear, we might consider some promises which, when first made, had a particular relation to God's dealings

with his people in the circumstances in which they were then placed, but which are, notwithstanding, applied in a more extensive manner to New Testament believers in all ages. Thus, when God says to his people, in the scripture formerly referred to, 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord,' whatever respect the promise may have to the church of the Jews, our Saviour applies it in a more extensive way, as belonging to believers in all ages, when he says, 'Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' Again, God promises Joshua that 'he would not fail nor forsake him,' and encourages him thereby 'not to fear nor be dismayed,'c when he was to pass over Jordan into the land of Canaan, and afterwards to engage in a work which was attended with many difficulties. Now, this promise is applied by the apostle as an inducement to believers in his day to be 'content with such things as they have;' for after exhorting them to be so, he adds, that what God told Joshua of old was written for their encouragement, namely, that 'he would never leave them, nor forsake them.' We cannot therefore but conclude, that the objection we have been considering is of no force in either of its branches to overthrow the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, as founded on the stability of the promises of the covenant of grace.

3. The saints' perseverance in grace may be farther proved from their inseparable union with Christ. Not only is this union federal, as he is the head of the covenant of grace, and they his members, whose salvation, as was observed under the last Head, he has engaged to bring about; but he may be considered also as their vital head, from whom they receive spiritual life and influence; so that as long as they abide in him, their spiritual life is maintained as derived from him. If we consider the church, or the whole election of grace as united to him, it is called 'his body,' 'the fulness of him that filleth all in all;'f and every believer being a member of this body, or a part, if I may so

express it, of this fulness, if it should perish and be separated from him, his body would be defective, and he would sustain a loss of that which is an ingredient in his fulness. Moreover, as this union includes that relation between Christ and his people which is, by a metaphorical way of speaking, styled conjugal, and accordingly is mutual, as the result of his becoming theirs by an act of grace, and they his by an act of self-dedication; so it is the foundation of mutual love, which is abiding. The love is certainly abiding on his part; because it is unchangeable, as founded on a covenant engagement which he cannot violate; and though their love to him is in itself subject to change through the prevalency of corrupt nature, which too much inclines them to be unsteadfast in this marriage covenant, yet he will recover and bring them back to him. He will not deal with them as persons do with strangers, whom they exclude from their presence or favour, if they render themselves unworthy of it; but as persons who stand in a nearer relation to him, and accordingly are the objects of his special love, and shall not be cast off for ever, how much soever he may resent their unworthy behaviour to him. Not to be separate from Christ, is, according to the apostle's expression, not to 'be separated from his love;' and this, he says, he was 'persuaded' he should not be. 'I am persuaded,' says he, 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'h Accordingly it is said, that Christ 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.'

Here I cannot but take notice of a very jejune and empty sense which some give of this text, to evade the force of the argument taken from it to prove the doctrine we are maintaining. By 'his own' they mean no other than Christ's disciples, whom he was at the time conversant with. Indeed, they apply whatever Christ says, in some following

chapters, to them, exclusive of all others. When, for example, he says, 'Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world;' and 'Because I live, ye shall live also;'l they suppose that he speaks of them in particular. So, in interpreting the text before us, they understand the clause, 'having loved his own which were in the world,' to mean his own disciples, as though he had a propriety in none but them; and the clause 'he loved them to the end,' to mean, not to the end of their lives, for that would prove the doctrine we are maintaining, but to the end of his life, which was now at hand; and his love to them, they suppose to be expressed in his condescending to wash their feet. But if this were the sense of the words, his love to them would not be so extraordinary a privilege as it really is; for it would be only an instance of human and not divine love. Indeed, our happiness consists, not only in Christ's loving us to the end of his life, but in his continuing to express his love in his going into heaven to prepare a place for us, in his there making continual intercession on our behalf, and in his coming again in the end, to receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also.

4. The saints' perseverance farther appears from Christ's continual intercession for them. This was particularly explained under a foregoing Answer. The apostle, speaking of his 'ever living to make intercession' for his people, infers that 'he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.'n But this Christ could not be said to do, should he leave the work which he has begun in them imperfect, and suffer those who come to him by faith, to apostatize from him. We formerly considered Christ's intercession as including his appearing in the presence of God, in behalf of those for whom he offered himself a sacrifice while on earth. We considered also that what he intercedes for shall certainly be granted him, not only because he is the Son of God in whom he is well-pleased, but because he pleads his own merits, and because to deny him what he merited,

would be, in effect, to deny the sufficiency of his sacrifice, as though the purchase had not been fully satisfactory. We must conclude, therefore, as he himself said on earth, that 'the Father heareth him always.' It is also evident that he prays for the perseverance of his people. He says to Peter, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' And there are many things in the affectionate prayer, mentioned in John 17, which he put up to God immediately before his last sufferings, which respect his people's perseverance in grace. Thus he says, 'Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are;' and, 'I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil;'q that is, either that he would keep them from the evil which often attends the condition in which they are in the world, that so the work of grace may not suffer, at least not miscarry thereby; or that he would keep them from the evil one, that so they may not be brought again under his dominion. He also prays 'that they may be made perfect in one;' that is, not only that they may be perfectly joined together in the same design, but that their unanimity may continue till they are brought to a state of perfection, and 'that the world may know that God has loved them, even as he has loved Christ.' Moreover, he declares his will; which shows that his intercession is founded on justice, and accordingly is of the nature of a demand, rather than of a supplication for what might be given or denied, and his 'will' is, 'that they whom the Father has given him may be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory.' Now, all these expressions are very inconsistent with the supposition, that it is possible that they whom he thus intercedes for may apostatize, or fall short of salvation.

It is objected by some, that this prayer respects none but his disciples, who were his immediate friends and followers, and not believers in all ages and places in the world. But the contrary is

evident from several things which are mentioned in it. For instance, he says, that 'the Father hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as he hath given him.' The sense of these words will sink too low, if we suppose that he intends, 'Thou hast given me power to dispose of all persons and things in this world, that I may give eternal life to that small number which thou hast given me, namely, my disciples.' He obviously speaks of that universal dominion which he has over all persons and things, which were committed to him with the view that all those who were put into his hand to be redeemed and saved, should attain eternal life. Again, he says, 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word.'u Did Christ manifest the divine name and glory to none but those who were his disciples; and were there none but they who had kept his word? Moreover, when he says that they whom he prayed for are the Father's, and adds, 'All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them,' is the number of those whom Christ has a right to, and the Father has set apart for himself, in whom he would show forth his glory as the objects of his love, and in whom Christ as Mediator was to be glorified, so small that it included only the eleven disciples? Or, does it not rather respect all who have believed, or shall believe, from the beginning to the end of time? And again, when he speaks of 'the world hating them, because they are not of the world,'y and of their being exposed to the evils which are in the world, or the assaults of Satan who is their avowed enemy; is this applicable only to the disciples? And when he says, 'Neither pray I for these alone,' that is, for those who now believe, 'but for them also which shall believe;' does it not plainly intimate that he had others in view besides his disciples? These, and several other passages in this prayer, are a sufficient evidence that there is no weight in the objection, to overthrow the argument we are maintaining.

5. Believers' perseverance in grace may be proved from the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them. When they were regenerated, it was by the power of the Holy Ghost, as condescending to come and take up his abode in them. Thus we often read of their being acted by, and under the influence of the Holy Ghost, who is said to dwell where he is pleased to display his divine power and glory; and if these displays are internal, then he dwells in the heart. Our Saviour speaks of him as 'another Comforter' given, 'that he may abide' with his people 'for ever.' This indwelling of the Spirit is very distinct from that extraordinary dispensation which the church had, when they were favoured with inspiration; for the apostle speaks of it as a privilege peculiar to believers as such: 'Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'b The meaning of these words cannot be that those have no interest in Christ who have not the extraordinary afflatus of the Spirit, such as the prophets had. We must suppose, therefore, that the privilege spoken of is one which believers have in all ages. Now, if the Spirit is pleased to condescend thus to take up his abode in the soul, and that for ever, he will certainly preserve it from apostasy. We may add, that there are several fruits and effects of the Spirit's dwelling in the soul, which afford an additional proof of this doctrine. Thus believers are said to have 'the first-fruits of the Spirit;' that is, they have those graces wrought in them which are the beginning of salvation; and as the first-fruits are a part of the harvest which will follow, these are the foretastes of the heavenly blessedness which God would never have bestowed upon them had he not designed to preserve them from apostasy. Moreover, believers are said to be 'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance.'d The earnest, as given by men, is generally deemed a part of payment; and upon any receiving it, they are satisfied that they shall, at last, receive the full reward. And shall believers miss of the heavenly blessedness,

who have such a glorious pledge and earnest of it? Again, if we consider 'the Spirit' as 'bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;' and that 'they shall be glorified together' with him; is this testimony invalid, or not to be depended on? Yet it could not be depended on were it possible for them to fall from a state of grace.

This testimony, as will be observed under the next Answer, is what we depend very much upon, in order to our attaining assurance that we are in a state of grace, and that we shall persevere in it. At present, we shall take it for granted that there is such a thing as assurance, or that this blessing is attainable. The use which I would make of this supposition to maintain our present argument, is, that the Spirit's having any hand in working or encouraging this hope that we have of the truth of grace, and consequently that we shall persevere in it to salvation, argues that the hope is warrantable, and not delusive; for he who is the author or giver of it cannot deceive our expectation, or put us upon looking for that which is not a reality. It hence follows that it is impossible that they should apostatize to whom 'God has given' this 'good hope through grace,' so that they should fail of that 'everlasting consolation,' which is connected with it. This consequence will hardly be denied by those who are on the other side of the question; and we may observe, that they who oppose the doctrine of perseverance, always deny that of assurance, especially as proceeding from the testimony of the Spirit. Yet that we may not be misunderstood, we do not say, that every one who has a strong persuasion that he shall be saved, shall be saved; for such a persuasion is no other than enthusiasm. But our argument, in short, is, that if there is a witness of the Spirit to the truth of grace which cannot be charged with enthusiasm, then the doctrine we are maintaining is undeniably true. This will more

evidently appear from what will be said in defence of the doctrine of assurance under our next Answer.

We proceed, therefore, to the other branch of the argument we have mentioned to prove this doctrine, namely, that believers have the seed of God abiding in them. This is founded on what the apostle says in 1 John 3:9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' For understanding this, let us consider that, by the words 'he cannot commit sin,' the apostle does not intend that such a one is not a sinner, or that there is such a thing as sinless perfection attainable in this life; for that is contrary, not only to the whole tenor of scripture and daily experience of mankind, but to what he had expressly said, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' In this text he is doubtless speaking of persons committing sins which are inconsistent with the truth of grace; as he says, in a foregoing verse, 'Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.'h The sin he speaks of is such as argues a person to be in a state of unregeneracy. Accordingly, when he says, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil,' he certainly speaks of such a commission of sin as argues us to be under the reigning power of the devil. That this may plainly appear to be his meaning, we may observe that he elsewhere distinguishes between 'a sin that is unto death,' and a sin that is 'not unto death.'k Here he does not mean, as the Papists suppose, that some sins deserve eternal death, and others not; the former of which they call mortal sins, the latter venial. But he is speaking of a sin which is inconsistent with the principle of grace, and the sin which is consistent with it. The former is sometimes called 'the pollution that is in the world through lust;' the latter, 'the spot of God's children.'m The least sin deserves death, though they who commit it shall not perish, but be brought to repentance; but the 'sin unto death' is wilful sin, committed and

continued in with impenitency; and with this limitation we are to understand the apostle's words, 'He who is born of God doth not commit sin.'

We shall now consider the reason assigned why the person he speaks of cannot in this sense commit sin, namely, he is 'born of God,' and 'the seed of God abideth in him.' To be born of God is what is elsewhere styled regeneration, or being born of the Spirit; in which there is a principle of grace implanted, which is here called 'the seed of God.' Indeed, this metaphorical way of speaking is very expressive of the thing intended. For as in nature the seed produces fruit, and in things moral the principle of action produces action, as the principle of reason produces acts of reason; so in things spiritual, the principle of grace produces acts of grace; and this principle being from God, which has been largely proved under a foregoing Answer, it is here called 'the seed of God.' Now, this seed of God, or this principle, is not merely said to be in the believer, as that which for the present is the ground of spiritual actions; but it is said to 'remain in him.' As, elsewhere, Christ speaks of the Spirit as 'abiding' with his people 'for ever;'o so here the apostle speaks of the principle of grace wrought by the Spirit as abiding, that is, continuing for ever. He hence infers that a believer 'cannot sin.' If he had been speaking only of its being implanted, but not abiding, all that could be inferred would be that he does not sin. But as he argues that he cannot sin, that is, apostatize, we must understand that the principle abides in him continually. Now, this plainly amounts to the argument we are maintaining, namely, that because the seed of God abides in a believer, he cannot apostatize or fall short of salvation.

They who are on the other side of the question seem to find it very difficult to evade the force of this argument. Some suppose that the apostle intends no more than that he who is born of God should not

commit sin. But this interpretation is not only remote from the sense of the words 'cannot sin,' but does not sufficiently distinguish one who is born of God from another who is not so; for it is as much a truth that an unregenerate person ought not to sin, as that a regenerate person ought not to do so. Others suppose the apostle to mean that believers sin with difficulty, or are hardly brought to commit sin. But as this also does not answer to the sense of the words 'cannot sin,' so it is inconsistent with that beautiful gradation which we may observe in the words. To say that the believer does not sin, and then if he commits sin it is with some difficulty, does not correspond with the climax which the apostle makes use of when he says he does not commit sin, yea, he cannot. Others suppose the apostle's meaning is, that he who is born of God cannot sin unto death, or apostatize so as to fall short of salvation, so long as he makes a right use of the principle of grace which is implanted in him; but that, by opposing and afterwards extinguishing it, he may become an apostate. But we may observe that the apostle attributes his perseverance in grace, not to his making use of the principle, but to his having it, or to its abiding in him. And he sufficiently guards against the supposition of its being possible that the principle of grace may be wholly lost; for then this seed could not be said to abide in him, nor would the inference deduced from its abiding in him, namely, that he cannot sin, be just.

We have thus considered the latter branch of the present argument to prove the saints' perseverance in grace, taken from the seed of God abiding in believers. But there is one thing which must be observed before I dismiss this Head, namely, that the principle of grace, which is signified by this metaphor, though it exists and abides in a believer, does not always exert itself so as to produce those acts of grace which would otherwise proceed from it. This cannot be better illustrated than by a similitude taken from the soul, which is the

principle of reason in man. Though it is as much the principle of reason in an infant in the womb as it is in any, yet it is altogether inactive; for most allow that infants have not the exercise of thought or acts of reason. And when a person is newly born, it hardly appears that this principle is deduced into act; and in these in whom it has been deduced into act, it may, through the influence of some bodily disease with which it is affected, be rendered stupid and almost inactive, or at least so disordered that the actions which proceed from it cannot be styled rational. Yet still it remains a principle of reason. The same may be said concerning the principle of grace. It is certainly an inactive principle in those who are regenerate from the womb; and it may cease to exert itself, and be with equal reason styled an inactive principle in believers, when they fall into very great sins to which it offers no resistance. This we shall take occasion to apply under a following Head, when we shall consider some objections which are brought against this doctrine by those who suppose that believers, when sinning presumptuously, as David, Peter, and others, are said to have done, fell totally, though not finally. There was indeed a total suspension of the activity of this principle, but yet the principle itself was not wholly lost. But more of this in its proper place. We are bound to conclude, therefore, that because this principle abides in believers, they can neither totally nor finally apostatize,—that they can neither fall from a state of grace, nor fail at last of salvation.

We have thus endeavoured to explain and show the force of those arguments which are contained in this Answer, to prove the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. There are several others which might have been insisted on. In particular, the doctrine may be proved from the end and design of Christ's death; which was, not only that he might purchase to himself a peculiar people, but that he might purchase eternal life for them. We cannot think that this invaluable

price would have been given for the procuring of that which should not be applied; for in this view Christ would be said to die in vain. When a person gives a price for any thing, it is with the design that he, or they for whom he purchased it, should be put into the possession of it; and if this be not done, the price which was given is reckoned lost, and the person who gave it disappointed. This argument may be considered "as having still more weight, if we observe that the salvation of those whom Christ has redeemed, redounds not only to their happiness, but to the glory of God the Father, and of Christ our great Redeemer. God the Father, in giving Christ to be a propitiation for sin, designed to bring more glory to his name than by all his other works. Accordingly, our Saviour appeals to him in the close of his life, 'I have glorified' thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' The work was his; there was a revenue of glory which he expected by it; and this glory did not consist only in his receiving a full satisfaction for sin, that so he might take occasion to advance his grace in forgiving it, but it consisted also in his people being enabled to 'bear much fruit.'r The glory of God the Father, therefore, is advanced by the application of redemption, and consequently by bringing his redeemed ones to perfection. The Son is also glorified, not merely by his having those honours which his human nature is advanced to as the consequence of his finishing the work of redemption, but by the application of redemption to his people. Accordingly, he is said to be 'glorified in them,' that is, his mediatorial glory is rendered illustrious by all the grace which is conferred upon them. Certainly, therefore, he will be eminently glorified, when they are brought to be with him, where he is, to behold his glory. Now, can we suppose that, since the Father and the Son designed to have so great a glory redound to them by the work of our redemption, they will sustain any loss of it for want of the application of it to those for whom it was purchased? If God designed, as the consequence of the work of redemption, that the

saints should sing that new song, 'Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;' and if God the Father, and the Son, are joined together, and their glory celebrated in this song, by the redeemed ascribing 'blessing, honour, glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever,'t then certainly they will not lose this glory, and the saints shall be brought into that state where they shall have occasion thus to praise and adore them. If it be objected that God the Father, and the Son, will be glorified, though many of his saints should apostatize, and so the death of Christ be to no purpose with respect to them, because all shall not apostatize, the answer is plain and easy,—that though he could not be said to lose the glory he designed by the salvation of those who persevere, yet some branches of his glory would be lost by reason of the apostasy of others who fall short of salvation; and it is a dishonour to him to suppose that he will lose the least branch of it, or that any of those for whom Christ died should be for ever lost. We might add, that for the same reason that we suppose one whom Christ has redeemed should be lost, all might be lost; and so he would lose all the glory he designed to have in the work of redemption. This appears from the fact that all are liable to those temptations which, if complied with, have a tendency to ruin them. All are supposed to be renewed and sanctified only in part; so that the work of grace meets with those obstructions from corrupt nature which would certainly prove too hard for all our strength, and baffle our utmost endeavours to persevere, did not God appear in our behalf, and keep us by his power. Now, if all need strength from him to stand, and must say that without him they can do nothing, we must either suppose that that grace is given to all saints which shall enable them to persevere, or else that it is given to none. If it be given to none, and all are left to themselves, then that which overthrows the faith of one, would overthrow the faith of all; and we might

conclude that whatever God the Father or the Son have done, in order to the redemption and salvation of the elect, might be of none effect.

I might produce many other arguments in defence of the saints' perseverance; but shall conclude this Head with two or three scriptures, whereby the truth of that doctrine will farther appear. Thus our Saviour says to the woman of Samaria, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' Here, by the water which Christ gives, is doubtless understood the gifts and graces of the Spirit. These are not like the waters of a brook, which often deceive the expectation of the traveller; but they are 'a well of water,' intimating that a believer shall have a constant supply of grace and peace, till he is brought to the rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand, and is made partaker of eternal life.—Again, our Saviour says, 'He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life;'x that is, it is as surely his as if he were in the actual possession of it. He farther intimates, too, that those who believe in him are not only justified for the present, but shall not come into condemnation. Now, this certainly implies that their salvation is so secure that it is impossible for them to perish eternally.—Another scripture which plainly proves this doctrine, is 2 Tim. 2:19: 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' In these words the apostle encourages the church to hope for perseverance in grace, after they had had a sad instance of two persons of note, namely, Hymeneus and Philetus, who had not only 'erred from the truth,' but 'overthrown the faith of some;' and he cautions all who make a profession of religion, as they would be kept from apostatizing, to depart from iniquity. His words

are as if he had said, "Since many of you are ready to fear that your faith shall be overthrown, as well as that of others, by the sophistry or cunning arts of those apostates who lie in wait to deceive, you may be assured that the state of those is safe who are built upon the foundation which God has laid, that 'chief corner-stone, elect, precious,' namely, Christ, 'on whom he that believeth shall not be confounded.' " Or the meaning is, that the instability of human conduct shall not render it a matter of uncertainty, whether they who are ordained to eternal life shall be saved or not; for their being saved depends on God's purpose, which is a sure foundation, and has this seal annexed to it, whereby our faith as to our being saved may be confirmed, that they whom God has set apart for himself, and lays a special claim to as his chosen and redeemed ones, whom he has foreknown and loved with an everlasting love, shall not perish eternally, because the purpose of God cannot be frustrated. But inasmuch as there is no special revelation given to particular persons, that they are the objects of this purpose of grace; all who name or profess the name of Christ ought to use the utmost caution that they be not ensnared; let them depart from all iniquity, and not converse with those who endeavour to overthrow their faith. Indeed, all who are faithful shall be kept from iniquity by God, as they are here given to understand that it is their duty to endeavour to depart from it; and consequently they shall be kept from apostasy. This seems to be the sense of these words; and it is agreeable to the analogy of faith, as well as a plain proof of the doctrine which we are maintaining.

A late writer, by 'the foundation of God, which standeth sure,' supposes the doctrine of the resurrection to be intended, which Hymeneus and Philetus denied, saying that it 'was past already.' This doctrine, says he, which is a fundamental article of faith, 'standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his;' that is, he

loveth and approveth of them. But though it is true that the resurrection is spoken of in the foregoing verse, and we do not deny that it is a fundamental article of faith; yet it does not seem to be what is intended by the word 'foundation' in this text. For if by the resurrection we understand the doctrine of the general resurrection of the dead, I cannot see where the force of the apostle's argument lies, namely, that there shall be a general resurrection, because the Lord knoweth who are his; for the whole world are to be raised from the dead. But if by the resurrection we are to understand a resurrection to eternal life, so that they who are known or beloved of God shall have their part in it, and if the apostle's reasoning be, that they who believe shall be raised to eternal life; this interpretation, so far from militating against the argument we are maintaining, is agreeable to the sense we have given of the text, and makes for us rather than against us. As to what is farther advanced by the author just referred to, namely, that the words 'The Lord knoweth them that are his,' are to be taken for that regard which God had to his apostles and ministers, this sense of the text seems too great a strain on the words, and is so much different from the scope of the apostle, as well as disagreeable to the caution given, that 'every one who names the name of Christ should depart from iniquity,' that no one who reads the scriptures without prejudice, can easily adopt it.

I shall mention but one scripture more for the proof of the doctrine of the saints' perseverance; and that is 1 John 2:19, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.' For understanding this, let it be considered that the apostle is speaking of some who were formerly members of the church, who afterwards turned apostates and open enemies to Christ and his gospel. It is plain that the words 'they went out from us,' and 'they were not of

us,' must be taken in different respects; for it would imply a contradiction to say that a person departed from the faith and communion of the church, when he never embraced it or had communion with it. But if the two phrases be differently understood, these persons left the faith and communion of the church because they were Christians only in pretence, and did not heartily embrace the faith on which the church was built, and were not really made partakers of that grace which the apostles and other faithful members of the church had received from God, as being effectually called by it. The sense is thus very plain and easy: there were some false professors, who made a great show of religion, and were admitted into communion with the church; and, it may be, some of them preached the gospel and were more esteemed than others. But they apostatized; for they had not the truth of grace, but were like the seed which sprang up without having root in itself, which afterwards withered. If, however, they had had this grace, it would have been abiding; and so they would, 'without doubt,' says the apostle, 'have continued with us;' but by their apostasy it appears that they were not, in this sense, of our number, that is, believers. They who understood this scripture, not of persons who were members of the church, but of ministers who first joined themselves with the apostles, and afterwards deserted them and their doctrine, advance nothing which tends to overthrow the argument we are maintaining. For, according to that interpretation, we may understand the words thus; they pretended to be true ministers of Jesus Christ, and doubtless, to be, as the apostles were, men of piety and religion, for in other respects, they were of them visibly, whilst they preached the same doctrines; but afterwards by departing from the faith, it appeared that, though they were ministers, they were not sincere Christians, for if they had, they would not have apostatized.

Examination of Objections against the Doctrine of Perseverance

We shall now proceed to consider the objections which are usually brought against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in grace.

I. It is objected that there are several persons mentioned in scripture, who appear to have been true believers, and yet apostatized,—some totally, as David and Peter,—others not only totally but finally, in which number Solomon is included. Others, also, are described as apostates, such as Hymeneus and Alexander, who are said 'concerning faith, to have made shipwreck,' and who are hence supposed to have had the grace of faith. Judas likewise is reckoned to have been a true believer, whom all allow afterwards to have proved an apostate.

1. As to the case of David and Peter, it is true, that their fall was very notorious, that the former seems to have continued some months in a state of impenitency, and that when they fell, there appeared no marks of grace in either of them. Peter's sin, indeed, was committed through surprise and fear; yet it had such aggravating circumstances attending it, that if others, whose character is less established than his was, had committed the same sin, we should be ready to conclude that they were in a state of unregeneracy. And David's sin was committed with such deliberation, and was so complicated a crime, that if any believer ever lost the principle of grace, we should have been inclined to suppose that he did so. Yet what gives us ground to conclude that this principle was not wholly extinguished either in Peter or in him at the time that they fell, and therefore that they were not total apostates, is what we formerly observed, that the principle of grace may be altogether inactive and yet abide in the soul, agreeably to the sense we gave of that scripture, 'His seed abideth in

him.' If what has been already said concerning the possibility of the principle of grace remaining, though it makes no resistance against the contrary habits of sin, be of any force, then these instances, and others of a similar nature on which one branch of the objection is founded, will not be sufficient to prove the possibility of the total apostasy of any true believer.

2. As to the case of Solomon, that he once was a true believer, is allowed on both sides. For it is said concerning him, soon after he was born, that 'the Lord loved him;' on which account he gave him the significant name, Jedidiah, 'the beloved of the Lord.' It is certain, also, that, in the beginning of his reign, his piety was no less remarkable than his wisdom. This appears from his great zeal, expressed in building the temple of God, and establishing its worship; and also from the extraordinary instance of devotion with which he dedicated or consecrated this house to God,c and the prayer put up to him on that occasion. It appears also from God's appearing to him twice. In his first appearance, he condescended to ask him, what he should give him; and upon Solomon's choosing 'an understanding heart' to judge his people, he was pleased with him, and gave him several other things which he asked not for, so that there were 'not any among the kings like unto him.' From all this it is taken for granted that he once was a believer. But, on the other hand, we must, if we duly weigh the force of the objection, set the latter part of his life against the former; and then we find him guilty of very great sins. Not only did he multiply wives and concubines, beyond what any of his predecessors had done; but 'his heart was turned away after other gods, and,' as is expressly said, 'was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.'e It is also said that 'the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice.' On this occasion, he determined to rend part of the kingdom from his

son;g which came to pass accordingly. Now, all this is said to have been done 'when he was old;' and in the remaining part of his history, we read of several who were 'stirred up as adversaries' to him,i and of little but trouble and uneasiness that he met with. This seemed to continue to his death, an account of which we have in 1 Kings 11 chapter throughout; which contains the history of his sin and troubles, but does not contain the least intimation of his repentance. For this reason he is supposed, in the objection, to have apostatized totally and finally.

The main strength of this objection lies in the supposition that Solomon did not repent of his idolatry which he committed in his old age, or, as is supposed, in the latter part of his life,—a supposition which is based on the alleged silence of scripture as to this matter, especially in that part of it which gives an account of his fall and death. But what is alleged is not sufficient to support the weight of the objection, and to oblige us to regard him as an apostate; for there is nothing in the account we have of him in scripture which appears to preclude the idea that he might have sufficient time for repentance, between his fall and his death. It is said, indeed, that in his old age his wives turned him aside; but this they might do, and yet he not die an apostate; for sometimes that part of life which is called old age comprises several years. Hence, when he began to be in his declining age, he might sin, and afterwards be brought to repentance. And as for the scripture speaking first of his fall, and then of his death, it does not follow that the one occurred immediately after the other; since the history of the blemishes and troubles of his life is but short. On the other hand, there are several things which may give us ground to conclude, that he repented after his fall. In particular, we have an intimation of his repentance in that communication of God respecting him in which it is supposed that God would suffer him to fall, and a provisionary encouragement is

given to expect that he should be recovered. He says, 'I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.' The same thing is repeated in Psal. 89:30–34, in which his fall is supposed, and his recovery from it particularly mentioned; as though God had designed that this should be a supplement to his history, and remove the doubts which might arise with relation to his salvation. There are also some things in other parts of scripture which plainly refer to the part of his life between his fall and his death, which give sufficient ground to conclude that he was a true penitent. None can deny that he was the inspired writer of Ecclesiastes; inasmuch as it is said, in the title or preface set before it, that they are 'the words of the preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem.' Now, if we duly weigh several passages in that book, we shall find many things in which he expresses the great sense he had of the vanity of his past life. He says, for example, 'I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly.' Here, by 'madness and folly,' he doubtless intends what was so in a moral sense, when he indulged his sinful passions, and what, therefore, respects the worst part of his life. This he farther insists on when he says, 'Whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour,'m or in all those things which afterwards were matter of grief and uneasiness to me. Here he observes how he did, as it were, take pains to bring on himself a long train of miseries which troubled him afterwards. And then he plainly expresses his repentance, when he says, 'All was vanity and vexation of spirit,' and there was 'no profit under the sun;' as though he had said, 'I turned from God to the creature, to see what happiness I could find in it, but I met with nothing but disappointment.' He had 'no profit in those things, where of he was now ashamed.' It is probable, that God showed him the vanity of his pursuits, by his chastening him, or visiting his

transgressions with the rod, and his iniquities with stripes, as he had promised to do, and so brought him to experience 'vexation of spirit.' This phrase is a plain intimation of that godly sorrow which proceeded from a sense of sin, which made him, beyond measure, uneasy; and this vexation or uneasiness was so great that he says, 'I hated life,' that is, I hated my past wicked life, and abhorred myself for it, 'because the work that is wrought under the sun, is grievous unto me,' that is, the work which I wrought was such as gave me grief of heart, 'for all is vanity and vexation of spirit,'o that is, this is all the consequence of what I did. It cannot be supposed that he was weary of his life for the same reasons that many others are, who are deprived of the blessings of common providence, and reduced to that condition which makes them miserable as to their outward circumstances in the world. It was the uneasiness he found in his own spirit, the secret wounds of conscience and bitterness of soul arising from a sense of sin, which made him thus complain. Elsewhere, too, he seems to be sensible of his sin, in heaping up vast treasures. The doing of this he calls 'loving silver;' and he adds, what seems very applicable to his own case, that he who is guilty of it, 'shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase; this is also vanity;' that is, this had been an instance of his former vanity. He adds farther, 'The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.'q If by this we understand that the increase of riches sometimes gives disturbance to and stirs up the corruptions of those who possess them, and if the passage thus understood be applied to himself, it is an acknowledgment of his sin. Or, if we understand by it that the abundance of a rich man will not give him rest at night, when his mind is made uneasy with a sense of the guilt of sin, and if it be applied to his own case when he is fallen, it intimates that his repentance not only gave him uneasiness by day, but took away his rest by night. It seems also not improbable, that

what gave him farther occasion to see the vanity of his past life, was the sense of mortality impressed on him; for he says, 'It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart;' that is, he will or ought to improve the sense of his own frailty, which we may conclude he had done; and therefore he adds, 'Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.'s—It may be objected indeed, that all these expressions, and many others of a similar nature, which might have been referred to, which are expressive of great repentance, are not applicable to himself. Now, though I cannot but think that the contrary seems very probable; yet there is something farther added, which he expressly applies to himself, and which refers to his unlawful love of women: 'I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands. Whose pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher.' If these things be not expressive of repentance, it is hard to say what are. We may add that, as he expresses a grief of heart for his past sins, so he warns others that they may not be guilty of that which he himself found more bitter than death. Accordingly, having described the arts used by the wicked woman to betray the unthinking passenger, he cautions every one to take heed of declining to her ways; inasmuch as the consequence will be, that 'a dart will strike through his liver,' and he is 'as a bird that hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.'u He also adds, 'She hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.' So that we find in Solomon two of the greatest evidences which we can have of sincere repentance; namely, a great degree of sorrow for sin, and an earnest desire that others would avoid it, by giving those cautions which are necessary to prevent their falling into the snare in which he had been entangled.—Moreover,

something is spoken in Solomon's commendation, after his death. This may be gathered from its being said that, during the three first years of Rehoboam's reign, which God approved of, 'he walked in the way of David and of Solomon;'y where we may observe that Solomon is joined with his father David. Hence, as there were abatements to be made for the blemishes in David's reign; the reign of Solomon had in it great blemishes. But as one repented, so did the other, and therefore ought not to be reckoned an apostate. We may add, that he was a penman of scripture; and it does not appear that God conferred this honour upon any who apostatized from him. On the other hand, they have the general character given of them by the apostle Peter, that they were all 'holy men of God.' Thus, then, we must conclude Solomon to have been, till we have greater evidence to the contrary than they can produce who say he was an apostate.

3. There are others mentioned in the objection, namely, Hymeneus and Alexander, whose apostasy we have no ground to doubt of; but we cannot allow that they fell from or lost the saving grace of faith. It is one thing to fall from the profession of faith, and another thing to lose the grace of faith. Hence, the only thing to be proved in answer to this branch of the objection, is, that these persons, who are described as apostates, never had the truth of grace, or that they fell only from that visible profession of it, whereby they were reckoned to be, what in reality they were not, namely, true believers. Now, the apostle speaks of them as having 'departed from the faith,' namely, the doctrines of the gospel; and their doing this was attended with blasphemy, for which they were 'delivered unto Satan,' which is a phrase used by the apostle here and elsewhere, for persons being cut off from the communion of the church. Hence, he advises Timothy to 'hold faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck,' as these had done. Now, the main force of the objection seems to lie in this, that they who have

made shipwreck of faith were once true believers; and that, therefore, such may apostatize, and so fall short of salvation. But by 'faith' here is meant the doctrines of the gospel, which are often styled 'faith.' Thus it is said that the apostle 'preached the faith which once he destroyed.' Elsewhere also it is said, 'before faith came,' that is, before the gospel-dispensation began, and those doctrines were preached, which, under that dispensation, were to be published to the world, 'we were kept under the law.'b Again, 'Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' that is, by hearing those doctrines which are contained in the gospel. Hence, what the apostle charges the apostates with, is making shipwreck of faith, considered objectively. They once, indeed, held the truth, but it was in unrighteousness; they had right notions of the gospel, which they afterwards lost. Now, the apostle advises Timothy not only to 'hold faith,' that is, to retain the doctrines of the gospel as one who had right sentiments of divine truths, but to hold it 'with a good conscience.' For I take the expression, 'hold faith and a good conscience,' to contain an hendyadis; and so it is the same as if he had said, 'Be not content with a mere assent to the truths of the gospel, but labour after a conscience void of offence towards God, that thou mayest have its testimony that thy knowledge of divine truth is practical and experimental, and then thou art out of danger of making shipwreck of faith, as these have done, who held it without a good conscience.' It is not said they made shipwreck of a good conscience; for that they never had. What is said is, 'Concerning faith,' which they once professed, 'they made shipwreck.'

The same thing may be said concerning Judas. He apostatized from the faith which he once made a very great profession of, being not only one of Christ's disciples, but sent forth with the rest of them to preach the gospel and work miracles; yet it is evident that he had not the saving grace of faith. Our Saviour, who knew the hearts of all

men, was not deceived in him, though others were; for it is said, 'He knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.' The principal force of the objection, however, is put in this way: Judas must needs have been a believer, because he was given to Christ; and our Saviour says, that 'those who were given to him were kept by him, and none of them was lost but the son of perdition.'e His being styled 'the son of perdition' argues him an apostate, and his having been 'given to Christ' denotes that he was once a true believer; so that he fell totally and finally. In answer to this, some conclude that they who are said to have been 'given to Christ,' are such as were appointed, by the providence of God, to be his servants in the work of the ministry. Now, it is said concerning them, that they were given to Christ to be employed by him in this service, and that all of them were kept faithful, except the son of perdition. If this be the sense of their being given to him, it does not necessarily infer their being made partakers of special grace. It is one thing to be given to Christ, to be employed in some peculiar acts of service in which his glory is concerned; and another thing to be given to him, as being chosen and called by him to partake of special communion with him. If Judas had been given to him in the latter sense, he would not have been a son of perdition, but would have been kept by him, as the other disciples were; but as he was given to Christ only that he might serve the design of his providence in the work of the ministry, he might be lost, or appear to be a son of perdition, and yet not fall from the truth of grace. If, on the other hand, by being given to Christ,' we understand a being given to him as objects of his care and special love, we must suppose that all who were thus given to him were kept by him; and in this sense Judas, who is called 'the son of perdition,' and was not kept by him, was not given to him. Accordingly, the particle 'but' is not exceptive, but adversative; and the passage is as if our Lord had said, 'All that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost; but the son of

perdition is lost.' I have not preserved him; for he was not the object of my special care and love. He was not given me to save; therefore he is lost. Now it is certain that the particle 'but' is used in this sense in many other scriptures, particularly that in which it is said, 'There shall in no wise enter into it,' that is, the heavenly Jerusalem, 'any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life;' which is as if it had been said, 'Ungodly men shall not enter in; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life shall.'g Thus much concerning the objection taken from particular persons who are supposed to have fallen from grace.

II. The next objection is taken from what the apostle Paul says concerning the church of the Jews, whom he describes as apostatized from God. It is evident that they are to this day given up to judicial blindness, and not in the least disposed to repent of that crime for which they were cast off. Concerning these, he says that they once were holy: 'If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches;' and afterwards he speaks of 'their casting away,' and of 'some of the branches being broken off, because of unbelief.'i Now, say the objectors, if the whole church apostatized, we must conclude that at least some of them were true believers. Hence, true believers may fall from the grace of God.

Now, that the church of the Jews apostatized, and were cut off for their unbelief, is sufficiently evident. But we must distinguish between the apostacy of a professing people such as the church of the Jews were, who first rejected God, and then were cast off by him, and the apostacy of those who were truly religious amongst them. The apostle himself gives us ground for this distinction, when he says, 'They are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.' Elsewhere, also, he

distinguishes between one who is a Jew, as being partaker of the external privileges of the covenant which the Jewish church was under; and a person's being a Jew, as partaking of the saving blessings of that covenant. He says, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.'l A church may lose its external privileges, and cease to have the honourable character given it of being a church,—the greatest part of them may be blinded; when, at the same time, 'the election,' that is, all among them who were chosen to eternal life, 'obtain it.' The apostle observes this, and, in doing so, intimates that some who were members of the Jewish church were faithful. These were preserved from the common apostacy, being converted to the Christian faith. Their privileges as members of a church were lost; but they still retained their spiritual and inseparable union with Christ, which they had as believers, and not as the result of their being the natural seed of Abraham. They were made, partakers of the blessings which accompany salvation; and therefore were not separated from the love of God in Christ; whilst formal professors and hypocrites, who were Abraham's natural seed, but not his spiritual, were cast off by Christ.

III. It is farther objected that there are some who have the character of righteous persons, concerning whom it is supposed that they may fall away or perish. The objectors particularly refer to Ezekiel 18:24, 'When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.' The objectors refer also to Hebrews 10:38, in which it is said, 'The

just shall live by faith; but if any man,' or, as the word should be rendered, 'if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' They hence infer that, as the righteous man may turn from his righteousness, and draw back to perdition, the doctrine of the saints' perseverance cannot be defended.

1. As to the former of these scriptures, we must consider the sense of it agreeably to the context, and the scope and design of the prophet. He had often reproved the people for those vile abominations which they were guilty of, and had denounced the threatenings of God, which should have their accomplishment in their utter ruin. Particularly, he foretells the judgments which should sweep away many of them before the captivity, and others that should befall them in it. This is the subject principally insisted on by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The people were, in consequence, sometimes represented as disliking the doctrine, desiring that 'smooth things' might be prophosied to them, and that 'the Holy One of Israel might cease from before them.' At other times they are represented as complaining of the hardship of the dispensation, intimating that it was unjust and severe, and, at the same time, justifying themselves, as though they had done nothing which deserved it, and as though it was to befall them wholly for the sins of their fathers. Accordingly, there was a proverbial expression often made use of by them, mentioned in the second verse of this chapter, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But by this they did not understand that we expect to perish eternally for our fathers' sins; in which sense it must be taken if the objection in question has any force. Now God, by the prophet, tells them that they had no reason to use this proverb, and so puts them upon looking into their past conduct, and inquiring whether they had not been guilty of the same sins which their fathers were charged with; and he assures them, that if they could exculpate themselves from these,

they should be delivered, and not die, that is, not fall by those judgments which either should go before or follow the captivity,—for that, as we have observed elsewhere,o seems to be the sense of 'dying,' according to the prophetic way of speaking. For understanding this scripture, then, we must consider that the prophet addresses himself to 'the house of Israel.' These are represented as complaining that 'the way of the Lord was not equal,' or that God's threatenings or judgments, which were the forerunners of the captivity, were such as they had not deserved. He hence tells them that he would deal with them according to their deserts. 'When the righteous,'q that is, one whose conversation formerly seemed to be unblemished, and who appeared not guilty of such enormous crimes as were committed by others—which may be supposed, and yet the person not be in a state of grace,—when such an one 'turneth away from his righteousness, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth,' that is, becomes openly vile and profligate, 'shall he live?' can he expect any thing else but that God should follow him with exemplary judgments, or that he should be involved in the common destruction? 'In his sin that he hath sinned, shall he die.' On the other hand, 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness;' that is, when they who have been guilty of these abominations shall reform their lives, or turn from their idolatry, murders, adulteries, oppressions, and other vile crimes which the people in general were charged with by the prophet, and which are assigned as the reason of God's sending the dreadful judgment of the captivity; I say, if there be such an instance of reformation, 'he shall save his soul alive;' that is, either he shall be delivered from the captivity, or shall be preserved from those temporal judgments which either went before or followed after it. This reformation, followed by deliverance from these judgments, amounts to something less than saving grace, and a right to eternal life, which is inseparably connected with it. Hence, if nothing else

than what has been stated be intended by 'the righteous' and 'the wicked man;' and if the judgments threatened, or their deliverance from them in case of reformation, includes no more than temporal judgments and temporal deliverance; it is evident, that the passage does not in the least suppose that any true believer shall apostatize or fall from a state of grace. As we may distinguish between eternal death and temporal judgments; so we must distinguish between a person's abstaining from the vilest abominations as a means to escape these judgments, and his exercising those graces which accompany salvation. There may be an external reformation in those who have no special grace, if nothing farther be regarded than a person's moral character, or inoffensive behaviour in the eye of the world. If we consider him only as abstaining from those sins which are universally reckoned disreputable among persons who make any pretensions to religion, and if in this respect he be denominated a righteous man; he may turn away from his righteousness and become immoral and profligate, and so be reckoned among the number of apostates. He cannot be said, however, to apostatize or fall from the grace of God; since moral virtue, or the exercise of righteousness in our dealings with men, is as much inferior to saving grace, as a form of godliness is to its power.

2. As to the other scripture mentioned in the objection, it is generally urged against us as an unanswerable argument, in the express words of it, to prove the possibility of the saints' apostasy. Our translation of it is charged with a wilful mistake, to serve a turn, and make the text speak what it never intended; since all, it is alleged, who understand the original must allow that it ought to be rendered, 'If he draw back,' which supposes that the just man may apostatize, or draw back unto perdition. But though the words, according to the form in which they are laid down, contain a supposition, it does not infer the being or reality of the thing supposed; but only this, that if

such a thing should happen, it would be attended with what is laid down as a consequence. This is very agreeable to our common mode of speaking. We say, for example, that if a virtuous person should commit a capital crime, he will fall under the lash of the law as much as though he had made no pretensions to virtue. Yet it does not follow, that such an one shall do it, or expose himself to this punishment. On the other hand, if a king should say to a criminal, as Solomon did to Adonijah, 'If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth,' it cannot be inferred that he will behave himself so that his life shall be secured to him. The proposition is true, as there is a just connection between the supposition and the consequence; yet this does not argue that the thing supposed shall come to pass. So it is with the scripture under our present consideration. The proposition is doubtless true, that if the just man should draw back, so as to become a wicked man; if he should lose the principle of grace which was implanted in regeneration, and abandon himself to the greatest impieties; he would as certainly perish as though he had never experienced the grace of God. But it must not be inferred from this, that God will suffer such an one, who is the object of both his love and his care, thus to fall and perish, so that his soul should have no pleasure in him.—Again, if we suppose the person here spoken of, whom we consider as a true believer, to draw back, we may distinguish between backsliding or turning aside from God by the commission of very great sins, and apostasy,—or between drawing back, by being guilty of great crimes, so as to expose himself to sore judgments, and drawing back to perdition. The just man, in this text, is said, indeed, to draw back; but he is distinguished from one who draws back to perdition. Accordingly, it is said in the following verse, 'We are not of them who draw back to perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul.' Such a drawing back as this, though it shall not end in perdition, inasmuch as the person shall be recovered and

brought to repentance, shall yet be attended with very great marks of God's displeasure against believers for those sins which they have committed. Accordingly, 'his soul having no pleasure' in them, denotes that he would, in various instances, as a display of his holiness, reveal his wrath against relapsing believers, who shall nevertheless be recovered and saved at last. If these things be duly considered, the objection seems to have no weight, even though it should be allowed that the words upon which it is principally founded are not rightly translated.—I cannot see sufficient reason, however, to set aside our translation; it being equally just to render the words, 'If any man draw back.'t For as the supplying of the words 'any man,' or 'any one,' is allowed in many other instances, both in the Old and the New Testament; so there is not the least incongruity in their being supplied in the text under consideration. Now if they be supplied, the sense which we give of it, will appear very agreeable to the context. For the meaning is, 'The just shall live by faith;' or, as in one of the foregoing verses, they who 'know in themselves that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance' shall live by faith; but as for others who do not live by faith, having only a form or show of religion, whose manner is to forsake the assembling of themselves together, these are inclined to 'draw back.' Let them know, therefore, that 'if any one,' or whosoever, 'draws back,' it will be at their peril; for it will be to their own 'perdition.' Yet, saith the apostle, that true believers may not be discouraged by the apostasy of others, let them take notice of what is said in the following words, 'We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.' These things being duly considered, it will be sufficiently evident that this text does not militate against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance.

IV. There is an objection brought against the doctrine we have been endeavouring to maintain, taken from what the apostle says in Heb.

6:4, 5, 6, 'It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' The force of this objection lies in two things, namely, that the persons are described as total and final apostates, and that, according to the account we have of their former condition, they appear to have been true believers. This is thought, by some who defend the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, to be one of the most difficult objections which we generally meet with against it. Those especially who cannot see how it is possible for a person to make such advances towards true godliness, and yet be no other than an hypocrito or formal professor, are obliged to take a method to set aside the force of the objection which I cannot agree with. They allege that when the apostle says 'it is impossible' that such should be 'renewed again to repentance,' the word 'impossible' denotes nothing else but that the thing is exceedingly difficult, not that they shall eventually perish. It is supposed that they are true believers; that their recovery, after such a notorious instance of backsliding shall be attended with difficulties so great that nothing can surmount them but the extraordinary power of God; and that though he will recover them, yet they shall feel the smart of their backsliding as long as they live,—that they shall be saved, 'yet so as by fire.' But though the word 'impossible' may be sometimes taken for that which is very difficult, I cannot but conclude that the apostle is here speaking of that which is impossible with respect to the event, and therefore that he is giving the character of apostates who shall never be recovered. This appears, not only from the heinousness of the crime, as they are said to 'crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame;' but from what is mentioned in the following verses, in which they are compared to 'the earth that

bringeth forth thorns and briars, which is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned;' and from their being distinguished from those who shall be saved, concerning whom the apostle was 'persuaded better things, and things that accompany salvation.' I think, therefore, he is speaking here concerning a total and final apostasy. But that this may not appear to militate against the doctrine we are maintaining, I shall endeavour to show that, notwithstanding the character the apostle gives of the persons he speaks of, they were destitute of the truth of grace; so that nothing is said concerning them, but what a formal professor may attain to.

They are described as 'once enlightened;' but this a person may be, and yet be destitute of saving faith. If by being 'enlightened' we understand their having been baptized, a sense in which the word is taken by some critics, and in which it was used in some following ages, it might easily be alleged that a person might be baptized and yet not be a true believer. But as I question whether, in the apostles' age, baptism was expressed by illumination, I would rather understand by it their having been convinced of the truth of the gospel, or their having yielded an assent to the doctrines contained in it. Now this a person may do, and yet be destitute of saving faith; which is seated not merely in the understanding, but in the will, and therefore supposes him not only to be rightly informed with respect to those things which are the object of faith, but to be internally and effectually called.—Again, they are said to have 'tasted the good word of God.' This description agrees with the character we formerly had of those who had a temporary faith,a who seemed for a while pleased with the word, and whose affections were raised in hearing it. Thus, Herod is said to have 'heard John the Baptist gladly, and to have done many things;' and certain hearers of the word are compared by our Saviour to the seed sown in stony ground, which soon sprang up, but afterwards withered away. Now, a person may hear the word in

this way, and yet not have saving faith; for it is one thing to approve of and be affected with the word, and another thing to mix it with that faith which accompanies salvation. As all men desire to be happy, a person may with pleasure entertain those doctrines contained in the word which, relate to a future state of blessedness, and at the same time be far from practising the duties of self-denial, taking up the cross and following Christ, mortifying indwelling sin, and exercising an entire dependence upon him and resignation to him in all things. To do this includes much more than what is expressed by 'tasting the good word of God.'—Further, the persons are described as having 'tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and of the powers of the world to come.' All these expressions, I humbly conceive, carry in them no more than this, that they had been enabled to work miracles, or that they had a faith of miracles, which has been already described, and has been proved to fall very short of saving faith.c The characters given of them, therefore, do not argue that they were true believers; and consequently the objection, which depends on the supposition that they were, is of no force to prove that saints may totally or finally fall from grace.

V. The next objection against the doctrine we have been maintaining is taken from Heb. 10:29, 'Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?' The crime here spoken of is of the most heinous nature, and the greatest punishment is said to be inflicted for it. Now, say the objectors, inasmuch as these are described as having been 'sanctified by the blood or the covenant,' it follows that they were true believers, and consequently true believers may apostatize and fall short of salvation. The force of the objection lies principally

in the words, 'The blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified.' This expression is taken by divines in two different senses.

1. Some take the word 'he' in the same sense as it is taken in the objection, as referring to the apostate; and then the difficulty which occurs is, how such a one could be said to be sanctified by the blood of the covenant, and yet not be regenerated, effectually called, or a true believer. To solve this, they suppose that by 'sanctification' we are to understand only a relative holiness, which those have who are made partakers of the common grace of the gospel. Thus it is said, 'Israel was holiness unto the Lord,' or, as the apostle Peter expresses it, 'an holy nation.'f They were God's people by an external covenant relation, and by an explicit consent to be governed by those laws which he gave them when they first became a church, and publicly avouched him to be their God, and he avouched them to be his peculiar people, which was done upon some solemn occasions.h Yet many of them were destitute of the special grace of sanctification, as including a thorough and universal change of heart and life. Moreover, it is supposed that this privilege of being God's people by an external covenant relation, together with all those common gifts and graces which attend it, was purchased by and founded on the blood of Christ, which is called 'the blood of the covenant,' inasmuch as he was 'given for a covenant of the people;' and, pursuant to this, he shed his blood to procure for them the external as well as the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. The former of these, the persons here described as apostates are supposed to have been partakers of, as the apostle says, 'To them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.'k They worshipped him in all his ordinances, as those whom the prophet speaks of, 'who seek him daily, and delight to know his ways, as a nation that did

righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of him the ordinances of justice, and take delight in approaching to God;' and yet these things were not done by faith. In this respect persons may be sanctified, and yet afterwards forfeit, neglect, despise, and forsake these ordinances, and lose the external privileges of the covenant of grace which they once had, and so become apostates. This is the most common method used to solve the difficulty contained in the objection. But I would rather acquiesce in another way which may be taken to account for the sense of those words, 'The blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified.'

2. The word 'he' may be understood as referring, not to the apostate, but to our Saviour, who is spoken of immediately before. Thus the apostate is said to 'trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith He,' that is, Christ, 'was sanctified, an unholy thing.' That this sense may appear just, it may be observed, that Christ was, in two respects, sanctified or set apart by the Father, to perform all the branches of his mediatorial office. He was so set apart as he was foreordained or appointed by him, to come into the world to shed his blood for the redemption of his people. Accordingly, his undertaking to redeem them, is called his sanctifying or devoting himself to perform this work. 'For their sakes,' says he, 'I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.' This he did in pursuance of the eternal transaction between the Father and him, relating to their redemption. But it will be said, that this was antecedent to his dying for them; and that hence he could not, properly speaking, be said, in this respect, to be 'sanctified by the blood of the covenant.' We add, therefore, that he was also sanctified or set apart by the Father, to apply the work of redemption after he had purchased it. His sanctification was, in the most proper sense, the result of his shedding his blood, which was the blood of the covenant. Hence, as

he was 'brought again from the dead,' as the apostle says, 'through the blood of the everlasting covenant,'n all the blessings which he in consequence applies to his people are the result of his being sanctified or set apart to carry on and perfect the work of our salvation, the foundation of which was laid in his blood.

Moreover, that they who, in the passage under consideration, are described as apostates, had not formerly the grace of faith, is evident from the context, which distinguishes them from true believers. The apostle seems to speak of two sorts of persons. He speaks first of some who had cast off the ordinances of God's worship, 'forsaking the assembling of themselves together,' and these are distinguished from those whom he dehorts from this sin, who had the grace of faith, whereby they were enabled to 'draw near to God in full assurance thereof, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water.' Concerning these he says, 'We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.' We must conclude, therefore, that others are intended in the text under our present consideration, who were not true believers. It hence does not appear from this text that true believers may totally or finally fall from a state of grace.

The apostates spoken of in this and the foregoing objection, were probably some among the Jews, to whom the gospel was preached, who embraced the Christian faith, being convinced by those miracles which were wrought for that purpose, but who afterwards revolted from it, and were more inveterately set against Christ and the gospel than they had been before they made this profession. Accordingly, as they had formerly approved of the crimes of those who crucified Christ, in which respect they are said to have crucified him; now they do, in the same sense, crucify him afresh. And as they had been made

partakers of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; afterwards they openly blasphemed him, and did so with spite and malice. These texts, therefore, not only contain a sad instance of the apostasy of some, but prove that they were irrecoverably lost. This comes as near the account we have in the gospels of the unpardonable sin, as any thing mentioned in scripture. What has been said, however, to prove that they never were true believers, is a sufficient answer to this and the foregoing objection.

VI. Another objection against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, is taken from 2 Peter 2:20–22, 'For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.' They are also said in the following verse, to 'turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them;' and their doing so is compared to the 'dog turning to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'

Now, though every one must conclude that the persons whom the apostle here speaks of plainly appear to be apostates; yet there is nothing in their character which argues that they apostatized or fell from the truth of grace; and it is only such whom we are at present speaking of. It may be observed that the apostle is so far from including these apostates in the number of those to whom he writes this and the foregoing epistle, whom he describes as 'elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,' and as having been 'begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance reserved for them in heaven,' and as such as should be 'kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation,' that he plainly distinguishes them from them.

For in the first verse of the chapter whence the objection is taken, it is said, 'There shall be false teachers among you, and many shall follow their pernicious ways.' He does not say many who are now of your number, but many who shall be joined to the church, when these false teachers arise. These persons, indeed, are represented as making a great show of religion, by which they gained reputation among some professors whom they seduced by means of it; and therefore it is said that 'they had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and that they had 'known the way of righteousness.' Such might indeed be joined to the church afterwards; but they did not now belong to it. And what is said concerning them amounts to no more than an external visible reformation, together with their having attained the knowledge of Christ and divine things; so that they were enlightened in the doctrines of the gospel, though they made it appear, by the methods they used to deceive others, that they had not experienced the grace of the gospel themselves, and therefore they fell away from their profession, and turned aside from the faith which once they preached. It is one thing for a formal professor, who makes a great show of religion, to turn aside from his profession, to all excess of riot; and another thing to suppose that a true believer can do so, and that to such a degree as to continue in apostasy. This the grace of God will keep him from. [See Note O, page 194.]

VII. Another objection against the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, is taken from the parable of the debtor and creditor, in Matt. 18:26, &c., 'The servant,' we are told, 'fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.' But afterwards, upon the servant's treating with great severity one of his fellow-servants who owed him a very inconsiderable sum, his lord exacted the debt of him

which he had before forgiven him, and so 'delivered him to the tormentors,' till he should pay all that was due to him. 'So likewise,' says our Saviour, 'shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.' From this it is inferred, that a person may fall from a justified state, or that God may forgive sin at one time, and yet be provoked to alter his resolution and inflict the punishment which is due to it at another; an inference which is altogether inconsistent with the doctrine of the saints' perseverance in grace.

Now, we must observe that our Saviour does not design in his parables that every word or circumstance contained in them should be applied to signify what it seems to import. But there is some truth in general intended to be illustrated by the parables; and this is principally to be regarded in them. Thus the parable of 'the judge which feared not God, neither regarded man,' who was moved by a widow's importunity to 'avenge her of her adversary,' and after a while resolved to do so because the widow 'troubled him,' is applied to 'God's avenging his own elect, which cry day and night unto him.' Now, we must observe that it is only in this circumstance that the parable is to be applied, without any regard had to the injustice of the judge; or to his being uneasy by reason of the importunity which the widow expressed in pleading her cause with him.—Again, in the parable of 'the steward,' we read that he was accused of having wasted his lord's goods;r and apprehending that he should be soon turned out of his stewardship, he takes an unjust method to gain the favour of his lord's debtors, by remitting a part of what they owed him, that by this means they might be induced to show kindness to him when he should be turned out of his service. It is said, indeed, that 'the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely;' though our Saviour does not design, in the account he gives of his injustice, to give the least countenance to it as if it were to be

imitated by us. Nor by his lord's commending him as acting wisely for himself, does he intend that it is lawful or commendable for wicked men to pursue similar measures to promote their future interest. But the only thing in which the parable is applied, is, that we might learn from it, that 'the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light;' and that men ought to endeavour, without the least appearance of injustice, to gain the friendship of others, by using what they have in the world in such a way that they may be induced, out of gratitude for those favours which they conferred upon them, to show respect to them; but principally, that in performing what was really their duty, they might have ground to hope that they shall be approved of God, and received into everlasting habitations.

Now, to apply this rule to the parable whence the objection is taken, we must consider that the design of it is not to signify that God changes his mind, as men do, by forgiving persons at one time and afterwards condemning them; as though he did not know, when he extended this kindness to them, how they would behave towards others, or whether they would improve or forfeit this privilege. To suppose this would be contrary to the divine perfections. But the only design of the parable is to show, that if they who now conclude that God has forgiven them, do not forgive others, they will find themselves mistaken at last; and that, though, according to the tenor of the divine dispensations, or the revealed will of God, which is our only rule of judging concerning this matter, they think they are in a justified state, it will appear that the debt which they owed was not cancelled, but shall be exacted of them to the utmost, in their own persons. All, therefore, which can be proved from the parable is, that a man may fall from or lose those seeming grounds which he had to conclude that his sins were forgiven. We are not to suppose that our Saviour intends that God's secret purpose, relating to the forgiveness

of sin, can be changed; or that he who is really freed from condemnation at one time, may fall under it at another. Hence, what is said in this parable, does not in the least give countenance to the objection founded on it, or overthrow the doctrine we are maintaining.

VIII. Another objection is taken from what the apostle Paul says concerning himself, in 1 Cor. 9:27, 'I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' It is certain, say the objectors, that the apostle was a true believer; yet he concludes that, if he did not behave himself so as to subdue or keep under his corrupt passions, but should commit those open, scandalous crimes which they would prompt him to, he should in the end become a castaway, that is, apostatize from God, and be rejected by him.

But though the apostle had as good ground to conclude that he had experienced the grace of God in truth, as any man, and was often favoured with a full assurance of his having done so; yet he did not attain this assurance by immediate revelation, in the same way as he received those doctrines which he was to impart to the church as a rule of faith; for then it would have been impossible for him to have been mistaken as to this matter. If this be supposed, then I would understand what he says concerning his being 'a castaway,' as denoting what would be the consequence of his 'not keeping under his body,' but not as implying that corrupt nature should so far prevail that he should fall from a sanctified state. If he did not attain assurance by immediate revelation, he had it in the same way as others have, by making use of those marks and characters which are given of the truth of grace. Accordingly, he argues that, though at present he thought himself to be in a sanctified state, from the same evidences that others conclude themselves to be so, yet if corrupt

nature should prevail over him, which it would do if he did not keep his body in subjection, or if he were guilty of those vile abominations which unregenerate persons are chargeable with, then it would appear that this assurance was ill-grounded, his hope of salvation delusive, and he no other than a hypocrite; and so, notwithstanding his having preached to others, he would be found, in the end, among those who were false professors, and accordingly be rejected of God. We may hence observe, that it is one thing for a person to exercise caution and use means to prevent sin, which, if he should commit it, would prove him a hypocrite; and another thing for one who is a true believer, to be suffered to commit those sins by which he would apostatize from God, and so miss of salvation.

IX. What we have just stated will serve to answer another objection which is usually brought against the doctrine we are maintaining. This objection is, that the doctrine is inconsistent with that holy fear which believers ought to have of falling, as an inducement to care and watchfulness in the discharge of their duty; as it is said, 'Happy is the man that feareth alway.' But we must distinguish between that fear of caution, which is a preservative against sin, and includes a watchfulness over our actions, that we may not dishonour God; and an unbelieving fear, that though we are in a state of grace, and are enabled to exercise that diligence and circumspection which becomes Christians, yet we have no foundation whereon to set our foot, or ground to hope for salvation. Or, it is one thing to fear lest we should, by giving way to sin, dishonour God, grieve his Spirit, wound our own consciences, and do that which is a disgrace to the gospel, through the prevalency of corrupt nature, whereby we shall have ground to conclude that we thought ourselves something when we were nothing, deceiving our own souls; and another thing to fear that we shall perish and fall, though our hearts are right with God, and we

have reason to expect that we shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation.

Practical Inferences from the doctrine of Perseverance

We shall conclude this Answer with a few inferences from what has been said to prove the doctrine of the saints' perseverance.

1. Since we do not pretend to assert that all who make a profession of religion are assured that they shall never apostatize, but only true believers, let unbelievers take no encouragement from what we have said to conclude that it shall be well with them in the end. Many are externally called, who are not really sanctified; they presume that they shall be saved, but without ground, inasmuch as they continue in impenitency and unbelief. Such have no warrant to take comfort from the doctrine we have been maintaining.

2. We may, from what has been said, observe the difference between the security of a believer's state, as his hope is fixed on the stability of the covenant and on its promises relating to his salvation, together with the Spirit's witness with ours concerning our own sincerity; and that which we generally call carnal security, whereby a person thinks himself safe, or that all things shall go well with him, though he make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. This is an unwarrantable security in a state of unregeneracy, or it is a licentiousness, which the doctrine of perseverance does not in the least give countenance to.

3. From what has been said concerning the apostacy of some from that faith which they once made a profession of, we may infer that it is only the grace of God experienced in truth, which will preserve us from turning aside from the faith of the gospel. The apostle speaks of some who, by embracing those doctrines which were subversive of

the gospel, had 'fallen from grace,' that is, from the doctrines of grace; concerning whom he says, 'Christ profited them nothing,' or was 'become of no effect to them,'x that is, the gospel, which contains a display of the glory of Christ, was of no saving advantage to them. All the sad instances we have of many who are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and are made a prey to those who lie in wait to deceive, proceed from their being destitute of the grace of God; which would have a tendency to preserve them from turning aside from the faith of the gospel.

4. Let us be exhorted to be as diligent and watchful against the breakings forth of corruption, and endeavour as much to avoid all occasions of sin, as though perseverance in grace were to be ascribed to our own endeavours, or as though God had given us no ground to conclude that he would enable us to persevere. Yet, let us, at the same time, depend on his assistance, without which this blessing cannot be attained; and hope in his mercy and faithfulness; and lay hold on the promises which he has given us, that it shall go well with us in the end, or that we shall have all joy and peace in believing.

5. Let us endeavour not only to persevere, but to grow in grace. These two blessings are joined together; as it is said, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.'

6. The doctrine of perseverance has a great tendency to support and fortify believers under the most adverse dispensations of providence to which at any time they are liable, and to comfort them under all the assaults of their spiritual enemies. For though these may be suffered to discourage or give them interruption in the exercise of those graces which they have experienced, yet grace shall not be wholly extinguished. Sometimes, also, by the overruling providence

of God, those things which in themselves have a tendency to weaken their faith, shall be ordered as a means to increase it; so that when they can do nothing in their own strength, they may be enabled, by depending on Christ, and receiving strength from him, to prevail against all the opposition they meet with, and at last come off 'more than conquerors, through him that loved them.'

[NOTE O. The characters described in 2 Pet. 2:21, 22.—The proverb which the apostle quotes, is, 'As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly,' Prov. 26:11. The character whom he describes, therefore, is a fool,—one who, notwithstanding his knowledge, or rather by misconceiving and perverting it, had never become 'wise unto salvation.' 'Swine' and 'dogs' are not sheep—they are not new creatures—they form no part of the flock, and never were admitted to the fold of the good Shepherd; hut, according to the uniform imagery of scripture language, they are enemies of purity, lovers of corruption, false teachers, perverters of truth, depraved and wicked men. 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs,' says our blessed Lord, 'neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.' The dogs of whom Peter speaks are expressly said by him to have been 'false teachers,' verse 1. Now this very class of persons are called dogs also by the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Paul. 'His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber; yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand,' Isa. 56:10, 11. 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision,' Phil. 3:2. Moreover, Peter says, respecting those whom he describes, that 'they have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,' Verse 15. Now, as they 'escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ,' so Balaam 'heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty, and, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open, said, I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth,' Numb. 24:16, 17; and, as Balaam, on the one hand, became rebukeable even by a dumb ass for the madness of opposing what he knew, so the persons described by Peter 'turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them.' They and 'the mad prophet' were the same class of persons, and possessed a common character. Though they, for a time, escaped the pollutions of the world, they were always defiled and swayed by unsubdued pollution of heart. While externally 'washed,' they were internally altogether vile; and even when outwardly clean, they were but washed swine, unrenewed in their nature, filthy in their inclinations, prepared to roll themselves anew in the mire, governed by habits and possessing dispositions altogether alien from those of the sheep of Christ's pasture.—ED.]

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ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

QUESTION LXXX. Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation?

ANSWER. Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those

> graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation.

WE have considered a believer as made partaker of those graces of the Holy Spirit which accompany salvation, and by which his state is rendered safe. We have considered also that he shall not draw back unto perdition, but shall attain the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul. But it is necessary for the establishing of his comfort and joy, that he should know himself to be interested in this privilege. It is a great blessing to be redeemed by Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit; but it is a superadded privilege to know that we are so, or to be assured that we are in a state of grace. This is the subject insisted on in the present Answer. In discussing it we shall observe the following method. First, we shall say something concerning the nature of assurance, and how far persons may be said to be infallibly assured of their salvation. Secondly, we shall endeavour to prove that this blessing is attainable in this life. Thirdly, we shall consider the character of those to whom it belongs. Lastly, we shall consider the means whereby it may be attained.

The Nature and Degrees of Assurance

We shall speak first concerning the nature of assurance, and how far persons may be said to be infallibly assured of their salvation. Assurance is opposed to doubting, which is inconsistent with it. He who has attained this privilege, is carried above all those doubts and fears respecting the truth of grace, and his interest in the love of God, which others are exposed to, and by which their lives are rendered very uncomfortable. It may be considered also as containing something more than our being enabled to hope that we are in a state

of grace; for though such hope affords relief against despair, yet it falls short of assurance, which is sometimes called a 'full assurance of hope.' And it certainly contains a great deal more than a probability or a conjectural persuasion relating to this matter; which is the only thing that some will allow to be attainable by believers, especially they who deny the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, and lay the greatest stress of man's salvation on his own free-will, rather than the efficacious grace of God. All that they will own as to this matter is, that persons may be in a hopeful way to salvation, and that it is probable they may attain it at last; but that they cannot be fully assured that they shall, unless they were assured concerning their perseverance. This, however, they suppose, no one can be; because, as they think, the carrying on of the work of grace, as well as the beginning of it, depends on the free-will of man, and because, according to their notion of liberty, as was observed under another Answer,b he who acts freely may act the contrary. They hence conclude that, as every thing which is done in the carrying on of the work of grace is done freely; no one can be assured that this work shall not miscarry; so that none can attain assurance. This is what some assert, but we deny. It is observed in this Answer, not only that believers may attain assurance that they 'are in a state of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation,' but that they may be 'infallibly assured' of this, and so possess the highest degree of assurance. How far this is attainable by believers, may be the subject of our farther inquiry.

It is a matter of dispute among some, whether assurance admits of any degrees; whether a person can be said to be more or less assured of a thing; or whether that which does not amount to the highest degree of certainty, may be called assurance. This is denied by some, for this reason, that assurance is the highest and strongest assent which can be given to the truth of any proposition; so that the least

defect of evidence on which it is supposed to be founded, leaves the mind in a proportionable degree of doubt as to the truth of it; in which case there may be a probability, but not an assurance. If this method of explaining the meaning of the word be correct, it is beyond dispute that they who have attained assurance of their being in a state of grace, may be said to be 'infallibly assured.' Whether this be the sense of that expression in this Answer, I will not pretend to determine; neither shall I enter any farther into this dispute, which amounts to little more than what concerns the propriety or impropriety of the sense of the word 'assurance.' All that I shall add concerning it, is that, according to our common mode of speaking, it is reckoned no absurdity for a person to say he is sure of a thing, though it, be possible for him to have greater evidence of the truth of it, and consequently a greater degree of assurance. Thus the assurance which arises from the possession of a thing cannot but be greater than that which attends the mere expectation of it. Hence, whatever be the sense of the 'infallible assurance' which is here spoken of, we cannot suppose that there is any degree of assurance attainable in this life, concerning the happiness of the saints in heaven, equal to that which those have who are actually possessed of that blessedness. To suppose this would be to confound earth and heaven together, or expectation with actual fruition.

As to our assurance, there is among some another matter of dispute which I am not desirous to enter into, namely, whether it is possible for a believer to be as sure that he shall be saved, as he is that he exists, or that he is a sinner and so stands in need of salvation; or whether it is possible for a person to be as sure that he shall be saved, as he is sure of that truth which is matter of pure revelation, namely, that he that believes shall be saved; or whether it is possible for a person to be as sure that he has the truth of grace, as he may be that he performs any actions, whether natural or religious, such as

speaking, praying, reading, hearing, &c.; or whether we may be as sure that we have a principle of grace, as we are that we put forth such actions as seem to proceed from that principle, when engaged in the performance of some religious duties. If any are disposed to defend the possibility of our attaining assurance in so great a degree as this, thinking it to be the meaning of what some divines have asserted, agreeably to what is contained in this Answer, that a believer may be 'infallibly assured of his salvation,' I will not enter the lists with them; though I very much question whether it will not be a matter of too great difficulty for them to support their argument, without the least appearance of exception to it.

I would not, however, extenuate or deny the privileges which some saints have been favoured with, who have been, as it were, in the suburbs of heaven, and had not only a prelibation but a kind of sensation of the enjoyments of it, and expressed as full an assurance as though they had been actually in heaven. It cannot be denied that this, in various instances, has amounted as near as possible to an assurance of infallibility. And that such a degree of assurance has been attained by some believers, both in former and later ages, will be proved under a following Head. Now, this, I am apt to think, is what is intended in this Answer by the possibility of a believer's being infallibly assured of salvation. But let it be considered that these are uncommon instances, in which the Spirit of God, by his immediate testimony, has favoured persons with as to this matter, and are not to be reckoned as a standard, whereby we may judge of that assurance which God's children desire and sometimes enjoy, which falls short of it. When God is pleased to give a believer such a degree of assurance as carries him above all his doubts and fears with respect to his being in a state of grace, and fills him with those consequent joys which are unspeakable and full of glory; the believer possesses that assurance which we are now to consider, and which,

in this Answer, is called an infallible assurance. But as to whether it is more or less properly called 'an infallible assurance,' we have nothing farther to add.

The Attainableness of Assurance

We shall now proceed to prove that this privilege is attainable in the present life.

1. We observe, then, that if the knowledge of other things which are of less importance be attainable, certainly it is possible for us to attain that which is of the greatest importance. This argument is founded on the goodness of God. If he has given us sufficient means to lead us into the knowledge of things which respect our comfort and happiness in this world; has he left us altogether destitute of those means whereby we may conclude that it shall go well with us in a better? God has sometimes been pleased to favour his people with some intimations concerning the blessings of common providence, which they might expect for their encouragement, under the trials and difficulties which they were to meet with in the world. Our Saviour encourages his disciples to expect that, notwithstanding their present destitute circumstances, as to outward things, their Father, who 'knoweth that they had need of them,' would supply their wants; so that they had no reason to be over-solicitous in 'taking thought what they should eat and drink, and wherewithal they should be clothed.' God, that he may encourage the faith of his people, gives them assurance that 'no temptation shall befall them, but what is common to men,' or that they shall not be pressed down, so as to sink and despair of help from him, under the burdens and difficulties which, in the course of his providence, he lays on them. Now, if he is pleased to give such intimations to his people, with respect to their condition in this world, that they may be assured that

it shall go well with them as to many things which concern their outward circumstances; may we not conclude that the assurance of those things which concern their everlasting salvation may be attained? Or, if the promises which respect the one may be depended on, so as to afford relief against all doubts and fears which may arise from our present circumstances in the world; may we not, with as good reason, suppose that the promises which respect the other, namely, the carrying on and perfecting of the work of grace, afford equal matter of encouragement? May we not hence conclude, that the one is as much to be depended on as the other; so that, as the apostle says, 'they who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them, may have a strong consolation' arising thence?

It will be objected that the promises which respect outward blessings are not always fulfilled; so that we cannot be assured concerning our future condition, as to outward circumstances in the world; though godliness, as the apostle says, 'hath promise of the life that now is,' as well as of 'that which is to come.' This, say the objectors, appears from the uncommon instances of affliction which the best men often meet with, and which others are exempted from. It is hence inferred that the promises which respect the carrying on and completing of the work of grace, will not afford that assurance of salvation which we suppose a believer may attain to as founded on them. Now, we reply, that the promises of outward blessings are always fulfilled, either in kind or in value. Sometimes the destitute state of believers, as to the good things of this life, is abundantly compensated with those spiritual blessings which are bestowed on them at present, or are reserved for them hereafter. Hence, if their condition in the world be attended with little else but affliction, they have no reason to say that they are disappointed; for while they are denied lesser blessings, they have greater instead. Their assurance of the accomplishment of the promises of outward blessings, therefore

must be understood with this limitation. But as to spiritual blessings which God has promised to his people, there is no foundation for any distinction of their being made good in kind or in value. If the promise of eternal life be not made good according to the letter of it, it cannot, in any sense, be said to be accomplished. Hence, as God gives his people these promises, as a foundation of hope, we may conclude that the assurance of believers relating to their salvation, is as much to be depended on as the assurance they have, founded on the promises of God, concerning any blessings which may tend to support them in their present condition in the world.

2. That assurance of justification, sanctification, and salvation, may be attained in this life, is farther evident from the obligations which persons are under to pray for these privileges, and to bless God for the experience which they have of the one, and the ground which they have to expect the other. That it is our duty to pray for them is no less certain than that we stand in need of them. This, then, being taken for granted, it may be inferred that there is some way by which we may know that our prayers are answered. To think that there is not such a way would be a very discouraging consideration. Nor, if there were not such a way, could the experience of answer to prayer be alleged as a motive to the performance of the duty; as the psalmist says, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' Nor could any believer have the least reason to say as he does elsewhere, 'Verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.'f The apostle also says that, 'if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us;' and, in the following words, he adds, 'We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' It follows, therefore, that we may know, from the exercise of faith in prayer for the forgiveness of sin, that our iniquities are forgiven. The same may be said concerning prayer for all other blessings which accompany

salvation; so that it is possible for us to know whether God has granted us these blessings or not.

It may be objected, that it is not absolutely necessary that an humble suppliant should have any intimations given him that his petition shall be granted; or that it would be a very unbecoming thing for such an one to say, that he will not ask for a favour, if he be not sure beforehand that it will be bestowed. We answer, that we are not only to pray for saving blessings, but to praise God for our experience of them. Thus it is said, 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me;' and 'Praise is comely for the upright.'i Now, this supposes that we know that God has bestowed upon us the blessings we prayed for. If the psalmist calls upon his soul to 'bless the Lord for forgiving him all his iniquities,' we must suppose that there was some method by which he attained the assurance of the blessing which he praises God for.

3. Some have attained the privilege of assurance; and therefore it is not impossible for others to attain it. That some have been assured of their salvation, is evident from the account we have in several scriptures. Thus the apostle tells the church he writes to, 'God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation;' and he says concerning himself, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.'m

It is objected that though some persons of old experienced this privilege, yet it does not follow that we have any ground to expect it; since they attained it by extraordinary revelation, in that age in which they were favoured with the spirit of inspiration, whereby they arrived at the knowledge of things future, even such as it was impossible for them otherwise to have known. At least, say the objectors, they could not, without these extraordinary intimations,

have arrived at any more than a probable conjecture concerning this matter. Now, continue they, that by these means some obtained assurance, is not denied, while to pretend to more than this, is to suppose that we have it by extraordinary inspiration, which, at present, can be reckoned no other than enthusiasm. We answer, that though God does not give the church, at present, the least ground to expect extraordinary intimations concerning their interest in spiritual and saving blessings, as he formerly did; yet we must not conclude that there is no method whereby they may attain the assurance of that interest in a common and ordinary way, by the internal testimony of the Spirit,—a testimony, as will farther appear under a following Head, which differs very much from enthusiasm, since it is attended with and founded on those evidences which God has given in scripture, of their being in a state of grace, and which they, in a way of self-examination, are enabled to apprehend in themselves.

That this may appear, let it be considered that there never was any privilege conferred upon the church by extraordinary revelation, while that dispensation was continued in it, but the same, or some other which is equivalent to it, is still conferred in an ordinary way, provided it be absolutely necessary for the advancing of the glory of God, and their edification and consolation in Christ. If this were not true, the church could hardly subsist; much less would the present dispensation of the covenant of grace excel the other which the church was under in former ages, as to those spiritual privileges which they have ground to expect. It is, I think, allowed by all, that the gospel-dispensation, not only in the beginning of it, when extraordinary gifts were conferred, but in its continuance, now that they have ceased, excels that which went before it, with respect to the spiritual privileges which are conferred in it. Now, if God was pleased formerly to converse with men in an extraordinary way, and thereby

to give them an intimation of things relating to their salvation, but at present withholds not only the way and manner of making such intimation to his people, but the blessings conveyed thereby; it will follow that the church is in a worse state than it was before, or else it must be supposed that these privileges are not absolutely necessary to enable them to glorify God, which they do by offering praise to him, and to their attaining that peace and joy which they are given to expect in a way of believing. If the church were destitute of this privilege, it would be in a very unhappy state, and retain nothing which could compensate the loss of those extraordinary gifts which have now ceased. They who insist on the objection, and charge the doctrine of assurance with savouring of enthusiasm, are obliged, by their own method of reasoning, to apply the same objection to the doctrine of internal, special, efficacious grace, which, under a foregoing Answer, we proved to be the work of the Spirit; and if these internal works are confined to the extraordinary dispensation of the Spirit, then the church is at present as much destitute of sanctification as it is of assurance. We must hence conclude, that the one no more savours of enthusiasm than the other; or that we have ground to hope for assurance of salvation, though not in an extraordinary way, as much as the saints had in former ages.

Our Saviour has promised his people the Spirit to perform what is necessary for carrying on the work of grace in all ages, even when extraordinary gifts should cease. Thus he says, 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' Elsewhere, also, it is said, 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.'p And as to the privilege of assurance, it is said, 'We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' Besides, there are many

other promises of the Spirit, which, though they had their accomplishment, as to what respects the conferring of extraordinary gifts, in the first age of the church, yet have a farther accomplishment in what the Spirit was to bestow on the church in following ages, though in an ordinary way. This seems very evident from scripture, inasmuch as the fruits of the Spirit are said to appear in the exercise of those graces which believers have in all ages, who never had extraordinary gifts. Thus it is said, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.'r Now, if these graces be produced by the Spirit, as they are called his 'fruits,' and the exercise of them be not confined to any particular age of the church, we must suppose that the Spirit's energy extends itself to all ages.—Again, believers are said to be 'led by the Spirit;' and their being so is assigned as an evidence of their being 'the sons of God.' On the other hand, it is said, 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'t We may hence conclude that there was, in the apostle's days, an effusion of the Spirit common to all believers, besides that which was conferred in an extraordinary way on those who were favoured with the gift of inspiration; otherwise, having the Spirit would not have been considered as a privilege belonging only to believers, and being destitute of it an evidence of a person's not belonging to Christ. As to the extraordinary dispensation of the Holy Ghost, it was not inseparably connected with salvation. For many had it who were Christians only in name, and had nothing more than a form of godliness; and, on the other hand, many true believers brought forth those fruits which proceeded from the Spirit in an ordinary way, who had not these extraordinary gifts conferred on them. Moreover, the apostle speaks of believers 'through the Spirit mortifying the deeds of the body.' Now, if the work of mortification be incumbent on believers in all ages, then the influences of the Spirit, enabling to this work, may be expected in all ages. To apply this to our present argument,—the

Spirit's bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, which is the foundation of that assurance which we are pleading for, is, together with the other fruits and effects of the Spirit just mentioned, a privilege which believers, as such, are given to desire and hope for, and which they stand in as much need of as those who had this or other privileges conferred on them in an extraordinary way in the first age of the gospel church.—We might add, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were conferred on particular persons, and not on whole churches; while assurance is considered by the apostle as a privilege conferred on the church to which he writes, that is, the greatest part of them, whence the denomination is taken. On this account, the apostle, speaking to the believing Corinthians, says, 'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Here he does not mean only himself and other ministers, but the generality of believers at that time who are described as walking by faith. There are many things said concerning them in the foregoing and following verses, which make it sufficiently evident that he intends more than himself and other ministers, when he speaks of their having assurance; since many had it who were not made partakers of extraordinary gifts. We must not conclude, therefore, that the church has at present no ground to expect this privilege; or that they are liable to the charge of enthusiasm if they claim it.

But that the objection which we are examining may farther appear not to be sufficient to overthrow our argument, we may appeal to the experience of many believers in the present age, who pretend not to extraordinary revelation. Let it be considered, then, that many, in later ages, since extraordinary revelation has ceased, have attained this privilege, and consequently it is now attainable. To deny this would be to offend against the generation of God's people, of whom

many have given their testimony to this truth, and have declared what a comfortable sense they have had of their interest in Christ, and what sensible impressions they have enjoyed of his love shed abroad in their hearts, whereby they have had, as it were, a prelibation of the heavenly blessedness. This assurance has been attended with the most powerful influence of the Spirit of God, enabling them to exercise those graces which correspond with these comfortable experiences, whereby they have been carried through and enabled to surmount the greatest difficulties which have attended them in life. Many, too, have been supported and comforted therewith at the approach of death; so that the sting of death has been taken away, and they have expressed themselves with a kind of triumph over it, in the apostle's words, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'—That some have been favoured with this invaluable privilege, is undeniable. The account we have in the history of the lives and deaths of many who have been burning and shining lights in their generation, puts it out of all doubt. And if this were not sufficient, we might appeal to the experience of many now living; for there is scarcely any age or place in which the gospel comes with power, but we have some instances of the Spirit's testimony to his own work, whereby it comes, with much assurance, a comfortable sense of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which are the first-fruits and earnest of eternal life. But since this point will be particularly insisted on, and farther proofs given of it under a following Answer,z we may at present take it for granted, that many have been assured of their being in a state of grace, who have not made the least pretension to inspiration; while to charge them with enthusiasm, or a vain ungrounded delusion, is to cast a reflection on the best of men, as well as on one of the highest privileges which we can enjoy in this world.—I am sensible that it will be objected that, though some have indeed expressed such a degree of assurance, yet this will afford conviction only to those who have it,

who are the best judges of their own experience, and of the evidence on which their assurance is founded, but is not a sufficient proof to us, with respect to whom it is only a matter of report. It may also be said, on the other hand, that it is possible these persons might be mistaken who have been so sure of their own salvation. It is very unreasonable, however, to suppose that all have been mistaken or deluded who have declared that they have been favoured with this blessing. Charity will hardly admit of such a supposition; and if there be no possibility of attaining this assurance, they must all have been deceived who have concluded that they had it. Moreover, this privilege has been attained, not only by a few persons, and these the more credulous part of mankind, or by such as have not been able to assign any marks or evidences tending to support it; but by many believers who, at the same time, have been far from discovering any weakness of judgment, or disposition to unwarrantable credulity. Yea, they have enjoyed it at a time when they have been most sensible of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and could not but own that there was a peculiar hand of God in it; and the same persons, when destitute of the Spirit's testimony, have acknowledged themselves to have used their utmost endeavours to attain it, but in vain. It is alleged, indeed, that though we suppose assurance true to a demonstration to those who have it, as being matter of sensation to them, it is only matter of report to us; and that we are no farther bound to believe it, than we can depend on the credibility of their evidence who have declared that they have experienced it. But if there be such a thing as certainty founded on report, to deny which would be the greatest degree of scepticism, and if the truth of assurance has been transmitted to us by a great number of those who cannot be charged with any thing which looks like a disposition to deceive either themselves or others, we are bound to believe, from their own testimony, that there is such an assurance to be attained by

those who pretend not to receive it by extraordinary inspiration from the Spirit of God.

The Character of the Persons who enjoy Assurance

We are now led to consider the character of the persons to whom this privilege belongs. They are described, in this Answer, as 'such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before him.' These only have ground to expect this privilege. It is an assurance of our having the truth of grace that we are considering; which supposes a person truly to believe in Christ. Accordingly, it is distinguished from that unwarrantable presumption whereby many persuade themselves that they shall be saved, though they be not sanctified. It is not 'the hope of the hypocrite' we are speaking of, which shall 'perish' and be 'cut off;' 'whose trust shall be as the spider's web,' which shall be swept away with the besom of destruction, and be like 'the giving up of the ghost,' which shall end in everlasting despair. What we are speaking of is a well-grounded hope, such as is accompanied with and supported by the life of faith; so that we are first enabled to act grace, and then to discern the truth of it in our own souls, and accordingly reap the comfortable fruits and effects which attend this assurance; as the apostle prays in behalf of the believing Romans, that 'the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing.'b An unbeliever, therefore, has no right to this privilege. Indeed, from the nature of the thing, it is preposterous for a person to be assured of that which in itself has no reality; as the apostle says, 'If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.' And if faith be necessary to assurance, it follows, as is farther observed in this Answer, that they who have attained this privilege walk in all good conscience before God; whereby the sincerity of their faith is evinced. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of

our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.'d

The Means of attaining Assurance

We are now to consider the means by which assurance is to be attained, namely, not by extraordinary revelation, but by faith, founded on the promises of God. As to the former, we have already considered that assurance may be attained without extraordinary revelation; as it has been experienced by some in the present dispensation of the gospel, in which extraordinary revelation has ceased. Indeed, it may be observed, in the account the scripture gives of this privilege, that it does not appear that, when extraordinary revelation was granted to many in the first age of the gospel, the design of it was to lead men into the knowledge of their own state, so that they should by means of it attain assurance of their interest in Christ and right to eternal life. The main design of inspiration was to qualify ministers in an extraordinary way to preach the gospel; as the necessity of affairs seemed then to require it. It was necessary also for the imparting of some doctrines which could not otherwise be known. Inasmuch, too, as it was an extraordinary dispensation of divine providence, it was an expedient to give conviction to the world concerning the truth of the Christian religion; since God hereby was pleased to converse in an immediate way with men, to testify the great regard he had to his church, and to promote the great ends of inspiration in propagating that religion which was then to be set up in the world. But we do not find that by extraordinary revelation the work of grace was ordinarily wrought or carried on; nor was it God's instituted means without which believers could not attain assurance, for, in that age of extraordinary inspiration, they arrived at that privilege in the same way in which we are to expect to attain it. It is

true, God occasionally intimated, by immediate revelation, that he would save some particular persons, and that their 'names were written in the book of life;' but these were special and extraordinary instances of divine condescension; and it is not designed by them that others should expect to attain the privilege of assurance in the same way. Hence, it will be hard to prove that the apostle Paul, and others whom he speaks of, who were assured of their salvation, though they received the knowledge of other things by inspiration, were led into the knowledge of their own state in such a way, much less may we expect to attain assurance by extraordinary revelation.

We are now led to consider the ordinary means whereby we may attain assurance. This means is, in this Answer, said to be faith, grounded on the truth of God's promises, and the Spirit's testimony, whereby we are enabled to discern in ourselves those graces which accompany salvation. Accordingly, in order to our arriving at a comfortable persuasion that we shall be saved, there must be revealed those promises of life and salvation which are contained in the gospel. These are remotely necessary to assurance; for without a promise of salvation we can have no hope of it. Yet though these promises are contained in the gospel, many are destitute of assurance. Again, it is necessary, in order to our attaining assurance, that there should be some marks and evidences revealed in the word of God as a rule for persons to try themselves by, in order to their knowing that they are in a state of grace. Now, we may say concerning this rule, as well as concerning the promises of salvation revealed, that, though it is necessary to assurance, yet it is only an objective means for our attaining it; inasmuch as we are hereby led to see what graces experienced, or duties performed by us, have the promise of salvation annexed to them. Hence, it is further necessary that we should discern in ourselves those marks and evidences of grace to which the promise of salvation is annexed; otherwise we

have no right to lay claim to it. Accordingly, it is our duty to look into ourselves, and observe what marks of grace we have, whence we may, by the Spirit's testimony with ours, discern ourselves to be in a state of grace. We shall, then, in examining this subject, consider the following points;—that in order to our attaining assurance, we must exercise the duty of self-examination; what we may truly call a mark or evidence of grace, whereby we may discern that we are in a state of salvation; and that we are to depend on, hope, and pray for, the testimony of the Spirit with our spirits, that we are the children of God, and that the evidences of grace are found in us.

I. In order to our attaining assurance, it is necessary that we exercise the duty of self-examination, which is God's ordinance for this end. It is certainly a duty and privilege for us to know ourselves,—not only what we do, but what we are; for without knowing this, whatever knowledge we may have of other things, we are chargeable with great ignorance in a matter of the highest importance; nor can we be sufficiently humble for those sins we commit, or thankful for the mercies we receive. If we reckon it an advantage to know what is done in the world, and are very inquisitive into the affairs of others, it is much more necessary and reasonable for us to endeavour to know what more immediately relates to ourselves; or if we are very desirous to know those things which concern our natural or civil affairs in the world, whether we are in prosperous or adverse circumstances; ought we not much more to inquire, how matters stand with us as to what concerns a better world?—Again, we cannot know the state of our souls, without impartial self-examination. This is evident from the nature of the thing. As inquiry is the means for our attaining knowledge; so looking into ourselves is a means of attaining self-acquaintance.—Further, self-examination is a duty founded on a divine command, and an ordinance appointed for our attaining the knowledge of our state. Thus the apostle says, 'Examine

yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.' Now, whatever duty God has commanded us to engage in, as expecting any spiritual privilege to attend it, is properly an ordinance for the attaining of that privilege; and its being so is an argument to enforce the performance of that duty.

Having thus proved self-examination to be a Christian's duty, we shall now consider how it ought to be performed. Here let it be observed that, as it is God's ordinance, we are to have a due regard to his presence, and consider him as an heart-searching God, and depend on his assistance, without which it cannot be performed to any great advantage. But more particularly, we are to engage in this duty deliberately. It cannot well be performed while we are in a hurry of business. As every thing is beautiful in its season, so we ought to redeem time and to retire from the world, to apply ourselves to this as well as other secret duties. We have the more need to do this, that a rash and hasty judgment concerning any thing is generally faulty, and must be reckoned an evidence of weakness in him who passes it, and will be much more so when the thing to be determined is of such vast importance.—Again, the duty of self-examination ought to be done frequently; not like those things which are to be performed but once in our lives, or only upon some extraordinary occasions, but often, at least so often that no presumptuous sin may be committed, or any extraordinary judgment inflicted on us, or mercy vouchsafed to us, without a due observation being made of it, in order to our improving it aright to the glory of God and our own edification. We cannot, however, exactly determine what relates to the frequency of this duty, any more than we can prescribe to those who are in a way of trade and business in the world, how often they are to cast up their accounts, and set their books in order, that they may judge whether they go forward or backward in the world. Yet, as the neglect of these mercantile duties has been detrimental to many, as to their worldly

affairs; so the neglect of self-examination has been often found an hinderance to our comfortable procedure in our Christian course. So far, however, as we may advise concerning the frequency of this duty, it would redound much to the glory of God and our own advantage if, at the close of every day, we would call to mind the experiences we have had, and observe the frame of spirit with which we have engaged in all its business. This the psalmist advises when he says, 'Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.' Moreover, it is advisable for us to perform this duty whenever we engage in other solemn stated religious duties, whether public or private, that we may know what matter we have for prayer or praise, what help we want from God against the prevalency of corruption or temptation, what answers of prayer we have received from him, or what success we have had under any ordinance in which we have engaged, as well as what the present frame of our spirit is when drawing nigh to God in any holy duty.

The duty of self-examination ought to be performed with great diligence. To arrive at a knowledge of ourselves, and the secret working of our hearts and affections in what respects things divine and heavenly, or to discern the truth of grace, so as not to mistake that for a saving work which has the external show of godliness without the power of it, requires great diligence and industry. Accordingly, the psalmist, in speaking concerning the performance of this duty, says, 'I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.' The thing to be inquired into is not merely, whether we are sinners in general, or exposed to many miseries in this life in consequence of being so, for this is sufficiently evident by daily experience. But we are to endeavour after a more particular knowledge of ourselves; and, accordingly are to inquire whether sin hath dominion over us to such a degree that all the powers and faculties of our souls are enslaved by it, and whether we commit sin

in such a way as denominates us, as our Saviour expresses it, 'servants of sin,'i or, whether sin be loathed and abhorred, avoided and repented of. As to our state, we are to inquire whether we have ground to conclude that we are justified, and in consequence delivered from the guilt of sin, and the condemning sentence of the law; or whether we remain in a state of condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on us. We must inquire whether the work of grace be really begun, so that we are effectually called, and enabled to put forth spiritual actions from a renewed nature; and whether this work is going forward or declining, what is the strength or weakness of our faith. We are to inquire also what is the general tenor of our actions; whether the ends we design in all religious duties are right and warrantable; whether our improvement in grace bears any proportion to the means we are favoured with. Moreover, we are to examine whether we perform all those relative duties which are incumbent on us, so as to glorify God in our conversation with men; whether we endeavour to do good to them, and receive good from them, and so improve our talents to the glory of God, from whom we received them. These and similar things are to be inquired into; and our examining ourselves respecting them will be more immediately subservient to the attaining of the privilege of assurance.

Self-examination ought to be performed with the greatest impartiality. Conscience, which is to act the part of a judge and a witness, must be faithful in its dictates and determinations, the matter in question being one of the greatest importance. Hence, in passing a judgment on our state, we must proceed according to the rules of strict justice, not denying, on the one hand, what we have received from God, or resolutely concluding against ourselves that there is no hope, when there are many things which afford matter of peace and comfort to us; nor, on the other hand, are we to think ourselves something when we are nothing. Some are obliged to

conclude, as the result of this inquiry into their state, that they are unregenerate and destitute of the saving grace of God. This sentence those are obliged to pass on themselves who are grossly ignorant, not sensible of the plague of their own hearts; who are altogether unacquainted with the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, or the method prescribed in the gospel for a sinner's justification or freedom from the guilt of sin, in a fiducial application of Christ's righteousness, which is the only means conducive to it; and who know not what is included in evangelical repentance, how sin is to be mortified, and what it is to depend on Christ in the execution of his offices of prophet, priest, and king. At least, if they have not such a degree of the knowledge of these things, though they cannot fully and clearly describe them, as may influence their practice, and excite those graces which all true converts are enabled to exercise, they have ground to conclude that they are in a state of unregeneracy. We may add, that a person must conclude against himself that he is destitute of the grace of God, if he allows himself in the omission of known duties, or the commission of known sins, and is content with a form of godliness without the power of it, or values and esteems the praise of men more than of God. Such must conclude that their hearts are not right with him.

Again, we must examine ourselves concerning our state, with a resolution, by the grace of God, to make a right improvement of that judgment which we are bound to pass on ourselves. If we apprehend that we are in a state of unregeneracy, we are not to sink into despair; but we are to wait on God in all his appointed means and ordinances, in order to our obtaining the first grace, that, by the powerful influences of the Spirit, there may be such a true change wrought in us that we may have ground to hope better things concerning ourselves, even things which accompany salvation. If, on the other hand, we find that we have experienced the grace of God in

truth, we must be disposed to give him all the glory, to exercise a continued dependence on him for what is still lacking to complete the work, and, as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him.—Finally, this duty must be performed with judgment. We are to compare our hearts and actions with the rule which is prescribed in the word of God, whereby we may know whether we have those marks and evidences of grace whence we may conclude that we have a good foundation to build on, and that our hope is such as shall never make ashamed.

II. We are thus led to consider what we may truly call a mark or evidence of grace, whereby we may discern that we are in a state of salvation. In order to our understanding this, we must consider two rules. First, every thing which is a mark or evidence of a thing, must, be more known than that which is designed to be evinced by it. The sign must always be more known than the thing signified by it; inasmuch as it is a means of our knowing that which we are at present in doubt about; as when the finger is placed in a cross-road, to direct the traveller which way he is to take. Again, a mark or evidence of a thing must contain some essential property of that which it is designed to evince. Thus the inferring of consequences from premises is an essential property belonging to every intelligent creature, and to none else. It is hence a mark or evidence of an intelligent creature. So to design the best end, and use those means which are conducive to it, is an essential property of a wise man, and consequently a mark or evidence of wisdom. On the other hand, there are some things which are not essential properties, but accidental, as a healthful constitution is to a man, or a particular action which has some appearance but not all the necessary ingredients of wisdom and goodness to a wise or good man. Now, let these rules be applied to our present purpose, in determining what we may call marks or evidences of grace. With respect to the former

of them, namely, that a mark must be more known than the thing which is evinced by it, we may conclude that eternal election, and the Spirit's implanting a principle of grace in regeneration, cannot be said to be marks or evidences of sanctification, since these are less known than the thing designed to be evinced. As to the other rule, namely, that a mark must contain an essential property of that which it evinces, it follows from it, that our engaging in holy duties without the exercise of grace, or our extending charity to the poor when it does not proceed from faith or love to God, &c., is no certain evidence of the truth of grace; for a person may perform these duties and yet be destitute of grace, while that which is essential to a thing is inseparable from it.—I could not but think it necessary to premise these general observations respecting marks of grace; inasmuch as some have entertained prejudices against all marks of grace, and seemed to assert that a believer is not to judge of his state by them. Nothing seems more absurd than this opinion. If they who adopt it have nothing to say in its defence, but that some assign those things to be marks of grace which are not so, and thereby lead themselves and others into mistakes about them; what has been premised concerning the nature of a mark or evidence, may, in some measure, guard against this prejudice, as well as prepare our way for what may be said concerning them. In treating this subject, we shall consider, first, those things which can hardly be reckoned marks of grace; and, secondly, what marks we may judge of ourselves by.

1. As to what are not to be reckoned marks of grace, we are not to conclude that a person is in a state of grace, merely because he has a strong impression on his own spirit that he is so. Such an impression is accidental, and not essential to grace; and many are mistaken with respect to it. It is not to be doubted that they whom our Saviour represents as saying, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done

many wonderful works?' had a strong persuasion founded on this evidence, that they were in a state of grace, till they found themselves mistaken, when he commanded them to 'depart from him.' Nothing is more obvious than that many presume that they are something when they are nothing. Indeed, a persuasion that a person is in a state of grace, merely because he cannot think otherwise of himself, the thing being impressed on his spirit, without any other evidence, lays him too open to the charge of enthusiasm.

Again, an external profession of religion, discovered in the performance of several holy duties, is no certain sign of the truth of grace; for this many make who are not effectually called. Of such Christ speaks when he says, 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' We may add, that persons may have some degree of raised affections when attending on the ordinances, some sudden flashes of joy when they hear of the privileges of believers, both in this and in a better world; though their conversation be not agreeable to their confident and presumptuous expectation. On the other hand, some have their fears very much awakened under the ordinances, as the subject of their meditations has a tendency to excite such fears; others have such a degree of sorrow that it gives vent to itself in a flood of tears, as Esau is said to have 'sought the blessing with tears;' but still there is something else wanting to evince the truth of grace. I do not deny that it is a great blessing to have raised affections in holy duties. But when these are experienced only in particular instances, and are excited principally by some external motives or circumstances attending the ordinance the persons are engaged in; and when the impressions made on them wear off as soon as the ordinance is over; we can hardly determine them, on the evidence of these raised affections, to be in a state of grace. The affections, indeed, are warmed in holy duties; but their being so is like iron heated in the fire, which, when taken out, soon grows cold again, and not like that

natural heat which remains in the body of man, which is an abiding sign of life. This subject, however, is to be treated with the utmost caution; inasmuch as many are apt to conclude that they have no grace, because they have no raised affections in holy duties, as truly as others presume that they have grace merely because they experience such affections. Let it be considered, then, that when we speak of raised affections not being a certain mark of grace, we consider the persons who experience them as being destitute of other evidences which contain some essential properties of grace. The affections are often raised by insignificant sounds, or by the tone of the voice, when there is nothing in the matter delivered which is adapted to excite any grace, the judgment not informed thereby, nor the will persuaded to embrace Christ as offered in the gospel. There may be transports of joy in hearing the word, when, at the same time, corrupt nature retains its opposition to the spirituality of the divine truth. A person may conceive the greatest pleasure in an ungrounded hope of heaven, as a state of freedom from the miseries of this life, when he has no favour or relish of that holiness which is its glory, in which respect his conversation is not in heaven. He may also be very much terrified with the wrath of God, and the punishment of sin in hell; when, at the same time, he has not a due sense of the vile and odious nature of sin, or an abhorrence of it. Such instances of raised affections we intend when we speak of them as no marks or evidences of the truth of grace. But, on the other hand, when, together with raised affections, there is the exercise of suitable graces, and the impression of the raised affections remains after their fervency is abated or lost, a good sign is afforded of grace; though, when they are not accompanied with the exercise of any grace, they afford no mark or evidence of the truth of it. Now, that we may not be mistaken as to this matter, we ought to inquire, not only what it is that has a tendency to raise the affections, but whether our understandings are rightly informed in the doctrines of the gospel,

and our wills choose and embrace what is therein revealed. If we find it a difficult matter for our affections to be raised in holy duties, we ought farther to inquire whether this may not proceed from our natural constitution. And if the passions are not easily moved with any other things in the common affairs of life, we have then no reason to conclude that our being destitute of raised affections in the exercise of holy duties is a sign that we have not the truth of grace, especially if Christ and divine things are the objects of our settled choice, and our hearts are fixed, trusting in him.

Further, the performance of those moral duties which are materially good, is no certain sign of the truth of grace. I do not say that this is not necessary; for when we speak of a mark of grace, as containing what is essential to it, we distinguish between that which is a necessary prerequisite, without which no one can have grace, and that which is an essential ingredient in it. Where there is no morality, there is certainly no grace; but if there be nothing more than morality, there is wanting an essential ingredient by which this matter must be determined. A person may abstain from gross enormities, such as murder, adultery, theft, reviling, extortion, covetousness, &c., and, in many respects, perform the contrary duties, and yet be destitute of faith in Christ. The Pharisee, whom our Saviour mentions in the gospel, had as much to say on this subject as any one; yet his heart was not right with God, nor was his boasting approved by Christ. There are multitudes who perform many religious duties, when their doing so comports with their secular interests,—they adhere to Christ in a time of prosperity, but in a time of adversity they fall from him,—and then, that which seemed to be most excellent in them is lost, and they appear to be, what they always were, destitute of the truth of grace.

2. We now proceed to consider what are those marks by which persons may safely conclude themselves to be in a state of grace. In order to our determining this matter, we must consider what are the true and genuine effects of faith, as mentioned in scripture. There are other graces which accompany or flow from it; as when faith is said to 'work by love,' or to enable us to 'overcome the world,'o or despise its honours, riches, and pleasures, especially when standing in competition with Christ, or drawing our hearts aside from him. This effect it produced in Moses, when he 'refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt;' and in others, who 'confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,'q who 'desired a better country, that is, an heavenly,' whose 'conversation was in heaven.' Moreover, we are to inquire whether faith has a tendency to 'purify the heart,'s and so puts us upon abhorring, fleeing from, watching and striving against, every thing which tends to corrupt and defile the soul; and whether it tends to excite us to universal obedience, called 'the obedience of faith,' and a carefulness to 'maintain good works,'u which proceed from it and are evidences of its truth; as the apostle says, 'Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works,' or as our Saviour says, 'The tree is known by its fruit.' But that we may more particularly judge of the truth of grace by its marks and evidences, we must consider its beginning and progress, or with what frame of spirit we first embraced and closed with Christ, and what our conversation has been since that time.

As to the former of these, our judging of the truth of grace by the beginning of it, we are to inquire what were the motives and inducements which inclined us to accept Christ. Did we first see ourselves lost and undone, as sinful, fallen creatures; and were we

thence determined to have recourse to him for salvation, as the only refuge we could betake ourselves to? Did we first consider ourselves as guilty; did this guilt sit very uneasy upon us; and, in order to the removal of it, did we betake ourselves to Christ for forgiveness? Did we first consider ourselves as weak and unable to do what is good, and so apply ourselves to him for strength against indwelling sin, and victory over the temptations which prevailed against us?—Moreover, we ought to inquire whether it was only a slavish fear and dread of the wrath of God, and the punishment of sin in hell, which gave the first turn to our thoughts and affections, so as to put us on altering our course of life; or, whether, besides this, we saw the evil of sin arising from its intrinsic nature, and its opposition to the holiness of God; and whether our so seeing it was attended with shame and self-abhorrence, with a perception of the excellency and loveliness of Christ, with a feeling that he was 'precious' to us 'as he is to them that believe.' We ought farther to inquire, what were the workings of our spirits when we first closed with Christ. Did we close with him with judgment, duly weighing what he demands of us in a way of duty, as well as what we are encouraged to expect from him? Were we made willing to accept him in all his offices, and to have respect to all his commandments? Were we earnestly desirous to have communion with him here, as well as to be glorified with him hereafter? Were we content to submit to the cross of Christ, to bear his reproach, and to count this preferable to all the glories of the world? Were we willing to be conformed to an humbled suffering Jesus, and to take our lot with his servants, though they might be reckoned the refuse and offscouring of all things?—Again, we ought to inquire whether we acted thus with reliance on his assistance, as being sensible of the treachery and deceitfulness of our own hearts, and of our utter inability, without the aids of his grace, to do what is good. Did we, accordingly, give up ourselves to him in hope of obtaining help from him, in order to the right discharge of every

duty? Did we reckon ourselves nothing, and Christ all in all, that all our springs are in him? This was a good beginning of the work of grace; and will prepare the way for this grace of assurance which we are now considering.

Some will object against what has been said concerning our inquiring into, or being able to discern, the first acts of faith, or that frame of spirit wherewith we first closed with Christ, that they know not the time of their conversion, if ever they were converted. They cannot remember or determine what was the particular ordinance or providence which gave them the first conviction of sin and of their need of Christ, and induced them to close with him. Much less can they tell what were the workings of their hearts at such a time. It is impossible for them to trace the footsteps of providence, so as to point out the way and manner in which this work was begun in their souls. Objectors will infer, therefore, that the frame of spirit in which persons first closed with Christ, which so few are able to discern, is not to be laid down as a mark or evidence of grace.—Now, I am not insensible that the case described is that of the greatest number of believers. There are very few who, like the apostle Paul, can tell the time and place of their conversion and every circumstance leading to it; or who are like those converts who, when the gospel was first preached by Peter, 'were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' or like the jailer, who broke forth into an affectionate inquiry very similar to this, 'Sirs, What must I do to be saved?'a though the ordinance leading to it was of a different nature. Sometimes the way of the Spirit of God in the soul at first, is so discernible that it cannot but be observed by those who are brought into a state of grace. Others, however, know nothing of this, especially they who have not run in all excess of riot, and been stopped in their course on a sudden by the grace of God; in whom the change made in conversion was

real, though it could not, from the nature of the thing, be so plainly discerned in all its circumstances. Some have been regenerate from the womb; and others have had a great degree of restraining grace, and been trained up in the knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel from their very childhood, and retain the impressions of a religious education. These cannot so easily discern the first beginnings of the work of grace in their souls. Yet they may and ought to inquire, whether they ever found, in the course of their lives, such a frame of spirit as has been already described, which believers have when the work of grace is first begun. Nor is it very material for them to be able to discern whether these were the first actings of grace or not. The main thing to be determined is, whether they have ground to conclude that ever they experienced the grace of God in truth. In this case, the most which some can say concerning themselves, is, as the blind man says in the gospel, when the Pharisees were inquisitive about the restoring of his sight, and the way and manner in which it was done, 'Whereas I was blind, now I see.' The true convert says, 'Whereas I was once dead in trespasses and sins, I am now alive, and enabled to put forth living and spiritual actions to the glory of God.' This evidence will give as much ground to believers to conclude that they are in a state of grace, as though they were able to determine when they were first brought into it.

Again, we may judge of the truth of grace by the method in which it has been carried on, whether we are able to determine the way and manner in which it was first begun, or not. Sanctification is a progressive work. Hence, in order to our concluding that we are in a state of grace, it is not enough for us to set our faces heavenwards, but we must make advances towards it, and be found in the daily exercise of grace. A believer must not only set out in the right way, but he must hold on in it. He must live by faith, if he would conclude that the work of faith is begun in truth. It is not sufficient to call

upon God, or implore help from him when under some distressing providences, and afterwards to grow remiss in or lay aside the duty of prayer,—it must be our constant work. A true Christian is distinguished from an hypocrite in its being said concerning the latter, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' denoting that a true believer will do so. He is either habitually or actually inclined to it; and that in such a way as is attended with the daily exercise of those graces which are the fruits and effects of faith, whereby we may conclude that he is in a state of grace.

III. Thus far we have considered those marks or evidences of grace which, in order to our attaining assurance, we must be able to discern in ourselves. But a believer may understand what are the marks of grace contained in scripture, and, at the same time, inquire into the state of his soul to know whether he can apprehend in himself any evidences of the truth of grace, and yet not be able to arrive at a satisfaction as to this matter, so as to have his doubts and fears removed. Let it be considered, therefore, that he must depend on, hope, and pray for the testimony of the Spirit with his spirit, that he is a child of God. It will be a difficult matter for us to conclude that we have the truth of grace, till the Spirit is pleased to shine on his own work. But when he does this, all things will appear clear and bright to us; though formerly we might have walked in darkness, and had no light.

In speaking concerning this inward testimony of the Spirit, which is necessary to enable a believer to discern in himself the marks of grace, on his doing which his assurance of salvation is founded, let it be premised that, as it is a branch of the Spirit's divine glory, by his internal influence, to deal with the hearts of his people; so he does this in various ways, according to the various faculties of the soul,

which are the subjects of his influence. In particular, when by his power he renews the will, and causes it to act those graces which are the effects of his divine power, he is said to sanctify a believer. But when he deals with the understanding and conscience, enabling us to discern the truth of the work of grace that we may take the comfort of it, he is described in scripture as a witness to our being in a state of grace, or as witnessing with our spirits that we are in that state; and the consequence is, that 'the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we know what is the hope of his calling.' Accordingly, he gives us to discern that he has called us by his grace; and that, as the result of his having done so, he has granted us a hope of eternal life.

This testimony of the Spirit is a privilege plainly mentioned in scripture. Nor must we suppose that none had it but those who had extraordinary revelation; since it is so necessary to a believer's attaining peace and joy, which the church is certainly not less possessed of in the present dispensation than it was in former ages. That the Spirit gives his testimony to the work of grace in the souls of believers, though extraordinary revelation has ceased, is evident from what is matter of daily experience. For there are many instances of those who have used their utmost endeavours in examining themselves to know whether they had any marks of grace, who have not been able to discern any, though they have been thought to be sincere believers by others, till, on a sudden, light has broke forth out of darkness, and their evidences for eternal life cleared up, so that all their doubts have been removed. This attaining of assurance they could not but attribute to a divine hand; inasmuch as formerly they could meditate nothing but terror to themselves. In this case, what the apostle prays for with respect to the church, 'that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,' is experienced by them. On this account they are said to be

'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise'f whereby their hope is established, and whereby that is now confirmed to them which they were before in perplexity about. We have therefore as much ground to conclude that the Spirit is the author of assurance in believers, as we have that he is the author of sanctification.

But that this doctrine may not appear liable to the charge of enthusiasm, let it be considered that the Spirit never gives his testimony to the truth of grace in any in whom he has not first wrought it; for to do this would be, as it were, a setting his seal to a blank. We may add, that, at the time when he gives his testimony to the truth of grace in believers, he excites the lively exercise of it, whereby they are enabled to discern that it is true and genuine; so that their assurance, though it is not without some internal impressive influences which they are favoured with, yet is not wholly dependent on these. Hence, if you demand a reason of the hope which is in them, though they ascribe the glory of that hope to the Holy Spirit, as enabling them to discern the truth of grace, yet they are able to prove their own selves, after having examined themselves whether they are in the faith, by discovering their evidences of the faith of God's elect. This fact argues that their assurance is no delusion.

DESTITUTION OF ASSURANCE

QUESTION LXXXI. Are all true believers, at all times, assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved?

ANSWER. Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it; and after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions; yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair.

HAVING considered some believers as favoured with assurance of their being in a state of grace, we are, in this Answer, led to speak of others who are destitute of it. Here something is supposed, namely, that assurance of grace and salvation is not of the essence of saving faith. Again, some things are inferred from this supposition; first, that true believers may wait long before they obtain assurance; secondly, that, after the enjoyment of assurance, it may be weakened and intermitted through bodily distempers, sins, temptations, and divine desertions; yet, thirdly, that they are never left without the support of the Spirit of God, and so are kept from sinking into utter despair.

Assurance not of the Essence of Faith

As to the thing supposed in this Answer, namely, that assurance of grace and salvation is not of the essence of faith, many persons who, in other respects, explain the nature of faith in such a way as is

unexceptionable, assert that assurance is of the essence of it. Now, in this we cannot but think they express themselves very unwarily; at least, they ought to have more clearly discovered what they mean by faith, and what by assurance, than they appear to do. If by assurance being of the essence of faith, they mean that no one has saving faith but he who has an assurance of his own salvation; they not only assert what is contrary to the experience of many believers, but lay a stumbling-block in the way of weak Christians, who will be induced to conclude that, because they cannot tell whether they are true believers or not, they are destitute of saving faith. On this account, it is necessary for us to inquire how far the opinion in question is to be allowed, and in what respect denied.

It is certain that there are many excellent divines in our own and foreign nations, who have defined faith by assurance; which they have supposed so essential to it, that without it no one can be reckoned a believer. It may be they were inclined thus to express themselves in consequence of the sense in which they understood several texts of scripture, in which assurance seems to be considered as a necessary ingredient in faith. Thus it is said, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' Again, the apostle speaks of assurance as a privilege which belonged to the church to which he wrote, 'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'h Elsewhere, also, he so far blames their not knowing themselves, or their being destitute of this assurance, that he will hardly allow those to have any faith who were without it: 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' From such expressions as these, they who plead for assurance being of the essence of faith are ready to conclude that they who are destitute of it can hardly be called believers. But that this matter may be set in a true light, we must distinguish between

assurance of the object, namely, the great and important doctrines of the gospel, being of the essence of faith; and assurance of our interest in Christ being so. The former we will not deny; for no one can come to Christ who is not assured that he will receive him, or trust in him till he is fully assured that he is able to save him. But the latter we must take leave to deny; for if no one is a believer but he who knows himself to be so, then he who doubts of his salvation must be concluded to be no believer. This is certainly a very discouraging doctrine to weak Christians; and, according to it, when we lose the comfortable persuasion we once had of our interest in Christ, we are bound to question all our former experiences, and to determine ourselves to be in a state of unregeneracy. But to do this would be in effect to withhold from God the glory of that powerful work which was formerly wrought in us, which we then thought to be a work of grace.—If, indeed, they mean by assurance being of the essence of faith, that an assurance of our interest in Christ is essential to the highest or most comfortable acts of faith, meaning by this doctrine that we ought to be incited to press after assurance if we have not attained it, and that God is very much glorified by it, and a foundation laid for our offering praise to him for the experience we have had of his grace, which a doubting Christian cannot be said to do; we have nothing to say against it. Or if they should assert that doubting is no ingredient in faith, nor a commendable excellency in a Christian; we do not oppose them. All we are contending for is, that there may be a direct act of faith, or a faith of reliance, in those who are destitute of assurance that they are in a state of grace. This is the thing supposed in this Answer, when it is said that assurance is not of the essence of faith.

That this may be better understood, and we be led into the sense of scriptures, such as those just mentioned and others of a similar kind, which describe believers as having assurance, let it be considered

that there are many scriptures in which believers are said to have such an assurance as respects only the object of faith, namely, the person, offices, and glory of Christ, and the truth and promises of the gospel,—an assurance which we do not deny to be of the essence of faith. Thus the apostle prays for the church, 'That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' Elsewhere he says, 'Our gospel came to you in much assurance.'l And he exhorts persons to 'draw near to God, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' Now, it is probable that, in these and several other scriptures of similar import, he means no more than an assurance of the object of faith. As for the scripturen where he seems to assert that all who are destitute of this privilege are 'reprobates,' some understand the word which we translate 'reprobates,' as signifying only injudicious Christians; and if this be its meaning, the thing which it denotes is not inconsistent with the character of believers. Others, however, with an equal degree of probability, render it 'disapproved;' and so the meaning is, 'If you know not your ownselves, that Christ is in you, you are greatly to be blamed, or disapproved; especially as your not knowing this proceeds from your neglect of the duty of self-examination; by which means you have no proof of Christ's being in you, who are so ready to demand a proof of his speaking in his ministers.' It does not appear from this text, then, that every one who endeavours to know that he is in a state of grace by diligent self examination, but cannot conclude that he is so, must be determined to be destitute of faith; which would necessarily follow from our asserting that assurance of our interest in Christ is of the essence of saving faith.—There are other scriptures which speak of assurance as a distinguishing character of Christians in general; which are usually brought to prove that assurance is of the essence of faith. Thus, 'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we

have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'q Again, 'We know that we are of God.' There are also several places in the New Testament in which the apostle addresses his discourse to whole churches, as having assurance as well as the grace of faith. Thus the apostle Peter speaks of them as 'loving Christ, believing in him, rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls;'s which could hardly be said of them, if they were destitute of assurance of their own salvation. All, however, that I would infer from these and similar scriptures is, that it seems probable that assurance was a privilege more commonly experienced in that age of the church than it is in our day. There may be two reasons assigned for this. First, the change which passed upon them when they were converted, was so apparent that it was hardly possible for it not to be discerned. They turned from dead idols and the practice of the vilest abominations, to serve the living God; which two extremes are so opposite, that their being brought from the one to the other could not but be remarked by themselves, and consequently more visible to them, than if their conversion had been otherwise. The other principal reason is, that the church was called at that time to bear a public testimony to the gospel, by enduring persecutions of various kinds; and some of them were to resist even unto blood. Now, that God might prepare them for these sufferings, and that he might encourage others to embrace the faith of the gospel, which was then in its infant-state, he was pleased to favour them with this great privilege. And it may be hereafter, if God should call the church to endure like trials, that he will in mercy grant them a greater degree of assurance than is ordinarily experienced. Nevertheless, it may be questioned whether those scriptures which speak of assurance as if it were a privilege common to the whole church, are not to be understood as applicable to the greater part of them, rather than to every individual believer among them. For though the apostle, in one

of the scriptures before-mentioned, considers the church at Corinth as enjoying this privilege, and as concluding that it should go well with them in another world when this earthly tabernacle was dissolved; yet, in the same epistle, he speaks of some of them as not knowing their ownselves, that Jesus Christ was in them. The apostle John also, notwithstanding his saying to the church, 'We know that we are of God,' which argues that many of them had assurance, plainly intimates that all had it not; for he says, 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.'u Though, too, in another scripture, just mentioned, the apostle Peter speaks to the church to which he writes, as having 'joy unspeakable and full of glory' consequent upon their faith, which argues that they had assurance; yet he exhorts others of them to 'give diligence to make their calling and election sure;' so that these are supposed, at that time, not to have had it. From all this it may be concluded, that assurance of grace and salvation is not of the essence of saving faith; which is the thing supposed in this Answer.

Assurance may not be soon attained

We proceed to consider the first of those things which are inferred from this supposition, namely, that a believer may wait long before he attains assurance. This appears from daily experience and observation. The sovereignty of God discovers itself in it, as much as it does when he makes the ordinances effectual to salvation in giving converting grace to those who attend upon them. Some are called early to be made partakers of the salvation which is in Christ; others late. The same may be said with respect to God's giving assurance. Some are favoured with this privilege soon after or when first they believe; others are like those whom the apostle speaks of, 'who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.' Many

have often inquired into the state of their souls, and been unable to discern any marks or evidences of grace in themselves, whose conversation is such that others cannot but conclude them to be true believers. Their spirits are depressed; doubts and fears prevail, and tend to make their lives very uncomfortable; they wait and pray for the evidence and sense of God's love to them, but cannot immediately find it. This state of feeling the psalmist speaks of, either in his own person, or as representing the case of many who had the truth of grace but not the assurance of it, when he says, 'O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee; I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.'z God suffers it to be thus with his people for wise ends. Hereby he lets them know that assurance of his love is a special gift and work of the Spirit; without which they remain destitute of it, and cannot take comfort from either former or present experiences.

Assurance may be weakened and intermitted

We observe next, that they who once enjoyed assurance may have it weakened and intermitted. Whether it may be entirely lost, will be considered under a following Head, when we speak concerning the supports which believers have, and how far they are kept by these from sinking into utter despair. It is one thing to fall from the truth of grace; another thing to lose the comfortable sense of it. The joy of faith may be suspended, when the acts and habits of faith remain firm and unshaken. As the brightest morning may be followed with clouds and tempests; so our clearest discoveries of our interest in the love of God may be followed with the withdrawment of the light of his countenance, and we be left under many discouraging circumstances concerning our state, having lost the assurance we once had. If it be inquired, what reason may be assigned for this? I

answer, that it must, in a great measure, be resolved into the sovereignty of God, who will bring his people to heaven which way he pleases, and may take away those comforts which had their first rise from himself; and, at the same time, none must say, why dost thou thus? We may observe some particular reasons, however, which the providence of God points out to us, to which we may in other respects ascribe our want of assurance; and these may be reduced to four heads, particularly mentioned in this Answer.

1. The weakening or intermitting of assurance is sometimes occasioned by manifold distempers, or bodily diseases. The soul and body are so closely joined to and dependent on each other, that the one can hardly suffer without the other. Hence it is that bodily distempers affect the mind, excite and give disturbance to the passions, a circumstance which greatly adds to the uneasiness which follows these distempers. When the spirits are depressed, and we are under the prevalence of a melancholy disposition, we are often inclined to think that we are not in a state of grace; and though we were formerly disposed to comfort others in similar cases, we are now unable to take the least encouragement ourselves. All things look black and dismal; our former hope is reckoned no other than delusive; and we are brought to the very brink of despair. It may be observed, too, that these sad and melancholy apprehensions concerning our state increase or abate, as the distemper which gives occasion to them more or less prevails. Now, that we may be able to determine whether our want of assurance proceeds from some natural cause, or bodily distemper, we must inquire whether we formerly endeavoured to walk in all good conscience in the sight of God, to hate every false way, and make religion the great business of life, so that we cannot assign any reigning sin as the cause of our present desponding frame; and also whether we have been diligent in performing the duty of self-examination, and have been sensible that

we stood in need of the Spirit's witness with ours, in order to our arriving at a comfortable persuasion that we are in a state of grace. If, as the result of these inquiries, we cannot see any cause but the unavoidable infirmities to which we are daily liable leading to this dejection of spirit, we may probably conclude that it arises from a distemper of body. But in order to our determining this matter, we must farther inquire whether some afflictive providence has not had an influence upon us, to bring us into a melancholy temper; and whether our depression of spirit does not appear in what relates to our secular, as well as our spiritual concerns. If this be the case, though it be very afflictive, it is not attended with that guilt which it would be, had it been occasioned by some presumptuous sin. In this case, too, there are other medicines to be used besides those which are of a spiritual nature, and are contained in the gospel, but what these are, it is not our business in this place to determine.

2. There are many sins which are the occasion of a person's being destitute of assurance. As all the troubles of life are brought upon us by sin; so are all our doubts and fears, arising from the want of a comfortable sense of or interest in the love of God. It pleases God in the method of his providence, thus to deal with his people, that he may humble them for presumptuous sins; more especially those which are committed against light and conviction of conscience, that he may bring to remembrance their sins of omission, or neglect to exercise those graces, in which the life of faith consists, that they may feel the effect of their stupidity, indifference, and carnal security, or their engaging in religious duties in their own strength, without dependence on the Spirit and grace of God, or a due sense of their inability to perform any duty in a right way. Or sometimes, as was formerly observed, they want assurance because they do not practise self-examination, which is God's ordinance for the attaining of this privilege; or if they do practise it, they neglect to give that glory to the

Holy Spirit which is due to him, by depending on his enlightening influence to bring them to a comfortable persuasion of their interest in Christ.

3. Assurance is often weakened and intermitted through manifold temptations. Satan is very active in this matter, and shows his enmity against the interest of Christ in the souls of his people, as much as lies in his power. Hence, though it is impossible for him to ruin the soul, by rooting out the grace which is implanted in it; yet he tries to disturb its peace, and weaken its assurance, and, if not prevented, to hurry it into despair. In this case the general design of his temptations is to represent God as a sin-revenging Judge, a consuming fire, to present to our view the threatenings by which his wrath is revealed against sinners, and to endeavour to set aside the promises of the gospel from which alone relief may be had. Moreover, he puts us upon considering sin, not only as heinously aggravated—and it may for the most part be so considered with justice—but also as altogether unpardonable; and, at the same time, pretends to insinuate to us that we are not elected, or that Christ did not die for us, and that, therefore, what he has done and suffered will not redound to our advantage. Now, there is apparently the hand of Satan in this matter; inasmuch as he attempts, by false methods of reasoning, to persuade us that we are not in a state of grace, that God is an enemy to us, and that therefore our condition is desperate. Here he uses the arts of the old serpent, that he may deceive us by drawing conclusions against ourselves from false premises. He induces us to reason that, because we daily experience the internal workings of corrupt nature, which incline us to many sins, both of omission and of commission, there is no room for us to expect mercy and forgiveness from God. From our barrenness also and unprofitableness under the means of grace, our improvements not being proportioned to the obligations we have been laid under, or

from our having great reason to charge ourselves with many declensions and backslidings, which afford matter for deep humiliation, and should put us upon sincere repentance, he endeavours to persuade us that we are altogether destitute of special grace. Again, whenever we are unprepared or indisposed for the right performance of holy duties, and our affections are not suitably raised in them, but grow stupid, remiss, and careless, he puts us upon concluding that it is a vain thing for us to draw nigh to God, and that he has utterly rejected both our persons and our services. Or if we are not favoured with immediate answers to prayer, and sensible communion with God in the performance of that duty, he tempts us to infer that we shall never obtain the blessing we are pressing after, and that we may as well lay aside this duty, and say, 'Why should I wait on the Lord any longer?' If by this method he cannot discourage us from engaging in holy duties, he sometimes injects blasphemous thoughts or unbecoming conceptions of the divine Majesty, which fill the soul with the greatest grief and uneasiness, that in consequence of these he might give us occasion to conclude that we sin in persisting in holy duties. By all these temptations he endeavours to plunge us into the depths of despair.

He tempts us also as to the purpose of God relating to the event of things. When we are led to determine that we are not elected, we come to this conclusion without sufficient ground. In presenting the question to us, he deceives us by pursuing false methods of reasoning, and puts us upon presuming to enter into those secret things which do not belong to us, or to infer that God has rejected us, because we deserve to be cast off by him for our sins, instead of giving diligence to make our calling and election sure. It is one thing not to be able to conclude that we are elected; and another thing to say that we are not so. The former is the consequence of our present doubts and desponding apprehensions concerning our state; the

latter is plainly a temptation of Satan. This we are often subject to, when we have lost that assurance of our interest in Christ which we once enjoyed.

4. A believer's want of assurance is, for the most part, attended with, and arises from, divine desertion. Not that we are to suppose that God will cast off his people, whom he has foreknown, effectually called, and preserved hitherto, so as to forsake them utterly; for to suppose this is inconsistent with his everlasting love, and the promises of the covenant of grace which respect their salvation. What we understand by divine desertion, is God's withdrawing his comforting presence, and withholding the witness of his Spirit to the work of grace in the soul; whence arise those doubts and fears which attend the want of assurance. Thus God says to his people, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.' In this respect they are destitute of God's comforting presence; though at the same time they may be favoured with his supporting presence, and those powerful influences which are necessary to maintain the work of grace, which at present appears to be very weak and languishing.

The State of Believers who want Assurance

We are thus led to consider the last thing mentioned in this Answer, namely, that, though believers are thus described, they are not left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair. This observation ought to be explained and considered with certain limitations, lest, while, on the one hand, we assert that which affords matter of encouragement to believers when they have some degree of hope, we should, on the other hand, throw discouragements in the way of others who will be apt to imagine, when they are ready to sink into despair, that what

they experience is wholly inconsistent with any direct act of faith. I dare not say that no believer was ever so far deserted as to be left for a while to despair of his interest in Christ; for scripture and daily experience give us instances of some, whose conversation in many respects discovers them to have had the truth of grace, whom God has been pleased, for wise ends, to leave to the terror of their own thoughts, and who have remained for some time in the depths of despair; while others have gone out of the world under a cloud, concerning whom there has been ground of hope that their state was safe. It is somewhat difficult, therefore, to determine what is meant in this Answer, by a believer's being kept from sinking into utter despair. If the meaning is, that they have the supports of the Spirit of God, so as to be kept from relapsing into a state of unregeneracy, in their despairing condition, that may be easily accounted for; or, if the meaning is, that believers are not generally given up to the greatest degree of despair, especially such as is inconsistent with the exercise of any grace, that is not to be denied. I would rather say, however, that, though a believer may have despairing apprehensions concerning his state, and though the guilt of sin may lie upon him like a great weight so as to depress his spirits; yet he shall not sink into endless misery; for though darkness may continue for a night, light and joy shall come in the morning. Accordingly, though there are many who are far from having assurance, yet they are, at some times, favoured with a small glimmering of hope, which keeps them from utter despair. Again, if they are in deep despair, yet they are not so far left as not to desire grace, though they conclude themselves to be destitute of it, or not to lament the loss of those comforts and inability to exercise those graces which once they thought themselves possessed of. Further, a believer, when in a despairing way, is notwithstanding enabled, by a direct act of faith, to give himself up to Christ, though he cannot see his interest in him, and to long for those experiences and comforts which he once enjoyed; and when he is at

the worst, he can say with Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Moreover, in this case a person has generally such a degree of the presence of God that he is enabled to justify him in all his dealings with him, and lay the blame of all the troubles which he is under on himself; and this is attended with shame and confusion of face, self-abhorrence, and godly sorrow. Finally, despairing believers have, notwithstanding, such a presence of God with them as keeps them from abandoning his interest, or running with sinners into all excess of riot, which would give occasion to others to conclude that they never had the truth of grace.

From what has been said concerning true believers being destitute of assurance, and yet having at the same time some degree of the presence of God, we may draw several inferences. First, this is not inconsistent with what was said concerning a believer's perseverance in grace. Yet it must be considered with this limitation, that though the truth of grace shall not be lost, the comforts and evidences of it may and often are.—Again, this should put us upon circumspect walking and watchfulness against presumptuous sins, which, as was formerly observed, are often the occasion of the loss of assurance; and also on the exercise of a faith of reliance on Christ, for maintaining the acts of grace, as well as restoring its comforts.—Further, this should instruct believers what to do when destitute of the privilege of assurance. We have observed that want of assurance is attended with divine desertion, which is generally occasioned by sins committed. Therefore let us say with Job, 'Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.' "Let me know what are those secret sins by which I have provoked thee to leave me destitute of thy comforting presence; enable me to be affected with, and humbled for them, and unfeignedly to repent of them, and to exercise that faith in Christ which may be a means of my recovering that hope or assurance of which I am at present destitute."—Again, what has been

said concerning a believer's being sometimes destitute of assurance, should put us upon sympathizing with those who are in a despairing way, and using endeavours to administer comfort to them, rather than to censure them or conclude them to be in an unregenerate state; as Job's friends did him, because the hand of God had touched him, and he was destitute of his comforting presence.—Finally, from what has been said concerning that degree of the presence of God which believers enjoy, which has a tendency to keep them from utter despair, at least from sinking into perdition, how disconsolate soever their case may be at present, we may be induced to admire the goodness and faithfulness of God in his dealings with his people, who will not lay more on them than he will enable them to bear. Though they are comfortless and hopeless, yet they shall not be destroyed; and, in the end, they shall be satisfied with God's loving-kindness; and, when the clouds are all dispersed, they shall have a bright and glorious day in his immediate presence, where 'there is fulness of joy,' and at his 'right hand,' where 'there are pleasures for evermore.'

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN GLORY

QUESTION LXXXII. What is the communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?

ANSWER. The communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is, in this life, immediately after death; and at last perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment.

AFTER having considered believers, or the members of the invisible church, as enjoying the privilege of union with Christ, and, as the

immediate consequence of it, communion with him, it was observed that this communion is either in grace or in glory. Their communion with him in grace consists in their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, and sanctification. These have been particularly considered, together with other graces and comforts which accompany and flow from them. We are now led to speak concerning the communion which believers have with Christ in glory. This is the highest privilege they are capable of receiving. It consists in his giving them some bright discoveries of the glory which they behold and enjoy by faith in this life, and also of that which shall be immediate, and in some respects complete, after death. And, at the resurrection and day of judgment, it shall be brought, in all respects, to the utmost degree of perfection; when their joy, as well as their happiness, shall be full, and continued throughout all the ages of eternity. These are the subjects insisted on in several following Answers, which remain to be considered in this first part of the Catechism.

EARNESTS OF GLORY, AND APPREHENSIONS OF WRATH

QUESTION LXXXIII. What is the communion in glory, with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy in this life?

ANSWER. The members of the invisible church have communicated to them in this life, the first-fruits of glory with Christ, as they are members of him their head, and so, in him, are interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of; and as an earnest thereof, enjoy the sense of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory; as, on the

> contrary, the sense of God's revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment, are to the wicked the beginning of their torments which they shall endure after death.

THERE are two sorts of persons mentioned in this Answer, namely, the righteous and the wicked, and the different condition of each of them is considered. With respect to the righteous, who are here styled 'the members of the invisible church,' there are several invaluable privileges which they are made partakers of in this life, in which they are said to have a degree of communion in glory with Christ. In particular, they have this communion in glory with Christ, as they enjoy the first-fruits or earnest of that glory which they shall have with him hereafter; as they are members of him, their head, and accordingly may be said, in some respects, to be interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of; and as they have a comfortable sense of his love to them, attended with peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and an hope of glory. On the other hand, we have an account of the dreadful condition of impenitent sinners, when God sets their iniquities in order before them. This is represented in a very moving way. They are said to be filled with 'a sense of God's revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment;' and these are considered as the beginning of those torments which they shall endure after death.

Earnests of Glory

There are several invaluable privileges enjoyed by the righteous in this life, which are styled the first-fruits or earnest of glory. Though Christ has reserved the fulness of glory for his people to the time when he shall bring them to heaven; yet there are some small degrees of glory, which they enjoy in their way to it. The 'crown of

righteousness,' as the apostle speaks, is 'laid up for them, which the righteous Judge shall give them at that day,' namely, when he shall come to judgment. Then their joy shall be full; they shall be satisfied in his likeness, and made completely blessed. Yet there are some prelibations or foretastes which they have of glory, for their support and encouragement while they are in this imperfect state. We are not to suppose, however, that the present enjoyments which believers experience in the highest degree, do fully come up to those which are reserved for them. There is a great difference as to the degree. As a child newly born has something in common with what he shall have when arrived at a state of manhood, but, in several degrees, and other circumstances, falls short of it; or as a few drops are of the same nature as the whole collection of water in the ocean, while there is a very small proportion between one and the other, so the brightest discovery of the glory of God which we are capable of enjoying in this world, or the most comfortable foretaste which believers have of heaven, falls very much short of that which they shall be possessed of when they are received into it. There are also very great alloys, and many things which tend to interrupt and abate their happiness, agreeably to the imperfection of the present state. Whatever grace they are enabled to act, though in an uncommon degree, is attended with a mixture of corruption; and as their graces are imperfect, so are the comforts that arise from them, which are interwoven with many things very afflictive. Hence, they are not what they shall be; but are travelling through this wilderness to a better country, and are exposed to many evils in their way thither.

Again, all believers do not enjoy those delights and pleasures which some are favoured with in their way to heaven. The comforts as well as the graces of the Holy Spirit, are bestowed in a way of sovereignty, to some more, and to others less. Some have reason to say with the apostle, 'Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in

Christ.' Others are filled with doubts concerning their interest in him, and go mourning after him all the day; and if they have at sometimes a small glimpse of his glory, by which they conclude themselves to be, as it were, in the suburbs of heaven, they soon lose it, and find themselves to be in the valley of the shadow of death. When the disciples were with Christ at his transfiguration, which was an emblem of the heavenly blessedness, and when his 'face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light,' they had occasion to say, 'It is good for us to be here;' yet before they had done speaking, or had time to reflect on their present enjoyment, they were deprived of it by 'the cloud overshadowing them.'g So the believer is not to expect uninterrupted communion with God, or perfect fruition of him here.

What we are at present to consider, however, is that degree of communion with God which some enjoy, which is here called the first-fruits and earnest of glory. The scripture sets it forth under both these expressions. Believers are said to receive the first-fruits of it, or as the apostle styles it, 'the first-fruits of the Spirit,' that is, the graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost. These are the first-fruits of that blessedness which they are said to wait for, which is called 'the adoption,' that is, those privileges which God's children shall be made partakers of, or 'the glorious liberty' which they shall hereafter enjoy. The name 'first-fruits' is used in allusion to the cluster of grapes which they who were sent to spy out the land of Canaan, were ordered to bring to the Israelites in the wilderness, that hereby they might be encouraged in their expectation of the great plenty which was to be enjoyed when they were brought into it. Or it has reference to the feast of in-gathering before the harvest, when the Israelites were to bring the sheaf which was first to be cut down, and 'wave it before the Lord,' with thankfulness and joy, in expectation of the full harvest, which would be the reward of the industry and labour of the

husbandman. Thus believers are given not only to expect the glory of God, but to rejoice in hope of it.—Again, communion with God is also called an earnest of glory. Thus believers are said to be 'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance.'k Elsewhere likewise it is said, 'God hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit.' An earnest is a small sum, given in part of payment; whereby they who receive it, are encouraged to expect the whole. So a believer may conclude that as surely as he now enjoys those spiritual privileges which accompany salvation, he shall not fail of that glory of which they are an earnest. In this respect God is pleased to give his people a wonderful display of his condescending love, that they may hereby be led to know what the happiness of the heavenly state is, in a greater degree than can be learned from all the descriptions which are given of it by those who are destitute of this privilege. Heaven is the port to which every believer is bound, the reward of all those labours and difficulties which he sustains in his way to it; and to quicken him to greater diligence in pursuing after it, it is necessary that he should have his thoughts, meditation, and conversation there. The reason why God is pleased to give his people some foretastes of it, is that they may love and long for Christ's appearing, when they shall reap the full harvest of glory. Now, this earnest, prelibation, or first-fruits of the heavenly blessedness, which believers enjoy in this life, is considered in this Answer, first, as it is included in that glory which Christ is possessed of as their Head and Mediator; and secondly, as they have those graces wrought in them, and comforts flowing thence, which bear some small resemblance to what they shall hereafter be made partakers of.

1. Christ's being possessed of the heavenly blessedness, as the Head of his people, is an earnest of their salvation. For understanding this, let it be considered that our Lord Jesus sustained this character, not only in what he suffered for them that he might redeem them from

the curse of the law, but in the glory which he was afterwards advanced to. Thus it is said, 'He is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.' Accordingly, they are said to be 'risen with him,'n as regards that communion which they have with him in his resurrection. Again, when he ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, his people are said 'to sit together in heavenly places in him.' Not that we are to suppose that they are made partakers of any branch of his mediatorial glory, or are joined with him in the work which he there performs as their exalted Head; but we are to understand, that his being considered as their representative appearing in the presence of God for them, is a foundation of their hope that they shall be brought thither at last. Hence, when he was about to depart out of this world, he gave an intimation to his people whom he left behind him that he 'went to prepare a place for them;'p and assured them that, 'because he lives, they shall live also.'

2. The graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, which believers are made partakers of, may also be said to be a pledge and earnest of eternal life. Heaven is a state in which that grace is brought to perfection, which at present is only begun in the soul. The beginning of it, however, affords ground of hope that it shall be completed. As a curious artist, when he draws the first lines of a picture, does not design to leave it unfinished; or he that lays the foundation of a building, determines to carry it on gradually, till he has laid the top-stone of it; so the work of grace, when begun by the Spirit, is a ground of hope that it shall not be left unfinished. As God would never have brought his people out of Egypt with an high hand and an outstretched arm, and divided the Red sea before them, if he had not designed to bring them into the promised land; so we may conclude that, when God has magnified his grace in delivering his people from the dominion of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of

his dear Son,—when he has helped them hitherto, and given them a fair and beautiful prospect of the good land to which they are going, —he will not leave his work imperfect, nor suffer them to fall and perish in the way. Christ in believers, is said to be 'the hope of glory;' and the joy which they have in believing, is said to be not only 'unspeakable,' but 'full of glory;'s that is, it bears a small resemblance to that joy which they shall be filled with when brought to glory, and therefore may well be styled the earnest or first-fruits of it.

That this may farther appear, let it be considered that the happiness of heaven consists in the immediate vision and fruition of God, where the saints behold his face in light and glory, and enjoy all those comfortable fruits and effects arising thence, which tend to make them completely happy. Thus it is said that 'they shall see him as he is,'u and that 'they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.' Believers, it is true, are not in all respects said to be partakers of this blessedness here; and their highest enjoyments bear but a very small proportion to it. Yet, when we speak of some as having the foretastes of it, we must consider that there is something in the lively exercise of faith and of the joy which arises from it, when believers have attained a full assurance of the love of God, and have those sensible manifestations of his comfortable presence with them, which bears some small resemblance to a life of glory. That which in some respects resembles the beatific vision, is a sight of God's reconciled face, and of their interest by faith in all the blessings of the covenant of grace. It is true, the views which they have of the glory of God here, are not immediate, but at a distance; and therefore they are said to 'behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.'y We see things at a distance through a perspective glass, which enlarges the object, and brings it, as it were, near to the eye, though in reality it be at a great distance from it; and so gives us a clear discerning of that which could otherwise hardly be discovered. So faith gives us clearer views

of this glory than we could have any other way. Hereby we are said 'to see him that is invisible.' Thus, when God bade Moses go up to the top of Pisgah, and strengthened his sight, Moses took a view of the whole land of Canaan; though, without this strengthening of his sight, he could have beheld only a small part of it. So when God not only gives an eye of faith, but strengthens it in proportion to the views he designs it shall take of the heavenly state which lies at so great a distance, the soul is enabled to see it, and, in seeing it, has a faint emblem of the beatific vision.

Moreover, as heaven is a state in which the saints have the perfect fruition of those blessings which tend to make them completely happy; the view which a believer is enabled by faith to take of his interest in Christ, and of the glory he shall be made partaker of with him, is sometimes attended with such an ecstasy of joy and triumph, as is a kind of anticipation of that glory which he is not yet fully possessed of. Such an one is like an heir who wants but a few days of being of age; who does not look upon his estate with that distant view which he formerly did, but with the satisfaction and pleasure arising from his being ready to enter into the possession of it. Or he is like one who, after a long and tedious voyage, is within sight of his harbour, which he cannot but behold with a pleasure which very much resembles that which he shall have when he enters into it. The joy of which we speak is more than a mere hope of heaven; it is a full assurance, attended with a kind of sensation of those joys which are inexpressible, which render the believer a wonder to himself, and afford the most convincing proof to others that there is something real and substantial in the heavenly glory, which God is pleased to favour some of his people with the prelibations of. That some have enjoyed such manifestations of the divine love, and been filled with such raptures of joy, accompanying their assurance of salvation; is evident from the experience which they have had of it in some

extraordinary and memorable occurrences in life, and, in other cases, at the approach of death. Of this there are multitudes of instances transmitted to us in history. I shall content myself with a brief extract of some passages which we meet with in the life and death of some who appear to have had as comfortable a foretaste of the joys of heaven as it is possible for any one to have in this world.

The first I shall mention is the eminently learned and pious Dr. Rivet; who, in his last sickness, seemed to be in the very suburbs of heaven, signifying to all about him, what intimate communion he had with God, his fore-views of the heavenly state, his assurance of being admitted into it, and how earnestly he longed to be there. In the very close of his life, one who stood by him could not forbear expressing himself to this effect: "I cannot but think that he is now enjoying the vision of God." This gave him occasion to signify, as well as he was able to express himself, that it was so. The account of this and of much more to the same purpose, is not only mentioned by the author of his last hours, but is taken notice of in a public funeral oration, occasioned by his death.

A very worthy writer, speaking concerning that excellent servant of Christ, Mr. Rutherford, recites some of his last words, which are very remarkable: "I shall shine, I shall see him as he is, and all the fair company with him, and shall have my large share. It is no easy thing to be a Christian; but as for me, I have got the victory, and Christ is holding forth his arms to embrace me. I have had my fears and faintings, as another sinful man, to be carried through creditably; but as sure as ever he spake to me in his word, his Spirit witnessed to my heart, saying, Fear not. He had accepted my suffering, and the outgate should not be matter of prayer, but of praise." A little before his death, after some fainting, he said, "Now, I feel, I believe, I enjoy, I rejoice, I feed on manna, I have angels food, my eyes shall see my

Redeemer; I know that he shall stand, at the latter day, on the earth, and I shall be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air. I sleep in Christ; and when I awake I shall be satisfied with his likeness; O for arms to embrace him!" To one who was speaking concerning his laboriousness in the ministry, he cried out, "I disclaim all. The port I would be in at, is redemption and forgiveness of sins through his blood." Thus, full of the Spirit, yea, as it were, overcome with sensible enjoyment, he breathes out his soul, his last words being these: "Glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land."

I may add the account given of that great man Dr. Goodwin, in some memoirs of his life, composed out of his own papers published by his son; who intimates that he rejoiced in the thoughts that he was dying, and going to have a full and uninterrupted communion with God. "I am going," said he, "to the three Persons with whom I have had communion. They have taken me; I did not take them. I shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye. All my lusts and corruptions I shall be rid of, which I could not be here; those croaking toads will fall off in a moment." Referring to the great examples of faith mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, he said, "All these died in faith. I could not have imagined I should ever have had such a measure of faith in this hour; no, I could never have imagined it. My bow abides in strength. Is Christ divided? No, I have the whole of his righteousness; I am found in him, not in my own righteousness, which is of the law, but in the righteousness which is of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Christ cannot love me better than he doth. I think I cannot love Christ better than I do. I am swallowed up in God." Then he added, "Now shall I ever be with the Lord." With this assurance of faith and fulness of joy, his soul left this world, and went to see and enjoy the reality of that blessed state of glory.

There is also an account, in the life and death of Mr. John Janeway, of the great assurance and joy which he had in his last sickness, in which he expresses himself to this purpose: "I am, through mercy, quite above the fears of death, and am going unto him whom I love above life. O that I could but let you know what I now feel! O that I could show you what I see! O that I could express the thousandth part of that sweetness which now I find in Christ! you would all then think it worth the while to make it your business to be religious. O my dear friends, you little think what a Christ is worth upon a death-bed! I would not, for a world, nay, for millions of worlds, be now without a Christ and a pardon. O the glory, the unspeakable glory, that I behold! My heart is full, my heart is full; Christ smiles and I cannot choose but smile. Can you find in your heart to stop me, who am now going to the complete and eternal enjoyment of Christ? Would you keep me from my crown? The arms of my blessed Saviour are open to embrace me; the angels stand ready to carry my soul into his bosom. O did you but see what I see, you would all cry out with me, How long, dear Lord! come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Or why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming?" Much more to the same purpose may be found in the life of that excellent man, which is exceedingly affecting.

There is another who does not come short of him in his death-bed triumphs. He says concerning himself, "Death is not terrible; it is unstinged; the curse of the fiery law is done away. I bless his name I have found him; I am taken up in blessing him; I am dying rejoicing in the Lord; I long to be in the promised land; I wait for thy salvation. How long! Come sweet Lord Jesus, take me by the hand; I wait for thy salvation, as the watchman watcheth for the morning; I am weary with delays; I faint for thy salvation. Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming? What means he to stay so long? I am like to faint with delays." Afterwards he said, "O Sirs, I could not believe

that I could have borne, and borne cheerfully, this rod so long. This is a miracle, pain without pain. And this is not a fancy of man disordered in his brain, but of one lying in full composure. O blessed be God that ever I was born. O if I were where he is! And yet, for all this, God's withdrawing from me would make me weak as water. All this I enjoy, though it be miracle upon miracle, would not make me stand without new supply from God. The thing I rejoice in is, that God is altogether full, and that in the Mediator Christ Jesus, there is all the fulness of the Godhead, and it will never run out. I am wonderfully helped beyond the power of nature. Though my body be sufficiently teazed, yet my spirit is untouched." Much more to this purpose we have in the account of the latter part of his life. But I shall close with one thing which is very remarkable. When he was apprehensive that he was very near his death he said, "When I fall so low that I am not able to speak, I'll show you a sign of triumph, when I am near glory, if I be able." This accordingly he did, by lifting up his hands, and clapping them together, when he was speechless, and in the agonies of death.

Many more instances might have been given to illustrate our argument. But from those which have been given it will evidently appear that God is pleased sometimes to deal familiarly with men, by giving them extraordinary manifestations of his presence, before he brings them into the immediate enjoyment of himself in heaven,—manifestations which may be well called an earnest or prelibation of it. The instances which we have narrated may serve also as a farther illustration of an argument formerly insisted on to prove that assurance of God's love is attainable in this life. This assurance, as it may be observed, is accompanied with the lively acts of faith, by which it appears to be well grounded; so that, as the apostle says, 'The God of hope' is pleased to 'fill them with all joy and peace in believing,' whereby they 'abound in hope, through the power of the

Holy Ghost.'g In this respect it may be said, to use the prophet's words, that 'they joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.' The joy they experience is like the appearing of the morning-star, which ushers in a bright and glorious day, and gives a full discovery to themselves and others, that there is much of heaven enjoyed in the way to it, by those whom God delights to honour. Thus concerning the communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church sometimes enjoy in this life.

Apprehensions of Wrath

We shall now consider the miserable condition of the wicked in this life, when God is provoked, as a sin-revenging Judge, to fill them with a sense of his wrath. From this arise horror of conscience and a fearful expectation of judgment; which, as is observed in the latter part of this Answer, are the beginning of those torments which they shall endure after death. We have many instances in scripture of the punishment of sin in this world, in those whom God is said 'to reprove,' and before whose eyes he sets their iniquities in order. This fills them with horror of conscience,k and leaves them in utter despair. They once thought themselves in a prosperous condition, and it was said concerning them, 'Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish;' but their end was terrible, for they were 'set in slippery places,' being 'cast down into destruction, brought into desolation as in a moment, and utterly consumed with terrors.'m

We have a sad instance of this in Cain, after he had slain his brother, and had fallen under the curse of God, whereby he was sentenced to be a fugitive and vagabond in the earth. He separated himself indeed from the presence of the Lord, and the place in which he was worshipped; but he could not flee from the terrors of his own

thoughts, or get any relief under the uneasiness of a guilty conscience. He hence feared that he should be slain by the hand of every one who met him, and complained, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' Some understand the words of Lamech in the same sense when he says, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven-fold.'o The wrath of God was also denounced against Pashur; as it is said, 'The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib; for thus saith the Lord, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends.' Judas, likewise, after he had betrayed our Saviour, was filled with the terrors of an accusing conscience, which forced him to confess, not as a believing penitent, but as a despairing criminal, 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood;' after which it is said, 'He departed, and went and hanged himself.'q Nothing is more terrible than this remorse of conscience, which renders sinners inexpressibly miserable. It is a punishment inflicted on those who sin wilfully, presumptuously, and obstinately against the checks of conscience, the rebukes of providence, and various warnings to the contrary, who treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. They are 'contentious, and do not obey the truth,' that is, they are so far from obeying it, that they persecute and oppose it; and on the other hand, they 'obey unrighteousness.' To these belong, as the apostle says, 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.' Not only does this punishment wait for them as 'laid up in store, and sealed up among God's treasures, to whom vengeance belongeth;'s but they are made to taste the bitterness of that cup which shall afterwards be poured forth without mixture. In this world 'their eyes shall see their destruction,' and afterwards 'they shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.' This is a most affecting subject. How awful a thing is it to see a person surrounded with miseries, and, at the same time, shut up in darkness, and left destitute of hope! With what horror and anguish

was the soul of Saul filled, when he uttered that doleful complaint, 'I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me!'u Much more dreadful is it for a person to apprehend himself to have fallen into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire; and to have nothing left but the fearful expectation of future judgment, and an abyss of woes which will ensue. These are the evils which some endure in this life; and they are no less terrible to them, than the comfortable foretastes of the love of God are joyful to the saints.

Practical Inferences from the Different Prospects of the Righteous and the Wicked

From this different view of the end of the wicked, and that of the righteous, many useful instructions may be learned.

1. When we consider the wicked as distressed with the afflicting sense of what they feel, and with the dread of that wrath which they would fain flee from but cannot, we may infer that a state of unregeneracy, whatever advantages may attend it as to the outward blessings of common providence, is a very sad and deplorable condition, far from being the object of choice to those who duly consider its consequences. The present amusements which arise from the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, whence the sinner concludes himself to be happy, afford the most miserable instance of self-deceit, and will appear to do so, if we consider the end of them, or that 'the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment,' and that then nothing shall remain but what shall wound his spirit, and make his misery intolerable.

Again, when we meet with instances of persons sunk in the depths of despair, and tormenting themselves with the fore-views of hell and destruction, let their case be a warning to others to flee from the

wrath to come. I would not be peremptory in passing a judgment on the state of those who apprehend themselves to be irretrievably lost, and feel those terrors in their consciences which no tongue can express. A person can hardly read the account of the despair of poor Spira, soon after the Reformation, and how much his sentiments concerning himself resembled the punishment of sin in hell, without trembling. He was, indeed, a sad instance of the wrath of God breaking in upon conscience; and is set up as a monument to warn others to take heed of apostasy. In his case, and in others of a similar kind, we have a convincing proof of the reality of a future state of misery, or that the punishment of sin in hell is not an ungrounded fancy. It is not for us, however, to enter into those secrets which belong not to us, or to reckon him among the damned in another world, because he reckoned himself among them in this. As to any others whom we may see in similar circumstances, we are not so much to pass a judgment concerning their future state, as to infer the desperate estate of sinners when left of God, and to bless him that this is not our case. On the other hand, let not unregenerate sinners think that they are safe, merely because their consciences are quiet, or rather stupid; for the false peace which they have is no better than 'the hope of the hypocrite,' which 'shall perish' and be 'cut off.' And his 'trust shall be as a spider's web,' if he continue in his present condition.

2. From what has been said concerning the happiness of the righteous, in the enjoyment they have of the first-fruits of the heavenly glory, we may attain farther conviction that there is a state of complete blessedness reserved for the saints in another world. For, besides the proofs of this which we have from scripture, we have others founded in experience, so far as it is possible for any to attain the joys of heaven before they go thither. Though the instances of this we have mentioned are uncommon, yet our inference from them

is just,—and may afford matter of conviction to those who are wholly taken up with earthly things, and have no taste of nor delight in things spiritual,—that religion has its own rewards, and that a believer is the only happy man in the world.

Again, the happy experience on the part of many of the earnests of glory, may serve as an encouraging motive to induce Christians to hold on their way. Whatever difficulties or distressing providences they may meet with in this life, if they have the earnest and foretastes of heaven at any time, these will make their afflictions seem light, inasmuch as they work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If they are rather waiting and hoping for them, than actually enjoying them, let them adore and depend on the sovereignty of God, who dispenses these comforts when he pleases. If they are destitute of the joy of faith, let them endeavour to be found in the lively exercise of the direct acts of it, trusting in Christ, though they have not such sensible communion with him as others have; and let them bless God that, though they have not those foretastes of the heavenly glory which accompany a full assurance of it, they have a quiet, composed frame of spirit, and are not given up to desponding thoughts, or unbelieving fears, and have ground to conclude that, though their state is not so comfortable as that of others, yet it is not less safe, and shall at last bring them to the fruition of that felicity which others have the first-fruits of.

Finally, let these who are at any time favoured with the privilege of assurance, and the joy which arises from it, walk very humbly with God, sensible that this frame of spirit is not owing to themselves, but to the quickening and sealing influences of the Holy Ghost, and that if, by neglecting to depend on him for the continuance of it, we provoke him to leave us to ourselves, we shall soon lose it, and be left in darkness. As without him we can do nothing, so without his

continued presence we can enjoy none of those privileges which tend to make our lives comfortable, and give us an anticipation of future glory.

DEATH

QUESTION LXXXIV. Shall all men die?

ANSWER. Death being threatened as the wages of sin, it is appointed unto all men once to die; for that all have sinned.

QUESTION LXXXV. Death being the wages of sin, why are not the righteous delivered from death, seeing all their sins are forgiven in Christ?

ANSWER. The righteous shall be delivered from death itself at the last day, and even in death are delivered from the sting and curse of it; so that, although they die, yet it is out of God's love, to free them perfectly from sin and misery, and to make them capable of farther communion with Christ in glory, which they then enter upon.

IN these Answers we have, first, an account of the unalterable purpose of God, or his appointment that all men once must die, and death is considered also as the wages of sin; next, it is supposed that death has a sting and curse attending it with respect to some; and thirdly, it is stated to be the peculiar privilege of the righteous, that though they shall not be delivered from death, yet death shall redound to their advantage. The reasons of this privilege are stated to be, first, that the sting and curse of death is taken from them; and secondly, that, in three respects, their dying is the result of God's love to them,—as they are thereby freed from sin and misery,—as they are

made capable of farther communion with Christ in glory, beyond what they can have in this world,—and as they shall immediately enter upon that glorious and blessed state when they die.

The Certainty of Death

God has determined, by an unalterable purpose and decree, that all men must die. Whatever different sentiments persons may have about other things, this remains an uncontested truth. We have as much reason to conclude that we shall leave the world, as at present we have that we live in it. 'I know,' says Job, 'that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.' On this account the psalmist says, 'I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.' Even if scripture had been wholly silent about the frailty of man, daily experience would have afforded a sufficient proof of it. We have much said concerning man's mortality in the writings of the heathen; but they are at a loss to determine the origin or cause of it. They hence consider it as the unavoidable consequence of the frame of nature arising from its contexture; that which is formed out of the dust must be resolved into its first principle, or that which is composed of flesh and blood cannot but be liable to corruption. But we have this matter set in a true light in scripture, which considers death as the consequence of man's apostasy at first from God. Before this he was immortal, and would have always remained so, had he not violated the covenant in which the continuance of his immortality was secured to him. The care of providence would have prevented a dissolution, either from the decays of nature, or from any external means leading to it. Hence, some of the Socinian writers have been very bold in contradicting the express account we have in scripture of the origin of death, when they assert that death was at first the consequence of nature.a But for this reason man would have been liable to it though he had not

sinned; whereas the apostle says, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' We have a particular account of this in the sentence God passed on our first parents immediately after their fall; when, having denounced a curse upon the ground for their sake, he says, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'c It may be observed, also, that as death is unavoidable, pursuant to the decree of God; so the constitution of our nature, as well as the external dispensations of providence, lead to it. The sentence no sooner took place than the temperament of human bodies was altered. The jarring principles of nature, on the due temperament of which life and health depend, could not but have a tendency by degrees to destroy the bodily frame. If there be too great a confluence of humours, or a defect of them; if heat or cold immoderately prevail; if the circulation of the blood and juices be too swift or slow, or the motion of the animal spirits too violent, or in the least impeded; diseases of different kinds will necessarily ensue. Or if the food on which we live, or the air which we breathe, be not agreeable to the constitution of our nature, or any external violence be offered to it, the frame of nature will be weakened, and dissolution brought on. David, speaking concerning Saul, includes the various means by which men die, in three general Heads, 'The Lord Shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish.' 'The Lord shall smite him,'e denotes a person's dying by a sudden stroke of providence, in which there is the more immediate hand of God; and his 'falling in battle,' denotes a violent death by the hands of men. In both these respects, men die before that time which they might have lived to, according to the course of nature; and 'his day coming to die,' means a person's dying what we call a natural death. When the dissolution of the frame of nature is gradual, or when nature is so spent and wasted that it can no longer subsist by all the skill of physicians or the virtue

of medicine, then the soul leaves its habitation, being no longer able to perform any of the functions of life.

We might here consider those diseases which are the forerunners of death. These are sometimes more acute; and by means of them, as one elegantly expresses it, nature feels the cruel victory before it yields to the enemy. As a ship which is tossed by a mighty tempest, and by the concussion of the winds and waves loses its rudder and masts, takes water in at every part, and gradually sinks into the ocean; so in the shipwreck of nature, the body is so shaken and weakened by the violence of disease, that the senses, the animal and vital operations, decline, and at last are extinguished in death. This seemed so formidable to good Hezekiah, that he uttered this mournful complaint, 'Mine age is departed, and removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I have cut off like a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.'

We might also consider the empire of death as universal. The wise man says, 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh;' and then they pass away also, like the ebbing and flowing of the sea. Death spares none; the strongest constitution can no more withstand its stroke than the weakest; no age of man is exempted from it. This is beautifully described by Job: 'One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul; and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.'i

We might also consider the body after death, as a prey for worms, the seat of corruption; and lodged in the grave, the house appointed for

all living. Then an end is put to all the actions, as well as enjoyments of this life; and, as the psalmist says, 'In that very day' all 'their thoughts perish.' Whatever they have been projecting, whatever schemes they have laid, either for themselves or others, are all broken. So the historian observes concerning the Roman emperor, that when he had formed great designs for the advantage of the empire,l death broke all his measures, and prevented the execution of them.

We might also consider death as putting an end to our present enjoyments, removing us from the society of our dearest friends to a dismal and frightful solitude. This was one of the consequences of it which was very afflictive to Hezekiah, when he said, 'I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.' It also strips us of all our possessions, and all the honours we have been advanced to in this world. The psalmist says, 'When he dieth he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him.'n

We might also consider the time of life and death, as being in God's hand. As we were brought into the world by the sovereignty of his providence; so we are called out of it at his pleasure. 'Our times are in his hand.' Hence, as nothing is more certain than death, nothing is more uncertain to us than the time when. This God has concealed from us for wise ends. Did we know that we should soon die, it would discourage us from attempting any thing great in life; and did we know that the lease of life was long, and that we should certainly arrive at old age, we might take occasion to delay all concern about our soul's welfare, presuming that it should be time enough to think of the affairs of religion and another world, when we should apprehend ourselves to be near death. Hence, God, by concealing from us the time of our departure from this world, has made it our

wisdom, as well as our duty, to be waiting all the days of our appointed time, till our change come.

From what has been said under this Head, we may learn the vanity of man as mortal. If, indeed, we look on believers as enjoying that happiness which lies beyond the grave, there is a very different view of things; but as to what respects this world, we have reason to say as the psalmist does, 'Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity.' We may see the vanity of all those honours and carnal pleasures which many pursue with so much eagerness, as though they had nothing else to mind, nothing to make provision for but the flesh; which they do at the expense of that which is in itself most excellent and desirable.—We may infer, also, that the certainty of death affords an undeniable and universal motive to humility. Death knows no distinction of persons, regards the rich no more than the poor, puts no mark of distinction between the remains of a prince and those of a peasant, and not only takes away every thing which men value themselves upon, but levels the highest part of mankind with common dust. They who boast of their extraction, descent, and kindred, are obliged with Job to 'say to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister.'q Shall we be proud of our habitations, 'who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust?' Are any proud of their youth and beauty? These are at best but like a flower which does not abide long in its bloom, and, when cut down, withers. The finest features are not only spoiled by death, but rendered unpleasant and ghastly to behold; and accordingly are removed out of sight, and laid in the grave.—Again, from the consideration of man's liability to death, and those diseases which lead to it as the wages of sin, we may infer that sin is a bitter and formidable evil. The cause is to be judged of by its effects. As death, accompanied with all those diseases which are the forerunners of it, is the greatest natural evil to which we are liable; so sin, whence

it took its rise, must be the greatest moral evil. We should never reflect on the one, without lying low before God under a sense of the other. The psalmist, when meditating on his own mortality, traces it to its spring, and ascribes it to those 'rebukes' with which 'God corrects men for their iniquities,' so that they die, and their 'beauty consumes away like a moth.' Elsewhere, also, when he compares the life of man to 'the grass which in the morning flourisheth, and groweth up, and in the evening is cut down and withereth,' he immediately adds, 'Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.'t When Hezekiah had an intimation of his recovery, after he had the sentence of death within himself, he speaks of his deliverance from 'the pit of corruption' as accompanied with God's 'casting all his sins behind his back.' And since we cannot be delivered from these sad effects of sin till the frame of nature is dissolved and afterwards rebuilt, our liability to death should put us upon using proper methods by which we may be freed from the guilt and dominion of sin; and accordingly should have a tendency in us to promote a life of holiness.—Finally, from the uncertainty of life, let us be induced to improve our present time, and endeavour so to live that, when God calls us hence, we may be ready. We ought to pray with the psalmist, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;'x that, by this means, that which deprives us of all earthly enjoyments, may give us an admission into a better world, and be the gate to eternal life.

The Sting and Curse of Death

We are now led to consider that death, with respect to some, has a sting and curse annexed to it. The apostle expressly says, 'The sting of death is sin.' As sin brought death into the world; so it is the guilt of it lying on the consciences of men, which is the principal thing that makes them afraid to leave the world. Not that death is in itself an

evil which nature cannot think of without some reluctance. The apostle Paul, when he expressed his assurance of happiness in another world, which he 'groaned' after, and 'earnestly' longed to be possessed of; yet had it been put to his choice, would have wished that he could have been 'clothed upon with his house which is from heaven;'z that is, had it been the will of God that he might have been brought to heaven without going the way of all the earth, he would have felt this more agreeable to nature. But when the two evils of death meet together, namely, that which is abhorrent to nature, and the sting which makes it much more formidable, they constitute an evil beyond measure distressing. In this Answer the sting and curse of death are put together, as implying the same thing. It is that whereby a person apprehends himself liable to the condemning sentence of the law, separated from God, and excluded from his favour; so that death appears to him to be the beginning of sorrows. This view of death is what tends to embitter it, and fills him with dread and horror at the thoughts of it.

Death an Advantage to Believers.

We now proceed to show that it is the peculiar privilege of the righteous, that though they shall not be delivered from death, yet it shall redound to their advantage. That they shall not be exempted from death, is evident; because the decree of God relating to it extends to all men. We read, indeed, of two who escaped the grave, namely, Enoch, who was translated that he should not see death, and Elijah, who was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot. But these were extraordinary instances, not designed as precedents by which we may judge of the common lot of believers. The saints who shall be found alive at Christ's second coming, shall undergo a change, which, though equivalent to death, cannot properly be styled a dying. The apostle opposes it to death, when he says, 'We shall not all sleep, but

we shall all be changed;'b and he speaks of it as a future dispensation of providence, which does not immediately concern us in the present age. We must not conclude, therefore, that believers are delivered from the stroke of death. Nevertheless, death is ordered for their good. The apostle says, with a particular application to himself, 'For me to die is gain;' and when he speaks of the many blessings which believers have in possession or in reversion, he says, 'Death is yours,' as if he had said, 'It shall redound to your advantage.'

1. The sting of death is taken away from them. This is the result of their being in a justified state. For as a person's being liable to the condemning sentence of the law is the principal thing which has a tendency to make him uneasy, and may be truly called the sting which wounds the conscience; so a sense of his interest in forgiveness through the blood of Christ, tends to give peace to it. A person who has this sense of interest in forgiveness can say, 'Who shall lay any thing to my charge? It is God that justifieth;' or, 'Though I have contracted guilt, which renders me unworthy of his favour, yet I am persuaded that this guilt is removed; so that iniquity shall not be my ruin, and even death itself shall bring me to the possession of those blessings which were purchased for me by the blood of Christ, and which I have been enabled to apply to myself by faith. With this confidence he can say with the apostle, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

2. Their dying is an instance of God's love to them. As those whom Christ is said to have 'loved in the world, he loved unto the end' of his life; so he loves them to the end of theirs. And as nothing has hitherto separated them from this love, nothing shall be able to do it. There are three particulars in which the love of God to dying believers discovers itself.

First, they are freed from sin and misery. This they never will nor can be till death. As for sin, there are the remains of it in the best of men, which give them great disturbance, and occasion for the daily conflict which there is between the flesh and the spirit. But at death the conflict will be at an end, and the victory which they shall attain over it complete. There shall be no law in the members warring against the law of the mind; no propensity or inclination to what is evil; nor any guilt or defilement contracted; which would be inconsistent with a state of perfect holiness. Moreover, as the state to which they are introduced is one of perfect happiness, there is an entire freedom from all those miseries which sin brought into this lower world. These are either internal or external, personal or relative; none of which shall occur to allay, or give any disturbance to, the saints' blessedness after death. But more of this will be considered under a following Answer; in which we shall be led to speak of the happiness of the righteous at the day of judgment, both in soul and body.

Again, the death of a believer appears to be an instance of divine love, as it is the means of his being made capable of farther communion with Christ in glory. Persons must be made meet for heaven before they are admitted to it. Our present season and day of grace, indeed, is a time in which God is training his people up for glory; and there is a habitual preparation for it, when the work of grace is begun. This is what the apostle intends, when he speaks of some who, when they were translated into Christ's kingdom, were 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' This, however, falls very short of that actual meetness which the saints must have when they are brought to take possession of the heavenly blessedness. Then, as will be observed in the next Answer, they shall be made perfect in holiness; for were it otherwise, there could be no perfect happiness. Besides, the soul must be more enlarged than it can be here, that it may be enabled to receive the

immediate discoveries of the divine glory, and to converse with the heavenly inhabitants. The frame of nature must be changed; which is what the apostle intends when he says, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.' Accordingly he adds, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.'i Here he intimates that frail, mortal, and corruptible man, is not able to bear that glory which is reserved for a state of immortality. The soul, therefore, must be so changed as to be rendered receptive of that glory; and, in order to its being so, all its powers and faculties must be greatly enlarged; otherwise it could no more receive the immediate rays of the divine glory, than the weak and distempered eye can look steadily on the sun shining in its meridian brightness. In this world our ideas of divine things are very imperfect, by reason of the narrowness of our capacities, and God condescends to reveal himself to us in proportion to this; but when the saints shall see him as he is, or have a perfect and immediate vision and fruition of his glory, they shall be made receptive of it. This is done at death; and then they are rendered capable of farther communion with Christ in glory.

Finally, at death believers immediately enter upon, and are admitted into, the possession of this glory. At the same time that the soul is enlarged and fitted for the work and enjoyment of heaven, it is received into it; where it shall have an uninterrupted communion with Christ in glory. This is the subject insisted on in the following Answer.

THE FUTURE STATE

QUESTION LXXXVI. What is the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death?

ANSWER. The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies, which, even in death, continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their souls: Whereas the souls of the wicked are at death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, till the resurrection and judgment of the great day.

HAVING considered the soul as separated from the body by death, the next thing which will be inquired into, is what becomes of it, and how it is disposed of, in its separate state. Here we find that there is a vast difference between the righteous and the wicked. The former have communion with Christ in glory; the latter are in a state of banishment and separation from him, being cast into hell, and there remaining in torments and utter darkness. Both these subjects are particularly insisted on in this Answer. In considering them, we shall observe the following method;—First, we shall notice that there is something supposed, namely, that the soul of man is immortal, otherwise it could not be capable of happiness or misery. Secondly, we shall consider the happiness which the members of the invisible church enjoy,—called 'communion with Christ in glory.' Lastly, we

shall consider the misery which the souls of the wicked endure at death; which is stated in the latter part of the Answer.

The Immortality of the Soul

Here we shall speak concerning the thing supposed in this Answer, namely, that the soul of man is immortal. This is a subject of so much importance, that we must be convinced of the truth of it, before we can conclude that there is a state of happiness or misery in another world. But before we proceed to the proof of it, it is necessary for us to explain what we are to understand by it. We read in scripture of the death of the soul, in a spiritual sense; as separated by sin from God, the fountain of life and blessedness; and as being destitute of a principle of grace, and in consequence, as utterly indisposed to perform any actions which are spiritually good, as a dead man is unable to perform the functions of life. In this sense we are to understand the apostle's words, 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' In regard to it, unregenerate persons are said to be 'dead in trespasses and sins;'l and a condemned state, which is the consequence of it, is a state of death. Now that which is opposed to this is called in scripture a spiritual life, or immortality. This, however, is not the sense in which we are to consider the life of the soul in our present argument.—Again, immortality may be considered as an attribute peculiar to God. Thus the apostle says, 'He only hath immortality.' The meaning of this is, that his life, which includes his Being and all his perfections, is necessary and independent. But in this respect no creature is immortal; their life is maintained by the will and providence of God, which gave being to it at first.—When we speak of creatures being immortal, we must either consider them as not having in the constitution of their nature any thing which tends to a dissolution, which cannot be effected by any second cause; or we must consider their eternal existence as

resulting from the will of God, who could, had he pleased, have annihilated them. It is in both these senses that we are to consider the immortality of the soul.

That it is in its own nature immortal, has been allowed by many of the heathens, who have had just conceptions of the spirituality of its nature, and paid any due regards to the providence of God, and those marks of distinction which he puts between good and bad men, as the consequence of their behaviour in this life. That the soul survives the body, has been reckoned by some of the heathens an opinion which has almost universally obtained in the world. Thus Plato introduces Socrateso as discoursing largely on this subject, immediately before his death; and in others of his writings, he not only asserts this doctrine, but gives as good proofs of it as any one destitute of scripture-light could do. One of his followers, in the account he gives of the doctrine as taught by him, recommends and insists on argument which he brings to prove it, which is not without its weight, namely, that the soul acts from a principle seated in its own nature, and not by the influence of some external cause, as things material do. Strabo also speaks of the ancient Brahmins among the Indians, as entertaining some notions of the immortality of the soul, and of the judgment passed upon it in its separate state; agreeably to what Plato advances on that subject.q Some, indeed, have thought that this notion took its rise from Thales, the Milesian, who lived between two and three hundred years before Plato, and about six hundred years before the Christian era. They ascribe the notion to him from an occasional passage mentioned by Diogenes Laertius in his life, which he brings in only as matter of report, and which is hardly sufficient to justify the supposition. Ciceros supposes it was first propagated by Pherecydes, who was contemporary with him; Though Diogenes Laertius makes no mention of such a fact. It may be inferred, however, from many things in Homer, the oldest

writer in the Greek tongue, who lived above three hundred years before Thales, that the world had in his time entertained some confused ideas of the immortality of the soul. For we often find him bringing in the souls of his deceased heroes, appearing to their surviving friends in a form and speaking with a voice like that which they had when living; and he not only supposes, but plainly intimates, that their souls existed in a separate state. In other places, also, he represents some suffering punishment for their crimes committed on earth;u which plainly argues, whatever fabulous account we have of the nature of the punishment, or the person suffering it, that it was an opinion generally received at that time, that the soul existed in a separate state. Indeed, this may be inferred from the doctrine of demons, or the superstitious worship which the heathens paid to the souls of those heroes who formerly lived on earth, who, as they thought, had done some things which rendered them the peculiar favourites of God, and the objects of worship by men, and whose souls, as they believed, existed with God in great honour and favour in a separate state.

But passing this by, it may be farther observed that whatever notions some of the heathens had of the immortality of the soul in general, they were very much at a loss, many of them, in determining the place, or many things relating to the state, in which they were. Hence, many asserted, with Pythagoras, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, or of their passing from one body to another, and being condemned to reside in vile and dishonourable bodies, as a punishment for sins committed in former bodies. This doctrine, though it perverts, yet does not overthrow, that of the soul's immortality. Others of the heathen seemed to doubt whether, after four or five courses of transmigration of souls from one body to another, they might not at last shrivel into nothing. It must also be acknowledged that there was a considerable party among them who

adhered to the sentiments of Epicurus, who denied the immortality of the soul, supposing it to be material. The Sadducees likewise are represented, in scripture, as imbibing that notion; they are said to have 'denied both angels and spirits.' In this respect they adopted Epicurus' philosophy, as to his denying the immortality of the soul, or its existence in a future state.z

We may observe, however, that notwithstanding all that has been said concerning this doctrine, by the better and wiser part of the heathen in their writings, their notions seem to have been very defective. If we trace them farther than what concerns the mere separate existence of the soul, or if they attempt to speak any thing concerning its happiness in a future state, they then discover that they know but little of the matter. Many of them, also, though they cannot deny the soul's immortality, seem to hesitate about it. We may therefore say with the apostle, that 'life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel;' that is, if we would be sure of the immortality of the soul, and know its state and enjoyments in another world, we must look farther than the light of nature for it; and in seeking for arguments in scripture, we shall find great satisfaction concerning this matter, which we cannot do from the writers before-mentioned. That some of the heathen were in doubt about this important truth, is very evident from their writings. Plato himself,b notwithstanding the many things which he represents Socrates as saying concerning a state of immortality after death, yet when endeavouring to convince his friend Cebes about that matter, and apprehending that he had so far prevailed in the argument as to have forced his antagonist to allow that the soul survives the body, though he held that it transmigrated into other bodies, seems to concede this point to him, and adds, that it is uncertain whether the soul, having worn out many bodies, may not at last perish with one that it is united to; and he farther says to him, "I must now die, and

you shall live; but which of us is in the better state, God only knows."d As for Aristotle, though, in many places of his writings, he seems to maintain the immortality of the soul; yet in others, it appears that he is in doubt about it, and seems to assert that neither good nor evil happens to any man after his death. The Stoics, also, who did not altogether deny this doctrine; yet supposed that, in process of time, the soul would be dissolved.'f Even Cicero himself, notwithstanding all he says in apparent harmony with this doctrine, yet sometimes speaks with great hesitation about it. And notwithstanding what Seneca says concerning the immortality of the soul, as has been before observed, yet he speaks doubtfully of it.h We must, therefore, have recourse to scripture, and to those consequences which are deduced from it, as well as those things which may be inferred from the nature of the soul, to prove that it is immortal.

1. For the proof of this doctrine, let it be considered that the soul is immaterial. This appears from its being capable of thought, whereby it is conversant about and takes in ideas of things divine and spiritual, which no creature below man can do. It has a power of inferring consequences from premises, and accordingly is the subject of moral government, capable of conversing with God here, and of expecting rewards or punishments from him hereafter. All this cannot be produced by matter and motion. As for matter, it is in itself altogether inactive; and when motion is impressed upon it, the only change made is in the situation and contexture of its parts,—a change which cannot give it life, sensation, or preception, much less a power of judging and willing, or of being conversant about things spiritual and immaterial. Nor was this power of thinking or reasoning derived from the body to which the soul is united. That which has not in itself these superior endowments, cannot communicate them to another. The body's union with the soul

cannot impart them to it; for whatever sensation the body has, which is below the power of reasoning, is derived from the soul. This appears from its being wholly destitute of sensation, when the union between the soul and it is broken. Hence, as these superior powers or excellences of the soul are produced by another cause, we must conclude that they are immediately from God. This evidently appears from scripture. The body of Adam was first formed; and then it is said, 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' that is, he put into it that soul which was the spring and fountain of all living actions; and then it follows, 'Man became a living soul.' Moreover, it is considered as a peculiar display of the glory of God, that 'he formeth the spirit of man within him.'k It follows, then, that the dissolution of the body makes no alteration in the powers and faculties of the soul; or that the soul, when dissolution takes place, is not rendered subject to death. For, as it did not derive these powers from the body, as was before observed; so it cannot be said to lose them in the ruin of the body. Thus our Saviour speaks of the soul as not being affected with those injuries which tend to the body's destruction, when he says, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.'

2. We have in scripture a particular account of the soul when separated from the body, as disposed of in a different way from it. It does not go down to the earth, as the body does, whence it was, but 'returns to God who gave it.' Its return to God supposes that it is accountable to him for its actions performed in the body, or for the way and manner in which its faculties were exerted. Accordingly, when separate from it, it is represented as returning to God to give an account of its behaviour in the body, and to reap the fruits and effects of it. And as it is said to return to God; so believers breathe forth their souls, and resign them by faith, into the hand of God.

Thus our Saviour said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;'n and Stephen said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

3. The soul's immortality may be proved from the vast extent of its capacities, and the small improvement men make of them in this world, especially the greatest part of mankind. What a multitude are there who never had the faculties of the soul deduced into act, in whom the powers of reasoning were altogether useless, while in this world,—I mean those whose souls are separated from their bodies as soon as they are born! Others die in their childhood, before reason comes to maturity. And how great a part of the world live to old age, whose souls have not been employed in any thing great or excellent, in proportion to their capacities! Now, were these made in vain? Or did God design, when he brought them into the world, or continued them either a longer or a shorter time in it, that they should never be employed in any thing worthy of these noble faculties? We must conclude, therefore, that there is another state, in which the soul shall act more agreeably to those capacities with which it is endowed.

4. This may be farther proved, not only from the natural desires which there are in all men of immortality, but more especially from those desires which the saints have of enjoying some things in God, which cannot be attained in this life. The natural desire of immortality is what belongs to all. With what reluctance, arising from a natural aversion to a dissolution, do the soul and body part, unless there be a well-grounded hope of a life of blessedness to follow! Moreover, there is not only a desire but an expectation of the soul's living for ever, when separated from the body, in a state of happiness,—an expectation which believers are made partakers of as a peculiar blessing from God. We must conclude, therefore, that he who gave such desire and expectation of immortality will satisfy them; so that as men have a thirst after happiness, which is the effect

of a supernatural power, they shall not be disappointed or destitute of it; which they would be if the soul does not survive the body.

5. The immortality of the soul may be proved from the justice of God, as the governor of the world. This divine perfection renders it necessary, that rewards and punishments should be distributed according to men's behaviour in this life. We formerly observed, from the consideration of the spirit's returning to him, that man is supposed to be accountable to God; and the same thing follows, from what was said under another Head, concerning the soul's being the subject of moral government. But this argument will be farther improved under a following Answer, when we consider our Saviour's coming to judge the world. All the use we shall at present make of it is, that the soul, being thus accountable to God, has reason to expect some peculiar marks of favour beyond what it receives in this world, or to fear, as the consequence of crimes committed, some punishment from the hand of the supreme Judge of all. Accordingly, it is said, 'God will render to every man according to his deeds;'q and 'Every one shall receive according to what he hath done in the body, whether it be good or bad.' Now, that which makes for our present argument is, that the best men in the world do not at present receive such peculiar marks of divine favour, as to their outward condition, as some of the vilest men often do. This the prophet Jeremiah takes notice of, when he says, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?'s The psalmist, also, when observing the prosperity of the wicked, says, 'They are not in trouble like other men; neither are they plagued like other men,' that is, not exposed to such rebukes of providence, as to outward things, as good men are. What some allege to solve this difficulty is, that virtue has its own reward; and that therefore the good man cannot but be happy,

whatever troubles he meets with in this life, since he has something within himself which makes him so. This consideration, however, cannot give the least satisfaction to those who are destitute of the inward comfort referred to, that the divine distributions are just and equal. Besides, the principal ingredient in that internal happiness which arises from the exercise of religion and virtue, consists in the divine approbation, and in the interest which those who possess it have in that love which shall discover itself more fully when the soul, being separate from the body, shall enjoy the happiness resulting from it in another world. The consideration in question, therefore, so far from militating against the doctrine we are maintaining, affords a considerable argument to support it. But, on the other hand, it may be objected that sin brings its own punishment along with it, in that uneasiness which the wicked find in their own breasts; concerning whom it is said, 'They are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt.'u This consideration, however, so far from being an objection, proves the immortality of the soul. For the fear which the wicked experience, arises from a sense of guilt, whereby persons are liable to punishment in another world, who are not in the least concerned about the punishment of sin in this, and are ready to conclude themselves out of the reach of human judicature. What they are afraid of is God's righteous judgments in another world, which they cannot, by any means, free themselves from the dread of. We must conclude, therefore, that this is as natural to man, considered as sinful, as the hope of future blessedness is to one who is righteous; and both these are the result of a divine impression stamped on the souls of men, and afford an evident proof of their immortality.

The objections against the doctrine of the soul's immortality, are generally such as involve the lowest and most abject thoughts of human nature, in those who may truly be said to despise their own

souls. When they pretend, as was formerly observed, that they are immaterial, they set the soul on a level with the body; for matter, how much soever it be refined, has, when resolved into the particles of which it consists, no excellency above other material beings. As to the objections which are brought against this doctrine from scripture, by which the frailty of the present life is set forth, they do not in the least tend to overthrow the immortality of the soul. Thus, when it is said, 'That which befalleth the sons of men, be alleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them. As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again,' it is plain that Solomon speaks of the inferior part of man, in which he has no pre-eminence above the beasts, as his body is resolved into dust, as well as the bodies of the brute creatures. Besides, the following words sufficiently confute the objection, 'The spirit of a man goeth upward;' for here he asserts, not only the superior excellency, but the immortality, of the soul.—Again, it is said, 'The living know that they must die, but the dead know not any thing; neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.'y Now, the objection, as founded on these words, is sufficiently answered by only reading the following words. Their memory is forgotten, and they are said to have no farther reward in this world, or, as it is expressed, 'they have no more any portion for ever, in any thing that is done under the sun;' but this does not in the least intimate that they have no portion in what respects the things of another world. Indeed, their labour being unrewarded here, affords us an incontestable argument, that they shall have it hereafter, when the soul leaves this world.—Further, there are other scriptures which seem to speak as if death put an end to all those actions of religion which were performed by good men in this life. Thus, 'When I go down to the pit, shall the dust praise thee, shall it declare thy truth?' 'The dead praise not the Lord; neither any that go down into

silence.'a 'The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.' But these and similar expressions mean only that the praises of God cannot be celebrated by those who are in the state of the dead in such a way as when they lived in this world; that they cannot praise him in the assemblies of his saints, from which they are separated, they being no longer considered as members of the militant church; and that they are not apprized of, or affected with, the things done in this lower world, in which respect they are said to know nothing. But this does not in the least militate against their praising God with the church triumphant, and having those privileges conferred upon them which are adapted to a state of immortality and eternal life.—Finally, others object that the immortality of the soul respects only the righteous; because the apostle says, 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'c But the sense which the objectors give of these words contradicts all those scriptures which speak of the punishment of sin in another world; for if none are said to 'abide for ever' but the righteous, or they who do the will of God, the wicked must necessarily go unpunished. Hence, we must understand the word 'abiding' in the same sense as the psalmist does, when he says, 'The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;' which does not signify their not existing in a future state, but their not being admitted into the congregation of the righteous, or made happy with them in that state.

The Immediate Happiness of the Righteous after Death

We shall now consider the happiness which the members of the invisible church enjoy, called 'communion with Christ in glory,' as it includes perfect holiness. Thus we read of 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' This perfection consists in the rooting out of all those

remains of corruption, and those habitual inclinations to sin, which they were never wholly freed from in this world. The most that can be said concerning a believer at present, is that he has a principle of spiritual life and grace, which inclines him to oppose, and stand his ground against, the assaults of sin which dwelleth in him, whereby it is mortified, but not wholly destroyed. The work of sanctification is daily growing up to perfection, though it does not fully attain it. But when the soul leaves this world, it arrives at perfection in a moment; so that the power which man had at first to yield sinless obedience, and which was lost by the fall of our first parents, is regained with great advantage. For this perfection of holiness denotes not only a sinless state, but the soul's being confirmed in that state. Accordingly, the soul is said to be received into the highest heaven, the place into which no unclean thing can enter, where there is spotless purity, as well as everlasting happiness; and here the righteous are described as beholding the face of God in light and glory. These things need not be particularly insisted on in this place, since the same privileges are said, in a following Answer, to belong to believers after the day of judgment, both in their souls and bodies, when they shall be received into heaven, and be made perfectly holy and happy, and be blessed with the immediate vision of God. At present, therefore, we shall notice on this subject only the following particulars:—First, The soul is made partaker of this blessedness immediately on its separation from the body. Secondly, It is farther described as waiting for the full redemption of the body, which is still supposed to continue under the dominion of death, though united to Christ, and consequently under his special protection. On this account believers are said, when they die, to rest in their graves, as in their beds, till their bodies are again united to their souls at the last day.

I. We shall consider that the soul, as is observed in this Answer, is made partaker of this blessedness immediately after its separation from the body. This doctrine seems to militate against three absurd opinions which have been advanced relating to the state of separate souls. The first is that of the Papists, who maintain that the soul is not made perfect in holiness at death, but enters into a middle state, which they call purgatory, in which it is to endure exquisite torments, designed partly as a punishment inflicted for those sins committed in this life which have not been expiated by satisfaction made by them, and partly to free them from the sin which they brought with them into that state. Another opinion which seems to be opposed in this answer, is what was maintained by some of the ancient Fathers, namely, that the souls of believers do immediately enter, not into the highest heaven before they are reunited to their bodies, but into paradise, not to suffer, as the Papists pretend they do in purgatory, but to enjoy pleasures which are reserved for them in a place not much inferior to heaven. The third opinion which is subversive of the doctrine contained in Answer, is, that the soul, at its separation from the body, sleeps till the resurrection, and that, therefore, in the intermediate space of time in which it is separate, it is no more capable of happiness or misery than the body which lies in the grave. The absurdity of these opinions we shall take occasion farther to consider.

1. We notice first the opinion of the Papists concerning a middle state, into which they suppose souls enter at death, in order to their being cleansed from the remains of sin, and so made meet for heaven. This doctrine, how ludicrous and ungrounded soever it may appear to be, they are so fond of, that it will be as hard a matter to convince them of the absurdity of it, as it was of old to convince the worshippers of Diana at Ephesus of their stupid idolatry; and the reason is, that it tends to promote their secular interest. They first

endeavoured to persuade the poor deluded people, that they must suffer very great torments after death, unless they be relieved by the prayers of their surviving friends; and then they endeavoured to induce survivors to show this favour to them, as well as to merit for themselves some abatement of these torments, or a speedy release from them. They tell them that it is their duty and interest to leave their estates, by their last will and testament, to pious uses, such as building of churches, endowing of monasteries, &c.; and by their success in such appeals, they have got a great part of the estates of the people into their own hands. To carry on this cheat, they give particular instances, in some of their writings, of souls being released from this dreadful place by their prayers. The account they give of this middle state between heaven and hell, is not only that souls are not admitted into the immediate presence of God, but that they are exposed to grievous torments by fire, little short of those which are endured in hell, and that if they are not helped by the prayers of the church, they are in danger of being sent directly to hell whence there is no release. They add that the punishment in this middle state, is longer or shorter, in proportion to the crimes committed in this world, for which satisfaction has not been made by penances endured, or money given to compensate for them. Some, indeed, are allowed by them to pass immediately into heaven, without being detained here, namely, those who have performed works of supererogation, or who, by entering into a vow of poverty, have parted with their estates, while living in the world, for the use of the church; for in this case no end could be answered, by telling them this fable of purgatory. Others are told that they may escape it by entering into a vow of chastity and canonical obedience. This belongs more especially to the priests, when entering into holy orders; who thus take care to make provision for themselves, that so the deluded people may have a greater regard to their prayers, since they will find none in purgatory to perform that service for them. This is so vile

and absurd an opinion, that it cannot but expose the church of Rome to the scorn and contempt of all who are not given up to strong delusions.

But though it sufficiently appears, that secular interest is the main foundation of the doctrine; yet there are some arguments, which they take from scripture to support it. These alone require our notice. One scripture to which they refer is in Isa. 4:4, where the prophet speaks concerning the Lord's 'purging the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.' The event here spoken of they suppose should have its accomplishment when the soul left the body, and should be detained in purgatory. This interpretation, however, is very remote from the design of the Holy Ghost in the passage. The words contain only a metaphorical description of some judgments which God would inflict on the people of Jerusalem in this life, as a punishment for their iniquities, and as a means to reclaim them from them. In the same way, we often read in the prophets of God's 'refining' his people 'in the furnace of affliction.' And it is said, 'The Lord's fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem;'h denoting the sore judgments they should undergo in this world, as a punishment for their idolatry.

Another scripture, which is miserably perverted, to support the doctrine of purgatory, is Zech. 9:11, 'By the blood of thy covenant have I sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.' This passage, they suppose, is to be understood of some state after this life; because the place of which it speaks is called 'the pit,' and is described as a place of misery, inasmuch as there is no water, that is, no refreshing comforts. They add, that the prophet does not speak of hell; because some persons are described as 'sent forth,' or released from it; so that it must needs be understood of this middle state between heaven and hell. But this is far from being the sense of the

text. It contains a prediction of the Jews being delivered from the Babylonish captivity; and Babylon, in a metaphorical way of speaking, is called 'the pit wherein is no water,' to denote the great distress that the people were to be brought under there. Thus the prophet Isaiah, speaking of their deliverance from the captivity, says, 'The captive exile hasteneth, that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit.' Or the passage denotes some future deliverance, which the church was to expect after great calamities undergone by them. This is said to be 'by the blood of the covenant,' because all the happiness which the church shall enjoy in this world, as well as in the other, is founded in the blood of Christ, pursuant to the covenant of grace. Even if the text must necessarily be understood of a deliverance from evil after death, it may be considered as a prediction of our being delivered from eternal destruction, by the blood of Jesus.

Another scripture which they bring to support the fabulous doctrine of purgatory, is 1 Cor. 3:13–15, 'Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.' The reason why this scripture is forced into the cause which they maintain is, that it speaks of persons being 'saved so as by fire.' This they suppose to refer to what should follow after the particular judgment of every one at death, when a scrutiny shall be made concerning their works, or their behaviour in this world, and when they who are found faulty may be saved after they have endured those sufferings which are there allotted for them. But there is nothing in the text which gives the least countenance to this notion. The apostle seems to be speaking concerning those ministers who preach false doctrines, that

is, propagate errors not directly subversive of the fundamental articles of faith, but such as tend to embarrass the consciences of men, and, in many respects, lead them out of the way; or of others, who have been perverted by them, and have embraced pernicious errors, which, in their consequences, are subversive of the faith, but yet do not hold those consequences. These may be saved; but their salvation shall be attended with some difficulty, arising from the mistaken notions which they have imbibed. Some compare their case to that of a person whose house is in flames, and who saves his life with difficulty, being scorched by the fire. God will, in his own time, take some method to discover what notions we have received in religion; and he is said to do this by fire. Whether the passage, as a learned writer observes, is to be understood of the clear gospel-dispensation, or whether it respects some trying dispensation of providence, accompanied with a greater measure of the effusion of the Spirit, which shall lead men into the knowledge of their mistakes, and set them in the right way, I will not determine. But whether the one or the other of these senses of the text seems most agreeable to the mind of the apostle, it is sufficiently evident that no countenance is given, either in this or any other scripture, to the absurd doctrine of the Papists.

Another scripture which they bring for the proof of this doctrine is 1 Pet. 3:19, in which it is said that our Saviour 'went and preached unto the spirits in prison.' The sense they give of this text, compared with the foregoing verse, is that our Saviour, after his death, visited those repositories where the Old Testament saints were lodged, and preached the gospel to them; that they embraced it, and in consequence were admitted into heaven; and that, in like manner, he went down to the subterraneous prison of purgatory, and preached to its inmates also. But whether his preaching to them was attended with the same success or not, they pretend not to determine. Only

the supposed fact of his preaching, they allege as a proof that there is such a place. To give countenance to their interpretation, they say that by 'the prison' here spoken of, the prison of hell cannot be intended; inasmuch as there is no hope of salvation there, and consequently no preaching of the gospel. Nor, they add, can it be meant of his preaching to any in this world; for they suppose that he went after he left the world and 'preached to spirits,' that is, to persons whose souls were separate from their bodies. Hence, he went, as they argue, and preached to those that are in purgatory. But in giving this sense of the text, they are obliged to take no notice of what follows, which, if duly considered, would plainly overthrow it. The meaning of the passage is, that our Saviour preached by his Spirit to the old world in the ministry of Noah, while the latter was preparing the ark; and that they, being disobedient, were not only destroyed by the flood, but shut up in the prison of hell. On this account, it is said that he preached to those that are now in prison. This scripture, therefore, makes nothing for the doctrine which we are opposing. [See Note P, page 245.] Nor does any other which is or can be brought; so that all the arguments pretended to be taken from scripture are a manifest perversion of it.

There is, however, one method of reasoning made use of by them which I cannot pass over, inasmuch as they apprehend that it contains a dilemma which is unanswerable; namely, that there is some place in which persons are perfectly freed from sin, which must be either this world, or heaven, or some middle state between them. It is allowed by all, they say, that there is no perfect freedom from sin in this world; and to suppose that persons are perfectly freed from sin after they come to heaven, is to conclude that heaven is a state of probation, in which the gospel must be preached, and persons who attend upon it be inclined to embrace it. This, they add, is not agreeable to a state of perfection; and is also contrary to scripture,

which speaks of no unclean thing entering heaven. It hence follows, they say, that the state in which men are fitted for heaven, must be that which they plead for, namely, a middle state, in which they are first purged, and then received into heaven—Now, it is true that believers are not perfectly freed from sin in this world, nor do they enter into heaven with either the guilt or the pollution of their sins upon them; but they are made perfect in an instant, in passing out of this world into heaven. The same stroke which separates, the soul from the body, takes away the remains of corruption, and fits the soul for the heavenly state. It passes out of this world perfect, though it was imperfect while in it; in like manner as the body, in being raised out of the grave, is rendered incorruptible. We have hence no occasion to invent a middle state, into which the saints are brought; and it follows, as it is expressed in this Answer, that the souls of believers, immediately after death, are made perfect in holiness. [See Note Q, page 246.]

2. There is another opinion opposed to the doctrine we are maintaining, embraced by some of the Jews, and several of the Fathers, in which they are followed by some modern writers; namely, that the souls of believers at death enter into paradise, where they continue till they are reunited to their bodies, and, after the day of judgment, are received into the highest heaven. Accordingly, they understand our Saviour's words to the penitent thief on the cross, 'To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise,' in a literal sense, as mentioning paradise in contradistinction to heaven. They assert, also, that the soul of our Saviour, when separated from his body, went immediately into paradise, and did not go into heaven until after his resurrection. They suppose paradise to import the same thing as 'Abraham's bosom' does in the parable. Indeed, the Greek word which we translate 'bosom,' in the metaphorical sense of it, signifies a port or haven, which is, as it were, a bosom for shipping.

This paradise is described as very distinct from the popish purgatory; for it is not a place of suffering, but of delight and pleasure. Tertullian, who adopted this notion, describes it as a place of divine pleasure, designed for the reception of the spirits of holy men, being separate either from this world, or other places near it, by an enclosure of fire, designed to keep the wicked out. It is what they suppose the apostle Paul speaks of when he says that he was 'caught up into paradise;'n and they conclude that the vision or rapture which he mentions, includes what he experienced at two several times, because he speaks, not of a single vision, but of 'visions and revelations.' Accordingly, they suppose that he had first of all a vision of the glory of heaven, and that then he had another of paradise. Thus a late writer understands the text.p I cannot think, however, that the interpretation is well-founded. The apostle's words are, as it were, a preface to introduce the account which he gives of himself. He says, 'I will come to visions and revelations;' that is, I will now tell you how God sometimes favours his people with extraordinary visions and revelations. Then he proceeds to give an instance in himself, that he was 'caught up into the third heaven,' or into paradise. For I cannot suppose that he speaks of two visions, or distinguishes paradise from heaven. I am hence obliged not to pay that deference to the sentiments of the Fathers mentioned by Whitby, which he does; but must conclude the notion to be altogether ungrounded, though it is supported by the credit of Irenæus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, Methodius, as well as of several Jewish writers, such as Philo and some others.

3. We shall now consider another doctrine, maintained by some, which is inconsistent with what is said in this Answer concerning the souls of believers being made perfect in holiness, and entering immediately into heaven when separated from their bodies. That opinion is, that at death the soul, as well as the body, sleeps till the

resurrection, when the one shall be raised, and the other awakened out of its sleep. Those who maintain this opinion suppose, not that the soul ceases to exist, but that it enters into and continues in a state of inactivity, without any power to exercise the faculty of thinking, and, in consequence, whilst remaining in this state, must be incapable of either happiness or misery. They assert, not that there shall be no rewards and punishments in a future state, but that there will be a deferring of these till the last day.

This doctrine was generally maintained by the Socinians, as may be seen in several of their writings referred to by a learned author who opposes them. The arguments by which it is usually supported, are taken partly from the possibility of the soul's being destitute of thought, and partly from those scriptures which compare death to a sleep; by which they understand a cessation of action, not only in the body, but likewise in the soul. In defence of the notion that it is possible for the soul to be without the exercise of thought, they argue that the soul of a newborn infant, or at least of an infant before it is born, has no ideas; and that though there is a power of reasoning which is essential to the soul, yet this is not deduced into act, so as to produce thought or actual reasoning, whence moral good or evil would proceed, and a sense of happiness or misery arise from it. This notion is carried somewhat farther by a late celebrated writer.s He himself, indeed, takes no notice of the tendency of his assertion to support the opinion concerning the soul's sleeping at death; yet others make a handle of it, to defend that opinion with a greater show of reason than what was formerly discovered in maintaining this argument. He asserts that the souls of those who are adult do not always think; that particularly when a person is in a sound sleep he has no thought, how much soever there may be the exercise of thought, though confused and irregular, in those who, between sleeping and waking, not only dream a thousand things which they

never thought of before, but also remember their dreams when they awake. That a person in a sound sleep has no dreams, and consequently is destitute of thought, he attempts to prove. He remarks that when any one is suddenly waked out of a sound sleep, he can give no account of what he had been thinking of; and he supposes it impossible for a person who was thinking, to forget the next moment what his thoughts were conversant about. This is the principal argument by which he supports this notion; and he has so far the advantage, that it is impossible for us to prove the contrary from any thing which we know or experience concerning ourselves. The argument, however, will not appear very convincing, when we consider that there are innumerable thoughts which we have when awake, which we can hardly give an account of the next minute. Besides, if the thoughts are very active in those who dream,—who are as much asleep as others who do not dream, though their sleep may not be so refreshing, I cannot see how the consequence can be inferred, that sleep is inconsistent with thought. Moreover, a person who is delirious or distracted, undoubtedly thinks, though his thoughts are disordered; but when the delirium or distraction is over, he can no more remember what he thought of than a person who is waked out of the soundest sleep. The argument in question, therefore, tends rather to amuse, or embarrass the cause they maintain, than to give sufficient conviction. Now, from this method of reasoning it is inferred that, when the soul is separate from the body, it is altogether destitute of the exercise of thought, which is what they mean by the soul's sleeping. To give farther countenance to this matter, they produce several scriptures in which death is compared to a sleep. Thus, when God speaks of the death of Moses, he says, 'Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers.' Joo also speaks of sleeping in the dust;'u and concerning the resurrection after death, he says, 'Man heth down and riseth not; till the heavens he no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.' David prays,

'Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.'y And our Saviour, speaking concerning Lazarus, when dead, says, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep;' which he afterwards explains, when he says, 'Lazarus is dead.'a There are several other scriptures to the same purpose, which they bring to prove that the soul sleeps in death, taking the word 'sleep' in its literal sense.

Now, in reply to their arguments, we reply that as to the possibility of the soul being rendered incapable of thinking, when separate from the body; it is no just way of reasoning to infer from the possibility of a thing, the actual being of it. Hence, if it could be proved to a demonstration, as the author above-mentioned supposes he has done, though I think without sufficient ground, that sleep deprives a person of thought; it will not follow that the soul, when separate from the body, ceases to think. When the powers and faculties of the soul are deduced into act, experience tells us that they are greatly improved and strengthened. The exercise of them, therefore, cannot be so easily impeded as is pretended; especially when we consider that the soul does not derive its activity from the body, which contributes very little to its ideas of things immaterial, which are not the objects of sense. And how much soever bodily diseases may weaken or interrupt the soul in its actings, we do not find that they so far destroy those powers, but that, when the distemper ceases, the former actings return, like the spring of a watch which may be stopped by something that hinders the motion of the wheels, and which, when this is removed, continues to give motion to them as it had done before. The body, at most, can be considered but as a clog and impediment to the activity of the soul; and we may hence infer that, in a state of separation, the soul is so far from being impeded in its actings, that it becomes more active than before.—But what I would principally insist on as sufficient to overthrow the doctrine we

are opposing, is the account which we have in many scriptures, and several just consequences which may be deduced from them, by which it will appear that nothing which has been said concerning the possibility of the soul's being inactive, when separate from the body, can enervate the force of the argument to support the contrary doctrine. It is true, the scripture often represents death as a sleep, as in the places formerly mentioned. Death is also sometimes described as a state of rest, which is of the same import with sleep; but this is explained as a state of peace, holiness, and happiness, and not a cessation from action. Thus it is said, 'He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.' This is plainly meant of the death of the righteous, as appears from the preceding verse, where it is said, 'The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.' Now, these are said to 'enter into peace;' which supposes that they are capable of the enjoyment of those blessings which the soul shall then be possessed of. They are also said to 'walk in their uprightness;' which signifies their being active in what respects the glory of God, which is very inconsistent with the soul's sleeping, when separate from the body. Rest and sleep are metaphorical expressions, when applied to this doctrine. Now nothing is more common than for such figurative ways of speaking to be used in the sacred writings; so that it is very absurd for us to understand the words in a literal sense in the instance before us.

We will now proceed to consider the proofs we have from scripture of the soul's being in a state of activity when separate from the body. The first scripture which may be brought to prove this, is 2 Cor. 12:2–4, where the apostle says concerning himself that he was 'caught up into the third heaven,' and knew not whether he was, at the same time, 'in, or out of the body.' If he was in the body, his senses were locked up, and he must be supposed to have been in a trance; which militates against the supposition that the soul's power

of acting may be impeded either by sleep or some bodily disease, in which there is not the exercise of the senses. Or if, on the other hand, he was 'out of the body,' his 'hearing unspeakable words' plainly proves our argument,—that the soul is capable of action, and consequently of enjoying the heavenly glory, when separate from the body. Moreover, this is evident from our Saviour's words to the penitent thief on the cross, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' To be 'in paradise' is certainly to be in heaven in a state of complete blessedness, where the soul delights itself in the enjoyment of God, which is altogether inconsistent with a state of insensibility. Were it otherwise, it ought rather to have been said, thou shalt be with me in paradise after the resurrection of the body, than to-day. The method which some take to evade the force of this argument, who say that 'to-day' refers, not to the time of his being admitted into heaven, but to the time when Christ spake these words, is so low and trifling, that it does not deserve an answer.—There is another scripture which fully proves our doctrine, namely, 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.'d Here the apostle takes it for granted that, as soon as he departed out of this world, he should be with Christ. This denotes that he should be in his immediate presence, beholding his glory; and is inconsistent with the supposition that the soul sleeps at death. Besides, he says, 'This is far better;' and he could not have said so, if the notion we are opposing were true. For it is much better for a saint to be serving Christ's interest in this world, and made so eminently useful in promoting his glory as the apostle was, than to be in a state of inactivity, in which the soul is not capable of doing any thing for him, or of enjoying any thing from him. Indeed, there is no comparison between the two states; so that when he said he was 'in a strait' which he should choose, the matter, had it been referred to him, might easily have been determined in favour of his continuing in this world; for here he was useful,—while,

in a state of inactivity, he would not only be useless, but incapable of enjoying those privileges which he was made partaker of here.—Further, we have another argument taken from 2 Cor. 5:8, 'We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' Here presence with the Lord is inferred from absence from the body, without any intimation of waiting till the soul is united again to the body, before being admitted into Christ's presence.—Again, our doctrine appears from the words of Solomon, in Eccles. 4:2, 'I praised the dead, which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.' By these words we are to understand that the state of believers, when they die, is much more happy than it can be in this life. Now this supposes that they are capable of happiness, and consequently that the soul, when separated from the body, is not in a state of insensibility, which is altogether inconsistent with happiness. We may add what our Saviour says in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: 'The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.' In this parable we have an account of the different state of the souls of the righteous and of the wicked at death, and not merely what shall follow after the resurrection of the body. For when the rich man is represented as being in torments, he says, in a following part of the parable, 'I have five brethren;' and he would have had 'Lazarus sent to testify to them, lest they should also come into that place of torment;' and he is told, 'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.'f Now all this plainly intimates that the parable refers to the state of separate souls before the resurrection, whilst others enjoyed the means of grace; and consequently it proves that the soul, when separate from the body, is capable of happiness or misery, and, what is more, is fixed in the one or the other of them.

An objection is founded on those scriptures which speak of the happiness or misery of men, as deferred to the end of the world. It is intimated in the parable of the tares, that 'the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just;' and the former are said to be 'cast into a furnace of fire;'h and the latter, namely, the righteous, are said to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' Moreover, our Saviour speaks of his people as 'blessed, and recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' The apostle Paul also expresses his hope of 'a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, should give him at that day,'l that is, the day of his coming to judgment. Several other scriptures likewise speak of what is consequent to the resurrection.—Now, we observe, in reply, that these scriptures respect, not the beginning, but the consummation of the happiness of the saints, or their complete blessedness in soul and body. This, however, is not inconsistent with the happiness which separate souls enjoy before the resurrection. Nor is the misery which is consequent upon the resurrection inconsistent with that which sinners endure before it, when their souls are separate from their bodies. Thus concerning the happiness of the souls of believers at death.

II. We are now led to consider what is farther observed in this Answer, concerning the soul's waiting for the full redemption of the body. The justified soul, though it continues under the dominion of death, is notwithstanding united to Christ; and accordingly believers are said to rest in their graves as in their beds, till the resurrection.

1. The souls of believers are described as 'waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.' This is the same expression which the apostle uses, Rom. 8:23; where 'redemption' denotes a full discharge from the state of confinement in the grave, in which the body was rendered incapable of answering the end for which it was redeemed

by Christ, while the soul was, at the same time, destitute of that happiness which its reunion therewith shall convey to it. The soul's enjoyments were all spiritual, and, in their kind, perfect; yet it was naked, or, as the apostle expresses it, 'unclothed;' it wanted that which was designed to be a constituent part of the human nature, and without which it was indisposed for those actions and enjoyments which arise from its union with the body. This reunion with the body it is said to wait for, as a desire of reunion therewith is natural to it; yet it waits without impatience, or any diminution of its intellectual happiness.

2. As to the bodies of believers, they are said to continue united to Christ. This is the result of their being redeemed by him, and of his condescending to dwell in them by his Spirit. His love extends itself to their lower part, as well as to their souls. 'Nothing,' as the apostle says, 'shall separate' a believer 'from his love;' no 'not death itself.' On this account they are said to 'sleep in Jesus,'n or to 'die in the Lord.' They are indeed buried in the grave, and seem to lie neglected like common dust; yet it is said, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.'p Christ reckons every particle of their dust among 'his jewels;' and is no more ashamed to own them as his peculiar care, than he was when they were in their most flourishing state in this world. For this reason they are also said to 'rest in their graves as in their beds.' This is a scripture-expression, as the psalmist says, 'My flesh shall rest in hope;'r and the prophet Isaiah, 'He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds.' The body, indeed, remains under the external part of the curse due to man for sin; yet, as will be abundantly demonstrated when death shall be completely swallowed up in victory, it is freed from that which is the most bitter ingredient of it. In this the bodies of believers have the advantage of all others. The frame of nature indeed is dissolved; there is no visible mark of distinction from the wicked put upon

them in the grave; yet there is a vast difference in God's account. This a writer elegantly compares to the removing of the tabernacle in the wilderness. When the Israelites changed their stations, all the parts of the tabernacle were carefully taken down and delivered to the Levites' charge, in order to its being raised again with honour. On the contrary, the house incurably infected with the leprosy, was plucked down with violence, and thrown into an unclean place with execration. The bodies of the saints are committed to the bosom of the earth, as the repository Christ has appointed for them; whence he will call them forth at last, when their souls shall be again united to them in the glorious morning of the resurrection.

The Misery of the Wicked at Death

We shall now consider the misery which the souls of the wicked endure at death. This is stated in the latter part of this Answer. We have here a different scene opened, the final state of the wicked described in words adapted to strike dread and terror into those who have at present no sense of their future misery. Their souls are considered as cast into or shut up in hell, their bodies imprisoned in the grave, and both the objects of divine wrath. We shall have occasion, under a following Answer, farther to speak concerning the punishment which shall be inflicted on sinners, whose torments shall be inexpressible, both in body and in soul, after the day of judgment. At present, therefore, we shall consider only the misery which the souls of the wicked shall undergo before they are united to their bodies. The soul which carries out of the world with it the power of reflecting on itself as happy or miserable, immediately sees itself separate from the comfortable presence of God, the fountain of blessedness. What tends to enhance its misery beyond what it is capable of in this life, will be the enlargement of its faculties. Its apprehension shall be more clear, and its sensation of the wrath of

God more pungent, when it is not oppressed with the drowsiness and stupidity which characterized it in the present life. Nor will it be possible for it to delude itself with those vain hopes which it once conceived of escaping that misery which it is now plunged into; when all the waves and billows of the Almighty shall overwhelm and swallow it up. The soul is, in a peculiar manner, the subject of misery, as it is made uneasy by its own thoughts; which are compared to the worm that dieth not. While the sinner looks backwards, and calls to mind the actions of his past life, and all his sins are charged upon him, his soul is filled with such a sense of guilt and confusion as is inexpressibly tormenting; and when he looks forwards, there is nothing but what administers despair, which increases his misery to the highest degree. These torments the soul endures before it is reunited to the body, and thereby rendered receptive of others, which we generally call the punishment of sense.

The place of punishment is the same that is allotted for soul and body, namely, hell. This is called outer darkness; which is an expression used to signify the greatest degree of misery. As for their bodies, they dread the thoughts of being united to them again; inasmuch as the reunion will bring with it new accessions of torment. They are considered as liable to a double dishonour; not only that which arises from their being in a state of corruption in common with all mankind, but in their being detained in the grave, as prisoners to the justice of God, whence they shall not be released as persons acquitted or discharged, but remanded from that prison to another, from which there is no deliverance. But more of this under a following Answer.

[NOTE P. Christ's Preaching to the Spirits in Prison.—Our Lord went at death, not to do any work in a middle state, but to be with his Father and reveal himself in paradise to the saved. On the eve of his

death, he said to his disciples, 'I go to my Father;' on the cross, he said to the penitent thief, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;' and at the moment of expiring, he said to the Father, 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit.' Nor did he go in person to 'the spirits in prison' of whom the apostle Peter speaks; but he went and preached to them by the Spirit,—the Holy Ghost, who spoke in all the prophets and holy men of old, and testified of Christ. Just as he went to 'the spirits' in question, so he went to the Ephesians who, in the days of the apostolic ministry, were converted to the Christian faith. 'Having slain the enmity by the cross,' says the apostle Paul, addressing the Ephesian believers, 'he came and preached peace to you who were afar off,' Eph. 2:17. As, by the ministry of Paul, but not in his own person, he 'came and preached' to the Ephesians; so, by the ministry of Noah, but not in his own person, 'he went and preached to the spirits in prison.' Noah was 'a preacher of righteousness,' (2 Pet. 2:5.) or of the way of mercy; and he just as really as Paul 'prayed men in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech them by him, to he reconciled to God.' The time, therefore, at which Christ preached to 'the spirits in prison,' was 'the days of Noah,' when the ark was a-preparing. 'The spirits,' too, were not only disobedient but objects of long-suffering: they were persons who were disobedient when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah:' they were not condemned men enduring the miseries of final wrath, but disobedient hearers of divine warnings which told them of wrath to come, and favoured objects of the divine long-suffering which 'waited' for their repentance. Nor is it strange that they are called 'spirits,'—'souls' or 'spirits' being a current designation of living men, in even the historical parts of scripture. See Gen. 12:5; 46:15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27 Exod. 1:5; 12:4; Josh. 10:28, 30, 32; 11:11, and many other texts. The 'prison,' then, in which they were confined, was simply the doomed world, converted into a vast dungeon from which the impenitent could not escape, and walled round by denunciations of

the divine anger which should certainly be executed. They were persons 'in keeping,' or 'under guard,' εν φυλακῃ. Accordingly, they were not, as the Romish gloss on the passage represents, delivered from 'the guard' which was over them, or 'the prison' in which they were shut up; for only 'a few, that is, eight souls,' Noah and his family, who held a common position with them, 'were saved.' Even these, also, were saved, not by fire, but 'by water,'—not by the action of purgatorial flame, but by being borne aloft in the ark on the surface of the flood,—'the like figure whereunto,' adds the apostle, 'even baptism doth also now save us—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God—by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' To crown all, the persons described were guilty of what Romanists call 'mortal sin,' or rather of all mortal sins combined; and, therefore, could not, according to the church of Rome's own doctrine, have been allowed admission to her supposed purgatory. Scarcely, then, can there be a more reckless perversion of the sense of a passage, than that which Romanists practise on this text in Peter.—ED.]

[NOTE Q. Arguments against Purgatory.—As Dr. Ridgeley has merely repelled the arguments advanced by Romanists in favour of their doctrine of purgatory, an outline of arguments on the opposite side, affording direct evidence that the doctrine is unscriptural, may not be unsuitable.

The doctrine of purgatory, then, is inconsistent with the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. Our Lord is able to 'save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.' 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' 'There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in

Christ Jesus.' Men, if justified by his blood at all, are 'justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' They have a remedy applied to them which is divinely efficacious to remove all their maladies; they have had a price paid for them which is divinely precious to 'redeem them from all evil;' and they cannot need, and consequently will not receive, such poor though painful supplementary aid as the action, for a season, of purgatorial fire.

The doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent also with the nature and the means of moral purification. Romanists are not agreed as to what their pretended purgatorial tire is; though the majority believe it to be literal fire, while the remainder suppose it to be something capable of inflicting agonizing pain. But who can conceive of mind being operated on, as if in a chemical way, by physical agency—of an intellect being burned, a memory excoriated, a soul fused or refined by literal flame? Or, if the fire be only figurative, who, with the Bible before him, can imagine the soul's moral purification to be effected by its subjection to pain and anguish? Moral means are those alone which, by divine appointment, and in suitableness to man's intellectual nature, are employed to remove his pollution and make him holy. He is 'sanctified by the truth.' His 'heart is purified by faith.' A believer is 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' His 'soul is purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit.' He is 'sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word, Christ having given himself for him, that he might present him to himself not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that he should be holy and without blemish.' While, therefore, the sacrifice of Christ is all-sufficient to take away all guilt, the power of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth is all-sufficient to remove all corruption; so that, on the one hand, purgatorial fire is not needed and cannot

exist to make atonement, and, on the other hand, is not needed and cannot exist to effect moral purification.

The doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent likewise with the condition and character of believers in Christ. Persons interested in Christ, as Romanists represent the candidates for their supposed purgatory to be, are 'one spirit with the Lord.' Their Redeemer and public Head says to them, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' They are 'dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God.' They never come into condemnation. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for them.' They are beyond the reach of what is penal. 'Having been justified by faith, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ their Lord, by whom also they have access into this grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.' They are partakers of life—eternal life—life together with Christ. They have received a right, εξουσια, to become the sons of God, 'the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' 'According to God's abundant mercy, they have been begotten again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.' How utterly irreconcilable with these views of the condition and hopes and relationships of Christians, and with other views equally glorious in the divine word, is the notion of their liability to be subjected to the penal and purgatorial fires of the Romish middle state! Look especially at their union with Christ,—their being one with him, married to him, quickened and raised with him; (Rom. 6:3, 4, 6; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 2:5,

6; Rom. 5:19; Matt. 25:40, 45; Isa. 63:9; John 17:21, 22;) and at their present enjoyment of their salvation,—their being saved, and saved now;—(Luke 7:50; 18:42; 1 Cor. 1:18; Tit. 3:5; Luke 19:9; Isa. 12:2; Heb. 5:9; Isa 45:17;) and can their condition and the doctrine of purgatory be for one moment viewed as compatible?

Again, the doctrine of purgatory, or of a middle or third state, is inconsistent with the uniform distribution of all moral matters into the two classes of good and evil. There are two ways in which men walk,—the way that leads to life, and the way that leads to destruction; two gates through which they all pass,—the strait gate which many seek to enter but are not able, and the broad gate, through which the multitude press; two kingdoms maintained in the world,—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, or the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness; two masters whom men serve, or to whom they yield subjection and obedience,—God and mammon, the living God and the demon of idolatry, holiness and sin; two families into which the human race are divided,—the children of God and the children of the wicked one; two classes into which the divine law distributes all who are under it,—those who are alive to God, and those who are dead in trespasses and sins, the saved and the lost, the justified and the condemned, the righteous and the wicked. Now, correspondingly to this uniform twofold classification, there are, and can be, only two ends,—'life and death,' salvation and destruction, heaven and hell.

Further, the doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent with the purposes and designs of Deity in calling men to the knowledge of the gospel. He 'chose them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' They, hence,

'have obtained'—in the present life, or simply as believers on the Son of God—'an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that they should be to the praise of his glory.' They were predestinated—not to come into a state of imperfect salvation which should require to be completed by some new and lengthened process in another world—but to be 'conformed to the image of God's Son.' 'Moreover,' adds the apostle, 'whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' They are 'saved by grace, through faith, and that not of themselves—it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for they are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them.' All the designs of the divine purposes concerning them, therefore, secure their being renovated, justified, sanctified, made heirs of glory, and set up to the praise of the divine grace, in the present world. 'My sheep hear my voice,' said Christ, 'and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' How, then, can any of them—alive to God, possessors of eternal life, held fast in the Redeemer's hand, predestinated, redeemed, and called to the heirship of heaven and practical conformity to the image of God's Son—be in a condition of fitness or liability to pass at death into a middle or purgatorial state?

The doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent also with what the scriptures declare shall be the state of things at the resurrection and the final judgment. Both by the granting of indulgences for many thousands of years, and by other practices and assumptions current in the church of Rome, the doctrine of purgatory is identified with a supposed continuation of the imprisonment of many persons in the middle state long after the end of the world. But there will be a

resurrection, not of three-classes of men, but of only two. There will be 'a resurrection unto life,' and 'a resurrection unto condemnation,'—'a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust.' Those who 'sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.' Not an individual will be found connected with the supposed purgatory in the resurrection; and not an individual will be left apart from the two great classes of men to inhabit it after the final judgment. But if the Romish doctrine respecting it be untrue in reference to these great epochs, it must be equally untrue respecting it in reference to any preceding period.

The Romish doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent likewise with the hope and the desire which Christians are warranted to cherish in anticipating death. 'We know,' says the apostle, speaking of himself in common with all true Christians, 'that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that

we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: for we walk by faith, not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,' 2 Cor. 5:1–8. How utterly incompatible are these breathings and desires and confident expectations of believers, with the notion that all of them may, and that some of them must, pass at death into a state of severe suffering! They are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord; so that, no sooner do they leave 'this tabernacle,' than they participate in the holiness and the joys of heaven. Their Lord has gone 'to prepare a place for them, and he will come again and receive them to himself, that where be is, there they may be also.' His prayer on their behalf, even when be was on earth, and a prayer which he continues to make, and which, belonging to his intercessory function as 'the High-priest of their profession,' invariably prevails, is, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' They, accordingly, have 'fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them; which hope they have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for them entered, even Jesus, made an High-priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.' They can, therefore, have no reason to fear, no ground to anticipate, even the risk of their being shut up, for a season after death, in the flames of a purgatorial state.

Again, the doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent with the representations of scripture as to the state, immediately after death,

of Christians in particular, and of mankind in general. Respecting Christians such statements as these occur: 'And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me. Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.' 'But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.' 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.' 'For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living,' Rev. 14:13; Heb. 11:16; Phil. 1:21, 23, Rom. 14:7–9. All these texts, and some others, either declare or assume that for Christians to die, is to be with Christ, to rest from their labours, to cease from suffering, to enter into heaven. As to mankind, in general, they are represented as passing at death either into one of two separate and enduring states, or into a condition of unalterably fixed character and destiny, where no change of prospects or position can be undergone: 'And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.' 'Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercies' sake. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?' 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' 'He that believeth on the Son hath

everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,' Luke 16:22, 23; Psal. 6:4, 5; Eccl. 9:10; Rev. 22:11; John 3:36. How entirely irreconcilable are all these statements with the notion of probation and purgation, and change of character and state in a future world!

Finally, the doctrine of purgatory is inconsistent with revealed facts respecting the state of departed souls John saw in vision an innumerable company of deceased believers who were all 'arrayed in white robes, and stood before the throne, and served God day and night in his temple,' having 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;' and 'they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, Rev. 7:13–17; 5:9. John was visited also by a glorified spirit whom he mistook for the Angel of the covenant, and who said to him, 'I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God,' Rev. 22:9. When Christ was transfigured on the mount, before his disciples, 'there talked with him,' we are told, 'two men, Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem,' Luke 9:30. If Lazarus and the rich man, in the parable, be viewed as representing the two great classes of mankind, they exhibit the whole of our race as passing at death either into paradise or into a place of endless torments; and even if viewed merely as individuals, they are instances, on the one hand, of a departed believer being in a state of bliss, and, on the other hand, of a departed unbeliever being in a state of incurable woe, Luke 16:19–26. 'Enoch,' we are told, was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for, before his translation, he had this

testimony, that he pleased God,' Heb. 11:5. These are all the instances I remember in which the divine word reveals facts respecting the condition of any deceased men; and, excepting the case of the rich man, who is stated to have lifted up his eyes in hell, they all represent them—in connexion with their having believed on Christ and served God on earth—as being in a glorified or heavenly state. Where, then, can there be the shadow of evidence, or even of apology, for the notion of purgatory?—ED.]

THE RESURRECTION

QUESTION LXXXVII. What are we to believe concerning the resurrection?

ANSWER. We are to believe that at the last day there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the self-same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls fur ever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ; the bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection, as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body, and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonour by him as an offended Judge.

IN discussing the foregoing Answers, we have considered the soul and body as separated by death, the body turned to corruption, and the soul immediately entering into a state of happiness or misery. We are now led to insist on the doctrine of the resurrection, when these two constituent parts of man shall be reunited. First, we shall

endeavour to explain what we are to understand by the resurrection of the dead. Secondly, we shall prove that there is nothing in this doctrine contrary to reason; at least, if we consider it as a supernatural and divine work. Thirdly, we shall observe that this doctrine could not be known by the light of nature, and that we believe it as founded in divine revelation. Fourthly, we shall state what arguments are contained in scripture for the proof of it; some of which might be taken from the Old Testament, and others from the New, in which it is more clearly revealed. Fifthly, we shall answer some of the most material objections brought against it. Sixthly, we shall consider the resurrection as universal, as it is here styled a general resurrection of the dead from the beginning of time to Christ's second coming; yet with this exception, that they who are found alive shall be changed. Lastly, we shall consider the condition in which the body shall be raised; on the one hand, those circumstances of honour and glory which respect mere especially the resurrection of the just, and, on the other hand, those circumstances of dishonour inflicted by Christ, as an offended Judge, which shall characterize the resurrection of the wicked.

The Meaning of the Resurrection

We shall first consider what we are to understand by the resurrection of the dead. We sometimes find the word taken in scripture in a metaphorical sense, for God's doing those things for his church which could not be brought about any otherwise than by his extraordinary and supernatural power. Sometimes the work of regeneration is set forth by this figurative way of speaking; they who are 'dead in trespasses and sins,' are said to be quickened; and our Saviour says, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.' But we are at present to understand the word 'resurrection' in a proper

sense, as denoting that change which shall pass upon the body when it shall be delivered from the state of corruption into which it was brought at death, and shall be reunited to the soul. This is distinguished in a following verse from the metaphorical sense of the word: our Lord says, 'All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.'x This includes not merely the repairing but the rebuilding of the frame of nature, which was not only decayed but dissolved in death; or the gathering together of those particles of matter of which the body was before constituted, it having been turned not only into corruption but into common dust. A new body, as to its form and qualities, is thus erected out of its old materials; otherwise it could not be called a resurrection. It is said, indeed, that the body shall not in all respects be the same that it was when separated from the soul. The apostle compares it to 'a grain of wheat' sewn in the ground, which, when it springs up, is not altogether the same as it was before; for 'God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.' But though very different as to its qualities, it is the same in substance, as it consists of the same materials. This will be farther considered when we speak concerning the condition of the body when raised from the dead, as raised with a design that it should be reunited to the soul, as immediately afterwards reunited to it, and as placed in a union with it which shall be indissoluble and eternal.

The Resurrection not Contrary to Reason

We shall now consider that there is nothing contrary to reason, or impossible from the nature of the thing, which might have a tendency to overthrow this doctrine; especially if we consider the resurrection as a supernatural and divine work, brought about by the

almighty power of God. If we look no farther than the power of natural causes, we may conclude it to be impossible for a creature to effect the resurrection, as much as it was at first to produce the body of man out of the dust of the ground. But it is not impossible with God. He who gave life and being to all things, and, by his sovereign will, puts a period to that life which had been for some time continued by his power and providence, can give a new life to the body; especially if there be nothing in this work which renders it unmeet for it to be performed by him. Now, that there is nothing in the nature of the thing which renders a resurrection impossible, appears from the fact that death, though it is a dissolution of the frame of nature, does not annihilate the body. If the body, indeed, were annihilated at death, then it would be impossible, or contrary to the nature of things, that there should be a resurrection of it. The bringing of it again into a state of existence would, in that case, be a new creation; which, though it would not be too great a work for omnipotence, could not be styled a resurrection, or a restoring of the same body to life which was separated from the soul to which it was once united. But when we suppose that the matter of which the body consisted is still in being, and nothing is necessary to the raising of it from the dead but the re-collecting of the various particles of it, and forming these again into a body fitted to receive the soul, the work is not in its own nature impossible; nor does it infer a contradiction, so as to imply that it cannot be brought about by divine power.

That this may more fully appear, let it be considered that nothing which God has brought into being can be annihilated but by an act of his will; for nothing can defeat or disannul his providence, which upholdeth all things that were brought into being by the word of his power. It is certain, also, that God has given us no ground to conclude that any part of his material creation has been or shall be turned into nothing. It hence follows that the particles of all the

bodies of men who once lived in this world, though turned to corruption or dust, are as much in being as ever they were, though not in the same form.—Again, it is certain that God, who made and upholdeth all things, has a perfect knowledge of that which is the object of his power, since his understanding is infinite. Hence he knows where the scattered dust or the smallest particles of matter which once constituted the bodies of men are reserved. And when we speak of a resurrection from the dead, we mean the gathering of these particles together, and the disposing of them in such a way that new bodies shall be framed out of them. Though, therefore, this could not be done by any but God, it is not impossible, from the nature of the thing, for him to do it. That he will do it will be considered, when we come more directly to the proof of this doctrine.

The Resurrection a Doctrine purely of Revelation

We proceed to consider the doctrine of the resurrection as a matter of pure revelation, such as we could not have known by the light of nature, without the assistance of scripture-light. Something, indeed, might be known by reason concerning the immortality of the soul, and its being, not only capable of happiness or misery in a future state, but dealt with there according to its behaviour in this world. But when we inquire into the part which the body shall bear in that state, whether it shall be raised and reunited to the soul, to be for ever a partner with it in what respects its state in another world, or whether it shall remain for ever in a state of corruption, we can obtain no information by the light of nature.

There are, indeed, many things found in the writings of the heathen which discover them to have had some notion of what bears a resemblance to a resurrection; as when they speak concerning the transmigration of souls, or their living in other bodies, when

separated from those which they formerly were united to. Others of them speak concerning the general conflagration, and the restoration of all things, immediately after, to their former state; as well as give some hints which are contained in their writings, concerning particular persons who have been raised from the dead, at least, pretended to have been so. What we find of this nature very much resembles the fabulous account we have in the popish legends of miracles, said to have been wrought, though without proof. Thus we are told of one Aristeas, the Proconnesian, who had a power of expiring and returning to life at pleasure, and relating what he had seen in a separate state. The same is reported of one Hermotimus of Clazomena.a But the most famous story of this kind, is what is related by Plato, and transcribed from him by Eusebius,c concerning one Er, the son of Armenius; who, after he was slain in battle, and had continued ten days among other dead bodies, was brought home to his house, and two days after, being laid on his funeral pile, came to life again. This Plato, while he is relating it, calls little better than a fable. It was also treated by others with ridicule; how much soever it was believed by some who regarded reports of it more than solid evidence of its truth. I might mention others, also, who are said, by heathen writers, to have been translated into heaven in their bodies and souls.e What they relate concerning these may have originated from what they had received by tradition, concerning the translation of Enoch and Elijah; and might have been invented with the view of giving their religion as great reputation as that of the Jews. But notwithstanding these particular instances related by them, of some translated or others raised from the dead, there were very few of them who believed the doctrine of the resurrection, while some treated it with as much contempt as we do the account they give of particular persons raised from the dead. Accordingly, when the apostle Paul encountered the Epicureans and Stoics at Athens, 'preaching to them Jesus and the resurrection,' they called him

'babbler,'g and insinuated that he seemed to be 'a setter forth of strange gods.' Œcumenius and Chrysostom think that they supposed he reckoned 'the resurrection' among the gods, as well as Jesus, whose divinity he doubtless maintained. But whether they were so stupid as thus to wrest his words, is not material. It is no wonder to find the Epicureans treating this doctrine with ridicule; for they, denying the immortality of the soul, could not entertain the least idea of the resurrection of the body in any sense. The Stoics, however, though they did not own the doctrine of the resurrection, yet could not think it so strange a doctrine as some others might do; for they held that the soul, after death, continued at least as long as the body; and they knew very well that many of the philosophers strenuously maintained the transmigration of souls. Indeed, the doctrine of transmigration was held by many of them, as well as by the Platonists and Pythagoreans. Hence, the doctrine of the resurrection, though it differed from it, could not seem so strange and unheard of a notion, that they should reckon it among the gods. It plainly appears, however, that, whatever confused ideas the heathen might have entertained by tradition concerning it, the doctrine of the resurrection could not be learned by the light of nature. It follows, then, that we must look for a satisfactory account of it from scripture. Accordingly, when the Sadducees put a stupid question to our Saviour concerning the woman that had seven husbands, who successively died, and requested to know whose 'wife she should be in the resurrection,' plainly designing to express their opposition to this doctrine, rather than a desire of information as to the question proposed; our Saviour, in his reply to them, refers them to 'the scriptures,' as the fountain whence a clear and satisfactory knowledge of the doctrine is to be derived, as well as from 'the power of God.' This divine perfection argues the possibility of the resurrection; the justice and goodness of God, its expediency. But the

scriptures, which contain a revelation of his will, rspresent it as certain.

Proofs of the Doctrine of the Resurrection

We are thus led to consider some arguments contained in or deduced from scripture for the proof of the doctrine.

1. We shall first adduce those proofs which we have in the Old Testament. These I choose first to insist on, because I am sensible there are many who think that the church knew nothing of it, till it was revealed by our Saviour in the New Testament. This notion very much detracts from the importance of the doctrine, as well as renders the state of those who lived before Christ's incarnation very uncomfortable; since the saints, according to this opinion, must have had no hope of a glorious resurrection to eternal life. The notion is defended by many who extend the darkness of the dispensation farther than what is convenient. Among others, it is generally maintained by the Socinians, probably with this design, that as, according to them, our Saviour had little else in view, in coming into the world, but to lead men into the knowledge of some things which they were ignorant of before, this might be reckoned one of those doctrines which he came to communicate. Thus Volkelius denies that there were any promises of eternal life made to the church under the Old Testament; and concludes that there was no one who had the least surmise that any such doctrine was contained in those scriptures which we commonly bring thence to prove it. To give countenance to this opinion, several quotations are often taken from Jewish writers since our Saviour's time, who either speak doubtfully of this matter, or give occasion to think that they did not understand those scriptures which establish the doctrine of the resurrection, in the Old Testament, as having any reference to it.

It may hence not be amiss for us to inquire, What were the sentiments of some of the Jews respecting this doctrine? Every one knows that there was one sect amongst them, namely, the Sadducees, who distinguished themselves from others by denying it. Josephus gives the largest account of any one, concerning another sect, namely, the Essenes, who affected to lead a recluse life in their respective colleges, and were governed by laws peculiar to themselves. Among other things which he relates concerning their conduct and sentiments, he says that it was an opinion established among them, that the bodies of men were corruptible, and the matter of which they were compounded not perpetual, though the soul remained for ever. Then he represents them as speaking, according to the Pythagorean and Platonic way, concerning the body being the prison of the soul, and its remaining when released from it, and of the soul dwelling in a pleasant place, and enjoying many things which tend to make it happy, &c. His account of them, however, is short, and the expression on which rests the whole stress of the supposition, of their having denied the doctrine of the resurrection, is a little ambiguous, namely, that the bodies of men are corruptible, and their matter not perpetual; for this may be understood as agreeing with the common faith concerning man's mortality, and the body's turning to corruption, and not remaining in the same state in which it was. His account, therefore, seems to leave it doubtful, whether they asserted or denied the resurrection. It is also supposed that Philo denied this doctrine, from several passages observed in his writings, which a late learned writer takes notice of. Philo's, however, was only the opinion of a single person, who, according to his general character, seemed to be halting between two opinions, namely, the doctrine of Moses, and the philosophy of Plato. I take his sentiments about this matter to be nothing else but an affectation of thinking or speaking agreeably to the Platonic philosophy; which had probably given such a tincture to his notions, that he might deny the

resurrection. And if the Essenes, before-mentioned, should be allowed to have denied it, they received it from their attachment to the same, or at least the Pythagorean, philosophy. But we cannot hence conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection was denied by the main body of the Jews, or the greater part of them, or by any excepting those who were led out of the way by the writings of the philosophers. Accordingly, the apostle Paul warns the church to 'beware of philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,'n as foreseeing that some of them in after-ages would, in many respects, corrupt the doctrines of the gospel, by accommodating them to or explaining them by what they found in the writings of the heathen philosophers, as Origen, Justin Martyr, and some others did; and he seems to take the hint from what had been observed relating to the corruption of the Jewish faith, by those who were attached to the philosophers. Thus concerning the opinion of those Jews, who are supposed to have denied the doctrine of the resurrection.

On the other hand, there are several Rabbinical writers, who sufficiently intimate their belief of this doctrine; though, it is true, some of them infer it from such premises as discover great weakness in their method of reasoning. The learned Bishop Pearson observes that they produce several places out of Moses' writings, which, when the resurrection is believed, may, in some sort, serve to illustrate it, but can, in no degree, be thought to reveal so great a mystery. Dr. Lightfoot produces other proofs, which they bring for this doctrine, as little to the purpose;p of which all the use that can be made is, that we may observe from them that they believe the doctrine we are maintaining to be contained in scripture. Whether or not they were able to defend it by showing the force of those arguments on which it is founded, is not much to our present purpose; my design in referring to their writings being to prove that this doctrine was

embraced by the Jews, in the ages before, as well as in those after, our Saviour's time. It is true, the Talmud and other writings which are generally quoted for the proof of it, are of later date; and the most ancient of the Chaldee paraphrases now extant, is supposed to have been written about that time, or at least but little before it. Nor are there any uninspired writings relating to the Jewish affairs, more ancient, except those which we generally call Apocryphal; which most suppose to have been written about one hundred and fifty years before the Christian era. Now, it is very evident that about that time the doctrine of the resurrection was believed by the Jewish church; for the author of the book of Maccabees, in the history of the martyrdom of the seven brethren in the reign of Antiochus, represents some of them in the agonies of death, as expressing firm belief of a resurrection to eternal life, their mother, in the meanwhile, encouraging them from the same consideration. These, it is more than probable, the apostle includes in the number of those noble Old Testament worthies who were 'tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection;'r which is an undeniable evidence that the church at that time believed the doctrine of the resurrection. All that I shall add under this Head is, that how weak soever the reasoning of some Jewish writers concerning this subject has been, there are others who give substantial proofs from the Old Testament; a circumstance which argues not only that they believed it, but that their belief proceeded from a just conviction of its truth. They give the same sense of some of those scriptures which are generally produced in proof of it which we do.

The first scripture which we shall take notice of is what contains the vision concerning 'the valley which was full of bones,' which were 'very dry.' God says to the prophet, 'Son of man, Can these bones live?' and the prophet replies, 'O Lord God, thou knowest.'

Afterwards we read of God's 'laying sinews, and bringing up flesh upon them, covering them with skin, and putting breath into them,' and their being immediately after restored to life. I am sensible that they who are on the other side of the question, pretend that this passage is no proof of a resurrection; because the design of the vision was to illustrate and make way for the prediction mentioned in the following verses, concerning the deliverance of God's people from the Babylonish captivity. But what has weight with me is, that God would never have made use of a similitude to lead them into this doctrine, taken from a thing which they had no manner of idea of. If, however, we suppose that they believed that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, agreeably to the literal sense of the words made use of to illustrate the deliverance from Babylon, then the argument is plain and easy, and is as if it had been said, 'As certainly as you have ground to believe that the dead shall be raised at the last day,—an event which, though it could not be brought about by any natural means, yet shall be effected by the power of God; so your deliverance, how unlikely soever it may appear to those who look no farther than second causes, shall come to pass by God's extraordinary power and providence, and will be as life from the dead." But it is farther objected that, when the prophet was asked by God whether 'these dry bones could live,' he seemed to be in doubt about it; so that he had no idea of the resurrection of the dead. We reply, that his doubt respected an event which should immediately follow. He knew that God could put life into these bones; but whether he would do it now or not, he could not tell. His doubt, therefore, does not imply any disbelief of the doctrine of the resurrection at the last day. Indeed, this scripture, how little soever it may seem to some to make for the doctrine we are maintaining, is alleged by others as an undeniable proof of it. Tertullian expressly says, that the vision recorded in it would have been a very insignificant one if this doctrine were not true. Jerome speaks to the same purpose, supposing that God would

never illustrate any truth which the Jews were in doubt of, by a similitude taken from an incredible fiction.x And Menasseh Ben Israel, a learned Jew, supposes this text to be an express and infallible proof of the resurrection; and his viewing it in this light plainly argues that he thought the Jews, in former ages, were convinced of this doctrine by it.

But supposing this scripture not to be reckoned sufficient to evince the truth of the doctrine, there is another which has more weight, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.' Job, as is generally supposed, lived in Moses' time; so that, if it can be made to appear that he professed his faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, we may conclude that the church was acquainted with it in the early ages. Now, nothing seems more evident, from the plain sense of the words, than that he here professes his faith in the doctrine, and encourages himself from the hope of future blessedness, both in soul and body, at Christ's second coming in the last day. It is with a great deal of difficulty that they who deny this doctrine, are obliged to account for the sense of this text, so as to evade the force of the argument taken from it. They suppose that Job intends nothing but a firm persuasion that he should be recovered from the state of misery in which he then was, which affected not only his mind, but his body, as it was 'smitten with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown,'a his flesh being 'clothed with worms,' and his 'skin broken and become loathsome.' They accordingly understand him to say, 'I shall be redeemed from this affliction, and brought into a happy state before I die.' They thus suppose that the words are to be taken in a metaphorical sense, and hence do not prove the doctrine of the

resurrection. But this will appear to be a very great perversion of the sense of this text, if we consider in how solemn a manner he introduces the passage: 'Oh that my words,' says he, 'were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever!' This language seems to import that he had something to communicate, which was of far greater moment than the account of his deliverance from the afflictions he was under in this world. It hence seems more agreeable to understand the words as denoting the great and important truth, in which all believers are concerned, relating to Christ's second coming, and the happiness which his saints shall then enjoy in soul and body. This deserves to be written with a pen of iron, that it may be transmitted to all generations. Again, it is evident that he is here speaking of something which should be done, not while he lived, but in the end of time; for he considers his 'Redeemer' as 'standing in the latter day upon the earth.' The person whom he here speaks of as his Redeemer, is doubtless our Saviour, who is frequently described, both in the Old and New Testament, under that character. If at any time God the Father is called the Redeemer of his people, it may be observed that he is never said, in redeeming them, to make himself visible to their bodily eyes, or to stand upon earth,—much less to do this in the latter or last day, in which Christ is said to come again in a visible manner, to raise the dead and judge the world. Now, this Job intends when he says, 'In my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.' Moreover, it is also evident that he intends something which should befall him after his death, and not merely a deliverance from his present misery in this world; for he speaks of his 'skin' or body as devoured by 'worms,' and of 'his reins as consumed within him,'—language which can mean only a state of corruption in death. Further, it does not appear that Job had any intimation concerning the change of his condition in this world, before God turned his captivity, having first

made him sensible of his error in 'uttering that which he understood not,' when, notwithstanding the injuries he had received from them, he testified his reconciliation to his friends by praying for them.' Indeed, he was so far from expecting happiness in this life that he says, 'Mine eye shall no more see good,'d that is in this world; and he hence takes occasion to meditate on his own mortality in the following words, 'The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more; thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.' After this he prays, 'Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave,' &c. Besides, immediately before he speaks of his 'Redeemer' as 'living,' and of the deliverance which he should obtain in 'the latter day,' he earnestly desires the compassion of his friends: 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.' Now, this does not well agree with the supposition that he had any expectation of a state of happiness in this world. In that case he would not have needed their pity. He might only have convinced them of the truth of his expectation, and it would have given a turn to their behaviour towards him; for we find that, when God blessed his latter end more than his beginning, every one was as ready to comfort him concerning the evil that the Lord had brought upon him, and show their very great respect to him by offering him presents, as any were before to reproach him. On the whole, therefore, it is very evident that Job is speaking, not concerning his deliverance from his present evils in this world, but of a perfect deliverance from all evil in the great day of the resurrection. We must hence conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection is plainly asserted in this scripture. Indeed, Jerome says that no one who wrote after Christ has more plainly maintained the doctrine of the resurrection than Job, who lived before him, does in this scripture.f

There is another scripture from which, if I do not mistake the sense of it, Job appears to have had a steady faith in the doctrine of the

resurrection, and to have been firmly persuaded concerning his happiness when raised from the dead. This scripture is in chap. 14:13–15, where he says, 'Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past;' that is, till a full end is put to all the afflictive providences which men are liable to in this world, namely, till the day of Christ's second coming; 'or that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me;' that is, that thou wouldst deliver me from the evils which I now endure. As to the former of these expedients, namely, his deliverance by death, he counts it a blessing, because he takes it for granted that 'if a man die he shall live again,' and therefore says, 'all the days of my appointed time,' that is, not of the appointed time of life, but the time appointed that he should lie in the grave, in which he desired that God would hide him,—'all the days of my appointed time I shall wait,' or remain, 'till my change come,' that is, till I shall be changed from a state of mortality to that of life. And he goes on in the following words, 'Thou shalt call,' that is, by thy power thou shalt raise me, 'and I will answer thee,' or come forth out of my grave; and hereby thou wilt make it known that thou 'hast a desire to the work of thine hands.' It may be objected to this sense of the words, that Job says, 'Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more; they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep;'h so that he is so far from expecting relief from his misery in the resurrection, that he seems plainly to deny it. I answer, that he does not deny the doctrine of the resurrection in the words, 'They shall not be raised from the dead till the heavens be no more;' he only seems to conclude that the dead should rise when the frame of nature was changed, as it will be at the last day, in which the heavens shall be no more. I confess this sense is not commonly given of these verses, nor any argument drawn from them to prove a resurrection from the dead; so that I would not be too tenacious of my own sense of them. Yet I cannot but think it more probable than the common sense; and if so, the

passage may be considered as a proof of the doctrine which we are maintaining.

There is another scripture which plainly proves the doctrine of the resurrection, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' This scripture is brought by several Rabbinical writers as a proof of this doctrine; and the words are so express that it will be very difficult to evade the force of them. It is true, some modern writers, who are ready to conclude that the Old Testament is silent as to the doctrine of the resurrection, take the words in a metaphorical sense, and understand them to mean, the deliverance of the church from those grievous persecutions which they were under in the reign of Antiochus. Accordingly, 'sleeping in the dust' is taken by them for lying in holes and caves of the earth, the Jews being forced to seek protection there from the fury of the tyrant. But this cannot be properly called 'sleeping in the dust of the earth;' nor is their deliverance from this persecution consistent with 'the contempt' which should be cast on some who were raised out of the dust; nor could the happiness which others enjoyed in this deliverance be called 'everlasting life.' Besides, it must be a straining of the metaphor to a great degree, to apply to their wise men and teachers, after this deliverance, the words, 'They shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.' This interpretation, then, has such difficulties attending it, that every person who is not prepossessed with prejudice must adopt the literal sense of the text, and confess that it proves the doctrine of the resurrection. The only difficulty which is pretended to be involved in this literal sense is its being said, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake,' while the doctrine we are defending is that of an universal resurrection. But as we shall have occasion to notice this difficulty under a following Head, we choose to refer it to its proper place, where, according to our designed

method, we are to consider that all who have lived from the beginning to the end of time shall be raised.

There are other scriptures in the Old Testament which might be brought to prove this doctrine. Thus God says, 'I kill, and I make alive;' and Hannah, in her song, says, 'The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.'l I know that 'death' and 'life' are sometimes taken for good and evil; but why should deliverance from the miseries of this life be represented by the metaphor of a resurrection, and this attributed to the almighty power of God, if the doctrine of the resurrection was reckoned by the church at that time no other than a fiction or chimera, as it must be supposed to have been if they had no idea of it, as not having received it by divine revelation?

We might, as a farther proof of this doctrine, consider the three instances narrated in the Old Testament of persons raised from the dead, namely, the Shunamite's child, by the prophet Elisha,—the man who was cast into his sepulchre, and 'revived and stood on his feet when he touched Elisha's bones,'n and the widow of Zarephath's son, by the prophet Elijah. In the last of these cases, it is said, Elijah 'cried to the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee let this child's soul come unto him again;' and accordingly the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. We must hence conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection was not unknown to the prophet; for had he not known it, he could not have directed his prayer to God in faith. These instances of a resurrection of particular persons could not but give occasion to the church at that time to believe the possibility of a resurrection at the last day; for it might as reasonably be expected that God will exert his power by raising the dead then, as that he would do it at this time, unless there were something in this possible event contrary to his moral perfections.

But the resurrection appeared to them, as it does to all who consider him as the governor of the world, and as distributing rewards and punishments to every one according to their works, as not only agreeable to these perfections, but, in some respects, necessary for the illustration of them. We must conclude, therefore, that as they had particular instances of a resurrection, which argued the general resurrection possible, they might easily believe that it should be future; which is the doctrine that we are maintaining.

We may add that the patriarch Abraham believed the doctrine of the resurrection; and of course had it some way or other revealed to him, before the word of God was committed to writing. This appears from what the apostle says when speaking concerning his offering Isaac, that 'he accounted that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.' These words render it evident that he was verily persuaded when he bound Isaac to the altar, and lifted up his hand to slay him, that God would suffer him to do it, otherwise the command to offer him up would have been no trial of his faith; so that his being prevented from laying his hand on him was an unexpected providence. Now, how could he solve the difficulty which would necessarily follow upon his slaying Isaac? Had he expected that God would give him another seed instead of Isaac, such an event would not have been an accomplishment of the promise which was given to him, namely, that 'in Isaac his seed should be called.' The only thing, therefore, which he depended on, was that when he had offered him, God would raise him from the dead, and by doing so would fulfil the promise which was made to him concerning the numerous seed which should descend from him. Hence, it cannot be supposed that Abraham was a stranger to the doctrine of the resurrection.

There are other scriptures by which it appears that the doctrine of the resurrection was revealed to the church under the Old Testament

dispensation, either from the sense of the words themselves, or from the explanation of them in passages of the New which refer to them. Thus it is said, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;' words which the apostle Peter quotes to prove the resurrection of Christ.r If David, therefore, knew that the Messiah should be raised from the dead—which, as will be considered under a following Head, is a glorious proof of the doctrine of the resurrection of the saints—we cannot suppose that he was a stranger to the latter doctrine.—Again, it is said, 'He will swallow up death in victory.' These words occur immediately after a prediction of the glorious provision which God would make for his people under the gospel dispensation, which is called, by a metaphorical way of speaking, 'A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined;'t and of the gospel's being preached to the Gentiles, which is expressed by his 'destroying the face of the covering, and the vail that was spread over all nations.' The passage may hence be well supposed to contain a prediction of something consequent on these events, namely, the general resurrection.—Moreover, there is another scripture to the same purpose, 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.'x Now, both this scripture and the former one are referred to by the apostle, as what shall be fulfilled in the resurrection of the dead. He says, 'Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' 'We cannot but think, therefore, that the prophets, and the church in their day, understood the words in the same sense.—There is still another scripture in the Old Testament, in which the premises are laid down whence the conclusion is drawn in the New for the proof of this doctrine, namely, that which narrates how God revealed himself to Moses.z This our Saviour refers to, and proves from it the doctrine

of the resurrection against the Sadducees. 'Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living.' This argument was so convincing that 'certain of the Scribes said, Master, thou hast well said; and after that, they,' that is, the Sadducees, 'durst not ask him any question at all;' so that it silenced, if it did not convince them. There are some, indeed, who, though they conclude that it is a very strong proof of the immortality of the soul, which the Sadducees denied, since that which does not exist cannot be the subject of a promise; yet are not able to see how the resurrection can be proved from it; though it is brought by our Saviour for that purpose. But that the force of it may appear, we must consider what is the import of the promise contained in the covenant, that 'God would be the God of Abraham.' This is explained elsewhere, when he told him, 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' Abraham, therefore, was given to expect, at the hand of God, all the spiritual and saving blessings of the covenant of grace. But these blessings respect not only the soul, but the body; and as they are extended to both worlds, the promise of them is an evident proof of the happiness of the saints in their bodies in a future state, and consequently that they shall be raised from the dead.

2. We are now led to consider those arguments to prove the doctrine of the resurrection which are contained in the New Testament, in which it is more fully and expressly revealed than in any other part of scripture. Here we may first take notice of those particular instances in which our Saviour raised persons from the dead in a miraculous way, as the prophets Elijah and Elisha did under the Old Testament dispensation. Thus he raised Jairus' daughter, whom he found dead in the house. He raised also the widow's son at Nain, when they were carrying him to the grave; and he did this in the presence of a great

multitude.d He likewise raised Lazarus from the dead, in a very solemn and public manner, after he had been dead four days, his body being then corrupted and laid in the grave, whence Christ called him, and he immediately revived and came forth. These instances of the resurrection of particular persons tended to put the doctrine of the general resurrection out of all manner of doubt. Indeed, it was, at this time, hardly questioned by any excepting the Sadducees. Accordingly, before Christ raised Lazarus, when he only told his sister Martha that he 'should rise again,' she, not then understanding that he designed immediately to raise him from the dead, expressed her faith in the doctrine of the general resurrection: 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day;'f on which occasion our Saviour replied, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' denoting that this work was to be performed by him.

Moreover, this doctrine was asserted and maintained by the apostles, after Christ had given the greatest proof of it in his own resurrection from the dead. It is said that they preached through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead.' The apostle Paul standing before Felix, and confessing his belief of all things which are written in the law and the prophets, immediately adds that he had 'hope towards God, which they themselves also allow,' that is, the main body of the Jewish nation, 'that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.' He, however, not only asserts but proves it with very great strength of reasoning, in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians. The argument which he there insists on, is taken from Christ's resurrection. 'If there be no resurrection, then is Christ not risen.'i Now, Christ's resurrection is a doctrine which could not be denied by any who embraced the Christian religion; since it was the very foundation of it. But if any one should entertain the least doubt about it, he adds, 'If Christ be not raised from the dead, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins,' that is, your

hope of justification hereby is ungrounded, 'and they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.' But this none of them could deny; so that they must have concluded that he had risen from the dead. If it be inquired how this argument proves the general resurrection, he farther says, 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.'l Christ's resurrection removes all the difficulties which might afford the least matter of doubt concerning the possibility of the resurrection of the dead; and his being raised as 'the first-fruits of them that slept,' or as the head of all the elect, who are said to have communion with him in his resurrection, or to be 'risen with him,' renders the doctrine of the resurrection of all his saints undeniably certain. As the first-fruits are a part and pledge of the harvest; so Christ's resurrection is a pledge and earnest of the resurrection of his people. Thus the apostle says elsewhere, 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.' Our Saviour, also, when he was discoursing with his disciples concerning his death, and his resurrection which would follow, told them that, though he should be separated for a time from them, and 'the world should see him no more,' yet 'they should see him again;' and he assigned this as a reason, 'Because I live ye shall live also:'o as if he had said, 'Because I shall be raised from the dead, and live for ever in heaven, you who are my favourites, friends, and followers, shall also be raised and live with me there.' The resurrection of believers, therefore, is plainly evinced from Christ's resurrection.

I might produce many other scriptures out of the New Testament, in which this doctrine is maintained; but we shall proceed to consider what proofs may be deduced from scripture consequences. It may here be observed that our Lord Jesus Christ has, by his death and resurrection, purchased an universal dominion over his subjects, or a

right to dispose of them in such a way as will be most conducive to his own glory and their advantage. Thus the apostle speaks of him as 'dying, rising, and reviving, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living;' and he infers thence that 'whether we live or die we are the Lord's.' Christ being Lord over the dead is expressed in other terms, by his 'having the keys of hell and death;' and this is stated to be the consequence of his 'being alive' after his death, or of his resurrection from the dead.q We conclude, therefore, that he has a power, as Mediator, to raise the dead. We may add, that he has engaged to do this work, as truly as he did to redeem the souls of his people. When believers are said to be given to him, or purchased by him, it is the whole man that is included. Accordingly, he purchased the bodies as well as the souls of his people, as may be argued from our obligation consequent on his redeeming us to 'glorify him in our bodies' as well as 'in our spirits, which are God's.' They are both under his care; and he has undertaken that his people's bodies shall not be lost in the grave. His having done so is very emphatically expressed, when he is represented as saying, 'This is the will of the Father which hath sent me,'s or is contained in the commission which I received from him, when he invested me with the office of Mediator, 'that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' What should be the reason that he here speaks of things rather than persons, if he had not a peculiar regard to the bodies of believers? As these are the subjects of his power when raised from the dead, so they are the objects of his care; and therefore he will raise them up at the last day.

We might farther consider Christ's dominion as extended to the wicked as well as the righteous. He is not, indeed, their federal head; but he is appointed to be their Judge. Hence, though they are neither the objects of his special love, nor redeemed by his blood, nor the dutiful and obedient subjects of his kingdom, he has a right to

demand them to come forth out of their graves, to appear before his tribunal; for it is said, 'God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' Elsewhere, also, it is said, that he was 'ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.'u Hence, we read that he shall 'sit upon the throne of his glory;' that 'before him shall be gathered all nations;' and that, as is stated in the following verses, he shall determine the final state, both of the righteous and the wicked. Now, this general judgment is described more particularly as being immediately after the universal resurrection. It is said, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened,'y—language, as will be observed under our next Answer, which respects his judging the world; and in order to this, it is farther said, that 'the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.' Besides, as Christ is represented as a Judge, it is necessary that he should execute his vindictive justice against his enemies, and punish them as their sins deserve. But this respects not only the soul but the body. Hence, Christ, that he may secure the glory of his justice, shall raise the bodies of sinners, that he may punish them according to their works; and therefore he is said to be the object of fear, because he is 'able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'

We have thus endeavoured to prove the doctrine of the resurrection by arguments taken from the Old and the New Testament, and from those scripture consequences whence it may be plainly deduced. How much soever, then, it may be thought a strange and incredible doctrine, by those who have no other light to guide them but that of nature; it will be generally believed by all whose faith is founded upon divine revelation, and who adore the infinite power and

impartial justice of God, the governor of the world. Indeed, it is not attended with such difficulties arising from the nature of the thing, as many pretend; since we have several emblems in nature which seem to illustrate it. These are very elegantly represented by some of the Fathers, and especially by Tertullian; whom the learned and excellent Bishop Pearson refers to and imitates in his style and mode of expression.b His words are these, "As the day dies into night, so doth the summer into winter. The sap is said to descend into the root, and there it lies buried in the ground. The earth is covered with snow, or crusted with frost, and becomes a general sepulchre. When the spring appeareth, all begin to rise; the plants and flowers peep out of their graves, revive, and grow, and flourish. This is the annual resurrection. The corn by which we live, and for want of which we perish with famine, is notwithstanding cast upon the earth, and buried in the ground, with a design that it may corrupt, and being corrupted, may revive and multiply. Our bodies are fed with this constant experiment, and we continue this present life by succession of resurrections. Thus all things are repaired by corrupting, are preserved by perishing, and revive by dying. And can we think that man, the lord of all these things, which thus die and revive for him, should be detained in death, as never to live again? Is it imaginable that God should thus restore all things to man, and not restore man to himself? If there were no other consideration but of the principles of human nature, of the liberty and remunerability of human actions, and of the natural revolutions and resurrections of other creatures, it were abundantly sufficient to render the resurrection of our bodies highly probable."

Examination of Objections against the Resurrection

We shall now consider some objections which are generally brought against the doctrine of the resurrection. Some things, indeed, are

objected against it, which are so vain and trifling, that they do not deserve an answer. The followers of Aristotle, for example, assert that it is impossible for a thing which is totally destroyed, to be restored to that condition in which it was before. And some have been so foolish as to think that those nations who burnt their dead bodies, put an eternal bar in the way of their resurrection; since the particles being so changed and separated by fire as they are, can never return again to their former bodies; or that those bodies which have been swallowed up by the ocean, so that the particles of which they consisted have been dissolved by water, and every one of them separated from the other, can never be again restored to their former situation. Such objections as these, I say, do not deserve an answer; because they consider the resurrection as if it were to be brought about in the same way in which effects are produced by second causes, according to the common course of nature, without any regard to the almighty power of God, which can easily surmount all the difficulties which, they pretend, lie in the way of the resurrection. There are other objections, taken from a perverse sense of some texts of scripture, without considering the drift and design of these, or what is added in some following words, which sufficiently overthrows the objection. Thus some produce as an objection that scripture in which it is said, 'That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; all go unto one place, and all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.'d This text we formerly noticed as brought against the immortality of the soul; and it is also alleged against the resurrection of the body, by those who conclude that the body shall be no more raised from the dead than the bodies of brute creatures. But this is rather a cavil or a sophism, than a just way of reasoning; inasmuch as the following words plainly intimate that men and beasts are compared together only as to their mortality, not as to what respects their condition after death; so that it is no sufficient argument to

overthrow the doctrine of the resurrection. These and similar objections are so trifling that we shall not insist on them. There are, however, three or four that we shall lay down, and consider what answers may be given to them.

1. It is objected against the doctrine of the resurrection, that, though the power of God can do all things possible to be done, yet the raising of the dead, at least in some particular instances, is impossible, from the nature of the thing; so that we may say, without any reflection cast on the divine Omnipotency, that God cannot raise them, at least not so that every one shall have his own body restored to him. Thus there are some instances of cannibals, or men-eaters, who devour one another, by which means the flesh of one man is turned into the flesh of another. In those instances also which are more common, the bodies of men, being turned into dust, produce food, like other parts of the earth, for brute creatures, and some of the particles of which they consisted are changed into the flesh of these creatures, and these again are eaten by men; so that the particles of one human body, after having undergone several changes, become a part of another. There cannot, therefore, say the objectors, be a distinct resurrection of every one of those bodies that have lived in all the ages of the world.

But it cannot be proved that, in those instances mentioned in the objection, when one man preys upon another, or when brute creatures live upon grass produced by the ground made fertile by the bodies of men turned to corruption, and, it may be, containing some of the particles of these bodies,—it cannot, I say, be proved that, in these instances, the particles of the bodies of men are turned into nourishment, and so become a part of human flesh; since providence did not design them to be for food. If so, then it is not true in fact, that the particles of one human body become a part of another. But,

suppose it were otherwise, and suppose the objection to have as much weight as possible, we may farther observe that it is but a very small part of what is eaten which is turned into flesh; so that those particles of one human body which by this means are supposed to pass into another, make up but a very inconsiderable part of the latter. Hence, if some few particles of one human body in the resurrection are restored again to that body to which they at first belonged, the doctrine of the resurrection of the same body will not be overthrown. If the body of a man lose a few ounces of its weight, no one supposes that it is not the same body. So when the bodies of men are raised from the dead, if the far greater part of the particles of them are re-collected and united together, they may truly be said to constitute the same body. The facts alleged in the objection, therefore, do not overthrow the resurrection of the same body from the nature of the thing.

2. It is farther objected, especially against the possibility of the resurrection of the same body which was once alive in this world, that the bodies of men, while they live, are subject to such alterations that it can hardly be said that we are the same when we are men as when we were children. The expenditure of those particles which are insensibly lost by perspiration, and the daily gaining of others by nutrition, make such an alteration in the contexture of the body, that, as some suppose, in the space of about seven years, almost all the particles of the body are changed, some lost and others regained. Now, if it be supposed that the same body we once had shall be raised, it is hard to determine whether those particles of which it consisted when we were young, shall be gathered together in the resurrection, or the particles of the emaciated or enfeebled body which was laid down in the grave.

We are obliged to take notice of such objections as these, because they are often alleged in a cavilling way, against the doctrine of the resurrection. The answer that I would give to this, is, that the more solid and substantial parts of the body, such as the skin, bones, cartilages, veins, arteries, nerves, fibres, that compose the muscles, with the ligaments and tendons, are not subject to the change which is mentioned in the objection by evaporation or perspiration, which more especially respects the fluids, and not the solids of the body. These remain the same in men as they were in children, excepting what respects their strength and size. Now, if the body, as consisting of these and some of the particles which it has lost, which the wisdom of God thinks fit to re-collect, be gathered together in the resurrection; we may truly say that the same body which once lived, notwithstanding the change made in the fluids of it, is raised from the dead. [See Note R, p. 269.]

3. There is another objection which is sometimes brought against the doctrine of the resurrection of the just, especially against their being raised with the same body which they once had. This objection is founded on the supposed inconsistency of their resurrection with their living in the other world, called heaven; which is generally distinguished from the earth, as being a more pure, subtile, and ethereal region, and therefore not fit to be an habitation for bodies compounded of such gross matter as ours are, which are adapted to the state and world in which they now live. To suppose them placed in heaven, say the objectors, is inconsistent, with the nature of gravity; so that we may as well conclude a body which naturally tends to the earth as its centre, to be capable of living in the air, at a distance from the surface of the earth, as we may conclude that it is possible for such a body to live in heaven. They hence argue, that the bodies of men, at the resurrection, must be changed so as to become ethereal; and by advancing this position, they in effect overthrow the

doctrine of the resurrection, as respecting, at least, the restoring of the bodies of men to the same form which once they had.—Moreover, this objection is improved by another supposition, which gave the Socinians occasion to assert that the same body shall not be raised, namely, that if the bodies of men should be the same as they are now, they would be rendered incapable of that state of immortality which is in heaven. They argue, as was formerly observed, that because man's body at first was to be supported by food, breathe in proper air, and be protected from dissolution only by being guarded against things which might tend to destroy its temperament, man would have been liable to mortality, though he had not sinned, or in other words, death was then the consequence of nature; and from the same premises they conclude that, at the resurrection, we must not have such bodies as we now have, but ethereal. To give countenance to this opinion, they refer to the apostle's words, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;' and to his speaking of 'celestial bodies' as distinguished from 'terrestial,'f and of the body being raised 'a spiritual body.' They generally refer also to a scripture in which our Saviour speaks of believers, in the resurrection, being 'as the angels of God;'h which they understand as signifying at least that their motion will no more be hindered by the weight of the body, than the motion of an angel is; so that their bodies must be of another kind that what we suppose they shall be in the resurrection.

Now, as to the inconsistency of bodies like ours living in the upper world, as being contrary to the nature of gravitation, it may be answered that, according to the generally received opinion of modern philosophers, gravity arises from an external pressure made upon bodies which are said to be heavy or light, according to their force. Hence, those bodies which are in the upper regions, above the atmosphere, are equally adapted to ascend or descend,—a fact which sufficiently answers that part of the objection. A learned writer takes

notice of it; and if it be not acquiesced in, he advances another hypothesis; which, because it has something of wit and spirit in it, I shall take leave to mention, though I must suspend my judgment concerning it, as to whether it be true or false. He says that perhaps our heaven will be nothing else but an heaven upon earth; and that it seems more natural to suppose that, since we have solid and material bodies, we shall be placed as we are in this life, in some solid and material orb. This supposition he thinks agreeable to the apostle Peter's words, when he speaks of 'a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;'k whence he concludes, that either this world shall be fitted to be the seat of the blessed, or some other which has a solid basis like it. To give countenance to this opinion, he refers to some ancient writers. He particularly tells us, that Maximus speaks of it as the opinion of many in his time; and that Epiphanius brings in Methodius in the third century as asserting the same thing.—As to that part of the objection, that bodies like those we have now are unmeet for the heavenly state, inasmuch as they cannot be supported without food and other conveniences of nature, which tend to the preservation of life in this world; it may be answered, that it is not necessary to suppose that the body shall be raised with such qualities that it will stand in need of food, rest, or other conveniences of nature, which at present tend to the support of life. The apostle seems to assert the contrary when he says, 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.' There is certainly a medium between asserting, with some, that we shall be raised with an ethereal body, in all respects unlike that which we have at present; and maintaining, that we shall have such bodies as are liable to the imperfections of the present state, and supported in the same way in which they now are. As to what the apostle says concerning 'flesh and blood not inheriting the kingdom of heaven,' he does not mean that our bodies shall be so changed that they shall in no respect consist of flesh and blood. And when he speaks of

'celestial' and 'spiritual' bodies, it is not necessary for us to suppose that he intends aerial or ethereal bodies. But this will be more particularly considered under a following Head, when we speak of the circumstances in which the bodies of believers shall be raised from the dead. As to the scripture in which glorified believers are said to be 'as the angels of God in heaven,' it respects their being immortal and incorruptible, or, as the context seems to intimate, that they need not marriage to perpetuate their generations in that world. We have no occasion, therefore, to strain the sense of the words, so as to suppose that our Saviour intends, in his saying 'they shall be as angels,' that they shall cease to be like what they were when men on earth.

4. The last objection which we shall mention, is taken from the resurrection not being agreeable to the goodness of God, extended to those who are made partakers of eternal life, inasmuch as it is a bringing of them into a worse condition than the soul was in when separate from the body. This objection is generally brought by those who adopt the mode of speaking often used by Plato and his followers, that the body in this world, is the prison of the soul, which at death is set at liberty. They hence suppose that its being united to the body again, is no other than its being condemned to a second imprisonment; which is so far from being a favour conferred, that it rather seems to be a punishment inflicted. Others, with Celsus, reckon it a dishonour for the soul to be reunited to a body which is corrupted.n Others say that the body is a great hinderance to the soul in its actings; that it frequently inclines it to the exercise of some of those passions which tend to make men uneasy, and in consequence unhappy; and that it may in some way or other operate thus in a future state.

There is no great difficulty in answering this objection; in which there is not a due difference put between the present and the future state of believers. The only thing which might give occasion to men to conclude that their souls are imprisoned in this world, is that they are abridged of that happiness which they shall be possessed of in another; which the apostle calls 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.' As for the reproaches which some of the greatest enemies to Christianity have cast on this doctrine, these are not sufficient to begot the least dislike of it in the minds of serious and unprejudiced Christians. What though the body be turned to corruption! It shall be raised incorruptible, and in glory; and therefore shall be a palace fit to entertain its noble inhabitant. What though it has, in this world, offered many temptations to the soul to sin, by which the latter has been sometimes overcome and exposed to passions which have defiled it, and made it very uneasy! Is this to be objected against its being raised from the dead in such a state of perfection, that it shall never more contract any guilt, or render the soul unhappy, by any inconvenience arising from it? But this will farther appear, when we speak, under a following Head, of the condition in which the body shall be raised.

The Resurrection Universal

We proceed to consider the resurrection of the dead as universal, including all who have lived, or shall live, from the beginning of time, till Christ's second coming, excepting those who shall be found alive, on whom a change shall pass which is equivalent to a resurrection.

1. All the dead shall be raised. This is expressly mentioned in the vision of John, 'I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their

works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.' Here the Judge is represented as demanding the bodies of men of all ranks, conditions, and ages, out of those places where they have been lodged, with a design to reward or punish them according to their works. Now, if the justice of God is to be displayed in this solemn and awful transaction, and the bodies, as well as the souls of men, are the subjects on which judgment must pass; it follows that the resurrection will be universal. Thus our Saviour says, 'All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' This is so evident a truth, founded on the divine perfections, as well as express words of scripture, that it is strange to find that any who allow that the dead shall be raised should deny it.

We meet, however, with several expressions in Rabbinical writers, which seem to speak of the resurrection as a peculiar privilege belonging to some but not to all. Accordingly, they have a proverbial expression, that, though the rain descends on the just and on the unjust, yet the resurrection of the dead belongs only to the just. This they infer from the words of the prophet Daniel, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.'s These words contain a difficulty which most have found it an hard matter to solve agreeably to the sense of the prophet. He says, in the words immediately following, that, as the consequence of the resurrection of which he speaks, 'some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt.' Here he divides the world into two parts, and considers the one as happy, the other as miserable; so that he must, doubtless, speak of a universal resurrection. But the great difficulty lies in these words, 'Many of them that sleep in the dust shall arise.' Some conclude that this expression contains an exception of others

who shall not arise. Thus some Jewish writers seem to have understood it. I rather think, however, that the word 'many,' there, imports nothing else but 'multitude,' that is, the whole number of those that sleep shall awake. It is somewhat hard to determine what the Rabbinical writers intend when they seem to confine the resurrection to the Israelites. Some of them do this in order to exclude from it, not only the wicked, but those who had not addicted themselves to the study of the law, whom they call the Gnam Haaretz. Thus they are represented in scripture as giving them but a very indifferent character, 'The people that knoweth not the law are accursed.'u By this means they bring the number of those who shall be raised from the dead into a very narrow compass. Nevertheless they speak of future rewards and punishments in another world. Hence, some have thought that, when they exclude all but the Israelites, and, of them, all but those who were in the greatest reputation amongst them, they understand nothing else by the resurrection, but that which they fancied would happen in the days of the Messiah; in which, they suppose that some of the Jews shall be raised from the dead before the general resurrection at the last day. In this sense we may easily understand their exclusive account, when they speak of many who shall not be partakers of this privilege. But if their opinion be extended to the resurrection at the last day, I am apt to think that they intend a resurrection to eternal life. So some understand the common proverb just mentioned, as to the rain descending upon all, while the resurrection belongs only to the just, to mean that though the rain descends upon the wilderness and barren ground, yet it is only some places which are made fruitful by it, and that in the same way, though the resurrection shall be universal both of the righteous and the wicked, yet the resurrection to eternal life belongs only to the just. All that I shall observe at present is, that this is not altogether disagreeable to the scripture mode of speaking. For while, in some places, it asserts the

resurrection of the whole world; in others, by the resurrection we are to understand nothing else but a resurrection to eternal life. Thus the apostle Paul, when he speaks of his 'attaining unto the resurrection of the dead,' intends his obtaining a glorious resurrection. Our Saviour also, when speaking concerning the happiness of the saints in another world, says that they shall be 'counted worthy,' or meet, 'to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.'z So that whatever is said by Jewish writers, tending to limit to some particular persons the resurrection of the dead to eternal life, it does not appear but that even they held, in other respects, a general resurrection, both of the just and the unjust; which is as demonstrable as is the resurrection in general.

2. They who are found alive at Christ's second coming, shall undergo a change which, though it cannot be called a resurrection, will be equivalent to it. The apostle Paul gives an account of this, as what was before unknown to the church: 'Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.' Elsewhere, also, he speaks of them when thus changed, as 'caught up in the clouds, together with' saints that are raised from the dead, 'to meet the Lord in the air.'b This change is no less an effect of almighty power than a resurrection; for hereby their bodies, though never separated from their souls, are brought into the same state as the bodies of others shall be when reunited to them, and are rendered incorruptible and immortal, as the bodies of all other saints shall be, and made partakers of the same glory with which they are said to be raised. We have an emblem of the change in Christ's transfiguration, when there was such a change made for the present on his body, that his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. There was, moreover, not only a resemblance, but a kind of specimen of it, in the translation of Enoch and Elijah, whose bodies were formerly liable to

corruption and all the other infirmities which attend the present life, but were made, in a moment, celestial and glorious. The body of our Saviour, also, though raised from the dead incorruptible and immortal, yet, during the space of forty days, while he continued on earth, was not made so glorious as it was immediately after the cloud received him into heaven; when it underwent such a change as was agreeable to the place and state into which he then entered. Even so the bodies of the saints, at last, shall, by this change, be made meet for heaven, and shall be received with other saints into it.

The condition in which the Body shall be raised

We shall now consider the condition in which the body shall be raised.

1. We shall notice first the circumstances of honour and glory which respect more especially the resurrection of the just. The apostle describes them as 'raised in glory.' The same body, indeed, is raised which lived on earth. Its identity he illustrates by 'a grain of wheat' springing up, and changed into a full grown ear. Though this is greatly improved, and very much altered from what it was when cast into the ground, yet 'every seed,' as he observes, 'has its own body.'d We may hence infer that the same body shall be raised from the dead, though with very different qualities. There are, in the account he gives of the bodies of the saints after the resurrection, several things mentioned by the apostle which some have attempted to explain in a way which is hardly consistent with a resurrection of the same body. The Socinians generally maintain that the body shall be altogether new, as to its substance, as well as its qualities. Others speak of it as an aerial body; supposing that the gross and heavy matter of which it formerly consisted, is not adapted to an heavenly state, and would render it not altogether free from a liability to

corruption. This opinion a late writer mentions as having been espoused by some of the Fathers, and he speaks very favourably of it. Inasmuch as the apostle calls it 'a spiritual body,' and seems to distinguish it from 'flesh and blood,' which 'cannot inherit the kingdom of God;' he thinks that, though the same flesh and blood may rise from the grave, it will then or afterwards, receive such a change as will render it spiritual and incorruptible, that so, perhaps, when it comes to heaven, it will not be flesh and blood; or, that it will' be clothed with such an heavenly body as will keep it from a possibility of corruption. Accordingly, he supposes that the apostle is to be understood as saying, that flesh and blood unchanged and unclothed with its heavenly body, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; that the body with which it shall be invested, will be thin, aerial, spiritual, bright, and shining; and that, in that respect, it may be called celestial.g The reason he assigns why 'flesh and blood,' namely, such as is subject to corruption here, 'cannot inherit the kingdom of God,' is that the flesh may be cut and divided, and the blood let out, which would subject it to corruption. Hence, he argues, it must be changed, and 'put on incorruption.'

This account of the bodies of the saints after the resurrection, seems, indeed, to be a medium between the two extremes, of those who suppose that the body shall differ but little from what it was while on earth, and of those who conclude it to be nothing else but an aerial body; yet it takes several things for granted which I cannot readily concede. What he farther adds on this subject, however, is undeniably true, namely, that the body, which before was subject to filth and deformity, is raised in glory and splendour, 'shining like the sun.' That which was once 'vile,' is 'fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body,'i and freed from all defect or deformity of its members, and from any dishonourable parts, not subject to weakness by labour, decays by age, to impotency and wasting by

diseases, but nimble, strong, active, and that without intermission or molestation, grief, pain, or lassitude. It is raised a spiritual body, possessed and acted by the Holy Spirit; and advanced so far to the perfection of spirits as to be free from grossness, ponderosity, from needing rest, sleep, or sustenance; and is fitted for a spiritual and celestial state, in which our bodies shall wholly serve our spirits, and depend upon them, and therefore may be styled spiritual. If we stop here, without giving too much scope to wit and fancy, in advancing things too high for us, and confess that we know not, or at least know but little, the affairs of an unseen world, or 'what we shall be,' we say enough to give us occasion to conclude that it is a glorious and desirable state, and the change wrought is such as fully answers our most raised expectations, and is agreeable to a state of perfect blessedness. Thus concerning the condition or circumstances in which the saints shall be raised.

There is one thing which must not wholly be passed over, which is farther observed in this Answer, namely, that the bodies of the just shall be raised by the Spirit of Christ. This the apostle expressly states: 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' The bodies of believers, which were in this world the temple of the Holy Ghost, and were under his divine influence while living, shall not cease to be the objects of his care when dead; and as an instance of his regard to them, as well as denoting the subserviency of them to their attaining that complete redemption which Christ has purchased for them, the Spirit, in a peculiar manner, demonstrates his personal glory in raising them from the dead. Others, on the other hand, are said to be raised only by the power of Christ.

2. We shall now consider the circumstances in which the wicked shall be raised, namely, in dishonour, or, as the prophet Daniel expresses it, 'to shame and everlasting contempt.' Some marks of dishonour shall doubtless be impressed on their bodies. They shall be raised with all those natural blemishes and deformities which rendered them the object of contempt. That part which the body bore in tempting the soul to sin, shall tend to its everlasting reproach; and when reunited to it, those habits of sin which were contracted shall incurably remain, as well as the tormenting sense of guilt consequent upon them; so that the body shall be exposed to the wrath of God for ever. The resurrection of the bodies of the wicked, therefore, which renders them immortal, brings upon them endless misery. Moreover, it is said to be brought about by Christ, as an offended Judge; and as the consequence of it, they are summoned to his tribunal that he may render to every one according to his works. We are thus led to consider Christ as coming to judge the world; which is that solemn transaction that will immediately follow after the resurrection.

[NOTE R. The Identity of the Human Body.—The objections against the doctrine of the resurrection, from the same particles belonging to different bodies, Mid the same body undergoing great changes as to its constituent particles, are merely a play upon the somewhat subtle subject of physical identity, and scarcely deserve a very serious reply. The decompositions, recombinations, and numerous transmutations capable of being performed in a process of chemical experiment, would silence an argument an hundred times stronger than the strongest which can be based on the principle of the sceptic's reasoning respecting the resurrection, and, if he chose to maintain that principle, would involve him, in the face of demonstrable facts, in inextricable difficulty and self-contradiction Astounding as the analyzing and transmuting processes of chemistry are, even they can throw little light on the question of identity as to the particles or

constituent parts of any one compound, organized, animated substance. How monstrous, then, is it, in defiance not only of that science but of all the knowledge which man has ever yet attained, to pronounce peremptorily, as the sceptics presume to do, on what does or on what does not affect the identity of an organized body! Let them look at a matter incomparably simpler—let them consider so seemingly obvious, so apparently very definable an object as a river; and, according to their reasonings, either there can be no rivers in the world, or there is no identity whatever in any one of them, and no conceivable distinctiveness between ocean, cloud, and stream. All the respective particles of water which flow on any given day in anyone river, have flowed before and may flow again in scores or hundreds of other streams, and have existed before, and will exist again, as portions both of the great deep and of the vapours of the sky. Nor may a sceptic escape by saying, that the channel, and not the water, constitutes the river; for he may remember that some rivers have materially or almost entirely altered their course, and still remain the same, and he will easily see, too, that a channel, apart from water, is only a hollow stripe of earth, possessing as little the character of a river as that of a Roman road.

But a better illustration of physical identity occurs in the history of the butterfly. How few, how very few, if any, of the original particles of the incipient caterpillar remain in the body of the winged insect! Not only, in its growth from the larva state to that of the full-formed caterpillar, in its transition thence to that of a chrysalis, and in its transition again to that of the butterfly, does it experience both a loss and an accession of particles surprisingly great, but it undergoes wondrous changes in organization, and eventually exists in a condition affording hardly one trace of resemblance to that which belonged to it at the commencement of its being. Yet he who should doubt or question its identity, would be compelled to adopt

principles of reasoning and practise rebuttings of testimony and observation, which would upset belief in all identity and in all physical realities whatever.

The identity of organized or mutable bodies, then, would seem to consist, not in the sameness of their particles, but in their relative position to some connecting or concomitant substance. Any given river of to-day is the same which it was centuries ago, simply by its consisting of waters which have their source in certain highlands and pursue their course through a certain valley; an insect in a butterfly state is the same being which existed as a caterpillar, simply because successive changes in its organization and in its loss and accession of particles have occurred in connexion with one animating principle or animal life; an oak of the forest is identical with the acorn whence it sprung, or a cornstalk of the field, with its fifty or fourscore ears of corn, is identical with the seed whence it vegetated, simply because its continuous succession of particles, in its transition from a seminal to a matured state, occurred in connexion with the same vegetable properties, or with the substratum or organic peculiarity which constitutes the distinctiveness or specific nature of the plant. Now, where, with these facts and thousands of similar ones before us, is the difficulty of conceiving the perfect identity of the incorruptible body of the resurrection, with the corruptible body which is consigned to the grave? Suppose the loss and accession of particles while the body is in life to be ever so extensive and frequent, and suppose any amount of the aggregate particles to belong successively to different bodies, we have only to see a continuous succession or connecting chain of particles between the body of the present life and the body of the resurrection,—or at most to see this succession in connexion with the distinctive peculiarity of a human body and in relation to the animating soul—in order to recognise, in an emphatic sense of the phrase, a perfect identity. The particles, be their history

what it may, which constitute the body of a man an hundred years old, occupy just the same relation to the rational soul which animates them, as the particles which preceded them; and they have been acquired through a process of consecutiveness, and in an uniformity of relationship, in strict though intermediate identity with the particles which constituted his body when he was born. His possessing now, or his having possessed before, particles which once belonged to other bodies, or his having at various periods of his life thrown off particles which other bodies have already incorporated, do not, in the remotest degree, impair the perfect identity of his present body with his body when an infant. How, then, or by what laws, can his bodily identity be affected by the comparatively fewer changes which shall take place between the putrifaction of his body and its resurrection? Changes such as are made the ground of the sceptic's objections take place chiefly while the body is animated on earth; loss and accession and constant alteration of particles occur in the processes of animated existence; even participation of particles which have belonged to other bodies, or throwing off particles which other bodies incorporate, occurs, in most cases, far more in the multitudinous and bulky changes of the body's life and activities, than in the summary and unique events of its dissolving into corruption; so that if doubts and difficulties are to be raised as to either the possibility or the fact of identity, they may be directed much more efficiently against the identity of the body of the sexagenarian with the body of the infant, than against the identity of the body of the resurrection with the body which is committed to the dust. Man's original body is, in all its particles, derived through the medium of the body of his mother; and, so long as he is a suckling, it derives all its accessions of particles by milk drawn from her paps. In the animal food which he afterwards eats, he incorporates the directly constituent particles of the bodies of brutes; and in the vegetable on which he feeds, and even the water which he drinks and

the air which he inhales, he almost, certainly, during his life, receives into his body minute but accumulating particles which once belonged to other human bodies. Yet numerous and great and constant as are the transmutations of his body, both in the accessions which it receives from other bodies, and in its exudations or losses of particles which other bodies in their turn incorporate, neither these bodies nor his own are, in the remotest degree, affected in their identity. How, then, can transmutations of a similar kind, but in the aggregate neither so great nor so direct, after the body is consigned to the grave, have any destructive or modifying effect? If the body of the resurrection but be consecutively connected with the body of the sepulchre, and occupy relationship or union to the same animating soul, it will possess just the constituents of identity with it, which-the body of the living man advanced in years possesses with the body of the same man when he was a suckling. These constituents will, without a doubt, exist, and can assuredly be as little marred or hindered by the transmutations of the grave as by the transmutations of animated existence.

It is clear, then, that the identity of a body, at any two stages or in any two states of its being, does not depend on the sameness of its particles. If, however, a certain amount of sameness of particles should be contended for as necessary to its identity, we can easily show that this sameness is more certain in the abstract, and may, in most cases, embrace a larger amount of particles, between the body of the resurrection and the body of the sepulchre, than between the body of advanced age and the body of infancy. If the allegations of some philosophers be correct, that, while the fluids and unguous parts of an animated body are very rapidly changed, even the hardest particles of the bones are renewed in the course of seven years, the body of any adult has ceased to possess even one particle which belonged to the body of the same person when an infant; but even if

such allegations be exaggerated, and if the most compact and durable parts of the body be of comparatively long continuance, still the body of a sexagenarian cannot be proved, and with difficulty can even be conceived, to retain any of the particles which belonged to it when he hung upon his mother's breast. Suppose, however, the body at death to be disposed of in any imaginable way,—suppose it to be interred in some spot of earth, where it mingles with the surrounding dust,—suppose it to be reduced to ashes, and either gathered into an urn, or scattered on the winds of heaven,—or suppose it to be devoured by a monster of the sea or of the land, and its flesh reduced to dust in common with the monster's body, while its bones are left to moulder away on the spot where the devourer made his horrid repast,—in either of these cases the departed soul will have left behind it a specific and considerable amount of the particles which actually constituted its body at death, and, by the power of God collecting the particles together and reconstructing them into organic form, it may be reunited to them in the day of the resurrection. While the soul of a man, when he is sixty years of age, is united to a body probably containing not one particle which belonged to it when he was an infant, it may most certainly, at the resurrection, be united to a body containing many of the very particles which belonged to it when he resigned it at death. Regard the question of physical identity, therefore, as we will, sceptics are bound either to deny the identity of the very bodies they themselves at present possess, and so to deny the identity of all organized and mutable substances whatever, or to admit the very obvious demonstrableness of the identity of the body which shall be raised in immortality with the body which is entombed in corruption.——ED.]

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

QUESTION LXXXVIII. What shall immediately follow after the resurrection?

ANSWER. Immediately after the resurrection shall follow the general and final judgment of angels and men, the day and hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ having finished the work which he undertook to perform, in gathering in his elect, and bringing that grace which he wrought in them to perfection; the only thing then remaining to be done, will be his receiving them into his immediate presence to behold his glory, and his banishing others for ever from him, with marks of infamy and detestation. In order to this, he will raise the dead, and give a summons to the whole world of angels and men, to appear before his tribunal in that day in which he is appointed by the Father to judge the world in righteousness. This is the subject insisted on in the present Answer. In discussing it, we shall observe the following method. First, we shall prove that there shall be a day of judgment. Secondly, we shall consider the person, the character, and the solemn appearance of the great Judge to whom this work is committed. Thirdly, we shall consider the persons to be judged,—angels and men. Fourthly, we shall consider the manner in which he shall proceed in judging them. Lastly, we shall state some circumstances concerning the place where, and the time when, this great and awful work shall be performed.

Proofs of the Final Judgment

We are here to prove that there shall be a day of judgment. This is as evident a truth as that there is a providence, or that God is the governor of the world. Every intelligent creature, being the subject of moral government, affords an argument for the proof of this doctrine. We must consider intelligent creatures as under a law which God has given as that by which they are to be governed. Hence arises our obligation to duty, and our being rendered accountable to the great Lawgiver, as to our obedience to or violation of his law. Now, God is obliged in honour to make a scrutiny into or take an account of our behaviour, that it may be known whether we have obeyed him or rebelled against him. This is evident from the concern which the glory of his own perfections has in calling us to account, and from the promises and threatenings annexed to his law, which he is obliged to fulfil or execute. It follows, then, that God will display his glory as the Judge of the world.

The fact that there will be a final judgment, is plainly revealed in scripture. It was foretold in the early ages of the world, as contained in the prophecy of Enoch, recorded in the epistle of Jude, 'Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' Though these words might have a peculiar reference to the judgment which God would execute in the destruction of the old world; yet it is plain from the application made of them by the apostle, that they look as far as the final judgment, which shall be in the end of time. The same truth appears likewise from what is said in Eccl. 12:14, 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' There are, indeed, many displays of God's judicial hand in the present dispensations of his providence; as he is said to be 'known by the judgment which he

executeth.' The visible tokens of his regard to his saints in this world, as well as the public and dreadful display of his vengeance poured forth upon his enemies, proclaim his glory as God, the Judge of all. But as sin deserves greater punishments than what are inflicted here; as the promises which God has made for the encouragement of his people, give them occasion to look beyond the present scene of affairs; and especially as the divine dealings with men, as to outward things, cannot so clearly be accounted for while we behold the righteous oppressed, and many of the wicked having, as it were, more than heart can wish; we must evidently conclude that there is a time coming when matters will be adjusted, and when, as the psalmist says, 'a man shall say,' or every one shall have occasion to say, 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.'o

Moreover, this doctrine is not only revealed in scripture, but is impressed on the consciences of men. Though they take never so much pains to extinguish their apprehension or dread of it, it is impossible for them to succeed. That secret remorse or terror which sinners feel within their own breasts, which makes them restless and uneasy, especially when they perceive themselves to stand on the confines of another world, is an undeniable argument that there is a future judgment. What was it that made Belshazzar's countenance to change? Why did his 'thoughts trouble him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another,' when he saw 'the hand-writing on the wall,' in the midst of all his mirth and jollity? Was he afraid of the united forces of the Persians and Medes, who at the time invested the capital city in which he was? Did he know that he should be slain before the morning? These things were most remote from his thoughts; for he apprehended himself safe from any danger which might arise from that quarter. Was he afraid of punishment from men? His condition in the world set him above

the dread of any such event. It was only the sense he had of a future judgment from God, that produced these effects in him. It was this too which made the heathen governor 'tremble,' when the apostle 'reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.'q And when Paul was disputing with the Athenians, though they mocked and treated what he said about the resurrection with ridicule, yet none of them had any thing to object against the doctrine that 'God would judge the world in righteousness.'

It may be observed, that the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, as the result of a sentence passed on men after death, is so often mentioned by heathen writers, that it is evident they either received it by tradition, or understood it by the light of nature. When they enter into particular explanations of it, indeed, we meet with little but what is fabulous and trifling. Some of them suppose the rewards and punishments to be in other bodies, agreeably to the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Others speak of fictitious lakes and rivers in the other world, where men are doomed to abide, at least, for some time. They knew nothing, however, respecting the day of judgment, or the appearance of the whole world before Christ's tribunal; for this is a matter of pure revelation.

The Person and Appearance of the Judge

We are now to consider the person, character, and solemn appearance of the great Judge to whom this work is more especially committed. This is a doctrine which can be known in no other way than by divine revelation. The light of nature, indeed, discovers to us that God shall judge the world; but something more than this may be learned from scripture, as well as those circumstances of glory with which the work shall be performed.

1. We read that the person who is to perform this great work, is the Lord Jesus Chrst. Of him it is said, he shall 'judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom;' and elsewhere, 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.'u If we consider his glory as a divine person, he is fit to engage in it. For as he knows all things, he can judge the secrets of men, which no mere creature can do; and as he has all the other perfections of the divine nature, he can display and glorify them, in such a way as is necessary, in determining the final estate of men, and rewarding every one according to his work. We may observe also, that this work is a branch of his mediatorial dignity, and is included in the execution of his kingly office. That he should perform it was contained in the commission which he received of the Father. Thus it is said, 'The Father judgeth no man,' that is, not in a visible manner, or by any delegated power which he is invested with, 'but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.'y We may add, that it is a part of the work which was incumbent on him in the application of redemption; which cannot be said to be brought to the utmost perfection, till the day of judgment. Thus, when he speaks concerning his 'coming in a cloud with power and great glory;' he bids his people then 'lift up their heads, inasmuch as their redemption draweth nigh.' We might also add, that it was very expedient that he should judge the world, since he was unjustly judged and condemned by the world. The cause must have a second hearing, that his enemies, at whose bar he once stood, may be fully convinced, to their eternal confusion, that he was not the person whom they took him to be, and that he did not deserve the treatment and rude insults which he met with from them, when he stood at their tribunal. They asked him the question, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' And he replied, 'I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'a Here he applied to himself what the prophet

Daniel said concerning him; and thus intimated that his coming to judge the world would be the most visible and incontestable proof of his mediatorial glory, with which he was invested as the Son of man. The high priest, on hearing his answer, rent his clothes, apprehending that he spake blasphemy; after which they all condemned him to be guilty of death. It is expedient, therefore, that this visible proof of his Sonship and mediatorial glory should be given, and that he should perform this great work which was incumbent on him, as he gave them to expect. It is his 'coming with clouds, that every eye shall see,' which shall oblige 'them which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth,' who set themselves against him, 'to wail because of him.'c Moreover, it was necessary that he should judge the world, in order that he might publicly vindicate his people, who have been judged and condemned by the world for his sake; and that his cause and interest, which have been trampled on by them, might be defended in the most public and glorious manner so as to afford an everlasting conviction that he whom men despised, whose glory was set light by, whose gospel was rejected and persecuted, is a person worthy of universal honour and esteem. Thus concerning the person who is appointed to judge the world, and the character in which he shall do it.

2. We are now led to consider the solemnity of his appearance when engaging in the work. The work being the most glorious which ever was performed since the world was created, and the honour redounding to Christ as the result of it, being the last and highest degree of his state of exaltation; it cannot but be supposed that he will appear with those ensigns of majesty and regal dignity which become his character as the Judge of quick and dead. Accordingly we have an account of his 'appearing in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.' 'His own glory' respects the rays of his divinity shining forth; whereby it will appear that he has a natural

right to summon the whole world before him. This cannot but strike a terror into his enemies, and enhance the joy and triumph of his friends, and excite the adoration which is due to so glorious a person. His appearing in 'his Father's glory,' denotes that this is the highest display of his mediatorial dignity; the reward of his having perfectly fulfilled the commission given him by the Father, and fully answered the end for which he became incarnate. And his appearing in 'the glory of his holy angels,' implies the reverence and homage which they will pay to him, into whose hands they are given as ministering spirits to fulfil his pleasure, and who always rejoice in the advancement of his kingdom. The angels shall not indeed be employed in raising the dead, for that is a work too great for finite power; but we read of their ministry as subservient to the glory of this solemnity, as consisting in their appearing with Christ as his retinue. So it is said that he shall 'come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.' These indeed make up his train; but do not convey to him the least branch of that glory or character he is invested with. It is their honour to attend him, whose servants they are. Their work is to praise and adore him, and to show their readiness to fulfil his pleasure, without desiring to usurp the least branch of his glory. The first thing they are represented as doing, is their attending his coming with a shout, or their transmitting to the whole world the word of command first given forth by Christ, whereby all men shall be summoned to appear before him. This shall doubtless be attended with universal joy and triumph expressed by them. As to its being said that Christ shall 'come with the sound of a trumpet,'f either the expression is to be considered as an allusion to the custom of calling the hosts together, which was done by the sound of a trumpet; or we may understand it in a literal sense to denote some sound like that of a trumpet, which shall be heard throughout the world, and which shall have a tendency to excite the joy and triumph of the saints, and to strike terror into the wicked. Now, as this trumpet gives an alarm

to all to appear before Christ's tribunal; the angels are represented as assisting in bringing them thither. It is by them that the saints 'which remain alive, shall be caught up' with others 'in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air;'h and it is said they shall 'gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other.' Elsewhere, our Saviour, speaking of 'the end of the world,' which he calls 'the harvest,' represents the angels as 'reapers;'k and he explains his meaning to be, that 'at the end of the world the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.' This plainly intimates that they are to gather the elect together. Inasmuch, too, as there must be a separation between the righteous and the wicked, so that the one shall be set at Christ's right hand, the other at his left; it is more than probable that this shall be done by the ministry of angels.m And then the Judge is represented as 'sitting on his throne.' This is called elsewhere 'a judgment-seat,' agreeably to his character as a judge; and it is here styled his throne, as expressive of the majesty and royal dignity with which he shall perform this great work.

The Persons Judged

We are now led to consider the persons who are to be judged. These are said to be angels and men, that is, all who are summoned to appear before Christ's tribunal. Whether the holy angels are included in the number of those whom Christ will judge, it is not safe for us to pretend to determine, since scripture is silent on the subject. That they are the subjects of moral government is evident, because they are intelligent creatures; and it follows that as such they are accountable to God for their behaviour. It is also certain that they are employed by our Saviour in 'fulfilling his pleasure;' and in connection with their being thus employed, they are 'sent forth by him to minister to the heirs of salvation.' On this account it may not

be reckoned foreign to the work of the day, for Christ to give a public testimony to their faithfulness in the discharge of every work which has been committed to them; especially as the saints who, in some respects, may be said to have been their charge and care, have received no small advantage from the good offices which they have performed for them by Christ's appointment. More than this, however, I think cannot be determined, with respect to their being judged by Christ. Many conclude, therefore, that, properly speaking, they are not included in the number of those who shall be judged by him; either because they are represented as attending him when he comes to judgment, and are never spoken of as standing before his tribunal as persons whose cause is to be tried by him; or because they are considered, as having been long before confirmed in holiness and happiness, as beholding the face of God in heaven, and consequently not to be dealt with as those who are to undergo a farther scrutiny in order to their having a new sentence passed upon them.

As to the fallen angels, they are to be brought as criminals before Christ's tribunal, in order to his passing a righteous sentence upon them. Whether the charge of their apostasy from God shall be again renewed, and sin traced to the very first spring and fountain of it, we know not. But all the guilt which they have contracted since they were, by a former sentence, cast out of heaven, shall be laid to their charge. All that they have done against the interest of God in the world, begun in the seduction of our first parents, and continued ever since, with all those methods of revenge and subtilty whereby they have opposed the kingdom of Christ in the world, and endeavoured to ruin his people, will be alleged against them, as well as the bold attempt they made on him in his own person, whilst he was in his state of humiliation. Accordingly, the fallen angels, though represented as cast down to hell, are yet said to be 'delivered into

chains of darkness, and reserved unto judgment.' This they are at present apprehensive of, and are accordingly said 'to tremble'q at the forethoughts of it. That they shall be judged at the last day may be inferred also from what they said to our Saviour, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time?' Moreover, as the result of the final judgment, it is said that 'the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,'s that is, adjudged to endure a greater degree of torment in proportion to the increase of his guilt.

But what is more particularly insisted on in scripture, and what we are immediately concerned in, is that men shall be judged by Christ. That they shall be so is set forth in universal terms. The apostle says, 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' Men of all ranks and conditions must appear there, 'small and great,'u 'quick and dead,' that is, those who died before or shall be found alive at his coming, 'the righteous and the wicked,'y and among these, not only those who have lived under the gospel dispensation, but others who have had no other light but that of nature, as it is said, 'As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.' We have no account in scripture, indeed, of the last class being adjudged to eternal life, for their doing by nature some things that are contained in the law. To suppose this, is to be wise above what is written. Indeed, it seems contradictory to those scriptures which assert the necessity of faith in Christ to salvation. But this class are generally described as suffering punishment proportioned to their works. Thus we read of 'the men of Nineveh,'a 'the queen of the south,' 'the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon,'c and 'those of Sodom and Gomorrah,' as 'appearing in judgment,' and being exposed to a less degree of punishment than those who sinned against greater light. But there is not the least intimation given of their being discharged from

condemnation. Our Saviour, indeed, speaks of 'the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself to do according to it, who should be beaten with many stripes,' that is, exposed to a greater condemnation. Yet he, at the same time, intimates that 'the servant who did not know it,' that is, who sinned under greater disadvantages for want of gospel revelation, 'should be beaten with few stripes,' or adjudged to suffer a less degree of punishment.

The Pelagians, indeed, have endeavoured not only to exempt the heathen from the consequences of the final judgment; but some have insinuated that they shall not be concerned in it at all. Thus one supposes that the persons who are represented as appearing at Christ's tribunal,f and sentenced by him according to their works, are only those who made a profession of the Christian religion. The principal argument which he brings to support this opinion is, that they on whom a sentence of condemnation is passed, are accused of not ministering to Christ's members; that this ministering is interpreted as not giving him meat when he was hungry, or drink when he was thirsty, &c.; and that this charge cannot be brought against those who never heard of Christ, or that if it could, they might excuse themselves by alleging that it was impossible for them to show respect to him whom they never knew. But though our Saviour's design here, is to aggravate the condemnation of those who sinned under the gospel, and to charge some with crimes of the highest nature; yet there is nothing mentioned to exclude others so as to give occasion to suppose that the judgment of the great day will respect those only who have sat under the sound of the gospel. We have hence ground to conclude that, as the resurrection of the dead will be universal, so all who have lived, or shall live, from the beginning to the end of time, shall be the subjects of the judicial proceedings in that solemn and awful day.

The Manner of the Judgment

We now proceed to consider the manner in which Christ shall proceed in judging the world. It is evident that the design of this glorious transaction is to determine the final state of all men; which will be done in a public and visible manner, that it may appear that the Judge of all does right. The transaction differs very much from that particular judgment which is passed on every one at death; in which, though the state of men is unalterably determined, yet it is not done in an open and visible manner, but with a design that the cause should be tried again in that day which is appointed for it. The account we have in scripture of the manner in which this shall be done, bears some resemblance to the proceedings in human courts of judicature. The day is set in which causes are to be tried; the judge appears with the ensigns of his authority; he being seated on the tribunal, the persons to be tried appear before him; the cause is heard; and as all are to be judged according to law, the law is supposed to be known, or the particular statute which is the rule of judgment is produced, and whatever charge is brought against any one is drawn up in the form of an indictment, and supported by sufficient evidence; and the persons are then acquitted or condemned. In allusion to this process of judgment we read of Christ's appearing in a visible manner, seated on a throne of judgment; or of 'the Son of man appearing with all the holy angels with him,'—of his 'sitting upon the throne of his glory, and all nations being gathered before him'—'the judgment set, and the books opened.'h

The righteous, who are a part of those who shall stand before Christ's tribunal? shall be separated from the wicked; the former placed at his right hand, the latter at his left. With respect to the wicked, an indictment shall be brought in, in which they shall be charged with

the violation of the holy law of God, with all the aggravating circumstances of their crimes, the detail of which is contained in the books which are said to be opened. This charge shall be supported by evidence; in which case men shall be witnesses against one another, so far as they have been apprized of each other's behaviour, or immediately concerned in it. It is not improbable also, that as the holy angels are conversant in this lower world, and as they are sometimes represented as being present in worshipping assemblies, and observing the actions of men,k that they shall appear as evidences against the wicked. It may be observed too, that the Judge himself will be a witness against the criminals; which is not usual in human courts of judicature, though it does not savour of the least injustice. Thus it is said, 'I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.' The divine Omniscience will put the charge out of all manner of doubt. There can be no appeal from it; for it is impossible for God, either to be deceived himself, or to deceive others. Besides, there shall be the testimony of conscience, whereby persons shall stand self-convicted. Their 'own hearts shall condemn them,' as well as 'God, who is greater than their hearts.' Thus it is said that 'the consciences of men bear witness, and their thoughts, in the mean while, accuse or else excuse one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.' Accordingly, 'every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world' of the ungodly 'become guilty,'n or appear by their own confession to be so, 'before God.' And in order to this, there shall be a particular dispensation of providence, whereby those sins which have been long since forgotten, shall be brought to remembrance. This seems intimated in our Saviour's words in the parable: 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime,

receivedst thy good things,'p &c.; and also in God's 'setting the iniquities' of sinners 'in order before their eyes;' and this will have a greater tendency to support the charge than ten thousand witnesses.

As to the things which shall be brought into judgment, or be charged and proved, they are mentioned in a very particular manner. Thus it is said, 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' Elsewhere he is represented as 'executing judgment upon all, and convincing all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.'s Our Saviour particularly intimates, that their behaviour, under the means of grace, shall be inquired into, and that what they have done against him and his interest in the world, shall be alleged against them. But now that we are speaking concerning those matters which shall be produced in judgment against the wicked, it may be inquired whether the smallest sins committed by them shall be brought into judgment against them. This seems to be intimated by our Saviour when he says, 'Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.'u From this statement some take occasion to complain of the severity of the divine dispensations, as if it were intended that persons shall be condemned to suffer eternal punishments for a vain thought. But no one will bring this as an objection against the methods of the divine proceeding in the great day, who duly considers the infinite evil of sin; or that the least sin deserves a sentence of banishment from God, as it is an affront to his sovereignty, and opposite to his holiness. Let it be considered, however, that no person in the world shall have reason to complain that he is separated from God, or rendered eternally miserable, only for a vain thought, or for a sin of infirmity, as though he had been guilty of nothing else. When our Saviour says that 'every idle word

shall come into judgment,' the meaning is, that every such sin shall tend to fill up the measure of their iniquity; so that the punishments which they shall be exposed to, shall be for this, in conjunction with all other sins. Every sin brings guilt with it; and all sins taken together, smaller as well as greater, enhance the guilt. Hence our Saviour's meaning is, that every sin exposes men to a degree of condemnation, in proportion to the aggravation of it; though those sins which are of a more heinous nature, bring with them a greater degree of condemnation. Thus concerning the charge brought against the wicked.

The next thing to be considered, is the trial of the righteous, who are said to stand before Christ's judgment-seat. Here it may be observed that no indictment shall be brought against them, at least, with the Judge's approbation; for they were acquitted and discharged, when brought into a justified state; and as the consequence of their having been so, 'none,' as the apostle says, 'shall lay any thing to their charge,' since 'it is God that justifieth.' If any thing be alleged against them by the enemies of God, who loaded them with reproach, and laid many things to their charge in this world of which some have been just, and others unjust and malicious, the great and merciful Judge will appear as an advocate on their behalf, and will vindicate them from those charges which are ungrounded, and will farther allege, as a foundation of their discharge from the guilt of all others, that he has made a full atonement for them. Hence, when their sins are sought for, they shall not be found in judgment, or charged upon them to their shame, confusion, or condemnation; but they shall be pronounced righteous, as interested in Christ's righteousness. The great Judge shall evince that they are so, by producing those graces which were wrought in them, which are inseparably connected with their justification, though not the foundation of it, that so the method of the divine proceedings may be vindicated, and it may

appear that, as 'without holiness no one shall see the Lord,' so they are holy, and accordingly possess that internal quality which denotes them to be persons whom God designed to save. This I take to be the meaning of our Saviour's address to the righteous, when he pronounces them 'blessed,' and invites them to 'come and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink,' &c. Here the word 'for' is taken demonstratively, and not causally; and denotes that they were such as might expect to be admitted to this honour and blessedness, having those marks and characters of his children upon them to which the promise of salvation was annexed; not as though any thing done by them was the cause of their salvation. It hence appears that the graces of God's people shall be published before angels and men, to the praise of the glory of him who was the author of them.

But there is a difficult question proposed by some, namely, Whether shall the sins of God's people be published in the great day; though it is certain they shall not be alleged against them to their condemnation? This is one of the secret things which belong to God, which he has not so fully or clearly revealed to us in his word; so that we can say little more about it than what is matter of conjecture. Some have thought that the sins of the godly, though forgiven, shall be made manifest, that so the glory of that grace which has pardoned them may appear more illustrious, and their obligation to God farther enhanced. They also think that the justice of the proceedings of that day requires it; since it is presumed and known by the whole world that they were prone to sin as well as others,—that, before conversion, they were as great sinners as any,—and that, after it, their sins had a peculiar aggravation. Why, then, they ask, should not their sins be made public, as a glory due to the justice and holiness of God, as being infinitely opposite to all sin? This they farther suppose

to be necessary, that the impartiality of divine justice may appear. Moreover, if God, by recording the sins of his saints in scripture, has perpetuated the knowledge of them, and if it is to their honour that the sins there mentioned were repented of, as well as forgiven, why may it not be supposed that the sins of believers shall be made known in the great day? Besides, that they shall be made known seems agreeable to those scriptures which state that every word and every action shall be brought into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be bad.—On the other hand, it is supposed by others, that though the making known of sin which is subdued and forgiven, tends to the advancement of divine grace; yet it is sufficient to answer this end, as far as God designs it shall be answered, that the sins which have been subdued and forgiven, should be known to those who committed them, who, in consequence of having received pardon, have matter of praise to God. Again, the expressions of scripture whereby forgiveness of sin is set forth, are such as seem to argue that those sins which were forgiven shall not be made manifest. Thus they are said to be 'blotted out,' 'covered,'a 'subdued,' 'cast into the depths of the sea;' and 'remembered no more,'c &c. Besides, Christ's being a Judge, does not divest him of the character of an Advocate, whose part is rather to conceal the crimes of those whose cause he pleads, than to divulge them. We may add, that the law which requires duty, and forbids the contrary sins, is not the rule by which they who are in Christ are to be proceeded against, for if it were, they could not stand in judgment; but they are dealt with according to the tenor of the gospel, which forgives and covers all sins. Furthermore, it is argued that the public declaring of all their sins before the whole world, notwithstanding their interest in forgiving grace, would fill them with such shame as is hardly consistent with a state of perfect blessedness. Lastly, the principal argument insisted on, is that our Saviour, in Matt. 25, in which he gives a particular account of the proceedings of that day, makes no

mention of the sins, but only commends the graces, of his saints. Such arguments as these are alleged to prove that it is probable the sins of the saints shall not be exposed to public view in the great day. But after all that has been said, it is safest for us not to be too peremptory in determining this matter, lest, by pretending to be wise beyond what is clearly revealed in scripture, we betray our own folly and too bold presumption, or assert that which is not right of this glorious Judge. Thus concerning the method in which Christ shall proceed in judging the world.

The Place and Time of the Judgment

We are now to consider some circumstances relating to the place where, and the time when, this great and awful work shall be performed, at least, so far as it is convenient for us to inquire into this matter, without giving too much scope to a vain curiosity, or desire to be wise above what is written.

1. As to the place, it does not seem probable that it shall be upon the surface of the earth; because we read that 'they which are' found 'alive' at Christ's coming, 'shall be caught up together with them,' that is, the others who are raised from the dead, 'in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.' This statement immediately follows the account which the apostle gives of the Lord's 'descending from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;' which is the signal to be given of the immediate appearance of the Judge. Hence, their being 'caught up in the clouds,' denotes that Christ shall judge the world, in some place above this earth; otherwise they must be supposed to be caught up thither, and afterwards obliged to descend thence to the place from which they were taken; which does not seem probable. This is all that

we dare assert, concerning the place where this great and solemn transaction shall be performed.

I the rather observe this, because some are of opinion that the valley of Jehoshaphat is designed to be the place. They found this opinion on the prediction of the prophet Joel, 'I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people.'f This, however, seems to be a prophecy of some signal victory which the church should gain over its enemies; which shall have its accomplishment before Christ comes to judgment, and be no less remarkable than that which God gave Jehoshaphat over the Moabites, Ammonites, and the inhabitants of mount Seir, mentioned in 2 Chron. 20; on which occasion the place where it was obtained, was called 'the valley of Berachah,' which signifies blessing. The prophet seems, by 'the valley of Jehoshaphat,' not to point out any particular place known by that name, but rather to allude to the signification of the word, as importing the judgment of the Lord. So that nothing else is intended by it but that God shall, in the latter day, probably when those scriptures shall have had their accomplishment, which relate to the conversion of the Jews, execute some remarkable judgment against the heathen, amongst whom they were scattered. It cannot, therefore, with the least shadow of justice, be argued from this scripture, that the place called the 'valley of Jehoshaphat,' is that where all the nations of the earth shall be gathered to judgment. Besides, some have observed, that how great soever this valley may be, it is not large enough to hold the vast multitudes that shall be convened on this occasion.

2. As to the time when Christ shall judge the world, it is called, in scripture, 'a day.' This does not signify that the whole work shall be performed in the space of time which we generally call a day; for that

space can hardly be sufficient for performing the many things which are to be done. Some have thought that the whole process shall take up no less than a thousand years; and suppose, that the apostle Peter intimates as much, when, speaking concerning the day of judgment, he says, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'h In this sense the excellent Mr. Mede understands that scripture. But as the idea is not more clearly explained by other scriptures, speaking to the same purpose, I dare not be too peremptory in adopting it. I would rather conclude that the time of the continuance of the last judgment is called 'a day,' as denoting a season appointed for the despatch of a work, whether it be longer or shorter. Thus Christ calls that season in which the gospel was preached to the Jews, 'their day.'k It is the safest way for us to acknowledge this point to be a secret which belongs not to us to inquire into.

As to the time when Christ shall come to judgment, or when this glorious day shall begin, this also is considered as a matter kept secret, not only from us, but from all creatures. Thus our Saviour, speaking concerning it, says, 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' This is particularly intimated in the Answer we are explaining; and the reason assigned why it is kept secret from us is, that all may watch and pray, and be ready for the coming of the Lord, which is certainly a matter of the highest importance. It is evident that if God had either revealed the time of Christ's coming to judgment, or let men know how long they should continue in this world before that judgment which is passed on all at death, the corruption of our nature might have taken occasion to put off all thoughts about it till it was at hand. Hence, our Saviour, in wisdom, as well as in kindness to his people, has represented his coming under the similitude of 'a thief in the night;'m and accordingly says, 'Therefore be ye also ready: for in

such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.' Thus concerning the day of judgment. As to the consequences of it, and the sentence which shall be pronounced on the righteous and the wicked, these shall be treated under the two following Answers.

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of the Final Judgment

All that I shall add at present are some practical inferences from this doctrine of Christ's coming to judgment.

1. What has been observed concerning Christ's coming to judge the world in his own glory, and that of his Father, and of his holy angels, should fill us with high and honourable thoughts of him; and since the angels reckon it an honour to attend him as ministering spirits in that great day, we should be excited to an holy ambition to approve ourselves his servants in all things, and to account it our honour that he will esteem us such.

2. Since Christ, at his coming to judgment, will bring all things to light, and impartially state and try the cause of every one, who shall be rewarded according to his works; we ought to feel protected against all unbelieving thoughts which may arise in our minds, concerning the seemingly unequal distributions of providence, in God's dealing with the righteous and the wicked, as to the outward affairs of life. We ought also to feel convinced that, though we know not his design in the various afflictive providences wherewith we are exercised, since we are not to expect those blessings here which he has reserved for his people at Christ's appearing to judgment; yet, if he is pleased to bestow them upon us hereafter, we shall then have the highest reason to admire his wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, in the whole method of his providential dealings with us.

3. This doctrine tends to reprove the atheism and profaneness of those, who make a just of or scoff at the day of judgment; like those the apostle Peter mentions, whom he calls scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' It also reproves those who abuse the day of God's patience; and because his coming to judgment is delayed, take occasion to commit the vilest crimes. Our Saviour speaks of some as acting thus, and intimates that he will 'come in a day when they looked not for him, and shall cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with hypocrites.'p

4. This doctrine should stir us up to universal holiness, and the greatest circumspection and diligence in the service of God. Accordingly, the apostle, when speaking concerning Christ's coming to judgment, with those displays of terrible majesty which shall attend it, says, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?'

5. Since we expect that Christ will judge the world at the last day, it behoves us to be often judging and trying ourselves; examining how matters stand between God and us; and whether we behave ourselves in such away that we may be meet for Christ's coming, and have boldness in the day of judgment. As the apostle says, 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged,' that is, with the judgment of condemnation.

6. It is an inexpressible advantage when we can conclude, upon good grounds, that this great Judge is our Friend, our Saviour, our Advocate, and that, living and dying, we shall be found in him; for in that case, though he come in such a way as will strike the utmost

terror and confusion into his enemies, we shall be found of him in peace; and the consequence of this day's solemnity shall be our admission into his immediate presence, and being for ever blessed in it.

FINAL PUNISHMENT

QUESTION LXXXIX. What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?

ANSWER. At the day of judgment the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand; and upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences, shall have the fearful, but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them; and thereupon shall be cast out from the favourable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever.

HAVING, under the last Answer, taken a view of Christ as coming to judgment, and the whole world as seated at his tribunal, the wicked on his left hand, and the righteous on his right, the books opened, the cause tried, and the evidence produced; we are now to consider the sentence which will be past on each of them, together with the consequences. In particular, we have an account in this Answer, of a sentence of condemnation, pronounced against the wicked, and the punishment inflicted on them in execution of it. This our Saviour expresses in words full of dread and horror: 'Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment.' This includes an eternal banishment and separation from him, in whose favour there is life. As sin is the

object of his detestation, it being contrary to the holiness of his nature, they who are found in open rebellion against him shall not 'stand in his sight.' As they did not desire his special and gracious presence, which his saints always reckoned their chief joy, in this world, they shall be deprived of it in the next. And when they are commanded to depart from him, they are described as 'cursed,' that is, bound over to suffer all those punishments which the vindictive justice of God will inflict, and which are contained in the threatenings denounced by his law which they have violated, and to be sent down into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both in body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever. Accordingly, there are three things to be considered, relating to the punishment of sinners in another world, namely, the kind of it, its degree, and its eternal duration.

The Nature of the Punishment

As to the kind of punishment; it is generally considered in two respects, namely, the punishment of loss and the punishment of sense.

1. The punishment of loss includes a separation from God, the fountain of blessedness; a being destitute of every thing which might administer comfort to them; and, as the consequence of this, a deprivation of fellowship, not only with Christ, but with his saints. Not that they were ever the objects of their love or delight, but, on the other hand, their conversation was distasteful and burdensome, especially when it was in itself most savoury and spiritual; yet it is reckoned to be one ingredient in their misery, as our Saviour states, when he first speaks of 'the workers of iniquity' as commanded to 'depart from him,' and then tells them, 'Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and

you yourselves thrust out.' Here the happiness of others is considered as what will raise their envy, and prove a torment to them.

2. There is the punishment of sense. This is set forth by unspeakable torments to be endured both in soul and body; and because no pain is so exquisite as that which is occasioned by fire, it is called 'unquenchable and everlasting fire.' As for the inquiry which some make whether the fire be elementary or material, like that which is in this world, it savours more of curiosity than what tends to real advantage. As it is called 'a fire prepared for the devil and his angels,' some have a little hesitated about this matter, concluding it impossible for material fire to affect spirits; but I am not desirous to enter too far into this disquisition. It is, indeed, a hard matter for us to determine whether or how far a spirit is capable of the punishment of sense, any otherwise, than as, by reason of its union with the body, it has an afflictive sensation of the evils which that immediately endures. Hence, some have thought that, when we read of the fire of hell, it is to be taken in a metaphorical sense, to denote those punishments which are most exquisite and have a tendency to torment both soul and body in different respects. The soul may be tormented as the wrath of God has an immediate access to it, to make it miserable. And though this cannot be styled the punishment of sense in the same respect as that is of which the body is the more immediate subject; yet if we understand the word 'sense' as importing an intellectual perception of those miseries which it undergoes, whereby it is made uneasy, and, in a moral sense, subject to pain, as we sometimes speak of the pain of the mind, as well as that of the body, then it may be said to endure the punishment of sense, though it is a spiritual substance.

There are various ways by which the wrath of God may have access to the soul, to make it miserable. This punishment is sometimes compared to fire, as it is beyond expression dreadful. Accordingly, God, when inflicting it, is styled, 'a consuming fire;' and elsewhere 'his jealousy' is said to 'burn like fire.'z Hence, some have described the punishment of sin in hell, as including the insupportable weight of the wrath of God lying on the consciences of men, and sinking them into perdition; whereby it appears to be 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' A judicious divine considers this as the effect of God's immediate presence, as a sin-revenging Judge. He does not, therefore, understand that text in. which it is said, 'They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord,' as denoting an exclusion from his comforting presence, which is an undoubted truth, and the more generally received sense of it, but he speaks of the presence of God, as well as his power, as the immediate cause of their destruction; just as the psalmist joins these ideas together when he says, 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger?'c This interpretation seems most agreeable to the grammatical construction of the words. Thus concerning that punishment which is more immediately adapted to the soul.

As for the punishment of sense which the body shall endure, whether it be compared to fire as containing some effects not unlike those produced by fire, or whether it signifies only that the punishment shall be most exquisite, as no pain is so terrible as that which is the effect of fire, I will not pretend to determine. There are, indeed, other expressions, as well as fire, by which it is set forth in scripture, namely, 'cutting asunder,' 'tearing in pieces,'f 'drowning men in destruction and perdition,' 'a being bound hand and foot,' and 'cast into outer darkness,'h or into 'a furnace of fire,' or 'a lake of fire burning with brimstone.'k Some of these are, doubtless, metaphorical expressions, by which the punishment of sin is set

forth; but whether they are all so, we must not be too positive in determining. Some, however, suppose that they are, because the glory of heaven is described by the metaphors of 'streets of gold, gates of pearl,' 'rivers of pleasure,'m &c., and the wrath of God is metaphorically described, when he is called 'a consuming fire.' Now, as the glory of heaven is represented by metaphors, denoting that it is inconceivably great; so, if we suppose that the punishment of sin in hell is set forth by metaphorical ways of speaking, we cannot, from the metaphors used to describe it, take, in all respects, an estimate of its quality. Yet, from such expressions we must conclude in general that it is inexpressibly terrible, and that it respects both soul and body, and in different senses is called the punishment of sense.

The Degree of the Punishment

We now come to consider this punishment as to its degree. This is generally described as being various, in proportion to the aggravations of sin committed. Accordingly, they who have sinned under the gospel dispensation, are considered as exposed to a greater degree of punishment than others who have not had those advantages. Thus the apostle says, 'Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?' Our Saviour, speaking concerning the Scribes and Pharisees, who were notorious hypocrites, and whose religion was no more than a pretence, and made subservient to the vilest practices, tells them that 'they should receive the greater damnation,'p that is, a greater degree of punishment, as they had contracted greater guilt, than others. The apostle likewise speaks of some who had had great advantages through 'the riches of God's goodness and forbearance' towards them, but yet were 'impenitent' and hardened in sin; and these he says 'treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of

wrath,' that is, add greater degrees to the punishment which they shall endure in another world.

The Duration of the Punishment

We are now to consider the punishment which sinners are liable to in the world to come, as to its duration; in which respect, it shall be without intermission, and eternal. That there shall be no relaxation of punishment, may be proved from what our Saviour says in the parable; 'the rich man,' who was tormented in flames, could not obtain 'one drop of water to cool his tongue'. Thus we read that the wicked 'drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation;' that 'the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;' and that 'they have no rest day nor night.'s Our Saviour speaks of the two main ingredients in the punishment of sin; namely, the tormenting sense which conscience shall have of the wrath of God, due to it; and the punishment of sense, which is compared to that which proceeds from fire; and both are described as eternal: 'Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'

That the punishment of sin in another world will be eternal, may be argued from the impossibility of their obtaining a discharge from the sentence of condemnation under which they are, unless satisfaction be given to the justice of God for sins committed. This cannot be given by the person who suffers; inasmuch as his sufferings are due to him in execution of the sentence of the Judge, and agreeably to the demerit of sin. The latter being, as it is usually expressed, objectively infinite, because committed against an infinite God, and containing a contempt of his sovereignty and other perfections which are infinite, deserves a punishment proportionable to it. And as the sufferings of finite creatures are no other than finite, and consequently bear no

proportion to the demands of infinite justice, they must be infinite in duration, that is, eternal.—It may be observed also, that at the same time that persons are suffering for past sins, they are committing others. This is not like God's furnace which is in Sion, by means of which he designs, not to consume, but to refine and purge away the dross and the tin; for it cannot in any instance be said, that this is overruled for good. Hence, the habits of sin are increased rather than weakened by it; and consequently sinners are set at a farther distance from God, from holiness and happiness; and as their sin is still increasing, their punishment must be eternal.—We may add, that there is no Mediator appointed between God and them, none who has undertaken to pay this debt for them, and procure their discharge. Accordingly, the apostle says concerning those who have 'sinned wilfully, after they had received the knowledge of the truth; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin;' no advocate to plead their cause; no ordinances in which the glad tidings of salvation are published, nor any golden sceptre of mercy held forth to invite them to come in, or give them hope of finding acceptance in the sight of God; no covenant of grace which contains any promise that will afford relief; and no inclination in their own souls to return to God with an humble sense of sin, and desire to forsake it. Hence arises everlasting despair, beyond expression tormenting, which the apostle calls 'blackness of darkness for ever.'x

This is a very awful and awakening subject. Many are as little desirous to hear of it, as the people were to hear the account which the prophet Isaiah gave them of approaching judgments; and therefore they say, 'Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.' But as there is such a passion in men as fear, and as this is often made subservient to their spiritual advantage; it pleases God, in wisdom and mercy, sometimes to reveal those things in his word which have a tendency to awaken our fears, and to set before us

death as well as life, the threatenings as well as the promises, that we may see it to be our duty and interest to flee from the wrath to come, and to use those precautions prescribed in the gospel which may have a tendency, through divine grace, to prevent our sinking into everlasting perdition. They who cast off fear, and think themselves safe, because the rod of God is not upon them, generally cast off a sense of duty, and say unto God, 'Depart from us; for we desire not the, knowledge of thy ways.'z Hence, these subjects are to be insisted on as warnings to induce men to avoid the rock on which multitudes have split and perished; not to lead them to despair.

How the Doctrine of Final Punishment is to be preached

There is great need of prudence, however, in applying every truth in such a way that it may be of advantage; which renders the work of those that are employed in preaching the gospel exceedingly difficult. Every one must have those doctrines in culcated and applied to him, which are adapted to his respective condition, as well as founded on the word of God. We therefore subjoin two remarks for direction.

1. Such subjects as those which relate to the final punishment of the wicked, though they are not to be concealed, as being a part of the counsel of God, and a means ordained by him to answer some valuable ends; yet are not only or principally to be insisted on, as if there were no passion to be wrought upon but fear. It is the stupid person who is to be awaked out of his lethargy by violent methods. The man who says, 'I shall have peace, though I walk according to the corrupt inclinations of my own heart; the danger is over; or no ill consequences will follow the wilful impenitency and unbelief which is like to prove destructive to one;' or the person who is willing to deceive himself, and endeavours to extenuate his sin, apprehending that the consequences of it will not be so pernicious as they really

are, or that the mercy of God will save him though he remain in open rebellion against him, as if there were no arrows in his quiver, or vials of wrath to be poured forth on his enemies;—these ought to be dealt with by representing God as a consuming fire, with whom is terrible majesty; and they must be told of the punishment of sin in this and another world, that they may see their danger before it be too late to escape. If it be said that the terrors of God have a tendency to drive persons to despair, we reply that the persons we are speaking of are so far from despairing of the mercy of God, that they are inclined to abuse it; and that that which is likely to be their ruin, is the contrary extreme, presumption, which leads them to turn the grace of God into wantonness.

2. As for others who are humbled under a sense of sin, whose flesh trembles for fear of God's judgments, there is not so much occasion to insist on these awakening subjects, when we have to do with them; for to do so would be like adding fuel to the fire. If the heart be broken and contrite, and is apt to meditate little else but terror; such subjects as are encouraging are to be insisted on. Thus when the prophet Jeremiah had been reproving the people for their abominations, and threatening many sore judgments which God would execute upon them, he applies, healing medicines: 'Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?' Elsewhere, also, when he had been reprehending them for their idolatry, and putting them in mind of those judgments they had exposed themselves to, he encourages them to 'cry unto God, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth. Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end?'b God, in his usual method of dealing with sinners, first excites their fear by charging sin on the conscience, and putting them in mind of the dreadful consequences of it, in which respect, as the apostle expresses it, 'The law enters that the offence might abound;'

and then he shows them that the soul may take encouragement when humbled under a sense of its own guilt, that 'where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded.'—The gospel is designed to administer comfort to those who are distressed under a dread of the wrath of God. Hence, there are promises as well as threatenings; and each are to be applied as the occasion requires; so that the happiness of heaven is to be set in opposition to the punishment of sin in hell. Accordingly, as the Answer we have been explaining contains a very awful and awakening subject; so, in the next, we are led to consider a doctrine which is full of comfort to those who have an interest in Jesus Christ.

FINAL BLESSEDNESS

QUESTION XC. What shall be done to the righteous at the day of judgment?

ANSWER. At the day of judgment, the righteous being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted; shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven: where they shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery, filled with unconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity; And this is the perfect and full communion which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory at the resurrection and day of judgment.

WE have, in this Answer, an account of the great honours and privileges which the saints shall be advanced to and partake of, as the consequence of that sentence which Christ will pass on them, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;' which are words containing a gracious invitation to them to take possession of that glory which shall tend to make them completely and for ever happy. We have already considered the righteous as caught up to Christ in the clouds. Either this is done by the ministry of angels, or else their bodies will be so changed that they shall be able to mount upward as easily as they now are to walk upon the surface of the earth. We have also considered them as set at Christ's right hand. Whether this has any

regard to the place of their situation, we cannot determine; but, according to the scripture mode of speaking, it certainly denotes the highest honours conferred upon them. These will be not only spiritual but external and visible; whereby it shall appear to all, that they are Christ's peculiar friends and favourites. That they should be thus dealt with by so glorious a person, while they were in themselves unworthy of his notice, will tend to raise in them the highest astonishment, and shall afford matter of eternal praise. What is farther observed concerning them in this Answer, is contained in the following Heads. First, they shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted. Secondly, they shall join with Christ in the judging of reprobate angels and men. Thirdly, they shall be received into heaven; and there they shall be freed from sin and misery, filled with unspeakable joy, made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and soul, and admitted into the company, of saints and holy angels, and have the immediate vision and fruition of God to all eternity.

The Saints Acknowledged and Acquitted

They shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted. Our Lord Jesus was not ashamed to own his people, when he condescended to take their nature upon him, and dwell among them; or, as the apostle expresses it, 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren.' He gives them many tokens of his approbation, by those spiritual privileges which he bestows on them here. But at last he shall own them publicly, in the presence of the whole world, as a people whom he has chosen, redeemed, and sanctified, and in whom he has brought the work of grace to perfection. He overlooks all their former failures and defects, and looks upon them as adorned with perfect beauty, appearing without spot before him, and having now nothing which may be offensive to his holy eye, or denote them unmeet for the

relation which they stand in to him, and the blessings which they shall enjoy with him.

Moreover, it is said that he shall openly acquit them, that is, declare publicly that he has given satisfaction for all their offences, and that therefore they are for ever pronounced clear from the guilt of them. It is not improbable, also, as was formerly observed, that their former sins shall not be so much as mentioned, being all covered, and if sought for, shall not be found. But it is certain that if they shall be mentioned, it shall not be to their confusion or condemnation; for it shall be declared that the justice of God has nothing to lay to their charge; and, in consequence, they shall be delivered from that fear, shame, and distress, which they had formerly been subject to, through the afflicting sense of the guilt and prevalence of sin. When, however, they are represented as thus acquitted, we are not to suppose that their sins were not fully pardoned before, or that justification in this life is imperfect, as to what concerns their right to forgiveness or eternal life. The debt was fully cancelled, and a discharge given into Christ's hands in behalf of all his elect, on his making satisfaction to the justice of God. But this was not their visible discharge; and not being a declared act, it could not be claimed by them, nor was it applied to them, till they believed; and then they might say, 'Who shall lay any thing to our charge? It is God that justifieth.' Yet their justification, as it is declared to faith, and apprehended by it, could not be said to be, in all respects, so apparent, or so attended with those comfortable fruits and effects which are the consequence of it, as it is when they are pronounced justified by Christ at death. And even then the discharge is not so open and visible to the whole world, as it shall be in the day of judgment.

The Saints Joining Christ in Judging

It is farther said that the saints shall join with Christ in judging reprobate angels and men. This is very often asserted by those who treat on this subject; and it seems to be founded on the sense which is commonly given of the apostle's words in 1 Cor. 6:2, 3, 'Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?' and, 'Know ye not that we shall judge angels?' We must take heed, however, if we apply that scripture to the case before us, that we do not advance anything which tends in the least to derogate from the glory of Christ, who alone is fit for, and appointed to perform, this great work. Hence, if we suppose that the apostle is here speaking concerning the judgment of the great day, the saints are said to judge the world in a less proper sense. But whatever be the sense in which we explain it, we must not think that they shall be assessors with Christ in his throne of judgment. It is one thing for them to be near his throne in the capacity and station of favourites; and another thing for them to be in it. If they are in any sense said to judge the world, it must be understood, not as if the trying of the cause or the passing of the sentence, were committed to them, but rather of their approving what Christ shall do. This they are represented as doing, when Christ is set forth as 'judging the great whore,' namely, the antichristian powers. They so far join with him in doing this, that they ascribe glory and honour to him, and say, 'Righteous are his judgments.' There is another sense in which some understand this scripture concerning 'the saints judging the world,' namely, as denoting that the public mention which shall be made of the graces of the saints, their faith, repentance, love to God, and universal holiness, will have a tendency to condemn those whose conversation in this world has been the reverse of theirs. Their having forsaken all and followed Christ, and accounted all things but loss that they might win him, the choice which they have made of suffering rather than of sinning, which appears to be an instance of the highest wisdom, shall condemn the wickedness and folly of those who have exposed

themselves to inevitable ruin and misery by being otherwise minded. Thus Noah is said to have 'condemned the world by his faith,'g when, in obedience to the divine command, he 'prepared an ark to the saving of his house;' which the world then thought to be the most preposterous action which ever was performed, though they were afterwards, to their cost, convinced of the contrary. 'The men of Nineveh,' also, and 'the queen of the south,' it is said, shall 'rise in the judgment with that generation, and condemn it,' that is, shall do so objectively, rather than formally; as their respective behaviour tended to expose the impenitency and unbelief of the Jews, whom Christ there reproves. If the saints' judging the world, be understood in either of these senses, it is an undoubted truth; but more than this I dare not assert.

We may take occasion to inquire, however, whether the text on which this doctrine is founded, may not be explained in another sense, as denoting some privilege which the saints were to enjoy in this world, when the empire should become Christian. Magistrates and judges should then be chosen out of the church; and in this respect they should 'judge the world.' This seems to me the most probable sense of the apostle's words. It is that in which an excellent and learned writer understands them; and it is very agreeable to the context, in which believers are dissuaded from 'going to law before the unjust, and not before the saints.'k The apostle here signifies the inexpediency of exposing those controversies, before heathen magistrates, which ought to be compromised in the church; as though the Christians thought themselves unfit to judge the smallest matters; for he speaks only of such matters, not of capital offences, which were to be tried only by the civil magistrate. Now to enforce his advice, he says, 'Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?'

It is objected to this sense of the text, that, at the same time when 'the saints' are said to 'judge the world,' the apostle speaks of them as 'judging angels,' a work which comes not within the province of civil magistrates, though we suppose them to be Christians. But when the apostle speaks of the 'saints judging angels,' his language is brought in occasionally, the former sense of 'judging' being more agreeable to the context. Since he is insisting on an honour which should be conferred on the church, he farther enlarges on that subject, and so speaks of their 'judging angels,' as denoting that the consequence and success of the gospel would be an evident conviction to the world, that the devil's empire was weakened, and that he had no right to reign over the children of disobedience as he formerly had done. Thus our Saviour speaks of Satan's kingdom being destroyed by the preaching and success of the gospel, 'Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.' Elsewhere also it is said, 'Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down.'m Moreover, the apostle may have a particular reference to their power of casting out devils, not only in that but in some following ages,—a power which our Saviour, before he left the world, promised they should have, and which is known to have continued in the church till the third century.o

It is farther objected that there is another scripture which seems to favour the opinion that the saints shall judge the world in the last day, namely, our Saviour's words in Matt. 19:28, 'Ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' That, it is alleged, which makes this sense more probable is what he mentions in the following verse as a reward which they who had 'forsaken all for his name's sake,' should enjoy, namely, 'Ye shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit

everlasting life.' We reply, that our Saviour, in one of these verses, may, without any strain on the sense of the words, be understood as giving his people to expect some honours which should be conferred on them here, and in the other, those which they should receive in another world. As to the honours which were to be conferred on them here, namely, their 'sitting on thrones,' &c., these are said to be enjoyed 'in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory,' that is, not when the Son of man shall come to judgment, but when he shall enter into his state of exaltation, and sit at God's right hand. 'The regeneration' seems most applicable to the gospel state; in which, as the apostle says, 'old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,' agreeably to what is foretold by the prophet, 'Behold I create new heavens and a new earth;'q which may well be called 'the 'regeneration.' As for the apostles 'sitting on thrones,' this may signify the spiritual honours which should be conferred upon them; so that however they might be despised by the world, they should be reckoned, by all who entertain just notions of things, the chief and most honourable men of the earth. Their 'judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' may, in the same way, be understood of their convicting the Jews, and condemning them for their unbelief in crucifying Christ, and rejecting and persecuting the gospel. This they might be said to do, partly in the exercise of their ministry, and partly in the success of it. Indeed, the gospel may be said to judge men when it convicts and reproves them. If this be the sense of the text, then it does not respect any honours which the apostles should be advanced to in the day of judgment; and consequently it does not give any countenance to the opinion that they, any more than other saints, shall bear a part in judging the world, either of angels or men.

The Saints Blessed in Heaven

The saints shall be received into heaven. This includes their being brought into a glorious place and state. The apostle calls this place, 'an house not made with hands;' which, doubtless, far excels all the other parts of the creation. For, as the earthly paradise far excelled all other places in this world, being planted immediately by God, and furnished with every thing which might be delightful and entertaining for man, for whom it was designed; so must this place be supposed to be the most glorious part of the frame of nature, being designed to be the place of the eternal abode of the best of creatures. Indeed, whatever is called heaven in scripture, comes short of it, this being styled, 'The heaven of heavens.'s It is also particularly described as 'God's throne;' the place of his immediate residence, where he displays his glory in an extraordinary manner. As for that particular part of the universe in which it is situated, it is neither possible nor of any advantage for us to determine, any otherwise than as it is described, as being above this lower world. The principal thing to be considered, is the glory of the state into which the saints shall there be brought. This is set forth in this Answer, by a variety of expressions.

1. The saints shall be fully, and for ever, freed from all sin and misery. These being inseparably connected, they are delivered from both at once. As to deliverance from the guilt of sin, it includes not only their being for ever discharged from the guilt of past sins, which is involved in their being openly acquitted, but their not contracting guilt for the future. Accordingly, they are put into such a State that they shall be disposed and enabled to yield sinless obedience; and as they are presented without spot and blemish before God, they shall never contract the least defilement, or do any thing which shall render them unmeet for that glory to which they are advanced, afford matter of reproach to them, or provoke God to cast them out of that place which cannot entertain any but sinless creatures. Their state,

therefore, differs not only from that sinless state in which man was created at first, but from that in which the angels were created, who were not all confirmed in their state of holiness, so as to render it impossible for any of them to fall. But a state of confirmed holiness is the happiness of glorified saints. We may infer also that there shall be no temptations to sin; none arising from themselves, since there are no lusts or remains of corruption to draw them aside from God; and no temptations from others, since they are all made perfectly holy. The soul meets with no temptations from the body, as it often did while it was subject to the infirmities of nature in this imperfect state. It shall never be liable to any weakness, weariness, stupidity, or any of those diseases with which it is now oppressed; so that the soul shall never meet with any temptations arising thence, inasmuch as the happiness of the body consists in its subserviency to it, in all those things which may tend to promote its complete blessedness.

Moreover, the saints are considered as delivered from all misery, whether personal or relative. The afflictions of believers are confined to the present state. In heaven 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.' Nothing remains which may tend to abate their happiness, or render the state in which they are imperfect.

2. They shall be filled with inconceivable joys. Thus our Saviour says to the man in the parable, who had improved the talents he had been intrusted with, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' They are said to be 'presented,' not only 'faultless before the presence of the glory of Christ,' but 'with exceeding joy.'y This is the necessary result of a state of perfect blessedness; which cannot but administer the highest satisfaction and comfort to those who are possessed of it; inasmuch as it not only answers, but even exceeds, their most raised

expectations. These joys are not indeed carnal, but spiritual; for, as the greatest delight which the saints have here, consists in the favour and love of God, and in the bright rays of his glory shining into the soul, so they shall be perfectly blessed with this delight hereafter, and in respect to it their joy shall be full.

3. They shall be made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and in soul. The soul shall be unspeakably more enlarged than it was before, as to all its powers and faculties. The understanding shall be rendered more capable of contemplating the divine perfections; and it shall be entertained with those discoveries of the glory of these perfections, which at present we have but a very imperfect knowledge of. It shall be fitted to behold the wisdom of God in the works of creation and redemption, and be led into the deep mysteries of his providence, and the reason of those various dispensations of it, which, though they know not now, they shall know hereafter. The will shall be perfectly free, having no corrupt nature to bias it or turn it aside from that which is its chief good and happiness; nor shall it choose any thing but what is conducive to that end. There will be no remains of rebellion and obstinacy, but a perfect and entire conformity to the will of God. The affections shall be perfectly regulated, and shall unalterably run in a right channel, fixed upon the best objects, and not in the least inclined to deviate from them. As for the body, it shall be fitted for a state of perfection, as well as the soul; for it shall be raised a spiritual, celestial, and glorious body, and therefore perfectly adapted to be a partaker with the soul of that glory which the whole man shall be possessed of, and sanctified to be a temple of the Holy Ghost for ever.

4. They shall be joined with the innumerable company of the saints and holy angels. The apostle speaks of 'an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the first-born,' to

which we are said in this world, to 'come' by faith; but hereafter these two assemblies shall be joined together, and make one body, that they may, with one consent, 'adore' and proclaim 'the worthiness, riches, wisdom, and strength of the Lamb that was slain, who lives for ever and ever.'a

As the saints and angels are described as making up the same body, and engaged in the same worship, some have taken occasion to inquire concerning the means by which they shall converse together in another world, or in what manner this united body shall be made visible to each other. These things, however, we must be content to be ignorant of in this present state. Yet as to the saints, they shall converse with one another by the organs of sense and speech; for that they may do so is one of the ends for which the body shall be raised and reunited to the soul; and it may be proved also, from the fact that Moses and Elias conversed with Christ at his transfiguration in such a manner. Some propose the question relating to this matter, Whether shall there be a diversity of languages in heaven, as there is on earth? But this we cannot pretend to determine. Some think that there shall; that as persons of all nations and tongues shall make up that blessed society, so they shall praise God in the same language which they used when on earth; and that in order to this worship being performed with the greatest harmony, and to mutual edification, all the saints shall, by the immediate power and providence of God, be able to understand and make use of every one of those different languages as well as their own. This opinion they found on the apostle's words, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.' The worship of Christ here described, they suppose to have respect to the heavenly state, because it is said to be done both by 'those that are in heaven, and those that are on earth.'c But though the apostle speaks, by a metonymy, of different tongues, that is,

persons who speak different languages, being subject to Christ, he probably means by the expression persons of different nations, whether they shall praise him in their own language in heaven or not. Accordingly, some conjecture, that the diversity of languages shall then cease; because it took its rise from God's judicial hand, when he confounded the speech of those who presumptuously attempted to build the city and tower of Babel, and because it has been ever since attended with many inconveniences. Indeed, the apostle seems expressly to intimate as much, when speaking concerning the heavenly state, he says, that 'tongues shall cease,' that is, the present variety of languages. Moreover, as the gift of tongues was bestowed on the apostles, for the gathering and building up of the church in the first age, and as it ceased to be bestowed when this end was answered; so it is probable, that, in like manner, the diversity of languages shall hereafter cease. I am aware that there are some who object that the saints' understanding all languages, will be an addition to their honour, glory, and happiness. But we may answer, that though it is indeed an accomplishment in this world for a person to understand several languages, its being so arises from the subserviency of it to those valuable ends which are answered by it. But all necessity for it, and consequently all such subserviency, would be entirely removed, if the diversity of languages be taken away in heaven, as some suppose it will.

There are some, who, it may be, give too much scope to a vain curiosity on this subject: they pretend to inquire what this language shall be, and determine, as the Jews and some of the fathers do, that it shall be the Hebrew. Their arguments for this opinion are not sufficiently conclusive; and are principally these;—that Hebrew was the language with which God inspired man in paradise, and that which the saints and patriarchs spake, and the church generally made use of in all ages, till our Saviour's time; that it was this

language which he himself spake while on earth; that since his ascension into heaven, he spake to Paul in the Hebrew tongue; and that when the inhabitants of heaven are described in Revelation as praising God, there is one word used, by which their praise is expressed, namely, 'Hallelujah,' which is Hebrew, the meaning of which is, 'Praise ye the Lord.' But these arguments are not sufficiently convincing; so that we must reckon the opinion which they are brought to support no more than a conjecture.

Others suppose that the language spoken in heaven will not be any particular language which is or has been spoken in this world, but one more perfect and significative; and that this language is what the apostle means when he speaks of 'the tongue of angels.' Now, though it is more than probable that there shall be some language more perfect and significative than any now known in the world, which glorified saints shall receive by immediate inspiration; yet that there will be such does not fully appear to be the apostle's meaning in the scripture referred to. For it is not certain that angels express their ideas by the sound of words; inasmuch as they have no bodies, nor organs of speech, nor can we certainly determine that they frame voices some other way. 'The tongue of angels,' which the apostle speaks of, is an hyperbolical expression, signifying the most excellent language, or such an one as angels would speak, did they use a voice; just as 'the face of angels'g signifies the most bright, glorious, and majestic countenance; and as manna is called 'angel's food,' that is, the most pleasant and delightful. But these things, though often inquired into by those who treat on this subject, are very uncertain; nor is it of any advantage for us to be able to determine them.

But there is another thing arising from the consideration of the saints being joined in one society, which is much more useful, and, so far as we have light to determine it, will afford a very comfortable

and delightful thought to us, namely, what concerns their knowing one another in heaven. The scripture, indeed, does not so fully determine this matter as it does some others relating to the heavenly state; yet many of God's children have died with a firm persuasion that they shall see and know their friends, in another world, and have been ready to conclude such knowledge to be a part of that happiness which they shall enjoy there. Nor can we think this altogether an ungrounded opinion; though it is not to be contended for as if it wore a necessary and important article of faith. The arguments which are generally brought in defence of it, are taken from those instances recorded in scripture in which persons who have never seen one another before, have immediately known each other in this world, by a special, immediate, divine revelation, given to them. Adam in this manner knew that Eve was taken out of him, and therefore said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.' He was 'cast into a deep sleep, when God took one of his ribs, and so formed the woman,' as we read in the foregoing words; yet the knowledge of the event was communicated to him by God.—Moreover, we read that Peter, James, and John, knew Moses and Elias;k as appears from Peter's making a particular mention of them, 'Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias,' though he had never seen them before.—Again, our Saviour, in the parable, represents 'the rich man' as 'seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom;'m and speaks of him as addressing his discourse to him. From such arguments some think it may be inferred that the saints shall know one another in heaven, when joined together in the same assembly.—Again, some think that this may be proved from the apostle's words, in 1 Thess. 2:19, 20, 'What is our hope, or joy, of crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy.' This language seems to argue that he apprehended their

happiness in heaven should contribute or be an addition to his, as he was made an instrument to bring them thither. Even so, by a parity of reason, every one who has been instrumental in the conversion and building up of others in their holy faith, as the apostle Paul was with respect to them, may expect that these shall tend to enhance his praise, and give him occasion to glorify God on their behalf. It follows, then, that the redeemed shall know one another; and that they who have walked together in the ways of God, and have been useful to one another as relations and intimate friends, in what respects more especially their spiritual concerns, shall bless God for the mutual advantages which they have received.—Further, some prove this from that expression of our Saviour, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.' If by these 'everlasting habitations' be meant heaven, as many suppose; then the meaning is, that they whom you have relieved and shown kindness to in this world, shall express a particular joy upon your being admitted into heaven; and consequently they shall know you, and bless God for your having been so useful and beneficial to them.

It is objected that, if the saints shall know one another in heaven, they shall know that several of those who were their intimate friends here on earth, whom they loved with a very great affection, are not there; and that their knowing this will have a tendency to give them some uneasiness, and be a diminution of their joy and happiness. But if it be allowed that the saints shall know that some whom they loved on earth are not in heaven, they will not experience uneasiness; for the affection which took its rise principally from the relation which we stood in to persons on earth, or the intimacy which we have contracted with them, will cease in another world, or rather run in another channel, and be excited by superior motives, namely, their relation to Christ, that perfect holiness which they are adorned with,

their being joined in one blessed society and engaged in one employment, and the remembrance of their former usefulness one to another, in promoting their spiritual welfare, as made subservient to the happiness they now enjoy. As for others who are excluded from their society, they will think themselves obliged out of a due regard to the justice and holiness of God, to acquiesce in his righteous judgments. Thus the inhabitants of heaven are represented as adoring the divine perfections, when the vials of God's wrath were poured out upon his enemies, and saying, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus. True and righteous are thy judgments.'

5. Another ingredient in the glory of heaven, which is, indeed, the greatest of all, is the saints' enjoying the immediate vision and fruition of God. This vision includes something more than their beholding the human nature of Christ, as Job speaks, when he says, 'In my flesh shall I see God.' This, indeed, will be a delightful object, not only by reason of the glory of it, but from the love which they bear to his person who, in that nature, procured for them the happiness which they are advanced to. But the principal thing contained in this vision of God, is that it is contemplative and intellectual; for, in other respects, he is invisible. Yet, there are two ways by which persons are said to see him. The one is by faith, adapted to our present state. Thus Moses is said to have 'seen him who is invisible,'q that is, to contemplate, adore, and improve the glory of the divine perfections, so far as he is pleased to manifest it to us in this world. But the other way of beholding him is more perfect, as his glory is displayed with the greatest clearness and in the highest degree in heaven. This the apostle opposes to that vision which we have of God by faith, when he says that in heaven 'we shall see face to face, and know even as we are also known;' that is, we shall have more bright and immediate discoveries of the glory of God. This,

when represented by the metaphor of 'seeing face to face,' has some allusion to our knowing persons when we are in their immediate presence, which far exceeds that knowledge which we had of them by report, when at a distance from them. This immediate knowledge of God the apostle expresses by a mode of speaking which cannot well be understood in this imperfect state, when he says, 'We shall see him as he is.'s It differs from those views which the saints have sometimes had of the glory of God, when manifested in an emblematical way in this world. Saints in heaven behold that glory as shining forth in its greatest effulgency. Moreover, as the apostle speaks of this as a privilege which should be enjoyed by the saints at the appearing of Christ, who seems to be the object more especially here intended, it may denote their beholding his mediatorial glory in its highest advancement. Now, the view which they have of it, is said to be assimilating, as well as delightful. Hence, the apostle adds, 'We shall be like him.' It shall also be satisfying. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will,' or shall 'behold thy face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.' How vastly does this differ from the brightest views which the saints have of the glory of God here! It is true they know something of him as he manifests himself in the works of creation and grace. But their knowledge of him as thus manifested is very imperfect. The object is not presented in its brightest lustre; nor is the soul, which is the recipient of it, enlarged, as it shall then be, to take in the rays of divine glory. Though, however, this vision of God shall be unspeakable, so that much more shall be known of his perfections than we can attain to in this life; yet the saints shall not have a comprehensive view of it; for that is not consistent with the idea of them as finite creatures. Thus concerning the immediate vision of God.

It is farther observed that this vision is attended with fruition; and therefore it is not merely speculative or contemplative, but such as is

felicitating. Accordingly, the saints know their interest in God, and see themselves to be the happy objects of the former and present displays of the glory of his perfections, and how these have all been exerted in bringing them to this blessed state, and fixing them in it; and hence arises that joy which accompanies this vision of God. Besides, there are some impressions of his glory on their souls, which not only occasion but excite this joy.—Again, it is observed that this fruition is of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father is beheld and enjoyed, as his glory shines forth in the face of Christ, as bestowing on his saints all the blessings which he has promised in that everlasting covenant which was established with and in Christ, as their Head and Saviour; his purposes of grace, and all his promises having had their full accomplishment in him. The glory of Christ is beheld as the person to whom the whole work of redemption, together with the application of it, was committed, and by whom it is now brought to perfection. The Holy Ghost is beheld as the person who has, by his power, rendered every thing which was designed by the Father, and purchased by the Son, effectual to answer the end which is now attained, by shedding abroad the love of the Father and Son in their hearts, dwelling in them as his temple, and beginning, carrying on, and perfecting that work which is so glorious in its effects and consequences. In these respects the saints have perfect and distinct communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which far exceeds all they can have here, and is infinitely preferable to all the delight which arises from that enjoyment which they have of the blessed society of perfect creatures to whom they are joined.

6. The last ingredient in the happiness which believers shall enjoy in heaven is, that it shall be to all eternity. As the soul is immortal, and the body to which it shall be united shall be raised incorruptible; so the inheritance which is reserved in heaven for the saints, is such as

'fadeth not away.' This will tend to make their happiness complete; which nothing could do were there not a full assurance of its everlasting duration. It would be a continual alloy to it, and a very uncomfortable thought, to conclude that, though their enjoyments are very great, they shall have an end. The glory of heaven is not like the glories of this present world, which are but for a moment, and, as it were, perish in the using; nor like the state of holiness and happiness in which God created man at first, which, through the mutability of his nature, it was possible for him to lose. But it is established by the decree of God, founded on the virtue of the blood of Christ, who purchased for his people eternal redemption, and in the covenant of grace settled this inheritance upon them, as an everlasting possession. This is a doctrine so universally acknowledged, that it is needless to insist on the proof of it; and it is so frequently mentioned in scripture, that we scarcely ever read of the glory of heaven, but it is described as 'eternal.'x

There is one thing more which, though it is not particularly mentioned in this Answer, I would not entirely pass over, that is, what may be said to a question proposed by some, Whether there are degrees of glory in heaven? The Papists not only maintain that there are, but pretend that greater degrees of glory shall be conferred on persons, in proportion to the merit of their good works here on earth. They, accordingly, have assigned the highest places there, to those who have performed works of supererogation, by doing more than was strictly enjoined them by the law of God. But all Protestant divines, who allow that there are degrees of glory in heaven, strenuously maintain that these are rewards of grace, as every ingredient in the heavenly blessedness is supposed to be. When this doctrine is made the subject of controversy, neither side ought to contend for their particular opinion, as if it were one of the most important articles of faith, or charge those who defend the other side

of the question with maintaining something directly contrary to scripture or of a pernicious consequence. They who suppose that there are no degrees of glory in heaven, are afraid that, if they should assert the contrary, it would in some measure eclipse the glory of the grace of God, and give too much countenance to the popish doctrine of the merit of good works. But this all Protestant divines, as was just observed, sufficiently guard against.—Again, it is argued against degrees of glory, that those external and relative privileges which the saints enjoy, such as election, justification, and adoption, belong equally and alike to all, and that the same price of redemption was paid for all, so that their glory shall be equal. But this reasoning will not appear very conclusive, if we consider that sanctification is as much the result of their being elected, justified, redeemed, and adopted, as their being glorified. Yet sanctification appears not to be equal in all; and it hence does not follow that their glory in a future state shall be so. Besides, though their objective blessedness, which consists in that infinite fulness of grace which there is in God, is inconsistent with any idea of degrees; yet it does not follow that the communications resulting from it, which are finite, shall be in a like degree.—Nor can it be inferred, that if there are degrees of glory, the state of those who have the least degree shall be imperfect in its kind, or have anything in it which shall afford the least abatement of their happiness, or be the occasion of envy or uneasiness, as the superior excellencies of some, in this imperfect state, often appear to be; for any such result would be inconsistent with perfect holiness. Nor is it to be supposed that there are any degrees with respect to the deliverance of the saints from the sins, guilt, and miseries of this present life; for this deliverance is equal in all. Nor do they who think that there are degrees of glory in heaven, in the least insinuate that every one shall not be perfectly filled and satisfied, in proportion to his receptive disposition. As a small vessel, put into the ocean, is as full, in proportion to its capacity, as the largest; so none of the saints

will desire, nor indeed can contain, more than God designs to communicate to them.—In defence of the opinion that there are no degrees of glory in heaven, reference is sometimes made to the parable of the persons who were hired to work in 'the vineyard.' There it is said that 'they that were hired about the eleventh hour, received every man a penny;' which is as much as others received who were hired early in the morning, and had 'borne the heat and burden of the day.' But this does not sufficiently prove the opinion; for some of these labourers are represented as 'murmuring,' and insinuating that they had wrong done them; and Christ replies to them, 'Is thine eye evil because I am good?' and they are described as 'called,' but 'not chosen.'a The parable, therefore, is designed to set forth, not the glory of heaven, but the temper and disposition of the Jewish church, who were partakers of the external blessings of the covenant of grace, and to show that they and the gospel-church had equal privileges.

The arguments, then, which are generally insisted on to prove that there are no degrees of glory in heaven, can hardly be reckoned sufficient to overthrow the contrary doctrine; especially if those other scriptures which are often brought to prove that there are, be understood in their most obvious sense. One of these is Daniel 12:3, 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.' Here the prophet speaks of those who excel in grace and usefulness in this world; and then considers them, not only as 'wise,' but as 'turning many to righteousness;' whose glory, after the resurrection, of which he speaks in the foregoing verse, has in it something illustrious and distinguishing, which is compared to 'the brightness of the firmament' and 'stars.' It is objected, however, that our Saviour illustrates the happiness of all the glorified saints, whom he calls 'the righteous,' by their 'shining as the sun;' that therefore the prophet

Daniel means no other glory but what is common to all saints; and that consequently there are no degrees of glory. We reply, that our Saviour does not compare the glory of one of the saints in heaven, with that of another; but intimates that the happiness of every one of them shall be inconceivably great, and very fitly illustrates it by 'the brightness of the sun.' The prophet, on the other hand, is speaking of some who were honoured above others in their usefulness here; and then considers them as having peculiar degrees of glory conferred upon them hereafter. This is something more than what he refers to in the foregoing verse, which is common to all the saints, when he speaks of them as 'awaking out of the dust to everlasting life.'

Another scripture brought to prove this doctrine, is 1 Cor. 15:41, 42, 'There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead.' Here the apostle is speaking concerning the happiness of the saints after the resurrection. He does not compare them with what they were when they left the world, for then they had no glory, being 'sown in corruption and dishonour;' but he seems to compare the glory of one saint, after the resurrection, with that of another. Accordingly, he illustrates it by the brightness of the heavenly luminaries; every one of which has a glory superior to terrestrial bodies. Yet he seems to intimate, that if we compare them together, the glory of the one exceeds that of the other. Thus the glory of the least saint in heaven is inconceivably greater than that of the greatest on earth. The glory, indeed, is full and complete in its kind; yet when compared with the glory of others, it may in some circumstances fall short of it.

Another argument brought by some to prove this doctrine is taken from the parable of the talents. There the reward is proportioned to the respective improvement of the talents by those who received

them; and it seems to have reference to some blessings which they were to receive in another world. Our Saviour compares himself to one who 'travels into a far country,' and after a long time, returns and reckons with his servants. Now, by the former is meant his ascension into heaven, and by the latter his return to judgment; so that the rewards spoken of which differ in degree, must respect some peculiar glory which he will confer on his people in another world. Indeed, the whole chapter seems to refer to the same thing. The preceding parable of the wise and foolish virgins denotes the behaviour of persons here, and the consequence of it hereafter; and the latter part of the chapter expressly speaks of Christ's coming to judgment, and dealing with every one according to his works. If, therefore, the improvement of the talents respects some advantages which one is to expect above another, it seems to intimate that there are degrees of glory.

This is farther argued from the higher degree of grace which some have in this world than others; which is a peculiar honour bestowed on them, and is sometimes considered as the fruit and consequence of their right improvement of the graces which they had formerly received. Their enjoyment of it may be considered as laying a foundation for greater praise; so that the soul must be enlarged in proportion to the grace received, in order that it may give to God the glory due to his name, as the result of what it enjoys. Hence, if we take an estimate of God's future from his present dispensations, it not only removes some objections which are sometimes brought against this doctrine, but adds farther strength to the arguments taken from the scriptures before-mentioned, to prove it. But notwithstanding all that has been said on this subject, it is the safest way for us to confess that we know but little of the affairs of another world, and much less of the circumstances of glorified saints, considered as compared with one another. Nor are we to conclude, if

there are degrees of glory, that the highest of these is founded on the merit of what any have done or suffered for Christ, or, on the other hand, that the lowest is inconsistent with complete blessedness; which shall be proportioned to their most enlarged desires, and as much as they are capable of containing. Thus concerning the question proposed by some as to whether there are degrees of glory.

There is another which has some affinity to it, which I would not wholly pass over, namely, whether the saints in heaven shall not have some additional improvements, or make progressive advances, in some things which may be reckoned a farther ingredient in their future happiness. This is to be insisted on with the utmost caution, lest any thing should be advanced which is inconsistent with the complete blessedness which they are immediately possessed of. I do not think, however, that it will detract from it, if we should venture to assert, that the understanding of glorified saints shall receive very considerable improvements, from those objects which shall be presented to them, and from the perpetual discoveries which will be made of the glorious mysteries of divine grace, whereby the whole scene of providence, and its subserviency to their eternal happiness, shall be opened, to raise their wonder, and enhance their praise. As it is not inconsistent with the perfect blessedness of the angels, to desire to know more of this mystery, which they are said to 'look into;' and as their joy is increased by those new occasions which daily present themselves; why may not the same be said with respect to the saints in heaven, especially if we consider that this will redound so much to the glory of God, as well as give us more raised ideas of that happiness which they shall be possessed of?

Practical Inferences from the Doctrine of Final Blessedness

We shall conclude with some practical inferences from what has been said in this Answer, concerning the happiness of the saints in heaven.

1. We may learn the great difference which there is between the militant and triumphant state of the church. Here believers meet with perpetual conflicts; but hereafter they shall be crowned with complete victory. Now, they walk by faith; but then faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in enjoyment. The saints of God are, at present, in their minority, having a right to their inheritance, but not the possession of it. Their desires are enlarged, and their expectations raised; but nothing can give them full satisfaction till they arrive at that state of perfection to which God will at last bring them.

2. The account which we have of the happiness of heaven being of a spiritual nature, and accompanied with perfect blessedness, and of the enjoyments of heaven being of a corresponding nature, may tend to reprove the carnal conceptions which many entertain concerning it, as though it were no other than what Mahommed promised his followers; who fancy that they shall have there those delights which are agreeable to the sensual appetites of such as have no other ideas of happiness than that it consists in the pleasures of sin. Nor is it enough for us to conceive of the heavenly blessedness as merely a freedom from the miseries of this life, though this is an ingredient in it; nor must we think of it as if it had no reference to the bringing of those graces which are begun here to perfection, or as if it did not consist in the blessed work of admiring and adoring the divine perfections, and improving the displays of these in the Mediator, a work in which the saints shall for ever be engaged.

3. Let us not content ourselves merely with the description which we have in the word of God of the glory of heaven, but inquire whether we have a well-grounded hope that we have a right to it, and are found in the exercise of those graces which will be an evidence of our fitness. It is a very low and insignificant thing for us to be convinced that the glory of heaven contains all those things which shall render those who are possessed of it completely happy, if we have no ground to claim an interest in it; and if we have this ground of hope, it will have a tendency to excite practical godliness, which is inseparably connected with eternal life, and affords an evidence of our right to it. But without this godliness, our hope will be delusive, and we shall be chargeable with an unwarrantable presumption, in expecting salvation without sanctification.

4. If we have any hope concerning future blessedness, it ought to be improved by us, to support and comfort us under the present miseries of life. Thus the apostle exhorts the church to which he writes, to 'comfort one another with these words,' or from considerations of the heavenly glory. Our hope should also be an inducement to us to bear afflictions with patience, since these 'work for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'f

5. Let the hope we have of the privileges to be enjoyed hereafter, put us upon the greatest diligence in the performance of those duties which are incumbent on us, as expectants of this inheritance; and let us endeavour to have our conversation in heaven, and be frequently meditating on the blessed employment of that state, and be earnest with God that we may be made more meet for it, and in the end received to it.

6. If we are enabled by faith to conclude that we have a right to the heavenly inheritance, let us be frequently engaged in the work and

employment of that inheritance, so far as is consistent with the present imperfect state. Let us be much in praising and blessing God, who has prepared these glorious mansions for his people; and let us set a due value on the blood of Christ, by which they were purchased, and give glory to the Holy Ghost, who has given us the earnest of them, and who, having begun the work of grace, will, we trust, carry it on to perfection.

MORAL OBLIGATION

QUESTION XCI. What is the duty that God requireth of man?

ANSWER. The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.

QUESTION XCII. What did God at first reveal unto man as the rule of his obedience?

ANSWER. The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the state of innocency, and to all mankind in him, beside a special command, not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the moral law.

HAVING, in the former part of the Catechism, been led to consider what we are to believe concerning God, and those works of nature and grace wherein he has displayed his glory to man, whether considered as created after his image, or as having lost it by sin, and as afterwards redeemed, and made partaker of those blessings which are consequent on redemption; we are now to consider him as under an indispensable obligation to yield obedience to God. They who

have received most grace from him, are laid under the strongest ties and engagements to yield obedience.

Man Bound to Obey God

We observe, then, that obedience is due from man to God. Our obligation to obey results from the relation we stand in to him as creatures; who ought to say with the psalmist, 'O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.' Our obligation results particularly from our being intelligent creatures, having excellencies superior to all others in this world, whereby we are rendered capable, not only of subserving the ends of his providence, but performing obedience as subjects of moral government. But our obligation becomes highest when we are considered as redeemed, justified, and sanctified, and made partakers of all the blessings which accompany salvation. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'h Obedience may be considered, not only as our duty, but as our highest wisdom; as it is said, 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding.' Hereby, in some measure, we answer the end for which we came into the world; and to render it is our interest, inasmuch as it is conducive to our present and future blessedness, and inseparably connected with it. We are to be very sensible, however, that to yield obedience is out of our own power; as our Saviour says, 'Without me ye can do nothing.'k We should, therefore, exercise a constant dependence on him who works in his people both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure. We might here consider the nature and properties of that duty and obedience which we owe to God.

1. If it be such as we hope God will accept or approve, it must proceed from a renewed nature, and, in consequence, from a principle of love to God as a reconciled Father; not from a slavish fear and dread of his wrath, as a sin-revenging Judge. Thus the psalmist says, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

2. It ought to be without the least reserve, including a ready compliance with whatever he commands. In performing it, we ought to approve ourselves to him as our Sovereign Lord and Lawgiver, and consider that we are under his all-seeing eye. Accordingly, his glory is to be assigned as the highest end of all we do.

3. It ought to be performed with constancy. It does not consist merely in a sudden fit of devotion, arising from the dictates of an awakened conscience, or the dread we have of his wrath, when under some distressing providence; but it ought to be the constant work and business of life.

4. When we have done or suffered most for God, we are not only to consider ourselves as 'unprofitable servants,' as our Saviour expresses it; but we must lament our imperfections, and be deeply humbled for the iniquities which attend our holy things, inasmuch as 'there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.'

Connexion of Revelation with Moral Obligation

In order to our yielding obedience, it is necessary that God should signify to us, in what instances he will be obeyed, and the manner in which obedience is to be performed; otherwise it would be rather a fulfilling of our own will than of his. None but those who are authorized by God to communicate his will, and who receive what they impart to us by divine inspiration, can, without the boldest presumption, assume to themselves the prerogative of prescribing to

us a rule of duty to God. It follows that obedience must be to his revealed will. The secret purposes of God are the rule and measure of his own actings: but his revealed will is the rule of our obedience. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children.'

The Law of God as the Rule of Obligation

The will of God, as thus made known to us, is called a Law. Now, let us consider that a law is the decree or revealed will of a sovereign, designed to direct and govern the actions of his subjects, and thereby to secure his own honour and their welfare. If this be applied to the law of God, we must consider him as our Lord and Sovereign, whose will is the rule of our actions; and he, being infinitely wise and good, is able and inclined to direct us in those things which are conducive to his own honour and our safety and happiness. This he has been pleased to do; and accordingly has given us a law as the rule of life.

The laws of God are in part such as take their rise from his holy nature. Accordingly, our obligation to yield obedience to these proceeds, not only or principally from the command of God, but from their being agreeable to his divine perfections; which must be assigned as the reason of his prescribing them as matter of obligation. These are all reducible to what we call, in general, the law of nature; which, because it is agreeable to the dictates of reason, is called by way of eminence the moral law. Thus when we consider ourselves as creatures, we are led to confess that we are subject to God, and therefore bound to obey him. When we think of him as a God of infinite perfection, our obedience must be agreeable to that perfection. Because he is a Spirit, our obedience must be performed in a spiritual manner; and as he is a holy God, he is to be worshipped with reverence and holy fear. Thus far we are induced to yield

obedience by the law of nature.—But, on the other hand, there are many laws relating to the circumstances or manner in which God will be worshipped, which are founded in his sovereign will. These we call positive laws. Of this kind was that law given to our first parents, not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and doubtless, there were many other laws given to them relating to their conduct of life and mode of worship, though they are not particularly mentioned in the short history we have of the state of man before the fall.—As for the moral law, it is said, in one of the Answers we are explaining, to have been revealed to Adam in his state of innocency, and to all mankind in him. Its being revealed to man, must be supposed to be a less proper way of speaking; inasmuch as the method of discovery by revelation is more especially applicable to positive laws. Hence, I would rather choose to express it, as in a foregoing Answer, by God's writing his laws in the hearts of our first parents, or impressing the commands of the moral law on their nature; so that by the power of reasoning with which they were endowed, they might attain to the knowledge of them. Accordingly, man, by the light of nature, knew all things contained in the moral law.

As to what is farther said in this Answer, that the moral law was given to man in innocency, we considered this subject elsewhere. And as all mankind were represented by him, we are to understand these words as meaning that it was given to all mankind in him. But these things having been insisted on in another place, as also what relates to his having been prohibited from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, I shall pass them over, and proceed to speak more particularly concerning the moral law, together with the uses of it to all sorts of men.

THE NATURE AND USES OF THE MORAL LAW

QUESTION XCIII. What is the moral law?

ANSWER. The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God and man; promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach, of it.

QUESTION XCIV. Is there any use of the moral law to man, since the fall?

ANSWER Although no man, since the fall, can attain to righteousness and life by the moral law; yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate.

QUESTION XCV. Of what use is the moral law to all men?

ANSWER. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.

QUESTION XCVI. What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?

ANSWER The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from wrath to come, and to drive them to Christ; or, upon their continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof.

QUESTION XCVII. What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?

ANSWER. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet beside the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care, to conform themselves thereunto, as the rule of their obedience.

The Nature of the Moral Law

IN these Answers we have, first, a description of the moral law.

I. This law is a declaration of the will of God to mankind, that so we may not be destitute of a rule to guide and regulate our behaviour, both towards God and man. This is the first idea contained in a law. But there is another, which respects the obligation which we are laid under by the law, arising from our being creatures, and consequently subject to God, who, as the supreme Governor, has an undoubted right to demand obedience from us to every thing which he

prescribes and reveals to us as a rule for our direction. Moreover, that which God requires of us in this law, is, personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience to its precepts.

1. Our obedience must be personal, that is, it is not to be performed by proxy. Whatever services we may expect from men, we must not conclude that they can perform obedience for us to God, and fulfil the obligation which we are personally laid under. Yea, we may proceed farther, and assert that the obedience which Christ has performed for us, does not exempt us from an obligation to yield perfect obedience. Obedience, indeed, is not to be performed by us with the same view with which he performed it. This will be farther considered under a following Head, where we shall show, that though the law is not to be obeyed by us as a covenant of works, yet we are obliged to obey it as a rule of life.

2. Our obedience to the law of God must be perfect. The same obligation which man was under at first, to yield perfect obedience, remains still in force, though we are not able to perform it. The insolvency of man by the fall, did not cancel or disannul this debt. How much soever God may own and approve the sincerity of his people, which is all the perfection that fallen man can arrive at in this world; yet we must not suppose that hereby we fulfil the obligation which God, as a Lawgiver, has laid us under. This I the rather take notice of, that there may not be the least ground to suppose that we make void the law: we rather establish it, and assert the right which God has to that perfection of obedience which is due from us, though unable to perform it.

3. Our obedience must be perpetual, without backsliding from God, or the least remissness in our duty to him. There is no abatement or dispensation allowed, which may give countenance to the least defect

of this obedience. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will never forget thy precepts;' and, 'Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.'s—Moreover, this obedience is to be performed with the whole man, and in particular, by the soul, with the utmost intenseness, in all its powers and faculties. Accordingly, our understandings are to be rightly instructed, as to the matter and manner of performing it; our wills to be entirely subjected to the will of God; and our affections engaged in his service, being sanctified and excited by the Spirit, to the end that duty may be performed with delight, arising from the love which we bear to him whose servants we are. Our obedience is to be performed also with our bodies. The former includes that obedience more especially which is internal; this, that which is external. This is what is styled a lower sort of obedience; and if we rest here, it is far from being acceptable, as the apostle says that 'bodily exercise profiteth little.' Yet as the body is an instrument of the soul in acting, that service which is performed in it is absolutely necessary. Hence, all religious worship is to be engaged in with a becoming reverence which is external, as well as with that which is internal; without which the soul cannot be said to engage in any religious duties in a becoming manner.—Again, this obedience includes holiness and righteousness. The former of these respects more especially our duty to God, which, being a branch of religious worship, ought to be performed with a reverential fear of his divine Majesty, and a due regard to his infinite purity, and entire dedication and consecration of ourselves to him, as becomes those who are sanctified by his Spirit, and enabled to exercise all those graces whereby we may approve ourselves his faithful servants and subjects. The latter more especially respects those duties which we owe to men, in the various relations we stand in to them, and which are incumbent on us as enjoined by God.

II. The moral law is farther considered as having a promise of life annexed to it, and a threatening of death upon the breach of it. This is what is generally called the sanction annexed to the law. A law without a sanction would not be much regarded, especially by those who have not a due sense of their obligation to obedience. Persons are very much disposed to inquire, when a command is given, what the consequence of their obeying or disregarding it will be; and this being made known beforehand, is a strong motive to obedience. If God is pleased, out of his abundant grace, to encourage his people, by giving them to expect some blessings which he will bestow on those who obey him, it is, in some respect, necessary that his doing so should be known. But especially as punishment, in proportion to the nature of the crime, will be the consequence of disobedience, it is becoming the divine perfections to let it be known that the wages of sin is death. Now, this sanction was not only annexed to the moral law, but equally impressed on the nature of man, who could not but know that rebellion against God would be punished with a separation from him, and that all those miseries which it deserves would attend it, in proportion to its respective aggravation.

The Uses of the Moral Law

We have an account of the use of the moral law since the fall; and that either with respect to mankind in general, or the unregenerate and regenerate. Here it is observed that no man since the fall can attain righteousness and life by it; so that it is not to be used with that view. We may hence infer that this end might have been attained by man before the fall, according to the tenor of the covenant which he was under, the sum and substance of which was, that 'the man that doeth these things shall live by them.' Eternal life was promised to man in innocency; and he was then able to yield sinless obedience, which was the condition of his obtaining it. But it is impossible for

fallen man thus to obey. How perfect soever his obedience may be for the future, it is supposed, from the nature of the thing, that it cannot be sinless, after sin has been committed; and it would be a reflection on the justice and holiness of God, for us to conclude that he will accept of imperfect obedience, instead of perfect. It follows that a right to life is not to be expected from our imperfect obedience to the law; as the apostle says, 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified,'x in God's sight. In this respect our own righteousness is represented, not only as faulty and defective, but as altogether insufficient to procure an interest in the divine favour, or to exempt us from the punishment which is due to us for sin. It is one thing to say that eternal life is connected with obedience, so that no one can have the least ground to expect the former without the latter, and another thing to say that eternal life is founded upon obedience, or that it gives us a right and title to it. We are not to conclude, however, that the law is of no use. For,

1. It is of use to all men, in several respects. It informs us of the holy nature and will of God, and of our duty to him. This is the first idea we have of a law, which signifies more especially a doctrine; and, as the grand scope of it respects our being taught what we are obliged to as commanded by a lawgiver, it signifies a law. The divine perfections are eminently stamped on it in very legible characters: his sovereignty, as having a right to demand obedience; his holiness in the matter of it, and in the obligation it lays us under to be 'holy in all conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy;'z and therefore this perfection is set forth in those threatenings which are annexed to it, whereby 'the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' As the law is designed to discover our secret faults, that we may be humbled for them, and a multitude of sins may be prevented; so it sets forth, not only the holiness, but the goodness of God. Indeed, there is nothing enjoined

in it as our duty, but what includes some advantage. Thus the psalmist describes it as 'more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb;' and adds, that 'in keeping thereof there is great reward.'b

Again, the moral law is of use to all men, as it binds them to perform that which is enjoined in it as matter of duty. This is another idea contained in a law, namely, it is that which binds the consciences of men, that so we may not vainly and presumptuously conclude, to our own destruction, that we may live as we list, or say, Who is Lord over us? It is a great instance of the care and goodness of God, that he has taken this method to prevent that ruin which would arise from our withdrawing the allegiance which we owe to him, and to lay us under the strictest engagement to seek after that blessedness which is connected with obedience to him.

Further, we are convinced by the moral law of our inability to keep its precepts, and of the sinful pollution of our nature, hearts, and lives, as an expedient to humble us under the sense of sin and misery. The law being spiritual, we are convinced by it that 'we are carnal, and sold under sin,' as the apostle expresses it; and he also says, 'I had not known sin, but by the law.'d When we consider ourselves as being obliged to yield perfect obedience, and compare our hearts and lives with the law which requires this, we shall see nothing but holiness and purity on the one hand, and a wretched mass of corruption and impurity on the other. God demands perfect obedience, while we are unable of ourselves to perform any obedience; and our best duties being attended with many imperfections, we are led to be humbled under a sense of sin, whatever thoughts we formerly had of ourselves. When 'the law enters, sin will abound;' and if we were apprehensive that 'we were alive,' as the apostle expresses it, 'without the law, when the

commandment comes, sin revives and we die,'f and see ourselves exposed to the miseries threatened against those who violate it.

Hence arises a clear sight of the need which persons have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience. When we find that we are condemned by the law, and that righteousness is not to be attained by our own obedience to it, we are led to see our need of seeking it elsewhere; and when the gospel gives us a discovery of Christ, as ordained by God to procure for us righteousness, or a right to eternal life by his obedience, we see the need we have of faith in him, whereby we derive from him that which could not be attained by our own conformity to the law.

2. The moral law is of use in particular to the unregenerate. We considered, under the former Head, that it is of use to all men, among whom the unregenerate are included, as it gives them a discovery of the pollution and guilt of sin; and now we are led to inquire into the consequence of this. Sin may be charged on the conscience, and the guilt of it make it very uneasy, so that a person may apprehend himself under the condemning sentence of the law; and yet he may receive no saving advantage. He may have a sight of sin, and not be truly humbled for it or turned from it. In some, corruption is excited by conviction; and the soul grows worse than it was before. Thus the apostle says, 'Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.' Others, when filled with a dread of the wrath of God, are inclined to stretch out their hand against him, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty; resolving, some way or other, to disentangle themselves, though, by such conduct, they render their condition much worse. These are compared to 'a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord;'h or, as our Saviour says concerning Paul, before his conversion, 'they kick against the pricks.' Every step they take to free

themselves from the horrible pit and miry clay into which they are cast, sinks them deeper into it. Others are convinced of sin by the law, and, at the same time, despair of obtaining mercy. They complain with Cain, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear;'k or, as it is in the margin, 'Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven.' These see themselves lost, or condemned by the law; but have no sight of Christ as coming into the world to save sinners, or, at least, to save the chief of them. The wound is opened; but there are no healing medicines applied. There are others also, whose condition is no less dangerous, in whom 'the wound is healed slightly,' who 'say, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.' They are, indeed, convinced of sin; and their conviction is attended sometimes with an external humiliation, arising from the dread of God's judgments. This effect it had in Pharaohm and Ahab. They are willing also to part with some particular sins, while they indulge others, that by this partial reformation they may free themselves from the condemning sentence of the law. But all this is to no purpose; sin gains strength, and the guilt of it is still increased. This is a wrong method to flee from the wrath to come. Hence, when convictions of sin have a good issue, in inciting those who experience them to flee from it, they have recourse to Christ. This is called a being driven to Christ; by which we are to understand that they see themselves under an unavoidable necessity of going to him, as not being able to find peace or solid rest elsewhere. But as this effect is in a peculiar manner ascribed to the gospel, the law being only the remote means of it, I would rather express it by their being drawn to him, or encouraged by the grace contained in the gospel, to close with him by faith; and then the work is rendered effectual, and convictions end in a saving conversion. But if it be otherwise, or they apply themselves to indirect means to ease themselves of the burden which lies on them, they are farther described as left inexcusable, and still remaining under the curse and condemning sentence of the law.

3. The moral law is of use to the regenerate. In considering this, it may be observed that there is something supposed in the Answer which treats on this subject, namely, that they who believe in Christ are delivered from the law as a covenant of works. This is the only sense in which we are to understand those scriptures which speak of believers as 'not being under the law,' and as being 'dead to the law,'p having been 'redeemed from its curse.' The moral law is to be considered in two respects, as a rule of life, and so no one is delivered from it; or as a covenant of works, in the same sense in which it was given to man in innocency, the condition of which was his performing perfect obedience, in default whereof he was liable to a sentence of death. In the latter respect a believer is delivered from it. This deliverance is the great privilege which believers are made partakers of in the gospel; which sets forth Christ as our surety, performing perfect obedience for us, and enduring the curse we were liable to. Hence, though the law was a covenant of works to him, it ceases to be so to those who are interested in him. Accordingly, it is added, that they are hereby neither justified nor condemned. They are not justified by it; for the apostle says, 'By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.'r Justification is to be expected only from him who is 'the Lord our Righteousness;' 'in whom all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and glory.'t Nor are they condemned by the law; for that they should be so is inconsistent with a justified state. Thus the apostle says, 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' We must distinguish, however, between a believer's actions being condemned by the law, or his being reproved by it, and laid under conviction, for sins daily committed; and his being in a condemned state, according to the sentence of the law. We are far from denying that a believer is under an obligation to condemn or abhor himself, that is, to confess that he deserves to be condemned by God, for the sins which he commits; for were God to mark these, or to punish him according to the demerit of them, he could not

stand. Thus the psalmist says, though speaking of himself as a believer, and consequently in a justified state, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.'x This a believer may say, and yet not conclude himself to be in a state of condemnation; inasmuch as he sees himself by faith to have ground to determine that he is delivered from the law, and so not condemned by it, as a covenant of works.

It is observed, on the other hand, in the Answer under our present consideration, that the moral law is of use to a believer, in those respects in which it is of use to all men. He is hence laid under the strictest obligation to perform all the duties which we owe to God and man, and to be humbled for those defects which he has reason to charge himself with, which call for the daily exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

But as to the special use of the moral law to those who are regenerate, as distinguished from all others, it is said to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring its curse in their stead and for their good. Christ is said to be 'the end of the law for righteousness;' that is, he has answered the end and demand of the law, by performing that obedience which it requires, and thereby procuring a justifying righteousness, which is applied to every one who believes. This lays them under a superadded obligation to obedience, peculiar to them as believers; so that they are engaged to the practice of universal holiness, not only from the consideration of the sovereignty of God commanding them in common with all others, but from 'the love of Christ,' which does as it were 'constrain them' to obey.z Hereby also they are said to be provoked to more thankfulness, as they have greater inducements to it than any others; and this gratitude cannot be better expressed than by the utmost care to approve themselves to him in all things. The

grace of God, therefore, is so far from leading to licentiousness, that all who have experienced it are put by it upon the exercise of that obedience which they owe to. God as their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and to Christ as their gracious Redeemer, whom they love entirely, and therefore keep his commandments.

Strictures on Antinomianism

I cannot but here take occasion to observe, not only with dislike, but a just indignation, how some, under a pretence of religion, sap the very foundation of it, while they frequently make mention of the gospel, and the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, and at the same time abuse it, not only by practising but pleading for licentiousness. The Epicureans were libertines among the heathen, and the Sadducees among the Jews; but these were vile and profligate out of principle, either denying the being of a God, or disowning his perfections as well as future rewards and punishments; so that it is no wonder that they had no regard to the divine law. But I want words to express the wickedness of those who pervert the gospel of Christ, so as to make it appear to exempt them from the obligation which all are under to universal obedience. The apostle had to do with some such in his day; and he represents them as saying, 'Is the law sin?' a question which may be paraphrased, 'Since we are delivered from the condemning sentence of the law, may we not take encouragement thence to sin?' or, as he elsewhere brings them in as saying, 'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?'b To both these questions he replies, with the greatest detestation, 'God forbid.' Afterwards, in an early age of the church, the Nicolaitans and Gnostics, and among them, the Valentinians, held these pernicious opinions, and encouraged themselves in the practice of the greatest immoralities.d Augustin speaks also of the Aerians and Eunomians, who lived in his time, who pretended that

any who persisted in the vilest crimes, would receive no detriment, provided they adhered to the sentiments which they advanced. There are many likewise in later ages, whose sentiments have been, in this respect, subversive of all religion; and from their denying the obligation we are under to yield obedience to the law of God, are justly called Antinomians.

But that we may not appear to be unjust to the characters of men, let it be considered that we are not here speaking of the charge of Antinomianism, which some who defend or oppose the doctrines of grace bring against each other, supposing that their respective sentiments lead to licentiousness. The Papists and Pelagians pretend, though unjustly, that the doctrine of predestination, efficacious grace, and the final perseverance of the saints, is liable to this charge; while they, on the other hand, lay themselves open to the same charge, by advancing doctrines which have the most pernicious tendency, as subversive of practical godliness, in various instances,—particularly by their asserting that God, in the gospel-covenant, dispenses with imperfect obedience instead of perfect, and that this is only such as we are able to perform without the aids of divine grace. We leave each party, however, to defend their scheme from this imputation. As to others who are more especially known by the character of Antinomians, they are of two sorts. The first are such as openly maintain that the moral law is not a rule of life in any sense; that good works are not to be insisted on as having any reference to salvation; that, therefore, if persons presume, as they, according to them, ought to do, that Christ died for them, and that they were justified before they had a being, they may live in the practice of the greatest immoralities, or give countenance to those who do so, without entertaining the least doubt of their salvation; and that it is a preposterous thing, for those who thus presumptuously conclude themselves to be justified, to confess themselves guilty of sin, since to

do so would be to deny that they are in a justified state,—or in any sense to pray for the pardon of sin, since to do this would argue that sin is not forgiven. Nor can they, with any tolerable degree of patience, entertain the least exhortations to practical godliness; because they pretend that they are exempted from the obligation to perform any branch of it, by their not being under the law. Nay, some of them have been so impudent and daringly wicked as to assert that, if they should commit murder, adultery, or any other crimes of a similar nature, even this would be no bar in the way of their salvation; and that the most vile sins which can be committed, will do them no hurt, nor in the least affect their eternal state. I have, indeed, sometimes thought that this representation of Antinomianism was only a consequence deduced from some absurd doctrines which have been maintained; or that so much of hell could never put on the mask or show of religion in any degree; and that this character belonged to none but those who are open and professed atheists. But though my lot has not been cast among persons of so vile a character, yet I have been informed by those whose souls have been grieved with their conversation, that there are some in the world who thus set themselves against the law of God.

There are others, indeed, who are styled Antinomians, whose conversation is blameless, and are not therefore to be ranked with these men, or judged Antinomians in practice; who nevertheless, do great disservice to the truth, and, it may be, give occasion to some to be licentious, by advancing unguarded expressions which will admit of a double construction, without condescending to explain some bold positions which they occasionally lay down. Thus, when they maintain eternal justification, without considering it as an immanent act in God, or as his secret determination not to impute sin to those who are given to Christ, but ascribe that to it which is only to be applied to justification, as it is the result of God's revealed will, in

which respect it is said to be by faith; and when they encourage persons from hence to conclude that their state is safe, and maintain that it is the duty of every one to believe that he is thus justified; they certainly advance positions which have a tendency to lead some out of the way of truth and holiness, whether they design so or not. Again, when others speak diminutively of good works, as though they were in no sense necessary to salvation, because they are not the matter of our justification; some may take occasion to think that they may be saved without them.—Further, when others deny the law to be a rule of life, or assert that believers have nothing to do with it; though, it may be, they mean nothing else but that it is not that rule according to which God proceeds in justifying his people or in giving them a right to eternal life, or that a believer is not under the law as a covenant of works; yet many would be ready to think that their words had a different meaning, and so be led out of the way by them, how far soever this might be from their intention.—Moreover, if a person seems studiously to avoid confessing sin or praying for forgiveness, some would be ready to judge of his sentiments by his practice; and certainly our denying either of these to be a duty in any sense, is not only contrary to scripture, but inconsistent with the humility and faith which are essential to practical godliness. Or when persons deny that self-examination is a duty, and speak of all marks and evidences of grace, though never so just and agreeable to the scripture-account of them, as legal, or as a low way of a person's coming to the knowledge of himself, or suppose that these marks and evidences are unnecessary, as being inconsistent with the Spirit's testimony; this has a tendency to lead to presumption, which is a degree of licentiousness.—Again, when they assert that God is not angry with his people for their sins, nor, in any sense, punishes them for them, without distinguishing between fatherly chastisements, and the stroke of vindictive justice, or the external and sensible effects of that hatred which God cannot but exercise against sin, and

his casting them out of a justified state; such doctrines lead some persons to licentiousness, whatever be the secret meaning of those who advance them. We have an instance of this, as the historian observes, in Agricola, who was Luther's townsman, and great admirer. He, as is probable, did not thoroughly understand what Luther maintained concerning the subserviency of the law to the gospel, and its having no place in the justification of a sinner; or else, from some unguarded expressions which Luther was sometimes apt to make use of, this friend of his took occasion to advance some Antinomian tenets, namely, that repentance ought not to be urged from the consideration of the breach of the law, that the gospel ought to be preached to sinners before they are brought under conviction by the law, and that, how scandalous and debauched soever persons be in their lives, yet, if they do but believe the promises of the gospel, they shall be justified. In these doctrines, Agricola was followed by a party of men. Accordingly Antinomianism is said to have taken its rise, in this part of the world, from that time. Luther, on the other hand, was forced to take a great deal of pains to rectify his mistakes; which, though it tended to Agricola's conviction, yet did not put a stop to the spread of his errors, which he had before propagated.

As for those who were charged with Antinomianism in England, in the last century, such as Dr. Crisp, Eaton, Saltmarsh, Town, and others, whatever their design might be, and how much soever they were remote from the charge of Antinomianism in practice; though it be alleged by some in their vindication that the principal thing they had in view was to bear their testimony against the prevailing doctrine of Arminianism, which was studiously propagated by some persons of great character and influence in the nation; yet we cannot but conclude that they would have done more service to the cause of truth, had they been more cautious in explaining their sentiments, and saved those who had favourable thoughts of them, in other

respects, the trouble of producing some expressions out of their writings, to convince the world that they did not hold those dangerous notions which were charged upon them. It is too evident to be denied, that many have understood their opinions in the worst sense; who have hence been ready to charge the most important doctrines of the gospel with leading to licentiousness. One result has been, that some are more sparing in defending those truths which ought to be insisted on and explained, though in words more intelligible and unexceptionable.

THE JUDICIAL AND THE CEREMONIAL LAW

QUESTION. XCVIII. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

ANSWER. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, which were delivered by the voice of God upon mount Sinai, and written by him in two tables of stone, and are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; the four first commandments containing our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man.

HAVING considered the moral law, as written on the heart of man at first, and the knowledge of it as in some degree attainable by all who exercise their reasoning powers; we are, in this and some following Answers, led to consider that epitome or abstract of it which was given to the Israelites by the voice of God upon mount Sinai, which is contained in the Ten Commandments. But as we are considering this instance of divine condescension to them, it may not be reckoned altogether foreign to our present design, to give some brief account

of those other laws which God gave, together with the moral law, most of which were communicated from mount Sinai. We may observe, therefore, that, together with the moral law, there were several forensic or judicial laws given by God for the government of the people of Israel, which more especially respected their civil rights. And there were other laws which had a more immediate subserviency to their attaining the knowledge of those things which related to the way of salvation by the promised Messiah, which are more fully revealed in the gospel. These are what we call the ceremonial law. Both are to be considered before we come to speak concerning the moral law, as summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

The Judicial Law

We shall speak first concerning the judicial law. It cannot be supposed that so great a people, so much interested in the care of God, to whom he condescended to be their king, should be without a body of laws for their government. Accordingly, there were some given them by him, which were founded in and agreeable to the law of nature and nations; which all well-governed states observe to this day, such as that murder should be punished with death, and that theft should be punished with restitution or some other punishments which may best tend to deter men from it. Moreover, there were other judicial laws given to Israel, which had a more immediate tendency to promote their civil welfare, as a nation distinguished from all others in the world; which laws expired when their civil polity was extinct. These were the following:—

1. Such as tended to prevent the alienation of inheritances from the respective families to which they were at first given. God commanded, that if a man died without children, his brother should

marry his widow to raise up seed to him, to inherit his estate and name.

2. If an Israelite had become poor, and was obliged to sell his land for the payment of his debts, the purchaser was to admit any of his family to redeem it; or, if they could not, he was, nevertheless, to restore the land at the year of jubilee, which was every fiftieth year.

3. If an Hebrew servant was sold for the payment of debts, which he could not otherwise discharge, his master was obliged to release him after six years' service. But if the servant chose to stay with his master longer than that time, out of the love he bare to him; then he was to have his ear bored, as a token that he should serve him, without being subject to the aforesaid laws, which made provision for his discharge after a certain number of years.k

4. The land was to lie untilled, and the vineyards and olive-yards were to be free for every one to come and eat of the fruit of them every seventh year. This law was designed more especially for the relief of the poor amongst them, who had no distinct inheritance of their own.

5. They were prohibited from taking usury of an Israelite, though they might of a stranger. The reason of this law might be that they might exercise brotherly kindness and charity to one another, in which sense the law is in force to this day; especially when the poor borrow money to supply themselves with necessary food, in which case it is now unlawful to take usury. Or the reason of it was, that the Israelites lived upon their farms or cattle, by which they seldom got more than what was a necessary provision for their families; so that the paying of usury whenever they were necessitated to borrow money, would have proved their ruin in the end. Hence they were not to take usury of an Israelite, but of a stranger they might; because

these enriched themselves by merchandise, and were gainers in a way of trade by what they borrowed.

6. All the males were to come up to Jerusalem, to appear before God, and perform public worship in the temple three times a-year, namely, at the solemn festivals,—the passover, pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles.

7. Six cities of refuge were appointed for those to flee to for protection, who killed any one by accident; though a near kinsman, as an avenger of blood, might kill the manslayer before he came to one of these cities. The design of this law was to induce them to take care that none might lose their lives through inadvertency. And there was provision made in these cites for the manslayer to dwell safely; whereby a just difference was put between such an one, and a wilful murderer. Thus concerning the judicial laws.

The Ceremonial Law

We now proceed to consider the ceremonial laws which were given them, the design of which was to lead them into the knowledge of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, then to come. These may be considered under six heads, which we shall briefly notice.

1. It was ordained that all their males should be circumcised. Circumcision was designed to be a visible mark put on the church, whom God had set apart for himself, that they might be distinguished from the world. But the principal design of it was, that it might be a sign or seal of the blessings of the covenant of grace, in which God promised that he would be 'a God to them;' and by observing this rite, they were to own themselves as his people.

2. There were various ways, whereby persons were reckoned unclean, and ordinances appointed for their cleansing. They were rendered unclean by eating those birds, beasts, fishes, and creeping things, which God had pronounced unclean, and not designed for food. Moreover, they were polluted by touching the dead bodies of such unclean birds, beasts, fishes, or creeping things.r Again, some diseases, incident to the bodies of men, which were more than ordinarily noisome, rendered them unclean, such as the issue, leprosy, &c. Besides, the clothes they wore, the houses they lived in, the beds on which they lay, their ovens, and the vessels used in eating or drinking, were, on several accounts, deemed unclean; and accordingly were either to be cleansed or destroyed, otherwise the owners of them would be polluted by them.t This law was designed to signify how odious and abominable sin, which is a moral pollution, is in God's account, who is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' We might also observe that there were various ordinances appointed for their cleansing, in order to which, several sacrifices were to be offered, and divers washings with water.x The former signified the way of our being delivered from sin by the blood of Christ, as the procuring cause of forgiveness; the latter, our being cleansed from sin by the internal, powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, in regeneration and sanctification.z

3. There were holy places, such as the tabernacle and temple, with their vessels and ornaments. The tabernacle was erected according to the pattern which God showed to Moses in the mount; and was so framed that it might be taken to pieces, and removed from place to place, as often as the host of Israel changed their station in the wilderness. Accordingly, there were Levites appointed to take it down and set it up; and also waggons, with oxen, to carry it, excepting those parts of it which belonged to the holiest of all, which were to be carried on men's shoulders.b The temple was the fixed

place appointed for public worship at Jerusalem; first built by Solomon, and afterwards rebuilt by Zerubbabel. Both this and the tabernacle signified that God would dwell in the midst of his people, and accept that solemn and instituted worship which was to be performed by his church in all ages. The temple was designed to be a type of the incarnation of the Son of God, who is styled 'Emmanuel, God with us;' and who, in allusion to it, calls his body a temple.' Moreover, the courts of the tabernacle and temple, and the ministry performed in them, had each its respective signification annexed to it. That in which the priests came daily to minister, wherein gifts and sacrifices were offered, pre-figured Christ's offering himself a sacrifice upon earth, for the sins of his people. And the inner court, which was the holiest of all, into which none but the high priest was to enter, and that with blood and incense, signified Christ's 'entering into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us.'d

As for the vessels of the tabernacle and temple, some of these were in the first court, which is also called 'the sanctuary; in which was the candlestick, the table, and the show-bread,' the laver and the altar;f all which were designed for types. The candlestick signified the church, and the preaching the gospel therein; whereby light is held forth to the world. The show-bread set up, signified the communion which the members of the church have with Christ, and with one another;h as he styles himself the 'bread of life,' or, 'the bread of God, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.' The laver signified that, when we draw nigh to God, our persons and our services ought to be pure and holy. To this the apostle alludes, when he says, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' The altar, which was holy, and sanctified the gift that the high-priest offered on it,l so that 'every thing that touched it was holy,' signified that the divine nature of Christ added

an infinite worth to what he did in the human, in which he offered himself a sacrifice to God. These were the vessels in the outer court. —Those in the inward court, or holiest of all, 'in which were the golden censer, the ark of the covenant, and the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat,'n were a symbol and type of God's special presence with his people, which is their glory, or of the Son of God's dwelling with us in our nature. The mercy-seat, which was placed over the ark, signified that the mercy of God was displayed to sinners through Christ. The cherubim of glory with their wings spread, overshadowing and looking down upon the mercy-seat, signified that the angels behold and admire the stupendous work of our redemption. The altar of incense, and the golden censer, were types of the intercession of Christ for his people; and the fragrancy of the incense typified the acceptableness of that intercession in the sight of God. There were, besides, three more things in the holiest of all, which are particularly mentioned. One was 'the pot of manna,' which was miraculously preserved from corruption throughout their generations, as a memorial of the bread which God had fed them with in the wilderness, and a type of Christ, the bread of life, who was to come down from heaven.p There was also Aaron's rod, which was preserved in memory of the wonders which were wrought by it in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. It is said also to have 'blossomed and yielded almonds;' which seemed to typify the flourishing state of the gospel, which is called, 'the rod of God's strength.'r Moreover, the two tables of the law were put into the ark, whereby the exceeding holiness of the law was signified, and also that it should be fulfilled and magnified by Christ, when he came to dwell among us. Thus we have given a brief account of the holy vessels of the temple and the tabernacle.

We might have added that there were various ornaments of the temple and the tabernacle. They were adorned with silver, gold, and

precious stones, carved, and curious needle-work; which rendered them exceedingly rich and beautiful. The temple, in particular, was the wonder of the world, far surpassing all other buildings, either before or since. Its splendour may be supposed to shadow forth the spiritual beauty and glory of the gospel-church, and of the heavenly state, in which the church shall be brought to its utmost perfection.t Thus concerning those holy places, which were immediately designed for worship.

There were other holy places, such as the land of Canaan, which was styled 'the holy land,' while the inhabitants of it were called 'a holy nation,' or 'the people of his holiness.' As this was a place where God gave them rest, and a settlement, after forty years' travel in the wilderness, it was a type of that rest which the church was to expect from Christ under the gospel.x Moreover, Jerusalem was an holy city; because thither the tribes went up to worship,z and God was present with them there.

4. There were laws which respected those whom God had appointed to be ministers in holy things. These were the Priests; the Levites, who were to assist the former in some parts of their office; but especially the High-priest, who was the chief or head of them all, and who is considered as an eminent type in several respects of Christ's priestly office. There were also various ceremonies instituted, which were observed in the consecration of them. In particular, they were to be washed with water;c ablution with which was a rite used in the consecration of persons and things, and signified that they who ministered in holy things should be holy in their conversation. Moreover, there wore several garments to be made and put on them, which are styled 'holy,' and designed 'for glory and for beauty.' These signified the dignity and holiness of Christ's priesthood. In particular, the breastplate, adorned with precious stones, on which

the names, of the children of Israel were engraven, which was worn only by the high-priest, and with which he was to go into the holy of holies, signified the concern of Christ's people in the execution of his priestly office, and his representing them when appearing in the presence of God for them. Again, the priests were anointed with the precious ointment compounded for that purpose; whereby they were set apart or consecrated to minister in the priest's office, and were types of Christ. On this account he is said to be 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.'f

5. There were laws respecting the temple-service, or the gifts and sacrifices which were to be offered there. There were many gifts presented or devoted to God; some of which were designed, not for sacrifice, but to testify their acknowledgment of God's right to all we are and have. Among these, the first ripe fruits were offered, or presented, as gifts to him. As for those things which were designed for sacrifice, they were offered, and their blood poured forth on the altar; which signified the expiation of sin by the blood of Jesus.h That part of the high-priest's office, which respected his carrying the blood with the incense, into the holiest of all, was a type of Christ's 'entering into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God' for his people.

6. There were laws which respected the holy times or festivals appointed for solemn worship. Some of these festivals were monthly, as the new moons; others annual, as the passover. The latter was not only a commemorative sign of their having been formerly delivered from the sword of the destroying angel, when he slew the first-born of Egypt; but it typified our deliverance from the stroke of vindictive justice, on which account Christ is called 'our passover.' There was also the feast of harvest, in which the first-fruits were presented to God as an acknowledgment that he has a right to the best of our time

and service. There was likewise the feast of tabernacles; which not only called to remembrance their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, but was an acknowledgment that we are strangers and sojourners upon earth, and was also a type of Christ, who was expected to come and pitch his tabernacle among us in his incarnation.—There are many other laws, both judicial and ceremonial, which I might have mentioned; but as these things are only spoken of occasionally, in connection with their having been imparted by God to Israel, by the hand of Moses, from mount Sinai, about the same time that the ten commandments were given,l we shall add no more concerning them.

The Legislation from Horeb

We proceed to consider what is particularly mentioned in this Answer, concerning God's giving the abstract of the moral law contained in the ten commandments. This was delivered by a voice; in respect to which God is said to have 'talked with them face to face.' But at the same time there were many ensigns of terrible majesty attending the delivery of this law. 'The mountain burned with fire.'n There were 'lightnings, thunderings, and earthquakes, and the sound of a trumpet, that waxed louder and louder; which made the people, and Moses himself, exceedingly tremble.' There was also the ministry of augels, who performed that part of the work which they were employed in on this solemn occasion. This is described in a majestic style, becoming the subject insisted on, when it is said, 'The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law.'p Their ministry might probably consist in their forming the thunder, lightnings, and tempest. Yet the law was not originally from them, but given immediately by God. The design of its being given in such an awful and majestic way, was that God might hereby set forth his greatness, and fill them with a

reverential fear of him; and to intimate that, if they did not yield obedience to him, they were to expect nothing else but to be consumed by the fire of his jealousy. It was an intimation, however, not that he designed to destroy them, but that he designed to prove them; as it is said, that 'his fear might be before their faces, that they should not sin.' What we may farther observe is, that, after God had delivered the ten commandments by words, he wrote them with his own finger on two tables of stone. In these ten commandments, written on the two tables, the whole moral law is summarily comprehended. This is particularly explained in several following Answers.

RULES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

QUESTION XCIX. What rules are to he observed for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?

ANSWER. For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed,

I. That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience for ever, so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.

This implies that, how unable soever we are to yield perfect obedience, yet it does not cease to be a duty; and that, though some sins are smaller than others, yet the least is contrary to the law of God, and therefore not to be committed by us.

II. That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers, of the soul, as well as words, works, and gestures.

This denotes that obedience ought to be performed in a spiritual manner. God is to be worshipped with our spirits; without which, all external modes of worship will avail nothing. Nevertheless, external worship is to be performed and expressed by words, works, and gestures; and it therefore supposes that our understandings are rightly-informed, or that we do not worship an unknown God,—that our wills express a readiness to obey him out of choice, and without the least reluctance,—and that our affections must centre in him, we performing the duties incumbent on us, with the utmost delight and pleasure.

III. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden, in several commandments.

Thus covetousness is forbidden in the tenth commandment. Yet as by this sin the world is loved more than God, it is a breach of the first commandment, and as such is styled 'idolatry.'

IV. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.

Thus the fifth commandment requires us to honour our superiors. It hence forbids our reproaching them, or doing any thing dishonourable or injurious to them. The eighth commandment forbids stealing; and it also requires the contrary duty, namely, that we should labour for a competent maintenance, that we may not be

exposed to any temptation to steal. Thus it is said, 'Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.'t Moreover, as there is a promise of long life annexed to the fifth commandment, this promise includes the contrary threatening to those that break it. Thus it is said, 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.' On the other hand, whatever threatening is annexed to any commandment, the contrary promise is included, and belongs to those who repent of, abhor, and turn from the sin forbidden. Thus it is said, 'At what instant I speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.'

V. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what be commands, is always our duty, and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.

Thus sin is, under no pretence, to be committed. Accordingly, Moses, when he was in a prosperous condition in Pharaoh's court, though he might have pretended that his greatness, and the advantages which Israel might have expected from it, would be an excuse for his continuing to enjoy the pleasures of sin there; yet he was sensible that these considerations would not exempt him from guilt. Hence, 'he forsook Egypt, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin.'—Again, what God commands is always a duty; so that there is no season of life in which it ceases to be so, for example, praying, reading, hearing the word, &c. Yet these duties are not actually to be engaged in every moment of our lives. It is always our duty to visit the sick, comfort the

afflicted, defend the oppressed; but such objects do not always present themselves to us, so as to render it our duty at all times.

VI. That, under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded, together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

Thus, according to the fourth commandment, it is our duty to sanctify the Sabbath, and consequently to avoid every thing which may be a means or occasion of our breach of it. In the sixth commandment murder is forbidden; so is likewise all sinful passion or anger with our brethren without a cause. In the seventh, adultery is forbidden; so is also 'looking on a woman to lust after her.'a And as we are obliged to 'abstain' from every sin forbidden, so 'from all appearance of evil,' or what may be an occasion of it. Thus 'fathers' are 'not to provoke their children to wrath;'c and according to the moral reason of the command, we are not to provoke any one to wrath, or do that which may excite their corruptions.

VII. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavour that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.

Not to endeavour to prevent sin in others, is, in effect, to commit it ourselves. Thus Eli contracted the guilt of his son's crimes, by not endeavouring to prevent them. Persons are said to 'hate their brethren in their hearts' who 'do not rebuke them, but suffer sin upon them.' And Abraham is commended for his having 'commanded his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord.'e It is hence a duty for parents to instruct their children in the ways of God.'

VIII. That, in what is commanded to others, we are bound according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them, and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.

That we are to be helpful to others, in that which is their duty, appears from our obligation to endeavour that God may be glorified. Hence, we are, to our utmost, to promote their faith and joy in Christ. Thus the apostle says, 'We are helpers of your joy.' On the other hand, we ought to take care that we do not partake with others in their sin. Thus the psalmist says, 'When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.'h

THE PREFACE AND SUM OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

QUESTION C. What special things are we to consider in the Ten Commandments?

ANSWER. We are to consider in the Ten Commandments, the preface, the substance of the commandments themselves, and several reasons annexed to some of them, the more to enforce them.

QUESTION CI. What is the preface to the Commandments?

ANSWER. The preface to the Commandments is contained in these words, 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,' wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being Jehovah, the eternal, immutable, and almighty God, having his being in and of

himself, and giving being to all his words and works; and that he is a God in covenant, as with Israel of old, so with all his people; who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thraldom; and that therefore we are bound to take him for our God alone, and to keep all his commandments.

QUESTION CII. What is the sum of the four Commandments, which contain our duty to God?

ANSWER. The sum of the four Commandments containing our duty to God, is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind.

THESE Answers contain some things necessary to be observed.

I. The substance of each commandment is to be considered by us; or what it is which God enjoins or forbids in it. We find that every commandment contains a distinct head of duty, and is to be explained according to the rules laid down in the foregoing Answer. We find also that some of them have reasons annexed to them; and it is an instance of God's condescending goodness, that, besides the consideration of our obligation to obey whatever he commands because it is his will, we may have other motives to enforce obedience. What these reasons or motives are, will be considered in their proper place.

II. Here is a general preface, which God has set before the commandments, and which contains several motives to obedience. Some of these, indeed, were peculiarly adapted to the Israelites, whereby they were put in mind of their late deliverance out of the land of Egypt. Yet if we consider the moral reason of the preface, as

it, together with the matter of the commandments to which it is prefixed, may be applied to God's people in all ages, we shall find that it extends farther than to show the obligation which Israel was under, as delivered from the Egyptian bondage.

1. We observe, then, that God reveals himself as the Lord, whose name alone is Jehovah, a God of infinite sovereignty and almighty power, as well as faithful to his promises. Hence, whatever he obliges us to do, or gives us encouragement to expect from him, we have the highest motive and inducement to do and expect.

2. He styles himself his people's God; and so puts them in mind of that relation which they stand in to him, as the result of the covenant of grace, in which he gives them a warrant to lay claim to those spiritual blessings which he bestows on a people nigh unto him. This is considered as a farther obligation to obedience. The covenant of grace respects either the external dispensation of it which belongs to the church in general, that is, to all who are made partakers of the glad tidings of salvation which are contained in the gospel; or else that particular claim which believers have to the saving blessings which are made over to them in it, which respects all those graces which God is pleased to give his people here, and that glory which he has reserved for them hereafter; and this must certainly be reckoned the highest motive to duty.

3. As to God's having brought Israel 'out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,' it is to be extended farther than that particular providence, which was then fresh in their memories. It denotes all the deliverances which God is pleased to vouchsafe to his people, whether temporal or spiritual,—in particular, that which was procured for us by Christ, from the bondage and thraldom of sin and Satan, the condemning sentence of the law, together with the

salvation which is inseparably connected with it. This deliverance is to be improved by us as an inducement to yield universal obedience to all God's commandments.

There are some, indeed, who think that we should call the preface a part of the first commandment; and so the meaning is, 'Thou art to know, and practically consider, that I am the Lord thy God,' as containing the affirmative part of the commandment; and then follows the negative, 'Thou shalt have no other gods.' Or they suppose the sentence to be a reason annexed to this commandment in particular. But it seems most probable that it is a preface to all the commandments; and that, accordingly, it is to be applied as a motive to enforce obedience to every one of them.

III. We have farther an account of the sum of the four commandments which contain our duty to God. Here we may observe, that the sum of all the commandments is love. This is what the apostle intends, when he says, 'The end of the commandment is charity,' or rather 'love,' as it ought to be rendered. Accordingly, he says, 'He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.'k This love hath either God or man for its object, and comprises the duties which we owe to God or man. All these duties are reduced to this general Head, that hereby we may understand that obedience, whether it be to God or man, is to be performed with delight. Without this, it will be a burden to us and unacceptable to him, who has obliged us to love him and keep his commandments, because he first loved us.

These commandments, as they respect our duty to God and man, are comprised in two tables, which are to be divided according to their respective objects. Some ancient writers, indeed, have very injudiciously supposed that the five first commandments belong to the first table, and the others to the second; and so make an equal

division of them. The Papists, on the other hand, have assigned but three to the first table, making the second commandment an appendix to the first; and, that the number ten may be complete, they divide the tenth commandment into two. The reason urged by them for this matter, will be considered in its proper place. We are bound to conclude, however, that the first four commandments contain the duties of the first table; and are those which respect the duties which we owe immediately to God. These are to be performed, as our Saviour says, 'with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind.' This is an idea superior to that which is contained in the duty we owe to man. The six last commandments contain the duties of the second table, of which our neighbour is the more immediate object. That this division of the commandments is just, appears from what the apostle says when, speaking concerning the duty contained in the fifth commandment, 'Honour thy father and mother,' he calls it 'the first commandment with promise.'m Now, it is not the first commandment which has a promise annexed to it, since the second commandment contains a promise of mercy to 'thousands of them that love God and keep his commandments;' nor is it the first of the ten commandments. The apostle, therefore, can intend nothing by calling it 'the first commandment with promise,' but that it is the first of the second table.

Now, that we are considering the commandments as contained in two tables, and distinguished with respect to their more immediate object, we may farther observe that, though the duties of both tables are enjoined by the authority of God, and consequently are equally binding, so that the obedience which is acceptable in his sight must be so extensive that we must 'have respect to all his commandments;' yet the duties of the first table, in which we have to do with God as the more immediate object of them, are to be considered as acts of religious worship, in performing which we not only confess our

obligation to obey him, but adore and magnify his divine perfections as the highest end and reason of our obedience. This feature is not included in the idea of the duties which we owe to our neighbour, as contained in the commandments of the second table. These, indeed, are to be religiously observed, not from any circumstance respecting our neighbour, but as duties which we perform in obedience to God.o —Again, though the principal and most excellent branch of religion consists in our obeying the commandments of the first table; yet our obedience is not only defective, but unacceptable to God, if we neglect to perform those of the second. On the other hand, the performance of the duties of the second table is not sufficient to denominate a person a religious man, who lives in the neglect of those which are contained in the first.—Further, the duties which we owe to our neighbour, as contained in the second table, are, for the most part, to give way to those which we owe to God, as enjoined in the first; especially when they are considered as standing in competition with them. Thus we are obliged, in the fifth commandment, to obey our parents or superiors; yet, if they command us to break the Sabbath, profane the name of God, or attend on such worship as he has not required, we are to disobey them, or to 'obey God rather than men.' Accordingly, it is said, 'If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go, and serve other gods; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him.'q This our Saviour calls 'hating father and mother, wife, children, and brethren,' without which we cannot be his disciples. By this language he intends that, if the love which we otherwise owe them be inconsistent with that obedience which he requires of his followers, or if we cannot oblige them, and at the same time perform the duties which we owe to him, the inferior obligation must give way to the superior.

THE DUTIES REQUIRED IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CIII. Which is the first commandment?

ANSWER. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

QUESTION CIV. What are the duties required in the first commandment?

ANSWER. The duties required in the first commandment, are the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honouring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him, believing him, trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him, being zealous for him, calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him, with the whole man, being careful in all things to please him, and sorrowful when in any thing he is offended, and walking humbly with him.

THE duties required in this commandment, are contained in three general Heads.

1. We are obliged to know God. This supposes that our understanding is rightly informed as to what relates to the divine perfections as displayed in the works of creation and providence, by which we are led into the knowledge of his eternal power and Godhead. This is called the natural knowledge of God. But that knowledge which we are to endeavour to attain, who have a brighter

manifestation of his perfections in the gospel, is of a far more excellent and superior nature. For we see in the gospel, the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or behold the perfections of the divine nature as displayed in and through a Mediator. To know God thus, is to possess that knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation; as our Saviour says, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' By means of it we know, not only what God is, but our interest in him, and the foundation which we have of our being accepted in his sight.

2. We are farther commanded to acknowledge God, or make a visible profession of our subjection to him, and, in particular, to Christ, as our great Mediator. His name, interest, and glory, should be most dear to us; and we are, on all occasions, to testify that we count it our glory to be his servants, and to make it appear that he is the supreme object of our desire and delight. Thus, the psalmist says, 'I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living;' and, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'u

3. We are farther obliged by this commandment to worship and glorify God, pursuant to what we know and the profession we make of him as the true God and our God. To worship and glorify God, is to ascribe all possible glory and perfection to him, and to have our hearts suitably affected therewith, as sensible of that infinite distance which we stand at from him. This is considered under several Heads, which contain the substance of what is required in this commandment.—First, we must make God the subject of our daily meditation: calling to mind what he is in himself, and what he is to us, or does for us. This is to be considered as a means to preserve us from sin, and a spur to duty, a motive to holy fear and reverence.—

Again, we are to honour, adore, and fear him for his greatness. Thus the psalmist says, 'Who in heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.'—Further, as God is the best good, and has promised that he will be a God to us; so he is to be desired, loved, delighted and rejoiced in, and chosen by us. Thus the prophet says, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night;'y and the church, 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight;' and the apostle, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.'a—Further, as he is a God of truth, we are to believe all that he has spoken; and, in particular, what he has revealed in his promises or threatenings, relating to mercies which he will bestow, or judgments which he will inflict. Thus our Saviour says, 'If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?' And it is said that, when 'Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.'c—Again, as he is able to save to the uttermost, and faithful in fulfilling all his promises, we are to trust him with all we have from him, and for all those blessings which we hope to receive at his hands. Thus the prophet says, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' And the apostle speaks of his 'having committed' all to him,e as the consequence of what he knew him to be.—Again, when the name, interest, and glory of God are opposed in the world, we are to express an holy zeal for them. Thus the prophet Elijah says, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword.' As to what concerns our conversation in general, we are to be 'not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'g—Further, as he is a God who hears prayer, we are daily to call upon him, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.'—Moreover, as he is the God of all our mercies, we are to

thank and praise him for them. Thus the psalmist says, 'O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.'i—Further, his sovereignty and dominion over us call for subjection and obedience, and a constant care to please him, and to approve ourselves to him in all things. Thus the apostle says, 'Submit yourselves to God;' and the psalmist speaks of a person's 'cleansing his way, by taking heed thereto according to his word.'l—Again, as he is an holy, jealous, and sin-hating God, we are to be filled with grief and sorrow of heart when he is offended, either by ourselves or others. Thus Ephraim says, 'I was ashamed, yea, even confounded; because I did bear the reproach of my youth.' And the psalmist says, 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they,' that is, the world in general, 'keep not thy law.'n—Finally, a sense of our unworthiness and daily infirmities should excite us to 'walk humbly with God.' This is enjoined as a necessary duty, and is called a being 'clothed with humility.'p Thus concerning the duties required in this commandment.

That which may be farther observed is, that it is fitly placed before all the other commandments, because what it enjoins is, from the nature of the thing, necessary to our performing the duties which are required in them. The object of worship must first be known before we can apply ourselves, in a right manner, to perform any duty prescribed, whether respecting God or man.—It may be also farther considered, that it is not an easy matter to keep this commandment, because of the spirituality and vast extent of the duty enjoined, and because of the many graces which are to be exercised by those who would perform it aright. Hence, we ought earnestly to beg of God that our hearts may he set right with him, and inclined and excited by him to perform it. This is a peculiar blessing to be desired and expected from the Holy Spirit. Thus the psalmist says, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.'

THE SINS FORBIDDEN IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CV. What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the first commandment, are, Atheism, in denying, or not having a God; Idolatry, in having, or worshipping more gods than one, or any with, or instead of, the true God; the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of any thing due to him required in this commandment, ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him, bold and curious searching into his secrets, all profaneness, hatred of God, self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him, in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God, using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means, carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal, lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God, estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God, praying or giving any religious worship to saints, angels, or any other creatures, all compacts, and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions, making men the lords of our faith and conscience, slighting and despising God and his commandments, resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent, and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us, and ascribing the praise of any good

we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature.

QUESTION CVI. What are we especially taught by these words before me in the first commandment?

ANSWER. These words before me, or 'before my face,' in the first commandment, teach us, that God who seeth all things, takes special notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other god; that so it may be an argument to dissuade from it, and to aggravate it, as a most impudent provocation, as also to persuade us to do, as in his sight, whatever we do in his service.

THE sins forbidden in this commandment may be reduced to two general Heads, atheism and idolatry.

Atheism

By atheism men are so far from taking God for their God, that they deny that there is a God, or, at least, that he is what he has revealed himself to be. Thus the wicked man, who is styled 'a fool,' is represented as 'saying in his heart, There is no God.' Atheism is either speculative or practical. The former is that which is seated in the minds and consciences of men; who are so far blinded, perverted, and deluded as to think that there is no God. There are, indeed, very few among these who are so bold and profane as to deny this truth when they attend to the dictates of nature, or duly exercise those reasoning faculties with which God has endowed them; by neglecting to do which, they must be reckoned but one remove from brutes. Some, it is true, are ready to wish that there were no God; or, inclined to deny those divine perfections which are essential to him, they cast contempt on his government, or, it may be, deny a

providence; which is, in effect, to deny that there is a God. It must be observed, however, that none proceed to this degree of wickedness, till, by a long continuance in sin, they are given up to judicial hardness of heart, and blindness of mind.s And even these have been forced, at times, to confess that there is a God, with whom is terrible majesty; when he has broken in on their consciences, and filled them with the dreadful apprehensions of his wrath, as a sin-revenging Judge.—But where there is one speculative atheist, there are a thousand practical ones, who live without God in the world; and these are described in this Answer, as being guilty of those sins which none who duly consider his divine perfections would venture to commit. To enlarge on every one of those instances, particularly mentioned in this Answer, in which this sin is supposed to consist, would require a distinct treatise, and be inconsistent with our designed brevity in explaining the ten commandments. All, therefore, that we shall attempt at present, shall be to consider some instances in which practical atheism discovers itself, together with the aggravations of this sin; and then we shall inquire what judgment we are to pass concerning those who complain of atheistical and blasphemous thoughts, and consider whether this be a degree of that atheism which we are speaking of, and what are the causes of this sin, and the remedies against it.

1. We shall first consider the instances in which practical atheism discovers itself. Among these are the following:—To be grossly ignorant, and know nothing of God but the name,—being utter strangers to those perfections whereby he makes himself known to the world; or to entertain carnal conceptions of him, as though he were altogether such an one as ourselves.—Never seriously to exercise thoughts about God, though we know, in some measure, what he is. This forgetfulness is a degree of atheism, and will be severely punished by him.u—To maintain corrupt doctrines and

dangerous heresies, subversive of the fundamental articles of faith, and contrary to the divine perfections. Of this kind are those doctrines which militate against his sovereignty and dominion over the wills, consciences, and affections of men; when we conclude that his counsels and determinations may be disannulled or defeated; or when we suppose that he changes, as we do; or when, under a pretence of advancing one perfection, we set aside the glory of another; when, in order to magnify his mercy, we disregard his holiness or justice, and so presume that we shall be happy without being holy; or when we give way to despairing thoughts, from the consideration of his vindictive justice, without improving the displays of his mercy, as set forth in the gospel.—Again, to repine and quarrel at his providence, and pretend to find fault with the dispensations of it; or charge God foolishly, and go about to prescribe laws to him, who is the Governor of the world, and may do what he will with the work of his hands.—To refuse to engage in those acts of religious worship which he has appointed, or to attend on his ordinances, in which we may hope for his presence and blessing.—To behave ourselves, in the conduct of our lives, as though we were not accountable to him, and had no reason to be afraid of his judgments; when we set our affections on other things, and take them off from him; when we are guilty of wilful impenitence and unbelief, and are incorrigible under divine rebukes; when our hearts and lives are estranged from him, as though we desired not the knowledge of his ways; when we resist and grieve his Spirit, are discontented and impatient under his hand, or ascribe that to second causes or to chance which is under the direction of his providence. In these and many other instances, persons are notoriously guilty of practical atheism, which is forbidden in this commandment.

2. We are now to consider the aggravations and dreadful consequences of this sin. It is contrary to the light of nature, and the

dictates of conscience, a disregarding of those impressions which God has made of his glory on the souls of men. In those who have been favoured with the revelation of the grace of God in the gospel, in which his perfections have been set forth to the utmost, it is a shutting of our eyes against the light, and casting contempt on that which should raise our admiration, and excite in us the highest esteem of him whom we practically disown and deny.—Again, it is directly opposite to all religion, and entirely inconsistent with it, and opens a door to the greatest degree of licentiousness. To live without God in the world, is to give the reins to our own corruptions. It is not merely a sin of infirmity or inadvertency, but a running in all excess of riot; and therefore the consequence of it must be dreadful; for that which strikes at the very being of God, cannot but expose the sinner to the sorest condemnation.

3. But there are some sins mentioned in this Answer, which contain a degree of practical atheism, and which believers themselves are prone to fall into and complain of, such as forgetfulness of God, unbelief, distrust of his providence, insensibility under judgments, too great a degree of hardness of heart, pride, carnal security, discontent and impatience under his dispensations. That believers are subject to these sins may tend very much to discourage them, and make them conclude that they are not in a state of grace; especially when they find, as sometimes they do, atheistical and blasphemous thoughts suggested to their minds. We must hence inquire what judgment we are to pass concerning those who are ready to charge themselves with practical atheism, especially as to those unbecoming thoughts and conceptions which they sometimes have of the divine Majesty? whether this be altogether inconsistent with the truth of grace, together with the causes of it, and the remedies against it?

It is certain that the best of God's people are sanctified but in part, and therefore are prone to commit those sins which seem to involve a denial, at least, a neglect, of that regard which we ought to have for the divine perfections, and especially when we are followed not only with vain but with blasphemous thoughts, which give great disturbance to us when engaged in holy duties. This state of mind ought to be reckoned a very great affliction, and occasion many searchings of heart; since sometimes it brings much guilt with it. Yet we are not always to conclude from it that we are in a state of unregeneracy. It is the prevalency of corruption, or the dominion of sin, which is inconsistent with the truth of grace, not the remains of it. A person may have faith, who yet complains of unbelief. He may have a due regard to God, as to what respects the course and tenor of his actions; and yet, in many instances, be chargeable with forgetfulness of him. He may have a love to him, and yet sometimes be guilty of indiscreet zeal, on the one hand, or of lukewarmness and deadness of heart, on the other. His mind and affections may be sanctified; and yet he be sometimes followed with atheistical and blasphemous thoughts.—We have instances in scripture of good men, who have spoken not only unadvisedly, but, as we may term it, wickedly with their lips. Thus Job is justly reproved by Elihu for charging God with 'finding occasions against him; putting his feet in the stocks, and marking all his paths;' as though his dealings with him had been unjust and severe; especially when he says at the same time, 'I am clean, and without transgression; I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.'y Jonah, also, when he was reproved by God for his passionate behaviour towards him, vindicated himself, and said, 'I do well to be angry, even unto death.' These are expressions which savour of a degree of atheism; and so do those unbecoming conceptions of God whereby our thoughts are sometimes defiled and depraved. But it is one thing to be guilty of this through surprise and the prevalency of temptation, and another thing to have these

thoughts indulged by and lodged in us unrepented of.—Moreover, there are some instances in which believers are afflicted with atheistical and blasphemous thoughts, when it is hard to say that they contract guilt by them, or, at least, their being afflicted with them must be reckoned only an infirmity arising from the present imperfect state. It must especially be thus viewed when the thoughts are injected by Satan, and are without the consent of our wills, but treated with the utmost abhorrence, constantly bewailed and resisted with all our might; more particularly when we take occasion from them to exercise those graces which discover that we have other apprehensions of God than what are suggested at those times when we are hurried by these temptations, and can scarcely say that we have the government of our own thoughts; especially if we are enabled to say, at such a time as our Saviour did, when unadvisably tempted by Peter, who was at the time the devil's instrument to persuade him to relinquish the work which he came into the world to perform, 'Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence to me.'a

Let us now consider the causes of such atheistical and blasphemous thoughts. Sometimes they proceed from a neglect of waiting on God in his ordinances, or from indulging a carnal and stupid frame of spirit in them, and not maintaining that holy reverence, or becoming sense of his all-seeing eye, which we ought always to have. Moreover, there is nothing that has a greater tendency to produce them, than our conversing with those who make religion the subject of their profane wit and drollery; especially if we do this out of choice, and do not at the same time testify a just abhorrence of it.

As for those remedies which are to be made use of to protect against and cure the sinfulness of our thoughts in such instances; it behoves us to repent of those sins which may have been the occasion of them or have given rise to them. And is it is not in our own power to

govern our hearts or affections, or restrain the breakings forth of corruption; it is necessary for us to commit our souls into Christ's hands, with earnest supplications to him that he would sanctify, regulate, and cleanse our thoughts, and bring us into and keep us in a good frame. We ought also to desire, seek after, and improve all opportunities of conversing with those whose discourse is holy and profitable. By this means our affections may be raised, and our thoughts tinctured with divine things, which will leave an abiding impression behind them.c

Idolatry

We proceed now to consider this commandment as forbidding idolatry. When it is said, 'Thou shalt have no other gods,' the meaning is, 'Thou shalt not worship idols, or set a creature in the place of God, or pay that regard to it which is due to him alone.' Here it may not be inconvenient to consider the difference between idolatry, as it is a breach of the first and of the second commandment. As it is a breach of the first commandment, it contains a giving of divine honour to that which is not God; but as it is a sin against the second commandment, it is a worshipping of God by the creature, to whom an inferior kind of worship is given. Thus when the Papists worship God by images, supposing them to be an help to their devotion, or a means of performing that worship which they pretend to be given ultimately to God; or when they ascribe any branch of divine glory to saints or angels; notwithstanding what they say to exculpate themselves from the breach of the first commandment, they are justly chargeable with the breach of the second. We are here to consider the idolatry more especially which is forbidden in the first commandment. This is either what is more gross, such as that which is found among the heathen; or that which is more secret, and may be found in the hearts of all, and is

discovered by the practice of multitudes of Christians, who profess the utmost detestation of idolatry in the other sense.

1. We shall first consider idolatry in the former sense, together with the rise and progress of it. As to its rise, we may observe, that it proceeded from the ignorance and pride of man, who, though he could not but know, by the light of nature, that there is a God, yet, being ignorant of his perfections, or of what he has revealed himself to be in his word, was disposed to frame those ideas of a God which took their rise from his invention. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.' When iniquity abounded in the world, and men withdrew from the ordinances of God, and cast contempt on them, they invented and worshipped new gods. In this manner some suppose Cain and his posterity acted, when 'he went out from the presence of the Lord;'e and 'the sons of God,' that is, the church, when they contracted marriages with 'the daughters of men,' and joined with them in idolatry; so that it is no wonder if persons leave the true worship of God, that they should choose to themselves other gods. When men acted thus, God gave them up to judicial blindness: so that 'they worshipped the host of heaven,'g as the apostle says the heathen did.

As to the idolatry which was practised among the Israelites, it took its rise from the fond ambition which they had to be like other nations, who were abhorred of God. They counted the religion of the heathen a fashionable religion; and finding the true worshippers of God to be fewer in number than the rest of the world, so that, as the prophet says, they were 'like a speckled bird,' despised and hated by the heathen 'round about them,' they approved and learned the heathen's ways. It was this which occasioned Solomon to cleave to them in love;' which was not much unlike the argument used by

Demetrius and his followers why Diana should be worshipped, namely, 'because all Asia and the world worshipped her.'k

The devil was permitted, for the trial of the faith of God's people, and as an instance of his righteous judgment on his enemies, to abuse the unthinking part of the world by various signs and lying wonders. Thus we read of prophets, and dreamers of dreams, who gave forth signs and wonders which God sometimes judicially suffered to come to pass; whereby many took occasion to 'go after other gods.' Antichrist also is said 'to come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.'m These signs and lying wonders were managed by the craft and covetousness of the priests, who made a gain of them, and amused the common people by them. The heathen oracles, so much spoken of by ancient writers, which gave countenance to their idolatry, are reckoned by some to have been no other than a contrivance of those who had little else but secular interest in view. When they predicted things future, or revealed secrets, they generally did so in doubtful expressions; so that whether the thing really came to pass or not, the end designed might be answered. Now there was doubtless a hand of Satan in this matter, to harden the world in that idolatry which was then practised by them. The gods they worshipped were as numerous as the countries and kingdoms where idolatry prevailed. Every nation, yea, every city, had its particular god and distinct modes of worship.— Some worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, supposing that their regular motion and influence on earthly bodies was not to be attributed to the all-wise providence of God, but to some intelligent being which resided in them, and gave them that motion and influence on account of which they worshipped them as gods. This worship of the heavenly bodies was practised by some in the early age in which Job lived; and the Israelites were warned against it.o Afterwards we read of 'idolatrous priests, who burnt incense to the

sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven;' and dedicated 'horses and chariots to the sun.'—Again, others worshipped the earth, and many creatures therein, especially those from which they received more than an ordinary advantage. Thus the Egyptians worshipped the river Nile; by the overflowing of which their country was rendered fertile. Some who lived in maritime towns worshipped the sea, thinking thereby to prevent an inundation from it. And the Philistines worshipped Dagon; inasmuch, as living near the sea, it afforded them plenty of fish.—Others worshipped those parts of the earth which they most delighted in; such as gardens, woods, groves, springs, &c. These they supposed to be inhabited by some gods, who produced the advantages which they received from them; without regarding the providence of God, to which every thing is to be ascribed, which the earth brings forth for the support and delight of men.—Others supposed that there were particular gods who had the oversight of men, gave success to their undertakings in the various affairs of life, conducted them when travelling by sea or land, gave good or ill success to their secular employments, and preserved them in sickness and health; and accordingly they paid divine adoration to them.—Others expressed the regard they had to virtue, by worshipping some men after their death, who had signalized themselves by inventing some things which were of common advantage to mankind while they lived. The Romans were so much addicted to this species of idolatry, that some of their emperors, though tyrants and monsters in wickedness whilst they lived, obliged their subjects to perpetuate their memories by worshipping them as gods when they were dead.—Others of the heathen were so stupid that they worshipped stocks and stones, ascribing divinity to them; and in doing so, they acted below the reason of intelligent creatures. Thus the prophet speaks of their idols as first 'growing in the wood,' then 'framed by the smith,' or carpenter, 'into gods,' and afterwards

'worshipped by them.'q And the psalmist justly observes, 'They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.'

We might under this Head consider some things mentioned in scripture in which idolaters not only acted contrary to the dictates of reason, but discovered themselves to be cruel and inhuman in their modes of worship. Thus Baal's worshippers, in Ahab's time, cut themselves with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them; and others made their children pass through the fire, in the worship they paid to Moloch, or the sun, whom the psalmist refers to, when he says, 'They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters.'t This language, indeed, some think, intends nothing else but that they passed between two fires; so that they were scorched by them. Yet others, with greater reason, suppose that they were enclosed in that brazen idol, and so burnt to death in the most barbarous manner.

The use which we ought to make of this doctrine, should be to feel excited by it to bless God for the clear light of the gospel, whereby we are led to turn from dead idols to serve the living and true God. Yet we are to take heed lest we be chargeable with heart-idolatry; whereby we may be said to break this commandment, though in a different way from that in which the heathen did.

2. We are thus led to consider that idolatry which is sometimes found among Christians. Though they abhor the thoughts of giving divine worship to a creature, yet, if they look into their own hearts, they will have reason to charge themselves with those things which are in scripture called idolatry; namely, when they put any thing in the room of God, or love it more than him. This idolatry may be considered in several instances.

Self may be reckoned among those idols which many who make profession of the true religion pay a greater regard to than God. The apostle, speaking concerning the great degeneracy of the world, says, among other things, that 'men should be lovers of their own selves;' so that self-love turns away the heart from God, and excludes all practical religion. This we may be said to be guilty of; and in respect to it we are chargeable with heart-idolatry.—We are guilty of it when we reject or refuse to give credit to any of the great doctrines contained in divine revelation, unless we are able to comprehend them within the shallow limits of our own understandings. On this account some are inclined to treat the most sacred mysteries of our religion with contempt; and, for the same reason, they might as well deny and disbelieve what is said concerning the infinite perfections of the divine nature, because they cannot be comprehended by us. This is no other than a setting up of our own understanding, which is weak and liable to err, in opposition to the wisdom of God; and, in some respects, a giving superior glory to it.—Again, we are guilty of heart-idolatry, when we are resolute and incorrigible under the various rebukes of providence, and persist in our rebellion against God, notwithstanding the threatenings which he has denounced, or the judgments which he executes, or when our will is obstinately set on those things which are directly contrary to the will of God, and, though we are warned, of the danger of this, resolve, notwithstanding, to add rebellion to our iniquities, like the wild ass used to the wilderness, or the swift dromedary traversing her ways, which cannot be easily turned out of her course. In acting thus, the will of man is set in opposition to God; and he is, for this reason, justly chargeable with idolatry.—The same sin discovers itself in our affections, when either they are set on unlawful objects, or immoderately pursue those which would otherwise be lawful; when we love those things which God hates, or covet what he has expressly forbidden, as Achan did the wedge of gold, and the Babylonish

garment. On this account 'covetousness' is, by the apostle, called 'idolatry.'y—We may add, that we are chargeable with this sin, when we 'make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Thus the apostle speaks of some 'whose god is their belly.'a As for those things which are otherwise lawful, we may be guilty of idolatry in the immoderate pursuit of them, when they take up too much of our thoughts, time, and concern; when our affections are as much set upon them as if we had nothing better to mind; when we are not willing to part with them though God calls for them at our hands, and are more cast down at the loss of them than we are when deprived of those spiritual blessings which are of the highest importance. In these instances we may be said to set up self as our idol in opposition to God.—We may add, that there is a more subtile kind of idolatry, whereby self enters into and takes its place in those religious duties which believers are engaged in. Believers are guilty of this when they attempt to perform these duties in their own strength, as though they had a sufficiency in themselves, and had no occasion to depend on the almighty power of God to work in them that which is pleasing in his sight. We are farther guilty of this sin when, through the pride of our hearts, we are apt to applaud ourselves when we have performed some religious duties, and expect to be justified by them; which is a setting up of self as an idol in the room of Christ. Lastly, we are guilty of this sin when self is the end designed in what we do in matters of religion, and so rob God of that glory which is due to his name.

There is another idol which is put in the room of God, and that is the world. When the profits, pleasures, or honours of it are thought of with the greatest delight, as though they were our chief good; when they are pursued with more earnestness than Christ's interest and glory; when the world not only has the highest place in our affections, but, as it were, engrosses them; we are guilty of that love

of the world which, as the apostle says, is inconsistent with the love of the Father, and denotes us guilty of that idolatry which we are now speaking of.—More particularly, we are guilty of this when our thoughts are so much engaged in the pursuit of the world, that we not only grow cold and remiss as to spiritual things, but allow ourselves no time for serious meditations on them, or for conversing with God in secret.—Again, we are guilty of it when the world has our first and last thoughts every day; when we are so far from following the psalmist's example, who says, 'When I awake, I am still with thee,'c as considering ourselves under the care of providence, and indebted to God for the mercies which we enjoy, that we are taken up with nothing else but the projects and schemes which we lay for the gaining or increasing of our wealth or worldly condition; and when this, having been the great business of the day, takes up and engages our wakeful thoughts by night, as though it were the main work and business of life.—Further, we are guilty of this sin when we pursue the world, without depending on God for his blessing to attend our lawful undertakings, and do not consider its good things as his special gift, or the disappointments which attend us in it as ordered by his overruling providence to engage us to walk more closely with him, and to take up our rest in him as our only happiness.—Again, we are guilty of this sin when our hearts are hardened by the world, and grow cold and indifferent in religion, or when it follows and disturbs us in holy duties, and renders us formal in the discharge of them; when the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world have a tendency to quiet our spirits, and give us full satisfaction, though under spiritual declensions, and destitute of the special presence of God, which is our greatest happiness; when we fret or repine at the providence of God, under the disappointments we meet with in our secular affairs in the world; and when we despise the members of Christ, because they are poor in the world, are ashamed of his cross, and refuse to bear reproach for his sake.

There is another instance of heart-idolatry, namely, when we adhere to the dictates of Satan, and regard his suggestions more than the convictions of our own consciences, or the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Satan's design in his temptations is to turn us away from God; and when we are drawn aside by them, we may be said to obey him rather than God. This is what all are more or less guilty of; but some are said, in an uncommon degree, to be his servants. Thus the apostle Paul styles the sorcerer, who sought to turn aside the deputy from the faith, 'a child of the devil;' and our Saviour tells the Jews, 'Ye are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do,'e &c. Satan is also called 'the god of this world,' and 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.'g Accordingly, he attempts to usurp the throne of God; and by doing so, has led a great part of the world after him. As he tempted our Saviour to fall down and worship him, though without success, he prevails upon others to do it to their own ruin.—Here it may be observed that he has propagated several doctrines, in opposition to the gospel. Indeed, all those doctrines which are subversive of it, take their rise from him. Thus the apostle speaks of some who, 'in the latter times, should depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.'i This they do when they depart from the way of truth. [See Note S, page 327.]—Again, Satan has sometimes invented modes of worship, which have been observed by some, in imitation of the sacrifices which God had ordained. Whatever pretence there might be of religion in such modes of worship, he doubtless designed by them to set up himself in opposition to God.—Further, he has amused and hardened the hearts of his subjects, by pretended miracles, designed to oppose and lessen the credit of those real miracles which have been wrought to confirm the truth by the finger of God.—He has also endeavoured to extirpate the true religion, by raising persecutions against the faithful worshippers of God. This has been his constant practice, so far as he

has been permitted, in all ages.—Moreover, he has excited, in some of his subjects, the greatest degree of hatred of God, opposition to him, and rebellion against him. Thus he 'entered into the heart of Judas;'l and 'filled the heart of Ananias, that he lied to the Holy Ghost;' and hardened the hearts of others, so that they bade defiance to the Almighty, like Pharaoh, who said, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?'n—Again, he has persuaded many of his subjects to enter into a kind of confederacy with him, and with one another, to promote his wicked designs. This was the case with those wretched Jews, who 'bound themselves under a curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.' And we read of others who had 'made a covenant with death and with hell.'p The vilest instances of sins of this nature were found among some who used sorcery, divination, witchcraft, and other diabolical practices. These are so horrid crimes, and so contrary to the dictates of human nature, that had we not an account of some in scripture who practised them, we should be ready to think that none were ever guilty of them.

I will not deny that many things which are commonly related concerning witchcraft and sorcery, as practised in later ages, are fabulous and incredible; that some things, said to be done by the power of the devil, may be accounted for by natural causes; and that others are ascribed to it, which are performed by the concealed arts of some who get a livelihood by cheating the unthinking part of mankind. I am far from thinking, however, as some modern writers suggest, that the account we have of witchcraft and sorcery in scripture, is without any manner of foundation. The famous story of the witch of Endor is an argument that there were persons, at that time, in the world who practised these arts. It will be objected, I am aware, that she was a cunning woman, who lived by her wits, and deceived Saul by pretending that she used some infernal art, as an

expedient to bring him to the speech of Samuel. It may not be amiss, therefore, to inquire into her case.

Let it be observed, then, that it is by no means to be supposed that she raised Samuel from the dead; for it is out of the devil's power to call the soul of a saint out of heaven, with a design to subserve his interest by doing so, and to set up his kingdom in opposition to Christ's. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that Samuel should do the devil so much service after his death, who was so great an enemy to him in his life. Besides, he was buried at Ramah; and can we think that he should be now raised at Endor? On the other hand, we are not to imagine that it was a mere trick or juggle of the woman, whereby she imposed on Saul: for though, it is true, he did not sec a shape, yet he heard a voice, and made a reply to it. Moreover, we read that he had an intimation given him, that Israel should be delivered into the hands of the Philistines, and that he and his sons should be with him the next day, that is, in the state of the dead. But the woman was not cunning enough to foretell this; or if she had guessed that it would be so, she would hardly have ventured to tell Saul such ungrateful tidings; since if he had lived to see himself cheated, and her prediction confuted, her life would have been endangered. Had it been nothing but a cheat or a juggle, she would rather have told him that he would be safe and victorious; for had this come to pass, she might have expected a reward; and had it not, she would have had nothing to fear from him as a just punishment of her impiety. We must suppose, therefore, that she was a professed servant of the devil, and had, as the text says, 'a familiar spirit.' By this we are to understand that she conversed with Satan; who, that he might harden her the more in her sin, and lead others, like Saul, into a credulous, diabolical presumption, might reveal some secrets to her, and, at the same time, either assume the shape, or, at least counterfeit the voice, of Samuel.

Thus concerning those, who, by the practice of these arts, have professed themselves to be in a kind of confederacy with Satan. It is certain no good man ever practised them. Hence, some have found it very difficult to understand the sense of the scripture concerning the cup which was in Benjamin's sack: 'Is not this the cup wherein my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?' And Joseph himself says, 'Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?'t Though Joseph was a prophet, it is certain he was no diviner in the sense in which the word is commonly used in scripture; nor was this cup an instrument by which he practised any such art. For understanding this scripture, then, we remark that the word which we render 'to divine,' denotes, as is observed in the margin, to make trial of or search after, or to discover or find out a matter; and that, instead of 'whereby.' or 'by which,' we ought to read 'concerning which.' The meaning of the scripture, then, is only this: 'Is not this the cup in which my Lord drinketh, and concerning which he maketh search?' As it was the cup in which he drank, if it were lost or stolen, he would soon miss it, and make inquiry to find out the thief, as he now did. And when Joseph says, 'Wot ye not that such a mail as I can divine?' the meaning is, "Do you think that one who is so diligent and industrious in the management of all those affairs which are incumbent on me, would lose the cup in which I drink, and make no inquiry after it? Did you expect to go undiscovered, when you had such an one as I to deal with, who have not only an inclination, but all the advantages that can be desired, to make search after those who have dealt unjustly by me, as you have done?"; Again, 'to divine' may signify to prophesy; and so it may be taken in a good sense as well as in a bad one. Accordingly, when Joseph's servants speak of him as divining concerning the cup, they consider him as one who had an extraordinary gift from God of revealing secrets. Hence, they might easily conclude that he would, by this means, find out the person who had stolen his cup. This is agreeable to the Egyptian

mode of speaking; for those whom the Hebrews called prophets, the Egyptians called diviners. Joseph uses the same expression when he says, 'Wot you not that such a man as I could divine?' as if he had said, 'Did you not know that I was a prophet, and by this means was advanced to my present honour in Pharaoh's court?' So that, whether we take the words in this or in the other sense, it does not follow that he used any arts which were diabolical or unlawful.

Now that we are speaking concerning the arts by which Satan deludes those who, either directly, or by consequence, pay that regard to him which is due only to God, it may farther be inquired what we are to conclude concerning the practice of judicial astrology by those, who, in scripture, are called 'stargazers,' as a term of contempt, and whose profession scripture universally condemns. These are, especially in our age, a generation of men, who impose on the weakness of many superstitious and ignorant people, who, by encouraging them, are partakers with them in their sin. The art they pretend to, is not only uncertain, but presumptuous, and involves a contempt of the providence of God, in paying regard to the signs and intimations which they suppose they receive from the stars, concerning future contingent events, or those actions which take their rise from the free-will of man. What I would observe in general concerning this practice is, that we nowhere find in scripture, that the stars were designed to signify the prosperous or adverse circumstances in which men shall be in the world, or to foretell the riches or poverty, sickness or health, which we should experience in our passage through it, or how long we shall continue in it. Our times and circumstances in the world are only in God's hand; and it is in mercy to us that he has concealed these future events from us. We may add, that this art, and those who use it, are very often spoken against in scripture, and that the church is warned against it. Thus God says, 'Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at

the signs of heaven.' Again, 'Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels; let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee.'x Elsewhere, the persons thus described are ranked with 'diviners,' and called 'liars.' It may be inquired whether any good men have ever practised this art, though without pretending to have had any intimation from Satan, but only proceeding according to the rules prescribed in the art. But it is not my business to censure men, but things. The best that can be said is, that if any good men have studied or practised it, they have generally blamed themselves for it afterwards, or, at least, confessed the uncertainty and presumption of it. We read of some who, in the time of their ignorance, had addicted themselves to it, who, when it pleased God to convert them, laid it aside, and burned the books whence they learned it.z

It is objected against what has been said concerning the unlawfulness of judicial astrology, that Moses addicted himself to the study of it, of whom it is said that 'he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.' But if, by 'the wisdom of the Egyptians,' we understand, as most expositors do, judicial astrology, Moses might know, but not approve of, or practise this art, which was so much in use among the Egyptians. Perhaps, however, nothing more is intended but his knowing the regular motion of the stars, and the wisdom of God seen in it, without judging by it of future events; and in that case, his knowledge was not only lawful, but commendable. Yet I am apt to think that, by 'the wisdom of the Egyptians,' we are to understand those maxims of state, and the secrets of Pharaoh's court, which he had an opportunity to know, as being a great favourite with him, as Josephus observes, who thinks that Pharaoh designed that he should succeed him in the throne.b

Having thus considered this commandment as being broken by atheism and idolatry, and considered also the various kinds and degrees of the latter, which is called our having other gods; we may now inquire what is meant by these words "before me" in the first commandment. They are an intimation of the aggravation of the sins forbidden in it. God puts us in mind by them of his all-seeing eye, which ought to deter us from the breach of it; especially when we consider, that inasmuch as he beholds all our actions, he cannot but be exceedingly displeased when we entertain any conceptions of him which tend to question his authority, dethrone his sovereignty, or alienate our affections from him, and set up any thing in competition with him. We ought hence to set the Lord always before us, considering him as the heart-searching God, who is jealous for his own honour, and will not suffer this sin to go unpunished.

[NOTE S. Doctrines of Devils.—The word δαιμονια. was currently used among the Greeks to signify superior intelligences,—objects of religious worship; and, in conformity with this sense, it is in one passage translated in our version by the word 'strange gods.' Its most common signification among the Greeks, seems to have been, 'the souls of men deified or canonized after death;' and this signification appears to be attached to it in Acts 17:18; Rev. 9:20; 1 Cor. 10:20, 21; and 1 Tim. 4:1. The phrase in the last of these texts, διδασκαλιαι δαιμονιων, is of parallel construction with the phrases which occur elsewhere, (Heb. 6:2; Acts 13:12.) βαπτισμων διδαχης, τῃ διδαχῃ του Κυριον, and may fairly be translated 'doctrines concerning deified or canonized men,' just as these may be translated,' doctrine concerning baptisms,' 'the doctrine concerning the Lord.' The word 'spirits,' too, is employed in the New Testament (1 John 4:1.) to designate pretenders to inspiration or miraculous gifts. The entire prophecy in 1 Tim 4:1–3, therefore, is a graphic description of the peculiar or characteristic features which should early be developed in the great

antichristian apostacy; for it enumerates errors by which both the western and the eastern sections of the body calling itself 'Catholic,' has been eminently characterized,—'departure from the apostolic faith, pretension to infallibility and miraculous powers, the canonizing and worshipping of departed souls, the prohibition of marriage to the clergy, and the encouraging of monasticism, the enjoining of fasts and festivals, and the promoting of courses of cynicism and penance: 'Now the spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing pretenders to authority over the conscience, and doctrines concerning canonized men; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry [and commanding] to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of those who believe and know the truth.'—ED.]

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CVII. Which is the second commandment?

ANSWER. The second commandment is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

QUESTION CVIII. What are the duties required in the second commandment?

ANSWER. The duties required in the second commandment are the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religions worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word, particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ, the reading, preaching, and hearing of the word, the administration and receiving of the sacraments, church government and discipline, the ministry and maintenance thereof, religious fasting, sweating by the name of God, and vowing unto him; as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship, and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.

QUESTION CIX. What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the second commandment, are all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any ways approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself, tolerating a false religion, the making any representation of God, of all, or of any of the three Persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly, in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever, all worshipping of it, or God in it, or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them, all superstitions devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others; though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever, simony, sacrilege, all neglect, contempt, hindering and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.

QUESTION CX. What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment the more to enforce it?

ANSWER. The reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it, contained in these words, "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments," are, besides God's sovereignty over us, and propriety in us, his fervent zeal for his own worship, and his revengeful indignation against all false worship, as being a spiritual whoredom, accounting the breakers of this commandment such as hate him, and threatening to punish them unto divers generations, and esteeming the

observers of it, such as love him, and keep his commandments, and promising mercy to them unto many generations.

Difference between the First and the Second Commandment

BEFORE we proceed to consider the matter of this commandment, we shall premise something, in general, concerning the difference between it and the first commandment. The first commandment respects the object of worship; the second, the manner in which it is to be performed. Accordingly, the former forbids our not owning God to be such an one as he has revealed himself to be in his word, and also the substituting of any creature in his room, or acknowledging it, either directly or by consequence, to be our chief good and happiness; the latter obliges us to worship God, in such a way as he has prescribed, in opposition to that which takes its rise from our own invention. These two commandments, therefore, being so distinct, we cannot but think the Papists to be chargeable with a very great absurdity, in making the second to be only an appendix to the first, or an explanation of it. The design of their doing so seems to be, that, they may exculpate themselves from the charge of idolatry, in setting up image-worship, which they think to be no crime; because they are not so stupid as to style the image a god, or make it a supreme object of worship. This commandment, however, in forbidding false worship, is directly contrary to their practice of worshipping God by images.

The method in which this commandment is laid down, is the same with that of several others; we have an account of the duties required, the sins forbidden, and the reasons annexed to enforce it.

The, Duties Enjoined in the Second Commandment

We shall first consider the duties commanded. These are contained in two Heads.

1. We are under an obligation to observe, or attend upon, such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed. Religious worship is that whereby we address ourselves to God, as a God of infinite perfection; profess an entire subjection and devotedness to him as our God; put our trust in him for a supply of all our wants; and ascribe to him that praise and glory which is his due, as our chief good, most bountiful benefactor, and only portion and happiness. As for the ordinances, our attendance on them depends on a divine command, to which God has annexed a promise of his gracious presence, whereby our expectations are raised that we shall obtain some blessings from him, when we engage in them in a right manner. In this respect they are instituted means of grace, and pledges of that special favour which he designs to bestow on his people. This is that which more especially renders a duty enjoined an ordinance. Accordingly, our Saviour says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' Now, these ordinances are either solitary or social; such as we are obliged to perform, either in our closets,d in our families, or in those public assemblies where God is worshipped. They are particularly mentioned in this Answer; and they are prayer, thanksgiving, reading, preaching and hearing the word, the administration and receiving of the sacraments, to which we may add, praising God by singing. All these will be insisted on in a following Answer, and therefore we pass by them at present.

Now, as these are duties which are daily incumbent on us, so there are other duties or ordinances, which are to be performed only as the necessity of aflairs requires. One of these is religious fasting, whereby we express public tokens of mourning and humiliation, and perform

other duties corresponding with these, when God is provoked by crying sins, or when his judgments are upon us and our families, or the church of God in general. Thus the prophet Joel, when speaking concerning several desolating judgments to which Israel was exposed, commands them 'to sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; and to weep between the porch and the altar; and say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach.' This is not to be done at all times; but only when the providence of God calls for it. Hence, we have no warrant for the observance of annual fasts, when that which was the first occasion of them is removed; much less for those weeks of fasting which the Papists observe, which they call Lent. No sufficient reason can be assigned why Lent should be observed at the season fixed on by the Papists, rather than at any other time of the year. Nor can their fasting on certain days of the week be vindicated, much less their doing so without joining other religious duties to it; or their abstaining from some kinds of food, while they indulge themselves in eating others which are equally grateful to the appetite. This is a ludicrous and superstitious way of fasting.—Again, another occasional duty or ordinance, is our setting apart time for thanksgiving to God for deliverances from public or national calamities, or those which more immediately respect ourselves and families. In observing this ordinance, those religious duties are to be performed which tend to express our spiritual joy and thankfulness to God, who is the Author of our deliverances; and, at the same time, we are to pray that he would enable us to walk as those who are hereby laid under renewed engagements to be his. Thus the Jews observed some days of thanksgiving for their deliverance from Haman's conspiracy. Such public thanksgiving for providential deliverances, is to be religiously observed; and so it differs from that carnal joy which is generally expressed by those who receive mercies, but do not give glory to God, the sole author of them.

But besides these occasional ordinances, there is another mentioned in this Answer, namely, vowing to God. Thus the psalmist says, 'Vow and pay unto the Lord.' This language either, more especially, respects God's ancient people entering into a solemn obligation or promise to give something which was to be applied to the support of the public and costly worship which was performed under the ceremonial law, on which account it is said, in the following words, 'Bring presents unto him;' or it may be considered as to the moral reason of the thing, as including our resolution to set apart or apply some portion of our worldly substance, as God has prospered us in our secular affairs, to the maintaining and promoting of his cause and interest in the world. But we ought, at the same time, to devote ourselves to him, whereby we acknowledge his right to us, and all that we have. Thus the apostle says, concerning the churches of Macedonia, not only that they devoted their substance to God, but that they 'gave themselves' also 'unto the Lord.'h This duty does not include our resolving to do those things which are out of our own power, or that we will exercise those graces which are the special gift of the Spirit of God; but it is rather a dedication of ourselves to him, in hope of obtaining that grace from him which will enable us to perform those duties which are indispensably necessary to salvation, and inseparably connected with it. This is such a vowing to God, as will not have a tendency to ensnare our consciences, or detract from his glory who is alone the Author of all grace. Nor does it contain the least instance of presumption; but is a duty which we ought to perform by faith, to his glory and our own edification.

We might notice another ordinance, mentioned in this Answer; namely, swearing by the name of God. This, as we have elsewhere expressed it, includes a swearing fealty to him, and our consecrating and devoting ourselves to him. As to swearing, as a religious duty to be performed in subserviency to civil duties, we shall have occasion

to speak of it under the third commandment; and therefore we pass it over at present.

2. We proceed to observe that the religious duties or ordinances which we have noticed, and all others which God has enjoined, are to be kept pure and entire. As we are not to cast off the ordinances of God in general, so we must take heed that we do not, while we perform some, live in the neglect of others; for that is not to keep them entire. Thus private duties are not to shut out those which are social in our families or the public assemblies, nor intrench on that time which ought to be allotted for them; and, on the other hand, it is not sufficient for us to worship God in public, and, at the same time, cast off all secret duties. This reproves the practice of some modern enthusiasts, who pray not, unless moved by the Spirit, as they pretend; and deny their obligation to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Moreover, as we are to keep the ordinances of God entire, we are also to keep them pure, that is, to allow, or practise nothing but what is warranted by the rules which God has given us in his word; in opposition to those who corrupt his worship, by intruding those ordinances into it which are of their own invention, and pretending that, though God has not commanded these, yet the service which we perform, which can be no other than will-worship, will be acceptable to him.

The Sins Forbidden in the Second Commandment

We now proceed to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. The general scope and, design of the commandment, as to the negative part of it, is God's prohibiting all false worship, either in our hearts, or in our outward actions or gestures, whereby we adhere to our own imaginations rather than his revealed will,

which is the only rule of instituted worship. The things forbidden in this commandment may be reduced to three Heads.

1. A not attending on the ordinances of God with that holy, humble, and becoming frame of spirit which the solemnity of the duties themselves, or the authority of God enjoining them. or the advantages which we may expect to receive by them, call for. When we do not seriously think what we are going about before we engage in holy duties, or watch over our hearts and affections, or when we worship God in a careless and indifferent manner; we may be said to draw nigh to him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him.

2. We farther break this commandment, when we invent ordinances which God has nowhere in his word commanded; or think to recommend ourselves to him by gestures, or modes of worship, which we have no precedent or example for in the New Testament. This is what is generally called superstition and will-worship. Thus we read in the degenerate age of the church, that 'the statutes of Omri were kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab;' referring to that false worship which was practised by them. Here we cannot but observe, that there are many things in which the Papists are chargeable with superstition and will-worship, if not with idolatry. For example, they worship the bread in the sacrament, supposing it to be the real body and blood of Christ, and not merely the sign of him. They understand the words of our Saviour when instituting this ordinance, 'This is my body,'l in a literal sense, though they ought to be understood in a figurative sense.—Again, they lift up the bread in the sacrament, pretending that their doing so is a real offering of Christ; and, at the same time, the people are obliged to show all possible marks of sorrow, such as beating their breasts, shaking their heads, &c., as though they really saw Christ on the cross. But it is a profaning of the Lord's supper, to say that Christ is really and visibly

offered in it by the hands of the priest; and is contrary to what the apostle says of his having been but 'once offered to bear the sins of many.'—Moreover, they use several superstitious ceremonies in baptism, which have, indeed, a show of religion, but want a divine sanction, and are no other than an addition to Christ's institution. Thus they use spittle, salt, and cream, besides the water with which the child is to be baptized; and anoint it with oil, and use exorcism, commanding the unclean spirit to depart out of it, and signing it with the sign of the cross; at which they suppose the devil to be so terrified, that he is obliged to leave it, being by this means, as it were, frightened away. The principal reason, however, which they give for their adding this ceremony to Christ's institution, is to signify that the child is hereby obliged to fight manfully under Christ's banner. But this ceremony neither increases nor diminishes the child's obligation; and it is a sign which Christ makes no mention of.—We may mention also their frequent crossing of themselves, as a preservative against sin, and as a means to keep them from the power of the devil, and to render their prayers acceptable in the sight of God; the splendour and magnificence of their churches, and especially the shape and figure of them, as accommodated to that of Solomon's temple, and their situation east and west; also their bowing to the altar, which is placed in the east,—a practice for which there is not the least shadow of argument in scripture, or example in the purest ages of the Church; the ludicrous and unwarrantable ceremonies used in the consecration of churches, and the reverence which every one must show to places thus consecrated, even at other times than that of divine worship. We may add, that there are many superstitious ceremonies in consecrating all the vessels and utensils which are used in their churches. Yea, the very bells are baptized, or, as they express it, consecrated, in order that the devil may be afraid of the sound of them, and keep his distance from those places of worship in which they are fixed. But such charms can be reckoned

only the sport of the powers of darkness, or looked on by them with contempt.—Again, the Papists ascribe a divine, yea, a meritorious virtue, to the frequent repeating of the Lord's prayer in Latin, commonly called 'Pater noster,' and the angel's salutation of the Virgin Mary,n called 'Ave Maria.' The words of this salutation they put a corrupt sense upon, contrary to their proper meaning and the recitation of them; and whether they be understood or not, it is reckoned acceptable service.—We may mention likewise the distinction of garments, and the relative holiness of the persons who wear them, as signified by that distinction. We may mention, too, the canonical hours which are appointed for the performing of divine service; especially if we consider the reason which they allege for the practice, namely, that there was something remarkable done or suffered by Christ at those hours in the day. These things argue them guilty of superstition.—We might take notice also of the many things which they make merchandise of, as consecrated bread, wax-candles, &c. They ascribe to these a spiritual virtue, or some advantage to be received by those who purchase them; and so they advance the price of them. There are also the relics which they call the church's treasure, or those rarities which they purchase at a great rate; though some of the wiser Papists have made but a jest of them.—We pass by, for brevity's sake, many other superstitious ceremonies used by them, and observe only their bowing at the name of Jesus. This practice can hardly be vindicated from the charge of superstition, especially as no extraordinary expression of reverence is made at the mention of those incommunicable attributes of God which are ascribed to him; nor, indeed, do they bow the knee at the mentioning of the word 'Saviour,' 'Christ,' or 'Emmanuel,' or when any other divine characters are given him. The only scripture they make use of to vindicate this practice, is Phil. 2:10, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' But it is plain that this 'bowing the knee' does not signify a bodily gesture, but only a subjection of soul to

Christ, as 'angels, authorities, and powers' are said to be 'made subject unto him.' These, indeed, are a very considerable part of the inhabitants of heaven, but they have no knees to bow; and as for 'things under the earth,' that is, the powers of darkness, they do not bow to him in a way of worship, but are subjected to him as conquered enemies.

3. We now proceed to consider that they are guilty of the breach of this commandment, who frame an image of any of the persons of the Godhead, or of any creature in heaven or earth, as a means or help made use of in order to their worshipping God. Here it must be inquired whether the making of images, absolutely or in all respects, be unlawful. It is generally answered that, if pictures representing creatures, either in heaven or earth, be made with no other design but, in an historical way, to propagate the memory of persons and their actions to posterity, the making of them seems not to be a breach of this commandment. But the sin forbidden in it, expressed in those words, 'Making to ourselves the image or likeness of creatures in heaven or earth,' is committed when we design to worship God by the images. Accordingly, the using of bodily gestures to them, such as those which were used in the worship of God, as bowing, uncovering the head, &c., wherein a person designs an act of worship, is idolatry. Even if nothing else is intended but the worshipping of God by the images, the use of them can hardly be excused from at least the appearance of idolatry; so that, according to one of the rules before laid down for understanding the ten commandments, it is to be reckoned a breach of the second commandment; which is what we are now considering.—Again, it must be inquired whether it be unlawful to represent any of the persons in the Godhead, by pictures or carved images? We answer, that, God being infinite and incomprehensible, it is impossible to frame any image like him.q Moreover, he assigns as a reason why

Israel should make no image of him, that 'they saw no manner of similitude when he spake to them in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire;' and adds, 'lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image.' And the apostle styles the representing of God by an image, an offering the highest affront to him, when he speaks of some who 'changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.'s But there are some who, though they do not much care to defend the practice of making pictures of God, yet plead for describing an emblem of the Trinity, such as a triangle, with the name Jehovah in the midst of it. Now, I would observe concerning this practice, that if the design of it be to worship God by the emblem, it is idolatry; but if not, it is unwarrantable, and, indeed, unnecessary; since a Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence, is to be understood as revealed in scripture, and not brought to our remembrance by an emblem, which is an ordinance of our own invention. It is farther inquired whether we may not describe our Saviour, as he sometimes is by the Papists, in those things which respect his human nature? whether we may not portray him as an infant in his mother's arms, or as conversing on earth, or hanging on the cross? The Papists not only describe him thus, but adore the image or representation of Christ crucified, which they call a crucifix. But whatever of Christ comes within the reach of the art of man to delineate or describe, is only his human nature, which is not the object of divine adoration; so that the practice of describing him in the way mentioned tends rather to debase, than to give us raised and becoming conceptions of him as such.

As God is sometimes represented as having a body or bodily parts, and as the prophet Daniel describes God the Father as 'the Ancient of days;' some suppose that it is not unlawful for them to make such representations of him by images. But God's being described by the parts of human bodies, is in condescension to the weakness of our

capacities, or agreeable to human modes of speaking; according to which the eye signifies wisdom, the arm power, the heart love, &c. We are, notwithstanding these modes of expression, to abstract, in our thoughts, every thing which is carnal or applicable to the creature, when conceiving of God; and therefore not to give occasion to any to think that he is like ourselves, by describing him in such a way. The Papists not only plead for making such images, but set them up in churches, calling them the laymen's books, with a design to instruct them in those things which the images represent. But such a method of instruction is without any warrant from scripture, as well as contrary to the practice of the purest ages of the church; who always thought that the word of God was sufficient to lead them into the knowledge of himself, without making use of a picture for that purpose.—Yet though this colour is put on the practice of setting up such images in churches, there are some of the Papists who plead for the worship of images only with this distinction, that it is a subordinate or a relative worship which they give to them, while, at the same time, the highest worship is given to God only. But they cannot thus exculpate themselves from the charge of idolatry. Indeed, in some of their books of devotion, we find the same expressions used when they address themselves to the creature, as if they were paying divine adoration to God; particularly in the book, which is well known among them, called the Virgin Mary's Psalter, in which her name is often inserted instead of the name of God, which is the highest strain of blasphemy. Thus when it is said, 'O come let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,'u instead of 'the Lord,' they put 'the Virgin Mary;' and when it is said, 'Have mercy upon me, O God,' they pray, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lady,' &c. These expressions cannot be read without detestation; and there are in that book many more of a similar kind. When this has been objected against them as a specimen of their idolatry, all the reply they make is, that the book was written by a private person as an help to devotion, but not

established by the authority of the church, which is not to be charged with every absurdity which some of their communion may advance. We reply, that the church of Rome has been very ready to condemn better books, written by those who were not in her communion; while she has never publicly condemned this book, but rather commended it as written with a good design. Besides, there are many blasphemous expressions given to the Virgin Mary, in their Breviaries and Missals, which are used by public authority. Thus she is often addressed in such characters as these,—'the mother of mercy,' 'the gate of heaven,' 'the queen of heaven,' 'the empress of the world;' and sometimes she is desired not only to pray her son to help them, but, by the authority of a mother, to command him to do it. At other times, they desire her to help and save them herself; and accordingly they give her the title of Redeemer and Saviour, as well as our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes also they profess to put their trust and confidence in her. Now, if this be not idolatry, where is there any to be found in the world?

We may notice, likewise, that idolatry which is practised by them in their devotion to the images of other saints. Every saint in their calendar is called upon in his turn. Among those, indeed, some were good men, as the martyrs, who refused to be worshipped while on earth; how much soever the Papists worship them now that they are in heaven. But there are others whom the Popes have canonized as saints, who were little better than devils incarnate, while they were upon earth; and others were rebels and traitors to their king and country, and suffered the just reward of their wickedness. Such as these are found among those whom they pay this worship to. There are also others whom they worship as saints, concerning whom it may be much questioned whether there ever were such persons in the world. These may be called fabulous saints; yet images are made to their honour, and prayers directed to them. There are also things

worshipped by them which never had life, as the picture of the cross, and many pretended relics of the saints. Upon the whole, therefore, we cannot but think that we have, in this mode of worship, a notorious instance of the breach of the second commandment; and we cannot but conclude that, in rendering this worship, they have apostatized or turned aside from the purity of the gospel.

It may be observed, that the church, for the first three hundred years after Christ, had comparatively but little superstition and no idolatry. But in the fourth century, superstition began to insinuate itself into it. Then it was that the pictures of the martyrs, who had suffered in Christ's cause, were first set up in churches, though without any design of worshipping them; and the setting of them up was not universally approved of. As for image-worship, it was not brought into the church till above seven hundred years after Christ; and then there was a considerable opposition made to it by some. This kind of worship was set up in one reign, and prohibited in another; but afterwards it universally prevailed in the Romish church, when arrived at that height of impiety and idolatry, without opposition, which it maintains at this day.

The Reasons annexed to the Second Commandment

We now proceed to observe the reasons annexed to this Commandment. These are taken from the consideration of what God is in himself: 'I am the Lord,' or 'Jehovah.' This being a name never given to any creature, is expressive of all his divine perfections, which render him the object of worship, and oblige us to perform that worship which he requires, in such a way as is agreeable to his character. He also styles himself a God to his people: 'I am thy God.' Hence, to set up strange gods, or to worship him in a way not prescribed by him, is a violation of his covenant, as well as not

performing the duty we owe to him, and would render us unfit to be owned by him as his people. Moreover, they who thus corrupt themselves, and pervert his worship, are styled haters of him, and therefore can expect nothing but to be dealt with as enemies. This he gives them to understand, in his styling himself 'a jealous,' or sin-revenging God, 'visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.' For understanding this language, let it be considered that, though God does not punish children with eternal destruction for the sins of their immediate parents, yet these often bring temporal judgments on families. Thus all the children of Israel who murmured and despised the good land, so far bare their fathers' iniquity, that they wandered in the wilderness nearly forty years. Again, these judgments fall more heavily on those children who make their parents' sins their own. This was the case of the Jews. Hence, our Saviour tells them that 'all the blood that was shed upon the earth, should come upon them, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.' They approved and committed the same sins which their fathers were guilty of, and consequently are said to have 'filled up the measure of their sins.' Hence, the judgments of God which they exposed themselves to, were most terrible. Further, whatever temporal judgments may be inflicted on children for their parents' sins, shall be sanctified, and redound to their spiritual advantage, as well as end in their everlasting happiness, if they do not follow their bad example. Accordingly, it is farther observed that God 'shows mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments.' These are very great motives and inducements to enforce the observance of all God's commandments, and this in particular.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXI. Which is the third commandment?

ANSWER. The third commandment is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

QUESTION CXII. What is required in the third commandment?

ANSWER. The third commandment requires, that the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, writing, by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves and others.

QUESTION CXIII. What are the sins forbidaen in the third commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are. the not using of God's name as is required, and the abuse of it, in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works; by blasphemy, perjury; 'all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating our oaths and vows, if lawful, and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful, murmuring and quarrelling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God's decrees and providences, misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines, abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices, the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any ways opposing of God's

truth, grace, and ways, making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by uncomfortable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walkings, or backsliding from it.

QUESTION CXIV. What are the reasons annexed to the third commandment?

ANSWER. The reasons annexed to the third commandment in these words, "the Lord thy God," and "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." are, because he is the Lord and our God, and therefore his name is not to be profaned, or any way abused by us, especially, because he is so far from acquitting and sparing the transgressors of this commandment, as that he will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment, albeit many such escape the censures and punishments of men.

General View of the Third Commandment

As the second commandment respects the manner in which God is to be worshipped, agreeably to his revealed will; in this we are commanded to worship him with that frame of spirit which is suitable to the greatness of the work, and the majesty of him with whom we have to do. By the name of God we are to understand all those things whereby he is pleased to make himself known; and these are his names, titles, attributes, words, and works. The attributes of God have been largely insisted on under the Question, 'What is God?' His names and titles have also been considered, as belonging to all the persons in the Godhead, in proving that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father.a His word is that in which the glory contained in his names, titles, and attributes, is set forth in the most glorious manner. Thus the psalmist says, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' or, thou hast given a brighter discovery

of thyself in thy word, than thou hast done in any thing else by which thou hast made thyself known to thy creatures. As for the works of God, whether of nature or of grace, they are designed to lead us into the knowledge of his power, wisdom, goodness, holiness, and faithfulness, which are eminently glorified in all that he does. Now, this commandment respects our having a due regard to all those ways whereby he makes himself known; and contains a prohibition of every thing which may tend to cast the least dishonour upon them.

The Duties Enjoined in the Third Commandment

Agreeably to the method in which we are led to discuss the commandments, we shall first observe the duties enjoined. The third commandment supposes that it is an indispensable duty for us to make mention of the name of God. Since he has given us some discoveries of himself, by what means soever he has done it, it would be an instance of the highest contempt of the greatest privilege for us to express no regard to them. But this those may be said practically to do, who make no profession of religion, and desire not to be instructed in those things which relate to the name and glory of God. Such conduct argues a person to be abandoned to the greatest wickedness, and to live without God in the world.

Now there are several duties mentioned in this Answer, in which we are said to make use of God's name. These duties are performed, in particular, when we attend on his ordinances, namely, the word, sacraments, and prayer; and when we take religious oaths, and make solemn vows; and these duties are, doubtless, to be performed with the utmost reverence. We have many instances, in scripture, of holy men who, when they have drawn nigh to him in prayer, have adored his divine perfections with a becoming humility. Thus Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, addresses himself to God: 'There is no

God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants, that walk before thee with all their heart.' Jacob, when wrestling with God in prayer, says, 'O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant.'d Hezekiah expresses himself thus in prayer, 'O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth.' Daniel, in prayer, styles him, 'the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.'f Abraham, when standing before the Lord, and pleading in behalf of Sodom, says, 'Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.' And the inhabitants of heaven, who are nearest the throne of God, are represented as worshipping him with the greatest reverence, 'casting their crowns before the throne,' in token of their being unworthy of the honour that they are advanced to, and saying, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power;'h which is to be understood of him, exclusive of all others. Now, as this reverence is to be expressed when we ask any thing at the hand of God, by a parity of reason it ought to be expressed in any other religious duty, on which he has made some impressions of his glory.

It may be inquired whether this reverence is consistent with that boldness which believers are said to have in prayer, when they are exhorted to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace,' and to 'have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus.'k But the word there translated 'boldness,' may be rendered a liberty of speech. Though he is infinitely above us, and a God of infinite holiness and purity, and therefore has the utmost abhorrence of sin,

which we have reason to charge ourselves with; yet we are encouraged to come to him, as sitting on a throne of grace, whence he displays his glory as a sin-pardoning God, who otherwise appears in his jealousy, as a sin-revenging Judge. This 'boldness,' then, is nothing else but our making use of that liberty which God gives us to come into his presence with hope of being accepted in his sight, in and through a Mediator.

We might farther observe that, as we are to express an holy reverence in drawing nigh to God in all religious duties, so we ought not to think of any of his works, but with a due regard to, and the highest veneration of, his glory, shining forth in them. Thus it is said, 'Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold.' This reverence is to be expressed in our meditations, words, and writings; so that we should never think or treat of divine subjects, but in an holy manner,—we should never speak of any thing by which God manifests his glory, but with a design to beget in ourselves and others a reverential fear of him, and the highest esteem for him.

The Sins Forbidden in the Third Commandment

We are now to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. In general, we violate it by not using the name of God in such a way as is required. This includes various particulars.

I. Persons break this commandment by not making any profession of religion, being afraid or ashamed to own that in which the name of God is so much concerned. Persons, indeed, do not usually arrive at this height of wickedness at once; but the mind is alienated from God and his worship by degrees. There is first a great deal of lukewarmness, formality, and hypocrisy, reigning in the heart of man; so that if they attend on the ordinances of God's worship, it is with great indifference, with many prejudices, and with such a frame

of spirit as savours more of profaneness than true religion. Afterwards they are ashamed of Christ and his cause, being influenced by the reproach which is cast on it in the world. Thus the Jews pretended, concerning Christianity, that it was 'a sect everywhere spoken against.' And 'Demas forsook' the apostle, 'having loved this present world;'o being more concerned for his reputation in it, than for Christ's interest. Eventually such persons cast off all public worship; and their doing so is generally attended with a seared conscience, and running into all excess of riot.

II. Persons take the name of God in vain, when, though they make a profession of religion, yet it is not in such a way as God has required. This is done by treating in an unbecoming manner his titles, attributes, or any ordinances or works in which he makes himself known. It is done when we speak of the divine perfections, and, at the same time, have no just ideas of what is intended by them; or when we use the name of God with a vanity or levity of spirit, and mention sacred things in a common way, whereby we may be said to profane them; or when we superstitiously pay a kind of veneration to the sound of words, relating to divine matters, but regard not the thing signified by them. This is using the name of God in such a way as he has not required, and consequently taking it in vain.

III. The name of God is taken in vain by blasphemy. This is a thinking or speaking reproachfully of him, as though he had no right to the glory which belongs to his name; and is, in effect, a cursing him in our hearts, and offering the greatest injury which can be done to a God of infinite perfection. This, though it is not a real lessening of his essential glory, yet argues the greatest malignity, and the highest degree of impiety in those who are guilty of it. It was so great a crime, that, by God's command, it was punished with death.

IV. This commandment is broken by not using religious oaths in a right manner, or by violating them; and, on the other hand, by all sinful and profane oaths and cursing.

1. By not using religious oaths in a right manner. It is certain, that we are, upon extraordinary occasions, to make mention of the name of God by solemn oaths; in which we appeal to him as a God of truth, the searcher of hearts, and the avenger of falsehood. That this is a duty, appears from the fact that we have various instances, in scripture, of God's condescending to confirm what he has spoken by an oath; wherein he appeals to his own perfections for the confirmation of our faith. Thus he is represented as 'swearing by himself,' and 'by his holiness.' Again, there are several examples and commands, in scripture, which make it our duty to appeal to God, on some occasions, by solemn oaths. Thus it is said, 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name;' and 'To me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.'s But we must observe that there is a vast difference between God's swearing by himself, or by any of his perfections, and man's swearing by him. When God swears by himself, his doing so is a display of the glory of his perfections, as a God that cannot lie; but when man swears by him, his doing so is an act of religious worship, containing an acknowledgment of God's perfections, and an appeal to him as a God of truth, and as the avenger of a lie. Hence, an oath is not to be taken but in matters of great importance, which cannot be decided without it; and being an act of religious worship, it ought to be performed in the most solemn manner; otherwise we profane the name of God, and so violate this commandment. This respects not so much the form used in swearing, as the levity of spirit with which the act is done, or our pretending to confirm by our oath that which is false.

The form used in solemn oaths has been various. We read of some ceremonies used in swearing which were only occasional. Thus when Jacob and Laban took a solemn oath to each other at their parting, a pillar was erected, and a heap of stones gathered together; and they both eat upon the heap, and 'sware by the God of Abraham and Nahor, and the Fear of Isaac,' that they would do no injury to each other. Also we read that, when Abraham made his servant swear that he would take a wife for Isaac from among his kindred, and not out of the land where he dwelt, he ordered him to 'put his hand under his thigh.'u This form of swearing seemed to be an appeal to God, as having promised that his seed should be increased and multiplied, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; which was a circumstance well-adapted to the matter and occasion of the oath, namely, that he should provide such a wife for Isaac as God approved of. The common form of swearing used of old, seems to have been by lifting up the hand to heaven, thereby signifying an appeal to God, whose throne is there. Accordingly, the lifting up of the hand to heaven imports the same thing as to swear, according to the scripture-mode of speaking. In this manner Abraham sware,y and the angel which appeared to John; and this is, undoubtedly, a very good and justifiable form of swearing, and is used in some Protestant countries even at this day. As to the form used by us in public solemn oaths, namely, laying the hand on the bible, or on the gospels, and kissing the book, it is nowhere warranted by scripture, and therefore is not so eligible as that of lifting up the hand. Yet because it is the common legal form used among us, it is rather to be complied with than that the duty should be neglected; because, as has been but now observed, some forms of swearing are said to have been used in scripture, and not reproved, which were of men's invention. The thing principally to be looked at in an oath, is the solemn appeal made in it to God. Hence, it is the frame of spirit with which this is done, which is chiefly to be regarded; and what we have

promised to do, is religiously to be observed, that so our oaths may not be violated.

The objections against the use of religious oaths, are principally taken from two or three scriptures, not rightly understood, in which they seem to be forbidden. Thus our Saviour says, 'I say unto you, Swear not at all;' and the apostle James speaks to the same purpose.b It is farther objected that the prophet speaks of swearing as a national sin, when he says, 'Because of swearing the land mourneth.' But in these scriptures it is profane swearing which is forbidden, whereby persons make use of the name of God in a light and trifling manner to confirm what they say, or it is swearing by creatures, as the heaven, the earth, or any creature in them. The texts in question do not forbid swearing as a religious appeal to God in a solemn manner, for the confirming of what we assert. When the prophet speaks of 'the land mourning because of swearing,' his words may be rendered, as in the margin of our bibles, 'because of cursing the land mourneth;' intimating that it was a custom among them to imprecate the wrath of God against one another, which was a sin highly provoking to the Majesty of heaven. Besides, it appears by what is said in the words immediately following, that the prophet is speaking of profane cursing or swearing, 'for both prophet and priest are profane.' The people of all ranks and degrees were profane; the prophets and priests, by abusing the sacred mysteries; and the people, in their common discourse, using oaths and curses; for which things the land mourned. This is the plain sense of that scripture; so that no argument can be drawn from it to prove that solemn and religious oaths are unlawful. It is, indeed, unlawful to swear by creatures, as is observed in the scriptures just mentioned; for they are not omniscient, and therefore not to be appealed to for the deciding of matters which are known to none but ourselves and the searcher of hearts. Nor are they to be reckoned avengers of the cause

of injured truth; for they have not a sovereignty over man, or a right to judge and punish him in such a way as God has, and to whom alone belongs the work of judging and punishing. Hence, to swear by their name, is to give them a branch of his glory, and consequently to take his name in vain.

2. This commandment is broken by violating religious oaths, either those which are assertory or those which are promissary. When men assert that for truth which is uncertain, especially if they know it to be false, and so design to deceive, they break this commandment. As for promissary oaths, they contain an appeal to God concerning some things to be done by us, conducive to the good of others. Now, we are guilty of the breach of this commandment when we assert a thing, without implying the condition which ought to be contained in it, that if God will, or he be pleased to enable us, we will do it. This the apostle particularly mentions, when he blames those who say, 'To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; whereas they know not what shall be on the morrow;' and therefore, they 'ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.'—Again, we break this commandment when we promise a thing which is out of our power to perform; and, much more, when we do not design to perform it.—Further, we break it when we promise a thing which is in itself unlawful; as the Jews did, who 'bound themselves under a curse, that they would not eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.'e If we have obliged ourselves by an oath to perform that which is unlawful, as we sin in making the promise, so we should sin in fulfilling it. There are, however, some cases in which persons may not perform what they have sworn to do, and yet not be guilty of perjury, or violation of their oaths. One of these cases is when they have used their utmost endeavours to fulfil what they have promised to do, but cannot accomplish it. It must be observed, indeed, that if the thing promised

was absolutely out of their power when the promise was made, the oath, as we just now observed, was unlawful. But suppose that the thing was in their power when they promised it, and that an unforeseen providence has put it out of their power at present to perform it, though they have used their utmost endeavours to do so, they are not chargeable with the guilt of perjury. If, on the other hand, we have promised to do a thing which is for the advantage of another, but now see reason to alter our mind, apprehending that some detriment will accrue to ourselves; we must, notwithstanding, fulfil our promise. Thus the psalmist says, 'He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.' Yet if the person to whom we made the promise, who is to receive the advantage by our fulfilling it, is willing to discharge us from our obligation, we may omit to do it, and not be guilty of perjury. Here it might be inquired whether we are always obliged to fulfil a promise extorted from us by violence. It is generally supposed by divines that we are not. Yet the person can hardly be excused from sin in making such a promise, when he designs not to perform it, though some small degree of force or threatening were used; especially as the will cannot be obliged to consent, or the tongue to utter the promise. We may add, that they are guilty of the breach of this commandment, how much soever they may think themselves guiltless, who use equivocations, or mental reservations, in taking solemn and religious oaths. Thus the Papists make no scruple of swearing to support the government under which they live, and yet take the first opportunity which offers to subvert it, pretending that they swore to support it as it stood before the Reformation. Or they swear allegiance to their sovereign, and yet do what they can to dethrone him, and have this mental reservation, that they intended only to do it for the present, till they should have a convenient opportunity to join in a successful rebellion. By this means they break through the solemn tie of religious oaths, elude the

law, and impose upon the common sense of mankind, in such a way as even the heathen themselves are afraid and ashamed to do.

3. This farther leads us to consider this commandment as broken by swearing profanely; namely, when we make use of the name of God, and pretend to confirm what we assert by an appeal to him, and, at the same time, are far from doing so in a religious manner. This many do who give vent to their passions by profane swearing, by invoking the name of God upon light and trifling occasions, without that due regard which ought always to be paid to his divine majesty. Under this Head we may observe, that cursing is a vile sin, whether a man, imprecates the wrath of God on himself or on others. They who curse themselves do, in effect, pray that God would hasten their everlasting destruction; as though their damnation slumbered, or as if it were a thing to be wished for. They do that which the devils themselves would not venture to do. And to curse others is to put up a profane wicked prayer to God, to pour out his vengeance upon them. This is the highest affront to him; as though the vials of his wrath were to be emptied on their fellow-men when they pleased, to satisfy their passionate revenge against them. It also includes vile uncharitableness towards those whom we are commanded to love as ourselves. And how contrary is it to that golden rule laid down by our Saviour, 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them?,h Thus we break this commandment by perjury or profane swearing. We may add, that it is notoriously broken by sinful vows; cither when we resolve or determine to do what is unlawful, or bring ourselves under solemn engagements to do that which is lawful, in our own strength, without dependence on the grace of God in Christ.

4. It is farther observed in this Answer, that men take the name of God in vain, by sinful lots. This subject, however, needs explanation.

Let it be considered, then, that when lots were an ordinance, by which God in an extraordinary manner determined things which were before unknown, they being an instituted means of appealing to him for that end, as in the case of Achan and others, were not to be used in a common way; for to have used them so would have been a profaning of a sacred institution. But as this extraordinary ordinance has now ceased, it does not seem unlawful, so as to be an instance of profaneness, to make use of lots in civil matters; provided we do not consider them as an ordinance which God has appointed, in which we think we have ground to expect his immediate interposition, and to depend upon it as if it were a divine oracle. In this view it would be unlawful, at present, to use lots in any respect whatsoever.

5. Persons are said to break this commandment by murmuring, quarrelling at, curiously prying into, and misapplying God's decrees or providences, or perverting what he has revealed in his word. In other words, we break it when we apply things sacred to profane uses, and have not a due regard to the glory of God contained in them; or when we pervert scripture, by making use of its sacred expressions in our common discourse, as some make the scripture the subject of their profane wit and drollery. This conduct is certainly a taking of God's name in vain. It is added, that we are guilty of this sin by maintaining false doctrines, that is, when we pretend that any doctrine is from God, when it is not, or that he makes himself known by it, when it is altogether disowned by him.

6. This commandment is farther broken, by making use of God's name as a charm; as when the writing, or pronouncing of some name of God, is pretended to be an expedient to heal diseases, or drive away evil spirits. This is a great instance of profaneness, and that which he abhors.

7. This commandment is farther broken, by reviling or opposing God's truth, grace, and ways; whereby we cast contempt on that which is most sacred, and lightly esteem that which he sets such a value on, and makes himself known by. We may add, that this is done by hypocrisy and sinister ends in religion, whereby we walk so as to be an offence to others, and backslide from the ways of God. This is an abuse of that which ought to be our glory, and a disregarding of that whereby God manifests his name and glory to the world.

The Reasons Annexed to the Third Commandment

We are now to consider the reasons annexed to the third commandment. These are taken from the consideration of what God is in himself, as he is the Lord, whose name alone is Jehovah; whereby he puts us in mind of his sovereignty over us, and his undoubted right to obedience from us; and intimates that his excellency should fill us with the greatest reverence and humility, when we think or speak of any thing by which he makes himself known. Moreover, he reveals himself to his people as their God, that so his greatness should not confound us, or his dread, as an absolute God whom we have offended, make us despair of being accepted in his sight. Hence, we are to look upon him as our reconciled God and Father in Christ; which is the highest motive to obedience.

Again, the observance of this commandment is farther enforced by a threatening denounced against those who break it; concerning, whom it is said, that 'the Lord will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain.' This implies that there will be a judgment, a reckoning day, when all shall be called to an account; and that it shall be known whether they are guilty, or not guilty. It is farther observed, that the profaning of God's name is a sin which includes a

great weight of guilt, and renders the sinner liable to punishment in proportion to it. Accordingly, God is said not to hold them guiltless, or they shall not escape punishment from him, though they may, and often do, escape punishment from men. There are many instances of the profanation of the name of God, which no laws of man can reach; as when we attend on his ordinances without that inward purity of heart, and those high and becoming thoughts of him, which we ought always to entertain. On the other hand, human laws against the open profaning of the name of God are not severe enough to deter men from it; and if they are, they are seldom put in execution. This is one reason why we behold the name of God so openly blasphemed, while this iniquity goes unpunished by men. Yet such as are guilty of it are to expect that God will follow them with the tokens of his displeasure, sometimes with temporal, at other times with spiritual judgments. And that he will do so is assigned as a reason why we ought to make mention of the name of God, or of every thing whereby he makes himself known in such a way that we may glorify him.

THE SABBATIC INSTITUTION

QUESTION CXV. Which is the fourth commandment?

ANSWER. The fourth commandment is, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and

rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

QUESTION CXVI. What is required in the fourth commandment?

ANSWER. The fourth commandment requireth of all men, the sanctifying, or keeping holy to God, such set time as he hath appointed in his word; expressly one whole day in seven, which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament, called the Lord's day.

General Import of the Fourth Commandment

IN this commandment it is supposed, that God is the sovereign Lord of our time; which is to be improved by us, to the best purposes, as he shall direct. As there are some special seasons which he has appointed for the exercise of religious worship, these are called holy days; and as we are to abstain from our secular employments in them and engage in religious duties, they are called sabbaths; and that more especially, because they are sanctified by God for his service. These are considered, more generally, as including all those set times which God has appointed in his word; and that they include these is implied in the moral reason of this commandment. Hence, if he was pleased to institute, as he did under the ceremonial law, various sabbaths, or days appointed for rest, and the performance of religious worship, his people were obliged to observe them. I take the meaning of this commandment, then, to be, 'Remember a sabbath day, or every sabbath day, or every day, which God hath sanctified for that end, to keep it holy;' and then follows the particular intimation of the weekly sabbath. This, as is observed in the Answer

we are explaining, was the seventh day of the week, from the beginning of the world, to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since. The latter is the Christian sabbath, and, in the New Testament, is called the Lord's day.

The Nature of the Sabbatic Institution

We shall here inquire—since the fourth commandment is contained in the decalogue, which is an abstract of the moral law—whether we are obliged to observe the sabbath by the law of nature, or by some positive law. For understanding this, let it be premised that some laws are moral by way of eminence, or, in the highest sense, as distinguished from all positive laws; and that others may be called moral-positive, that is, the laws are positive, while there is, at the same time, some moral reason annexed to enforce our obedience to them. This moral reason is either what is founded in the sovereignty of God commanding, as is the case in all positive laws, which, in this respect, are moral, though they could not be known without a divine revelation; or else positive laws may have a moral circumstance annexed to them to engage us to obedience, taken from some glory which redounds to God or good to ourselves by the observance of them, or from some other reason assigned by God. For example, the reason annexed to the fourth commandment is taken from God's resting from the work of creation on the seventh day, and its being sanctified for our performing religious duties.

1. We shall consider first in what respects the sabbath is moral in the highest and most proper sense of the word. Here we shall lay down the following propositions, which may be considered in their respective connection.—First, it is a branch of the moral law, that God should be worshipped. This is founded in his divine perfections, in the relation we stand in to him, and in the consideration of our

being intelligent creatures, capable of worship.—Again, the moral law obliges us to perform social worship. This appears from the fact that man, as a creature, is capable of society, and is naturally inclined and disposed to it. That he is so, we cannot but know, when we look into ourselves, and consider the disposition of all intelligent creatures, leading them together with ourselves to this end; so that without any positive law to direct us, we should be naturally inclined to converse with one another.—Further, as man is a creature designed to worship God, as the law of nature suggests; so it appears, from the same law, that he is obliged to perform social worship. For, if we are obliged to converse with one another, and thereby to be helpful to one another, in other respects; certainly we are obliged by the same law, to converse with one another about divine matters, to be helpful to one another in them, and to express our united concurrence in those things which relate to the glory of God.—Again, the law of nature farther suggests that as the whole of our business in this world is not included in that of society, which is rather to be occasional than stated; and as there are other secular employments which we are to be engaged in, in which we do not converse with others; so we are not to spend our whole time in public or social worship. From these premises, then, it follows that some stated times are to be appointed for public and social worship. Now, it is agreeable to the law of nature, that God, who is the sovereign Lord of our time, as well as the object of social worship, should appoint these times; that is, that he should ordain a sabbath, or what proportion of time he pleases, for us to perform those religious duties which he enjoins. These considerations relating to our observance of the sabbath, are purely moral and not positive.

2. We shall now show in what respects the sabbath is positive, and not moral in the highest and most proper sense of the word. Here let it be considered that it is the result of a positive law, that one

proportion of time should be observed for a sabbath rather than another; namely, that it should be a seventh, rather than a third, fourth, fifth, or sixth part of our time. For this point could not have been known by the light of nature, any more than the other branches of instituted worship that are to be performed. Hence, whether it be the seventh day in the week, or the first, which we are to observe, the appointment of it being founded in the divine will, we conclude it to be a positive law. This we are obliged to assert that we may guard against two extremes, namely, that of those who deny the sabbath to have any thing of a moral nature contained in it; and that of others who suppose that there is no idea of a positive law in it. That, in some respects, the fourth commandment is a branch of the moral law, may be proved by various arguments.—In particular, it is inserted, among other commandments which are moral, and which were proclaimed by the voice of God from mount Sinai. But the ceremonial and judicial laws were not so proclaimed; they were given by divine inspiration: 'These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more,' namely, at that time. Moreover, they were written on two tables, with the finger of God, which none of the other laws were; and were laid up in the ark before the Lord.l Now, these circumstances denote the dignity and perpetuity of these laws, above all which were ceremonial, judicial, or merely positive.—Again, the sabbath was not only enjoined to be observed by the Israelites, who were in covenant with God, together with their servants, who were made proselytes to their religion, and were obliged to observe the ceremonial and other positive laws; but it was also to be observed by the stranger within their gates, namely, the heathen, who dwelt among them, who were not in covenant with God, and did not observe the ceremonial law. These were obliged to obey the sabbath, it being, in many respects, a branch of the moral law.—Further, if the observance of the sabbath

had been a duty of the ceremonial, and in no respects of the moral law, it would have been wholly abolished at the death of Christ. But, though then the day was altered, yet there was still a sabbath observed after his resurrection, even when the ceremonial law was no longer in force.—Moreover, the weekly sabbath is distinguished from all the ceremonial festivals, which are also called sabbaths; for God lays a special claim to it, as his own day. Hence, it is called, in this commandment, 'the sabbath of the Lord thy God;' and it is styled, 'his holy day,' by way of eminence, to distinguish it from other days which he has appointed to be, in other respects, devoted to his service; and, when changed, it is called 'the Lord's day,'n which is a peculiar honour put upon it. For these reasons, we conclude that the sabbath has in it something moral, and is not a part of the ceremonial law.

It is objected that the sabbath is included, by the apostle, among the ceremonial laws, which were designed to be abrogated under the gospel-dispensation; and therefore he says, 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.' But by 'the sabbath-days,' which are 'a shadow of things to come,' we are to understand the Jewish festivals, such as the new-moons, the passover, pentecost, the feast of tabernacles, &c., which are often called sabbaths; wherein holy convocations were held. Hence, when the apostle says, 'Let no man judge you' in respect of this matter, he means, let none have occasion to reprove you for your observing those days which were merely ceremonial, and the design of which was to typify the gospel-rest. That the apostle does not mean the weekly sabbath, is plain; for if he did he would contradict his own practice, and that of the churches in his day, who observed it. The other sabbaths, however, were abolished, together with the ceremonial law. Moreover, that he

intends no more than the ceremonial sabbaths, or Jewish festivals, is evident from what follows, 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink,' as well as 'in respect of an holy day,' &c. Here he does not mean, let no one have reason to judge or condemn you for gluttony or drunkenness; but he means, let no man judge or condemn you for your abstaining from several sorts of meat, forbidden by the ceremonial law; and he thus intimates that the distinction of meats is removed under the gospel-dispensation. Now, it follows that the ceremonial sabbaths, or holy days, are taken away; which are intended by 'the sabbath day,' in that place, and not the weekly sabbath. Hence, our translation rightly renders it, 'the sabbath days,' not the sabbath day. Or if it ought to be rendered 'the sabbath day,' or the weekly sabbath, because it is distinguished from the holy days previously mentioned; then he means the seventhday-sabbath, which was abolished, together with the ceremonial law, in opposition to the Lord's day. How far this seventh-day-sabbath was a sign or shadow of good things to come, will be considered in our reply to the next objection.

It is farther objected by those who pretend that the sabbath is a branch of the ceremonial law, that it is said, 'The children of Israel shall keep the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever,' &c. But whenever the weekly sabbath has any idea annexed to it corresponding to that of the ceremonial law, as when, in this scripture, it is said to be 'a sign' between God and Israel, we are to understand only that there was a ceremonial accommodation annexed to it, as an ordinance for their faith in particular, signifying the gospel rest. This signification was annexed to it, not from the beginning, but when it was given to Israel. From the beginning, it was not a type; but when God gave the ceremonial law, it was made a type. So the rainbow, which proceeds from natural causes, was,

doubtless, set in the heavens before Noah's time; yet it was not ordained to be a sign of the covenant between God and him, till God ordered it to be so in his time. Thus God ordained the sabbath to be a type or sign to Israel, when he gave them the ceremonial law, though it was not so before. And at Christ's resurrection it ceased to be an ordinance for their faith in the gospel-rest, or to be observed; when another day was substituted in the room of it, namely, the first day of the week.

It is farther objected that, when the observance of the sabbath was enjoined, God bade the Israelites 'remember that they were servants in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord their God brought them out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm;' and 'therefore commanded them to keep the sabbath day.' But God's bringing his people out of Egypt, is no argument that this commandment is a part of the ceremonial law, which was given soon after that time. For, in the preface to the ten commandments, his bringing his people out of the land of Egypt is assigned as a reason why they should observe all the commandments. Hence, it might as well be inferred that they are all a part of the ceremonial law, as that the fourth commandment is so; since they are all enforced by the same motive. Again, though this particular reason is given to induce the Israelites to observe this commandment, and it is in a more especial manner applied to that dispensation of providence which they were lately under; yet it could not be said to apply to the first institution of the sabbath, if we suppose, as we shall endeavour to prove under a following Head, that it was instituted before Moses' time. Further, the particular reason taken from their having been 'servants in Egypt,' is added to enforce the obligation laid on masters, to let their servants rest on the sabbath day, namely, because they themselves were once servants in Egypt; without any reference being

made to the matter of the commandment, or any intimation that it is a branch of the ceremonial law.

The Date of the Sabbatic Institution

We shall now consider when this law, relating to the observation of the sabbath, was first given. There are various opinions about this matter. Some think that the sabbath was first instituted when God spake to Israel from mount Sinai; inasmuch as it is one of the ten commandments which God gave them from that place. But we may remark that the sabbath was observed some days before Israel came into the wilderness of Sinai, namely, when they were in the wilderness of Sin. Thus Moses, when speaking concerning their gathering twice as much manna as was usual, the day before the sabbath, assigns as a reason for it, 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.' And that this was before they encamped at mount Sinai, appears from its being said that 'they came into the wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month,'s whereas they did not come into the wilderness of Sinai, till the third month. Others, therefore, fix the epoch of the giving this law, from their coming into the wilderness of Sin; this being the first time in which the sabbath is expressly said in scripture to have been observed. Nothing, however, can be justly inferred to this effect from the mode of expression used by Moses in this scripture; for it argues, not the giving of a new law, which had not been before observed, but only the putting them in mind of the observance of that day which had, for some time, been disregarded. Accordingly, the approach of the sabbath is assigned as a reason of their gathering twice the quantity of manna on the sixth day; which supposes that they knew beforehand, that they were to rest on the seventh. It is highly probable, indeed, that the observance of this commandment had been neglected, for some years before, while they were in Egypt; and

it may be, they were not suffered by those who held them there in bondage to observe it, and many other of the divine laws. Yet the memory of the sabbath was not wholly lost among them; and Moses now puts them in mind of it.

The most probable opinion therefore relating to the institution of the sabbath, is, that it was given to man from the beginning. This may be argued from the reason annexed to the commandment, namely, God's resting from his work of creation; and it immediately follows, that when he rested from his work, he blessed and sanctified the seventh day; that so man might celebrate and commemorate his power and glory which had been displayed. It is objected, however, that God's blessing and sanctifying the seventh day, may be understood proleptically, as denoting that at first he sanctified or ordained that it should be a sabbath to his people in following ages; and that it did not become so till Moses, time. Accordingly, the objectors suppose that Moses, having been speaking of the creation of the world, and God's resting from his work, gives them to understand that this was the reason of the law which was now given them, concerning the observance of the sabbath, which they never heard of before. But this sense of the text will appear very absurd to any unprejudiced person. For if God's resting from his work, which is mentioned immediately before, as the reason of his sanctifying the seventh day, is to be taken literally, why must his sanctifying the sabbath be taken figuratively? If the one be an account of what was just done, why should the other be an account of what was not to take place till two thousand and five hundred years after?

Again, if God had a church in the world, and public worship was performed by them from Adam to Moses' time, then there were set times in which they were to meet together for that end, and consequently a sabbath. This stated season of sacred rest was equally

necessary for the good of the church in foregoing as in following ages; and therefore we cannot suppose that it should have been denied that privilege then which has been granted it ever since, or that from Moses' time the church should be obliged to celebrate the glory of God, as their Creator, sovereign Ruler, and bountiful Benefactor, and by his express command, devote a seventh part of time to this service, and yet that he should loss the glory, and his people the advantage arising from it, before that time.—We are told, however, that the scripture is wholly silent as to this matter; so that nothing can be concluded in favour of the argument we are maintaining. But some think that the scripture is not wholly silent as to this matter; but that it may be inferred from what we read in Gen. 4:3, 4, where it is said that 'in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought an offering unto the Lord,' which was, doubtless, an instance of public worship. We render the words 'in process of time;' but they may, with equal justice, be rendered, as is observed in the margin, 'at the end of days;' that is, at the end of that cycle of days which we generally call a week, or on the seventh day. Then the offering was brought, and the solemn worship performed; and hereby the sabbath was sanctified according to God's institution. But if this argument be not allowed, it does not follow that the scripture's not mentioning their observing a sabbath, gives us just ground to suppose that they did not observe any. It might as well be argued that, because the scripture speaks very little of any public worship performed before the flood, there was then none in the world; or that as we do not read of the church's observing a sabbath, and many other parts of instituted worship all the time of the Judges, which is said to have been 'about the space of four hundred and fifty years,' it follows that a sabbath was not observed during the whole of that interval, and all instituted worship was wholly neglected.

The next thing to be inquired into is, whether the sabbath was instituted before or after the fall of our first parents. "Now it appears to have been instituted before the fall; because the reason of its institution was God's resting from his work of creation, of which we read before the account of their fall. It is objected, however, that Adam, in innocency, had no man-servants, nor maid-servants, nor stranger within his gate; and therefore was not in a capacity to observe this commandment. But before the world was increased, our first parents might observe the principal thing contained in the commandment, by setting apart a day for religious worship; and, when the world was increased, the other part of the commandment, which is only circumstantial, might also be observed. Indeed, this objection might be as much alleged against Adam's being obliged to yield obedience to the fifth, seventh, and eighth commandments, as against his obeying the fourth.

The Change of the Sabbath

It is farther observed, in this Answer, that the day which we call a seventh part of time, was the seventh day of the week, from the beginning of the world till the resurrection of Christ; and that it has been the first day of the week ever since, and will continue to be so till the end of the world. The latter is the Christian sabbath, or the Lord's day. That the seventh day of the week was observed as a sabbath at first, is taken for granted. Nor do we find that it was abolished by a positive law, so that there should be no sabbath; but the day was changed, by substituting another in its room. If, according to the fourth commandment, there is to be but one sabbath in the week, and the other six days are allowed for our own lawful employments, and if we can prove, as we shall attempt to do, that the first day of the week is the Christian sabbath, then it follows that the seventh day ceases to be a sabbath. It may be observed,

indeed, from several ecclesiastical writers, that some, in the three first centuries, observed both the seventh and the first day of the week. As for the apostles, they often assembled with the Jews, in their synagogues, on the seventh day; but they did so with a design to propagate the Christian religion among them, which could not, with equal conveniency, be done on other days. The church afterwards met together on that day, as well as the Lord's day, apprehending that, though it was not now to be reckoned God's holy day, or the Christian sabbath, yet the observance of it was expedient in order that they might keep up the memory of his having, on that day, finished the work of creation. Others kept it as a day of fasting, accompanied with other religious exercises, in memory of Christ's lying that day in the grave. But this practice can hardly be justified. It is evident, however, that they did not pay the same regard to it as to the Lord's day, nor style it God's holy day, or the Christian sabbath, by way of eminence. Some expressly intimated that, whatever regard they paid to the seventh day, or what assemblies soever they held on it for worship, they did not observe it in the same way the Jews did.z Nor were they obliged to hold meetings on that day, as they were on the Lord's day, the matter being, in part, left to their discretion. It was supposed that they had sufficient leisure from their secular callings, and therefore might attend to the worship of God on that day, as an opportunity offered itself; though they did not count it equally holy with the Lord's day, nor were obliged, when the worship was over, to abstain from their secular employments. I mention these facts only occasionally, in order to obviate an objection taken from the practice of some of the ancient church, in observing the seventh day of the week; an argument which does not much affect the cause we are maintaining, our design being to prove that the first day of the week is ordained to be the Christian sabbath. But before we enter on that subject, it may be necessary to premise some considerations.

It does not in the least derogate from the honour and glory of God, to change the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. It would indeed, derogate from the glory of God if he should take away one sabbath and not institute another in its room; for then he would lose the honour of that public worship which he has appointed to be performed to him on that day. Moreover, if there be a greater work than that of creation to be remembered and celebrated, it tends much more to the advancing of the glory of God, to appoint a day for the solemn remembrance of that work than if no such appointment should be made. We may add, that if all men must honour the Son even as they honour the Father, it is expedient that a day should be set apart for his honour, namely, the day on which he rested from the work of redemption, or, as the apostle says, 'ceased from it, as God did from his.' On the following grounds, then, it was expedient that God should alter the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.—Hereby Christ took occasion to give a display of his glory, and in particular of his sovereign authority, to enjoin what time he would have us set apart for his worship under the gospel-dispensation, as well as what worship he will have performed in it, and to discover himself to be, as he styles himself, 'the Lord of the sabbath day.'c—Again, we, in the observance of the Christian sabbath, signify our faith, in a public manner, that Christ is come in the flesh, that the work of our redemption is brought to perfection, and consequently that there is a way prepared for our justification and access to God, as our God, in hope of finding acceptance in his sight.—Further, all the ordinances of gospel-worship have a peculiar relation to Christ; and it is accordingly expedient that the time in which they are to be performed under the gospel-dispensation, should likewise have relation to him. Hence, that day in which he finished his work of redemption must be set apart in commemoration of it; and that was the first day of the week.

We are now led to consider what ground we have to conclude that the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, after the resurrection of Christ.

1. This change of the sabbath appears from the example of Christ and his apostles, who celebrated the first day of the week as a sabbath, after his resurrection. Thus we read that 'the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.' And 'after eight days,' or the eighth day after inclusive, 'again his disciples were within; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you.'e Here we may observe, that the meeting spoken of was not merely an occasional meeting, but a fixed one, which returned weekly. Hence, they met eight days after, or the following first day of the week; which was the second Christian sabbath. Again, on both these days of their meeting together for public worship, Christ appeared in the midst of them, and spake peace to them. He thus owned the day, and confirmed their faith in the observance of it as a sabbath, for the future.

It is objected that the reason of the apostles meeting together on the first day of the week, was for fear of the Jews; and not because that day was substituted, in the room of the seventh day, as a sabbath perpetually to be observed. But it is not said that they met together for fear of the Jews; but that when they were assembled, the doors were shut for fear of them. Besides, the fear of persecution would have been no warrant for them, not to keep the seventh-day sabbath, or to substitute another day in the room of it. We may add, too, that they might have more securely met together on the seventh day of the week, than on any other day, if they had been afraid of disturbance from the Jews; for then the Jews were engaged in

worship themselves, and it is probable, would be inclined to let them alone, for want of leisure to give them disturbance in their worship.

2. That the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, farther appears from the fact that this was a day in which the church met, together with the apostles, for solemn public worship. Thus we read that 'upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.' Now this was not a private, but a public meeting of the church; for it is said, that the disciples, that is, the church, met together. Nor was the day occasionally appointed by the apostle; but it was the stated usual time of their meeting. For it is said, not that Paul designed to preach to them on that day, and therefore they met together; but that when they came together, 'on the first day of the week,' that is, on the day of their usual meeting, 'Paul preached unto them.' Again, the apostle had been with them some days before; for it is said in the fore-going verse, that 'he abode there seven days.' Now, why did they not meet together, and he preach to them the day before, namely, the seventh day of the week, on which day he was with them; but because that was no longer a sabbath, but changed to the first day? Further, the object of their meeting was to break bread. Now, though the word is to be preached in season and out of season; yet no day is so proper to break bread on, or celebrate the Lord's supper, as that on which he rose from the dead. Besides, when a day is particularly described as that which is set apart for solemn worship, such as preaching and breaking of bread is supposed to be, that day must be understood to be the sabbath. Moreover, the disciples could not be said now to meet together for fear of the Jews, as was before objected to their observing the first sabbath; for the meeting in this case was at Troas, where the Jews had no influence, and could not persecute them, the church consisting of converted Gentiles.

It is objected that the word which we render 'the first day of the week,' might be rendered 'one day of the week,' or a certain day. But our translation of the Greek word is by far the most proper, as all know who understand that language. Besides, the same words are used in John 20:1, and Luke 24:1, in both of which scriptures Christ's resurrection is said to have occurred 'on the first day of the week.' How preposterous would it be, to render the words there, 'on a certain day of the week?' And if they are, in these scriptures, and in others which might be referred to, to be rendered 'the first day of the week,' as all allow they must, why should they be rendered otherwise in the text under present consideration?—It is farther objected, that their meeting together on the first day of the week to break bread, does not argue the day to have been a sabbath; because in the early ages the Lord's supper used to be administered whenever the word was preached, and that was on other days, besides the first day of the week; yea, we read, that in some ages of the church the word was preached, and the Lord's supper administered, every day. But though the Lord's supper may be administered on another day, yet, as has been already observed, the occasion mentioned in the passage in question is said to have been the day more especially appointed for the observance of this solemn ordinance, or for public worship. Besides, though the Lord's supper was administered on other days after this; it will be hard to prove that it was administered on any other day than the Lord's day in the apostles' time.

3. The change of the sabbath, from the seventh to the first day of the week, may be farther argued from 1 Cor. 16:1, 2, in which the apostle says, 'As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him; that there be no gatherings when I come.' Here we may observe that there is a work of charity recommended,—a duty most proper for the sabbath, as a testimony

of our thankfulness to God for spiritual blessings held forth to or received by us on that day; and it is a day in which our hearts are most likely to be enlarged to others, when most affected with the love of God to us. Those duties which the prophet recommends as suitable to a fast which God had chosen, are very suitable to all public ordinances, and in particular to sabbaths, namely, 'to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to deal forth bread to the hungry.' If the poor of the church were to be provided for, this was to be done not by a private but by a public collection, whereby more might be raised, and no burden laid on particular persons. It is said, moreover, that they were to 'lay by as God had prospered them;' that is, not only in proportion to the increase of their worldly substance, or the success which attended their secular employments on other days, but in proportion to the spiritual advantage they received from Christ under his ordinances. Again, this work of charity was to be done, not on one first day of the week, but on the return of every first day; as all who read this scripture impartially must understand it.i Hence, the first day of the week was a day in which the church met together for solemn, public, and stated worship. Further, the work was not only commanded to the church at Corinth, but was agreeable to what had been commanded to 'all the churches of Galatia.' It follows that the churches of Galatia were obliged to observe the first day of the week, as well as that at Corinth. And inasmuch as this epistle is directed to 'all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ,' it may, by a parity of reason, be applied to them. Accordingly, it may be argued that it was a universal practice of the church at that time, to meet together for religious worship on the first day of the week. This argument cannot but have some weight to prove the doctrine which we are maintaining, as to the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

4. The change of the sabbath, from the seventh to the first day of the week, farther appears from the fact that there is a day, mentioned in the New Testament, which is styled 'the Lord's day.' Thus it is said, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.' Here it may be observed, that there is a peculiar claim which Christ lays to this day as his own, distinct from all other days. As the seventh day of the week was formerly called, as in this commandment, 'the sabbath of the Lord thy God,' and elsewhere, 'his holy day;'m so there is a peculiar day which our Saviour, who is the Lord here spoken of, claims as his holy day. And what can this be, but that day which he instituted in commemoration of his having finished the work of our redemption? It may be farther observed that, when God is said to lay claim to things in scripture, the meaning is that they are of his appointment, and for his glory. Thus the bread and the wine in that ordinance which Christ has appointed in remembrance of his death, is called 'the Lord's supper,' or 'the Lord's table,' denoting that it is an ordinance of his own appointment. In like manner, 'the Lord's day' may be fitly so called for the reason that it is instituted by him.

The arguments which have hitherto been brought to prove that the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, are principally such as are founded on a scripture consequence. We shall now proceed to prove that this consequence is just, namely, that because the first day of the week was observed by our Saviour, his apostles, and the church in general, as the Lord's day, that is, a day instituted by him in commemoration of his having finished the work of our redemption, therefore we ought to observe it for that end. It is not to be supposed that this day was universally observed by the church at random, or by accident, without some direction given them. For as the apostles were appointed to erect the gospel church, and, as God's ministers, to give laws to it, relating to the instituted worship which was to be performed in it, it is reasonable to suppose

that they gave direction concerning the time in which public solemn worship should be performed. Now, whatever the apostles ordered the church to observe, in matters belonging to religious worship, they did it by divine direction; otherwise the rules they laid down for instituted worship could not be much depended on, and they would doubtless have been blamed, as not having fulfilled the commission which they received from Christ, to 'teach' the church 'to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them.' Nor could the apostle have made this appeal to the church: 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God;' and elsewhere, 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you;'o and, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received.' Nor would he have acted agreeably to the character he gave of himself and the rest of the apostles, concerning whom he says, 'Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.'q And he says concerning himself, 'I have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful;' and elsewhere, 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.'s Hence, whatever directions he gave about the time as well as mode of worship, were stamped with divine authority; so that an apostolic intimation relating to this matter contained a divine command.

Those things which were delivered to the church by persons under divine inspiration, are not to be reckoned among the traditions which the Papists plead for, which took their rise in those ages when inspiration had ceased. The apostle uses the word 'tradition' in the same sense in which we are to understand a divine oracle, or a command given by those who were divinely inspired. Accordingly, he says 'I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances,' or, as it is in the margin, 'traditions, as I

delivered them to you.' And elsewhere he exhorts them to 'hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or his epistle;'u that is, all those things which had been communicated to them by divine inspiration, in whatever form they were transmitted to them, whether by word or writing; which different circumstances of imparting them, do not in the least detract from their divine authority. The laws which God gave to his church, were either immediately from himself, as the ten commandments, or were given by those who were inspired for that purpose. Indeed, the greater part of what related to gospel worship was in the latter way. This was either verbal or real; the former containing an intimation of what the apostles had received of the Lord, and the latter being enforced by their example and practice. Now, their example and practice, supposing them under divine inspiration, was a sufficient warrant for the faith and practice of the church, whether relating to the mode or to the time of worship; and consequently, the practice and example of the apostles and church, in their day, in observing the first day of the week, is a sufficient argument to convince us concerning the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the Lord's day, which was to be observed by the church in all succeeding ages.

A question is proposed by some, When was it that Christ gave instructions to the apostles concerning the change of the sabbath? But this is an over-curious inquiry. It is enough for us to conclude that this, together with other laws given by them relating to the gospel-dispensation, were given by him during that interval of time in which 'he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;' of which, we may reasonably suppose this to have been one. But if this consideration be not reckoned sufficient for confirming our faith, we have the highest reason to conclude that it was given by the inspiration of the

Spirit, concerning whom Christ promised to the apostles that he would guide 'them into all truth,' and that he should 'show them things to them.'y By this we are to understand that he was to lead them, not only into those truths which were necessary for them to know as Christians, but into those things which it was necessary for them as ministers to impart to the churches as a rule of faith and practice. This, I think, may give us sufficient satisfaction, as to the divine origin of the Lord's day; without our being obliged to have recourse to an ecclesiastical establishment, without a divine institution, a device which would very much detract from the dignity and glory of the Christian sabbath, and from the regard which we ought to pay to it, as the Lord's holy day. We have considered that it was instituted by the apostles; that they had instructions in all things relating to the edification of the church; and that they were so faithful, in what they imparted, that they cannot be, in the least, suspected of intruding any invention of their own into the worship of God, in this any more than any other branch of that worship,—to suppose which, would leave us in the greatest uncertainty as to matters of the highest importance. Thus, concerning the observance of the Lord's day, as founded on a divine warrant given to the church by the ministry of the apostles, who were appointed by God to make known those laws to them which respect the manner and time in which he will be worshipped, under the gospel-dispensation.

The next thing to be considered, is that the church, in and after the apostles' time, universally attended to the religious observance of the Lord's day; which was celebrated as a sabbath in all succeeding ages. This is so evident from history that it needs no proof. That the apostles and the church in their day observed it, has been already considered; and that the observance of it was continued in the church after their death, appears from the writings of most of the Fathers, who speak of it as a day in which the church met together

for public worship, and to which they paid a much greater deference than to any of the other days of the week in which they occasionally attended on the exercise of religious duties. Thus Ignatius, who lived in the beginning of the second century, advises every one who loved Christ to celebrate the 'Lord's day, which was consecrated to his resurrection; and he calls it 'the queen, and chief of all days.' Justin Martyr, also, who lived about the middle of the same century, in one of his apologies for the Christians, says, "On that day, which they," namely, the heathen, "call Sunday, all who live in cities or villages, meet together in the same place, where the writings of the apostles and prophets are read, and we all assemble; it being the day in which God finished the creation, and Jesus Christ, our Saviour, rose from the dead. For the day before Saturday he was crucified; and the day after it, that is, Sunday, he appeared to his apostles and disciples, and instructed them in those things which we propose to your consideration."a In the third century, when persecution so much raged against the church, it is well-known that Christians distinguish themselves, by the character of observers of the Lord's day, which they reckon a badge of Christianity. I need not descend any lower, to prove that the Lord's day was universally observed by the church, in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, in all succeeding ages; for that is generally allowed. I shall therefore add only a simple thought or two to illustrate this argument, taken from the practice of the Christian church, from our Saviour's resurrection to this day. It cannot reasonably be supposed that God would suffer his church universally to run into so great a mistake, as to keep a wrong day as a weekly sabbath; and that not only in one or two, but in all ages, since our Saviour's time. Whatever error particular churches have been suffered to imbibe, God has not left them all, before the corruption and apostasy of the church of Rome, as well as since the Reformation, to be deceived; yet they must have been so left, had they esteemed that to be God's holy day which he has neither

instituted nor owned as such. Again, God has not only suffered all his churches to go on in this error, if it be an error, and not undeceived them; but he has, at the same time, granted them many signal marks of his favour, and has, to this day, in many instances, owned the strict and religious observance of the Christian sabbath. Now, we can hardly suppose him to have done this, or to have given a sanction to it, by being present with his people when attending on him in it, in the ordinances of his appointment, if the day had not been of his own institution.

The Relative Time of the Sabbath

We now come to observe the proportion of time which is to be observed as a weekly sabbath. It is said in this Answer, we are to keep holy to God, one whole day in seven. A day is either artificial or natural. The former is the space of time from the sun's rising to its setting; the latter includes the space of twenty-four hours. Now, the Lord's day must be supposed to continue longer than the measure of an artificial day; otherwise it would fall short of a seventh part of time. But this point has not so many difficulties attending it, as that has which relates to the time of the day when the sabbath begins. Yet we have some direction as to this matter, from the intimation given us that Christ rose from the dead 'on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was yet dark.' Hence, the Lord's day begins in the morning, before sun-rising; of, according to our usual way of reckoning, we may conclude, that it begins immediately after midnight, and continues till midnight following. This is our common method of computing time, beginning the day with the morning, and ending it with the evening; and it is agreeable to the psalmist's observation, 'Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour' in the morning, 'until the evening.'d Rest, in the order of nature, follows labour; and the night follows the day. Hence, the Lord's day evening

follows the day; and on this account, the day must be supposed to begin in the morning. Again, if the sabbath begins in the evening, religious worship ought to be performed some time in the evening; and then, soon after it is begun, it will be interrupted by the succeeding night, and it must be revived the following day. Besides, as to the design of the sabbath, it seems not agreeable to it that, when we have been engaged in the worship of God in the day, we should spend the evening in secular employments; yet our doing so cannot be judged unlawful, if the sabbath be then at an end. It is much more expedient that the whole work of the day should be continued as long as our worldly employments are on other days; and that our beginning and ending the performance of religious duties, should, in some measure, correspond with the nature of them. Again, that the sabbath begins in the morning may be proved from what is said in Exod. 16:23, 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord;' whereas, if the sabbath had begun in the, evening, it would rather have been said, 'This evening begins the rest of the holy sabbath.' Another scripture generally brought to prove this argument, is John 20:19, 'The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, unto them. Peace be unto you.' Here the evening of the first day of the week is called 'the evening of the same day;' so that the worship which was performed that day was continued in the evening. It is not called the evening of the next day, but of the same day in which Christ rose from the dead; which was the first Christian sabbath.

It is objected that the ceremonial sabbaths under the law, began at evening. Thus it is said, 'In the fourteenth day of the first month, at even, is the Lord's passover;' and, speaking concerning the feast of expiation, which was on the tenth day of the seventh month, it is

said, 'It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest; and ye shall afflict your souls in the ninth day of the month, at even. From even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath.' We reply, that the beginning of sacred days is to be at the same time with that of civil; and the date of the former was governed by the custom of nations. The Jews' civil day began at evening, and therefore it was ordained that from evening to evening should be the measure of their sacred days. Our days have another beginning and ending. This difference, however, is only circumstantial. The principal thing enjoined, is that one whole day in seven be observed as a sabbath to the Lord.

THE DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXVII. How is the sabbath, or Lord's day, to be sanctified?

ANSWER. The sabbath, or Lord's day, is to be sanctified, by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are, at all times, sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful, and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship; and to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation to dispose, and seasonably to despatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

QUESTION CXVIII. Why is the charge of keeping the sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors?

ANSWER. The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone ofttimes to hinder them by employments of their own.

Preparatory Duties to Sabbath-Sanctification

THE former of these Answers more especially respects the manner in which the sabbath is to be sanctified. The first thing in reference to it which requires our attention, is that we are to prepare our hearts, and, with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose of and seasonably to despatch our worldly business, that we may be more free and fit for the business of that day. We do not read, indeed, that there is any time sanctified, or set apart by God, in order to our preparing for the sabbath; but this matter is left to our Christian prudence. Yet we read in the New Testament of the day of preparation for the sabbath; that is, the day before the Jewish sabbath. Persons who had any sense of the importance of the work to be performed on the following day, thought it their duty to prepare for it beforehand, at least by giving despatch to their worldly business, that their thoughts might be fixed on the duties in which they were to engage. Thus we read that 'that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And they returned and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the sabbath day, according to the commandment. The mixing of ointments and spices, which were compounded, according to the custom of those times, for the

embalming of the dead, was a work of labour, and not fit to be done on the sabbath. They therefore did this work the day before, that they might not be brought under any necessity of performing that on the sabbath which might be done on another day. This practice of despatching worldly business, in order to their being prepared for the sacred employment of the sabbath, seems to have been inculcated when the observance of that day was revived by Moses in the wilderness of Sin. On that occasion he says, 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord. Bake that which ye will bake, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning.'h The meaning of this is, that they were to gather the manna,—work which would take up a considerable time,—and to grind or prepare it for baking or seething. This was a servile or laborious work, and might as well be done the day before. Accordingly, they were commanded then to despatch or finish it, that they might rest in and sanctify the sabbath immediately following. As to the time which the more religious Jews took, in preparing for the sabbath before it came, something may be learned from the practice of holy Nehemiah; whereby it appears that, in order to their preparing for the sabbath the day before, they laid aside their worldly business at sunset, or when it began to be dark. Thus it is said, 'When the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, he commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be. opened till after the sabbath.' This matter, however, was discretionary; and some Jewish writers observe that many of them began to prepare for the sabbath the evening before, at six o'clock, and some at three; and that others spent the whole day before in the despatch of their secular business, that they might be better prepared for the sabbath. Now, this practice as to what is equitable or moral in it, is, doubtless, an example to us; so that we many say as Hezekiah did in his prayer, 'The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek

God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.'k

This leads us to consider the duties to be performed preparatory to the right observing of the Lord's day. Now, we ought, the evening before, to lay aside our care and worldly business, that our thoughts may not be encumbered, diverted, or taken up with unseasonable or unlawful concerns about it. This is a duty very much neglected; and the omission of it is one reason of our unprofitable attendance on the ordinances of God on the Lord's day. Thus, many keep their shops open till midnight; and by this means make encroachments on part of the morning of the Lord's day, by indulging in too much sleep,—a practice which occasions drowsiness under the ordinances, as well as their thoughts being filled with worldly concerns and business while attending on them. We may add, that all envyings, contentions, evil surmising against our neighbour, are to be laid aside; since these will tend to defile our souls and deprave our minds, when we ought to be wholly taken up about divine things. Thus the apostle advises those to whom he writes, to 'lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, and as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby.' Moreover, we are, the evening before, to endeavour to bring our souls into a prepared frame for the duties of the Lord's day, by having our thoughts engaged in those meditations which are suitable to these duties. In particular, we are to consider the many lost sabbaths we have to account for or repent of, as also the wonderful patience of God, who has, notwithstanding, spared us to the approach of another sabbath; and what precautions are necessary to be used, that we may not profane or trifle it away. It would also be expedient for us to meditate on the vanity of worldly things, which we have laid aside all care about, and think how contemptible the gain of them is, if compared with communion with God, which is our

great concern. Hence, we are to consider ourselves as having a greater work to transact with God on his own day, and desire to have then no disturbance from the world. To these meditations we ought to join our fervent prayers to God, that the sins committed by us in former sabbaths may be forgiven, that he may not be provoked to withdraw the influences of his Spirit on the approaching day, and that the world, with its cares, may not then be a snare to us, through the temptations of Satan, together with the corruption of our own hearts, whereby our converse with God would be interrupted. We ought to pray also that he would assist his ministers in preparing a seasonable word, which may be blessed to ourselves and others. Thus the apostle exhorts the church, to 'pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints; and for him, that utterance might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.'m We ought to be very importunate with God, that he would sanctify and fill our thoughts, from the beginning to the end of the Lord's day, which he has consecrated for his immediate service and glory.

The Sabbatic Rest

We are now to consider what we are to rest and abstain from on the Lord's day. This is included in two general Heads, namely, not only from things sinful, but from what is in itself lawful on other days.

As to those things which are sinful on other days, they are much more so on the sabbath; for when we do them then we contract double guilt, not only in committing the sin, but in breaking the sabbath. Such sins are, for the most part, presumptuously committed, and greatly tend to harden the heart; and they not only

hinder the efficacy of the ordinances, but, if allowed, and persisted in, are a sad step to apostasy.

We break the sabbath also by engaging in things which would be lawful on other days, whether these be worldly employments or recreations. We are wholly to lay aside or abstain from worldly employments, particularly buying and selling or encouraging those who do so. We have a noble instance of zeal in Nehemiah, relating to this matter. He says, 'In those days saw I in Judah, some treading winepresses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. And I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them. What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?' The prophet Jeremiah also speaks to the same purpose, when he prohibits 'carrying burdens on the sabbath day, or doing any work' therein, and exhorts the people to 'hallow the sabbath day as God commanded their fathers.'o These texts may tend to reprove those tradesmen who, on the sabbath, post their books, state their accounts, or prepare their goods, which are to be exposed to sale on the following day. And if we do not run these lengths in profaning the sabbath, yet we are highly guilty when our thoughts and discourse run after our covetousness, which is, in effect, a saying as they did who complained, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat?' This conduct the prophet reproves when he says, 'They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. For with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.'q

Again, the sabbath is violated by recreations. We are therefore to abstain from these; otherwise we spurn at the sabbath. Accordingly, the prophet Isaiah speaks of those who sanctify the sabbath, as 'turning away their foot from doing their pleasure on God's holy day, and calling the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, honouring him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words.' The recreations we are to abstain from, on the Lord's day, are unnecessary visits; by which the worship of God in families is interrupted, the minds of men perverted and filled with vanity, the motions of the Spirit quenched, and the advantage of public worship greatly hindered, if not wholly lost. We are to abstain also from walking in the fields; whereby, instead of meditating on the word, the mind is diverted from it. We may add, that we are to abstain from taking unnecessary journeys. These will appear to be no other than finding our own pleasure and doing our own works on God's holy day. We read, indeed, of 'a sabbath day's journey;'s a phrase which seems to argue that it was not unlawful to travel on the Lord's day. But, that we may not mistake this matter, let it be considered that 'a sabbath day's journey,' according to Jewish writers, contained the length of two thousand cubits, or about a mile; which was, ordinarily speaking, the length of their cities, together with their respective suburbs. Now, as this is the measure of a sabbath day's journey, the phrase implies that they were not to go out of their cities to divert themselves, or to undertake journeys under a pretence of business. Accordingly, they were commanded to 'abide every man in his place on the seventh day;' that is, not to wander out of their tents to take the air, though they were obliged to go out of their tents to the tabernacle, the place of public worship, which was pitched in the midst of them for the conveniency of their coming to it. Hither, indeed, they went, from their respective tents; and their going to it was the only journey they took, unless in case of necessity, on the sabbath day. We may add,

that it is not lawful, on the sabbath day, for persons to divert themselves by talking of news or common affairs. Such unseasonable discourse often gives a check to those lively frames of spirit we have had under the word preached; and by indulging it, we not only break the sabbath ourselves, but, by our example, induce others to do the same. I do not deny that it may be seasonable to meditate on the providence of God towards the church and the world, on the Lord's day, as well as at other times; but then we must take heed that his glory, and not merely our own diversion, is the great inducement to such meditation.

Works of Necessity and Mercy

When it is said, in this fourth commandment, 'Thou shalt do no manner of work on the sabbath day,' there is an exception made, or an intimation that works of necessity and mercy, though they include something servile or laborious, may, notwithstanding, be done on the Lord's day. Some things are necessary, as they tend to the support of nature, such as eating and drinking. Hence, the providing of food for that end, is doubtless, lawful; especially if too much time be not spent in it, too many servants or others detained by it from the worship of God, or entertainments and splendid feasts made, in which variety of things are prepared to please the appetite, and all this attended with vain and trifling conversation, unbecoming the holiness of the day. There are also other works of necessity which may be done on the sabbath day, namely, such as are subservient to the worship of God; without which it is impossible that the public exercises of that worship should be performed. Under the ceremonial law, there were many laborious services which attended public worship,—particularly the killing of those beasts which were appointed for sacrifice on the sabbath day; though we are exempted from such services under the gospel-dispensation. To these, it is

probable, our Saviour refers when he says, 'Have ye not read in the law, how that the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?' that is, perform those servile works, subservient to public worship, which, according to your method of reasoning, would be a profaning of the sabbath.

Here it is inquired by some, whether it be lawful to kindle a fire on the sabbath day, since this seems to have been forbidden to the Israelites; to whom Moses says, 'Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.' Some are of opinion, that if this be lawful at present, agreeably to what we generally practise, its being so is a peculiar privilege attending the gospel-dispensation. We may hence take occasion to explain what is meant by this prohibition. Now, it could not have been hereby forbidden to kindle a fire for refreshment in cold weather; for that was as necessary as any of the other conveniences of life, such as eating, drinking, sitting down when we are weary, &c. It was done, too, with very little pains or difficulty; so that it would not much hinder the religious exercises of the sabbath. On the other hand, the not making a fire, provided the season of the year was extremely cold, would indispose men for the worship of God. It is most probable, therefore, that the meaning of the text in question is this, that as at the time when this law was given, many of the Israelites were employed in the work of building and adorning the tabernacle, a work which, as all artificers know, required the kindling of fires for the melting of metals, heating of iron tools, &c., and, as the people might be apt to think that, because the building of the tabernacle required expedition, they might kindle fires and therewith employ themselves in the work of it, on the sabbath day; Moses tells them, that it was not a work so absolutely necessary that it required that they should attend to it on that day. This seems to be the reason of the law which prohibited the kindling of a fire on the sabbath day. But there was an application of that law

to the dressing of food, which seems to be prohibited in the passage, 'Bake that ye will bake to-day, and seethe that which ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay it up to be kept for you until the morning.' Now, the meaning of this seems to be, 'Bake or seethe that which is necessary for your food, the day before the sabbath, and lay up the rest, to be baked or seethed on the sabbath.' The command more especially prohibits the gathering of manna on the sabbath, and preparing it for baking or seething; which would have taken up too great a part of the day, and have been a diversion from religious worship. But the baking or seething which would have afforded but a small interruption to the work of the sabbath, does not seem to have been forbidden.

We are now led to inquire what judgment we may pass on the 'stoning of the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath day.' The gathering of sticks for the making of a fire on the sabbath day, seems to be a work of necessity. Hence, some may be ready to conclude that the punishment inflicted on him was too severe. But, instead of excepting against the greatness of the punishment inflicted, I would rather infer that the crime was very great. For he might have gathered sticks on other days, and so have provided a sufficient quantity for his necessary use on the sabbath day; or else he should have been content to have been without a fire on that day, rather than give so ill a precedent of the breach of the sabbath. Again, it is probable that he gathered the sticks, not to supply his present necessities, but to increase his store; and, that he did not gather a few sticks, but a large quantity. But his acting thus cannot be pretended to be a work of necessity. Nor is it unlikely, that the man made a practice of it, for several sabbaths together; and so lived in a total contempt and neglect of God's public ordinances. Moreover, it is reasonable to suppose that he persisted in this practice presumptuously, publicly, and in defiance of the divine command,

after having been reproved for it; and he might obstinately vindicate it, and resolve, for the future, to persist in it; for to do so is the nature of a presumptuous sin. It is plain, indeed, that lie sinned presumptuously. For, in the verses immediately foregoing, God had threatened that 'the soul that doth ought presumptuously,' or, as it is in the margin, 'with an high hand,' who 'reproached the Lord' herein, 'should be cut off;' and then the account of the man's being stoned for gathering sticks on the sabbath day, is brought in as an instance of a just punishment of a presumptuous sinner.

These things being duly considered, we cannot take occasion to conclude, as many do, that there is this difference between the legal and the gospel-dispensation, that the sabbath was formerly to be observed more strictly than now; and that the more strict observance of it was a part of the yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, the relaxation of which is reckoned a branch of that liberty which we have under the gospel. This sounds very ill in the ears of all serious Christians, who think the duties of religion, and the strictness of our obligation in regard to them, a privilege rather than a burden. Thus concerning the lawfulness of our performing works of necessity on the sabbath day.

We proceed farther to consider that works of mercy ought to be done on that day; such as visiting and preparing medicines for the sick, relieving the poor, providing food and water for cattle and other brute creatures. This our Saviour vindicates by his practice, and illustrates by asserting the necessity of 'lifting out a sheep,' that has 'fallen into a pit,' on the sabbath day.

When, however, we maintain the lawfulness of performing works of necessity and mercy on the sabbath day, some cautions ought to be attended to. First, let the necessity be real, not pretended; of which,

God and our own consciences are the judges.—Again, if we think that we have a necessary call to omit or lay aside our attendance on the ordinances of God on the sabbath day, let us take heed that the necessity be not brought on us by some sin committed, which gives occasion to the judicial hand of God. Let us observe also that providence, which renders it necessary for us to absent from ordinances, should be rather submitted to, than esteemed a matter of choice or delight.—Further, if necessity obliges us to engage in secular employments on the Lord's day, as in the instances of those whose business is to provide physic for the sick, let us, nevertheless, labour to possess a spiritual frame, becoming the holiness of the day, so far as may consist with what we are immediately called to do.—Again, as we ought to see that the work we are engaged in is necessary; so we must not spend more time in it than what is needful.—Finally, if we have a necessary call to engage in worldly matters, and so be detained from public ordinances, we must endeavour to satisfy others that the providence of God obliges us to act as we do; that so we may not give offence to them, or they take occasion, without just reason, to follow their own employments, to do which would be a sin in them.

The Sanctifying of the Sabbath

We are to sanctify the sabbath, by spending the whole day in the public and private exercises of God's worship, and by maintaining a becoming holy frame of spirit, from the beginning of the day to the end of it.

1. In the beginning of the day, let not sleep make encroachments on more of the morning than what is needful, particularly, more than what we allow ourselves before we begin our employments on other days. Let us begin the day with spiritual meditations, and carefully

watch against worldly thoughts, as what will give us great interruption and hinderance in the work of the sabbath. Let us be earnest with God in prayer, that he would prepare our hearts for the solemn duties we are to engage in. Let us consider the sabbath as a very great talent that we are intrusted with; and that it is of the greatest importance for us to improve it, to the glory of God and our spiritual advantage.

2. While we are engaged in holy duties, especially in the public ordinances of God's worship, let us endeavour to maintain a becoming reverence and filial fear of God, in whose presence we are, and a love to his holy institutions, which are stamped with his authority. Let us, moreover, watch and strive against the first motions and suggestions of Satan, and our corrupt hearts, endeavouring to divert us from or disturb us in holy duties. Let us often lift up our hearts to God, by spiritual, short ejaculatory prayers, for help from him, to enable us to improve the word, and, at the same time, endeavour, to our utmost, to affect our hearts with a sense of the great worth of gospel opportunities. Let us also cherish, improve, and bless God for all the influences of his Holy Spirit, which he is pleased, at any time, to grant to us; or bewail and lament the want of these, when they are withheld.

3. In the intervals between our attendance on the ordinances of God's public worship, we are to engage in private duties, and worship God in and with our families. In order to this, we are to call to mind what we have heard, impress it on our own souls, recommend it to those whom we converse with and are concerned for, and take heed that we do nothing, between one public ordinance and another, which may unfit us for the remaining duties of the day, but, on the other hand, that we strive against and give a check to the least motions of corruption in our own souls.

4. The sabbath is to be sanctified in the evening, when the public ordinances are over. We are then to call to mind with thankfulness, what we have received from God, and how we have behaved ourselves in all the parts of divine worship, in which we have been engaged. We ought to inquire whether the sabbath was welcome to us, and we rejoiced in it as a blessing, as well as set about the observing of it as a duty; as the psalmist says, 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.' Moreover, we ought to inquire whether our aim was right in all the duties we performed; whether the glory of God, and the good of our own souls, was our great concern; or whether we were influenced only by custom, and rested in a form of godliness without regarding the power of it, and loved the opinion and praise of men more than that of God. We ought to inquire whether our minds, our affections, and outward gestures were grave, sedate, and composed, and we were ready to receive whatever God was pleased to impart in his word; whether we had a due sense of the divine perfections impressed on our spirits, and of the infinite distance which there is between the great God and us; whether we saw our need of the word, as Job says that 'he esteemed the words of God's month more than his necessary food;' and whether we have not only attended to every truth, but applied it to our own souls, as desiring to retain and improve it, and to make it the rule of our conversation. We are also to consider what we have received from God under his ordinances; whether we have had any sensible communion with him, any experiences of his love, or impressions of his power on our hearts; whether we have had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; whether, as we have gone from one ordinance to another, we have gone from strength to strength, our faith being more lively, our love to God increased, and our spiritual joy enlarged by every duty. We ought to inquire whether we have learned some doctrine from the word, which we understood not, or, at least, have been more confirmed in

it, after some degree of wavering, or have been affected with some truth which we never saw such a beauty and glory in before; whether we have been melted under the word; whether it has been, as the prophet says, 'like fire,' or as 'the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces;'d or whether we can adopt the language of the disciples, 'Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?' Now, we may comfortably conclude that we have received good under the ordinances, if we have been brought into an holy and lively frame of spirit; if the more we attend on them, the more our hearts are drawn forth to desire and delight in them; and especially if public duties fit us for private, and if, from the advantage that we receive from such opportunities, we are more disposed to walk with God in all the affairs and businesses of life, so that our whole conversation in this world receives a tincture from the benefit which we gain by that communion which we enjoy with God in his ordinances on his own day. Thus we are to take a view of our behaviour when engaged in public worship; and if we have received any spiritual advantage, the glory of it is to be given to God. But if, on the other hand, upon a strict and impartial inquiry into the frame of our spirits under the ordinances, we have, as too often happens, reason to complain of our deadness and stupidity under them; if we have not experienced that sensible communion with God which we have at other times enjoyed, or have reason to say that we wax worse, rather than better, under them; let us dread the consequence of this experience, lest it should issue in a judicial hardness of heart, and habitual unprofitableness, under the means of grace. We ought, in this case, to search out that secret sin which is as a root of bitterness springing up within us and troubling us, and to be humbled before God for it. We ought also to be still pressing after that special presence of God in his ordinances which will have a tendency to promote the life and power of religion in our souls.

We may add that, besides our dealing thus with ourselves in our private retirements, after having attended public worship, we are to endeavour to sanctify the sabbath in our families in the evening. Family worship is to be neglected no day; but on the sabbath it is to be engaged in with a particular relation to the duties which we have been performing in public. Accordingly, it is said, in one of the Answers we are explaining, that the charge of keeping the sabbath is directed to the governors of families, and other superiors; inasmuch as they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those who are under their charge, and not to hinder them, as many are prone to do, by employing them in those works which are foreign to the duties of the day. Masters of families are not only, on the sabbath day, to restrain immoralities in those who are under their care, but to lay their commands on them to engage with them in the worship of God, as they expect a blessing from him in all their undertakings. Thus Joshua resolves that 'he and his house would serve the Lord;' and God speaks to the honour of Abraham, when he says, 'I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord.'g Superiors have no power to dispense with any of God's commandments, or disengage their dependents from yielding obedience to them. But, on the other hand, they are obliged to see that all under their care perform their duty to God, as well as to them, and particularly that of sanctifying the sabbath. They are hence to restrain them from taking their own diversions, or finding their own pleasure in sinful recreations on the Lord's day; and to impress on them those suitable exhortations which may have a tendency to promote religion in their families; by which means they may hope for a peculiar blessing from God, in every relation and condition of life.

THE PROHIBITIONS AND MOTIVES OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXIX. What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment, are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them, all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful, and by all needless works, words, and thoughts about our worldly employments and recreations.

QUESTION CXX. What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?

ANSWER. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work;" from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God;" from the example of God, who, "in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day;" and from that blessing which God put upon that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it; "wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

QUESTION CXXI. Why is the word "remember" set in the beginning of the fourth commandment?

ANSWER. The word "remember" is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment, partly because of the great benefit of remembering it; we being thereby helped, in our preparation to keep it; and in keeping it better, to keep all the rest of the commandments, and to continue a thankful remembrance of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgment of religion; and partly because we are very ready to forget it; for that there is less light of nature for it, and yet it restraineth our natural liberty in things at other times lawful; that it cometh but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it; and that Satan, with his instruments, much labour to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.

The Sins Forbidden in the Fourth Commandment

IN discussing these Answers, we shall first consider the sins forbidden in this commandment.

1. The first of these are the omission of the duties required. Sins of omission are exceedingly prejudicial; because, though they have a tendency to harden the heart and stupify the conscience, yet they are, of all others, least regarded. As to the omission of holy duties on the sabbath day, it is a slighting and casting away of a great prize, put into our hands. Hence, in such a case, it will be said, 'Wherefore is there a price put into the hands of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?' It may be observed also that the omission of holy duties on the sabbath is generally attended with the neglect of secret duties, and is an inlet to all manner of sins, and to a total apostacy from God.

2. The next thing forbidden in this commandment, is the careless performance of holy duties. We commit this sin when our hearts are not engaged in them, or when we content ourselves with a form of godliness, denying the power of it, and have no sense of God's all-seeing eye, or dread of spiritual judgments, being given up to barrenness and unprofitableness under the means of grace. Such a frame of spirit as this, is always attended with a declining state of religion; especially if we do not lament and strive against it. We may add, that we greatly sin when we profane the day by idleness; either by sleeping away a great part of the morning of the day as though it were a day of sloth, and not of spiritual rest, designed for religious exercises; or by drowsiness under the ordinances, as though we had no concern in them, whereby we give all about us to understand that we do, as it were, withdraw our thoughts from the work in which we pretend to be engaged. In some, indeed, this drowsiness proceeds very much from the weakness of their natural constitution. Such may be heavy and weary in duty, though they are not weary of it; and they lament it, and are far from giving way to it, though they are, sometimes, unavoidably overtaken with it. In this case, though it cannot be excused from being a sin; yet it is such, as, it is to be hoped, our Saviour will cover with the mantle of his love, or at least not charge upon them for their condemnation, though he may reprove them for it to bring them under conviction. Thus he dealt with his disciples, when he 'came to them, and found them asleep.' Though he tacitly reproves them, yet he does not infer that they were wholly destitute of faith; but he charges their unbecoming carriage on the weakness of faith, and on their being overpowered by the infirmities of nature, when he says, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

3. There are other sins forbidden in the fourth commandment, which are particularly mentioned in this Answer. But these were insisted

on, in considering how the sabbath is to sanctified; where we showed that, as we are not to do that which is in itself sinful, so we are to abstain from our worldly employments and recreations, and endeavour to guard against that vanity of thoughts which will have a tendency to alienate our affections from God, or hinder the success of ordinances.

The Reasons Annexed to the Fourth Commandment

We proceed now to consider the reasons annexed to this commandment.

1. It is highly reasonable that we should sanctify the Lord's day; since God is pleased to allow us six days out of seven, for attending to our worldly affairs, and reserves but one to himself. This supposes that we are allowed to engage in our secular callings on other days. Hence, though it is brought in occasionally in this commandment, the duty which it implies belongs rather to the second table than to the first. In particular, it seems to be a branch of the eighth commandment. It is alleged, however, as a reason of our observing this commandment. Now, six days in seven is a very large allowance which God has made for our own employments. If, on the other hand, he had allowed us but one day in seven for them, and laid claim to six days to be set apart for religious worship, none would have had reason to complain; since he, being the absolute Lord of our time, may demand what proportion of it he pleases. And they who are truly sensible of the real advantage which there is in attendance on all God's holy institutions, and consider the sabbath as a privilege and blessing, would think it not only reasonable, but a great instance of the kindness of God to man, had this earth so much resembled heaven, that there should be a perpetual sabbath celebrated here, as there is there, where the saints count it their

happiness to be engaged without interruption, in the immediate service of God.

It is objected by some that they cannot spare out of their worldly business a seventh part of time for religious duties, and that it is very hard for them to get bread for their families by all their diligence and industry. Others allege that the sabbath is their market-day, by selling things on which they get more than they do on other days. As to the former part of the objection, taken from the difficulty of persons subsisting their families, it may be replied that God is able to make up the loss of the seventh part of time, so that their not working in it shall not be a real detriment to those who are in the lowest circumstances in the world. God has ordered it so, that our observing his holy institutions shall not, in the end, prove detrimental to us. Thus when Israel was commanded to rest, and, every seventh year, not to cultivate their land for a whole year together, providence so ordered it that they were not sufferers by this institution, inasmuch as the year before brought forth enough for three years; and when they were not to gather manna on the seventh day of the week, there was a double quantity rained upon them, which they gathered, the day before.l Why, then, may we not conclude that, by the blessing of God, what is lost by our not attending to our secular callings on the Lord's day, may be abundantly made up, by his blessing giving success to our endeavours on other days? As to that part of the objection in which persons pretend that the Lord's day is their market-day, in which they expect more advantage than on other days, it may be replied that if this be true it arises from the iniquity of the times; and it should be a caution to us, not to encourage those who expose their wares to sale on the sabbath day, since, if there were no buyers, there would be no sellers, and this public and notorious sin would be prevented. We have a noble instance of this in Nehemiah, whose

wisdom, zeal, and holy resolution, put an effectual stop to this practice, in his dealing with those who 'sold fish on the sabbath day.' First, 'he shut the gates of the city against them;' and when he saw that they continued without the walls, hoping, by some means or other, to get into the city, or to entice some to come out to buy their merchandise, then he 'testified against them,' and commanded them not to continue without the walls, and by this means gave a check to their scandalous practice. Moreover, this gain of iniquity is not to be pretended as a just excuse for the breach of a positive commandment; since, what is gotten in a way of presumptuous rebellion against God, is not likely to prosper, whatever pretence of poverty may be alleged to give countenance to it.

2. Another reason annexed to enforce our observance of the sabbath day, is taken from God's challenging a special propriety in it. Thus it is called 'the sabbath of the Lord thy God;' a day which he has consecrated or separated to himself, and to which accordingly he lays claim. Hence, it is no less than sacrilege, or a robbing of him, to employ it in any thing but what he requires to be done in it.

3. God sets his own example before us for our imitation. Thus it is said, 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day, and hallowed it.' It is observed that God was six days in making the world; whereas, had he pleased, he could have created all things with the same beauty and perfection in which they are at present, in an instant. But he performed this work by degrees, that he might teach us that whatever our hand finds to do, we should do in the proper season allotted for it. And as he ceased from his work on the seventh day, he requires that we should rest from ours, in conformity to his own example.

4. The last reason assigned for our sanctifying the sabbath, is taken from God's blessing and sanctifying it, or setting it apart for an holy use. To bless a day, is to give it to us as a particular blessing and privilege. Accordingly, we ought to reckon the sabbath a great instance of God's care and compassion to men, and a very great privilege, which ought to be highly esteemed by them. Again, for God to sanctify a day, is to set it apart from a common to an holy use. Accordingly, we ought to reckon the sabbath a day signalized above all others, with the character of God's holy day; and as such, we ought to employ it in holy exercises, answerable to the end for which it was instituted.

Import of the Word 'Remember' in the Fourth Commandment

It is observed in the last Answer we are explaining, that the word 'remember' is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment. From this circumstance we may observe our great proneness, through worldly business, and Satan's temptations, to forget the sabbath. We may learn also the importance of our observing the sabbath, without which irreligion and profaneness would universally abound in the world; and that, on the other hand, in our observing this day as we ought to do, we may hope for grace from God, whereby we may be enabled to keep his other commandments.—Again, the word 'remember,' prefixed to this commandment, imports, not only that we are to call to mind that this particular day which God has sanctified is a sabbath, or to know what day it is in the order of the days of the week, but that we ought to endeavour to have a frame of spirit becoming the holiness of the day, or to remember it so as to keep it holy. It is certain that it is an hard matter, through the corruption of nature, to get our hearts disengaged from the vain amusements and entanglements of the present world; in

consequence of which, we lose the advantage which would redound to us, by our conversing with God in holy duties. We are therefore to desire of him that he would impress on our souls a sense of our obligation to duty, and of the advantage which we may hope to gain from it. To induce us to act thus, let it be considered that the profanation of the sabbath is generally the first step to all manner of wickedness, and a making great advances to a total apostasy from God. Again, the observing of it is reckoned as a sign between God and his people. With respect to him, it is a sign of his favour; and with respect to man, it is a sign of their subjection to God, as their King and Lawgiver, in all his holy appointments. Moreover, we cannot reasonably expect that God should bless us in what we undertake on other days, if we neglect to own him on his day, or to devote ourselves to him, and by doing so discover our preferring him and the affairs of his worship before all things in the world.

Inferences from the Fourth Commandment

1. What has been said in explaining this commandment may serve to confute those who think that the observance of days in general, or that the keeping of the first day of the week as a sabbath, is a setting up of the ceremonial law, without distinguishing aright between a ceremonial and a moral precept. For, how much soever the observance of the seventh day, might have a ceremonial signification as it was enjoined to Israel from mount Sinai, it is possible for the typical reference of it to cease, and yet the moral reason of it to remain in force to us; as the sabbath is a day appointed by God in which he is to be worshipped, so that we may have ground to expect his presence and blessing, while attending on him in his holy institutions.

2. Others are to blame who think that every day is to be kept as a sabbath, pretending that such a practice is most agreeable to a state of perfection. It is contrary, however, to God's allowing us six days for our own employment. Indeed, none who make use of this argument, do, in reality, keep any day as a sabbath, at least in such a way as they ought.

3. Others are guilty of a great error who think that the sabbath is, indeed, to be observed; but that there is no need of that strictness which has been inculcated, or of its being kept holy from beginning to end. Some suppose that the only design of God in instituting it, was, that public worship should be maintained in the world; and that, therefore, it is sufficient if they attend on it, without endeavouring to converse with him in secret.

4. What has been said, is directly contrary to the opinion of those who think that the Lord's day was a mere human institution; without considering, as has been hinted, that what the apostles prescribed respecting it, was by divine direction. This opinion, if it should prevail, would open a door to great carelessness and formality in holy duties, and would be an inducement to us to profane the day in various instances.

THE SUM OF THE SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW

QUESTION CXXII. What is the sum of the six commandments, which contain our duty to man?

ANSWER. The sum of the six commandments, which contain our duty to man, is, to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them do to us.

As the first table of the ten commandments respects our duty to God, so the other contains our duty to our neighbour. This is comprised in the general idea of love; which therefore is styled the sum of the following six commandments. It is included in our Saviour's words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' and elsewhere, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'o

Love to our Neighbour

We are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. This implies a caution against a selfish temper; as though we were born only for ourselves, or were obliged to do good to none else. Such selfishness is what the apostle reproves, when he says, 'Men shall be lovers of their own selves;' that is, they shall study and consult the happiness, ease, and comfort of none but themselves.—Moreover, our loving our neighbour as ourselves, implies our using endeavours to promote the good of all whom we converse with; and thereby rendering ourselves a blessing to mankind. It does not, indeed, exclude self-love, which it supposes to be a duty; but obliges us to love others as well as ourselves, in things which relate to their spiritual and temporal good.

Here we may inquire whether we ought to love others better than ourselves; or what the apostle intends when he says, 'Let each esteem other better than themselves?' Now, it cannot be hereby meant that they who have attained a great measure of the knowledge of the truths of God, should reckon themselves as ignorant of or unstable in the doctrines of the gospel, as those who never made them the subject of their study and inquiry; or that they who have had large experience of the grace of God, should conclude that they have no more experience of it than those who are unregenerate, and have not taken one step heavenward. But the meaning is, that the greatest

saint should not think himself better than the least, any otherwise than as he has received more from the discriminating grace of God; as the apostle says, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?'r Indeed, such an one may see more sin in himself than he can see in any other; and, therefore, may have reason to reckon himself, as the apostle says, 'the chief of sinners.' The best saints would have been as bad as the vilest of men, had they been left to themselves; and it may be, some of those who have had less grace, have had fewer talents and opportunities, of grace than the former have had, which they have improved better in proportion to what they have received, than the others have the many advantages which God has been pleased to bestow on them.

Our next inquiry may be, whether our love to our neighbour should extend so far that we should be willing, were it needful, to lay down our lives for them; as it is said, 'We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren;' and, 'Peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.'u But by 'laying down our lives,' in these scriptures, is principally intended hazarding our lives, or exposing ourselves to the utmost danger, even of death itself, for others. Yet we are not to do this rashly, and at all times; but only when God, who is the sovereign Lord of our lives, calls us to it. Nor ought this to be done for every one, but 'the brethren;' especially for those who are more eminently useful in the church of God than ourselves or others. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'for a good man,' that is, one who is a common good, or a blessing to many others, 'one would even dare to die.' Moreover, our obeying this precept must be at times when, in exposing ourselves for the sake of others, we give our testimony to the gospel; and, in defending them, plead the injured cause of Christ and religion.

Doing as we would be done by

Loving our neighbour as ourselves is farther illustrated in this Answer, by doing to others what we would have them do to us. This is one of the most undeniable and self-evident truths contained in the law of nature. Whatever disputable matters there may be as to other duties, this rule is allowed by all mankind. Many, indeed, do not conform their practice to it; and their acting so gives occasion to the injuries done between man and man. Yet the vilest of men, when they deliberate on their own actions, cannot but blame themselves for acting contrary to it. This Saul did when he said to David, 'Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.' We conclude, then, that it is one of the first principles of the law of nature, and may well be called, as it is in this Answer, the sum of the commandments of the second table, or that to which they are all reduced. There are two things which we shall lay down, relating to this golden rule of doing to others as we would that they should do to us.

1. It is miserably neglected by a great part of the world. It is neglected by those who turn away their hearts from the afflicted; so as not to pity, help, or endeavour to comfort them in their distress. The psalmist was of another mind than these persons, when he said, 'As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother. I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.' Moreover, this rule is broken by those who deny to others those natural, civil, or religious liberties which, by God's appointment, they have a right to, or envy them the possession of these.

2. We are farther to inquire how this rule, of doing to others what we would have them do to us, may be of use in order to our right observing the commandments of the second table. The fifth commandment, which requires the performance of all relative duties, would be better observed, did superiors put themselves in the place of inferiors, and consider what they would then expect from them; and the same they ought to do to them. The same thing may be said with regard to the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments; which respect the life, the honour, and the wealth of others. If these are dear to us, ought we not to consider that they are so to others? And if we would not be deprived of them ourselves, how unreasonable is it for us to do any thing which may tend to deprive others of them? Again, if, according to the ninth commandment, our good name be so valuable, that we ought to maintain it, should not defamers, slanderers, and backbiters reflect that they do that to others which they would not have done to themselves? As to the tenth commandment, it forbids our uneasiness at, or being discontented with, the good of others, or our endeavouring to divest them of the possession of what God has given them in this world. Now, these things cannot be done by any persons who duly consider, how unwilling they would be to have what they possess taken away, to satisfy the covetousness or lust of others.

THE RELATIONS OF LIFE

QUESTION CXXIII. Which is the fifth commandment?

ANSWER. The fifth commandment is, "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

QUESTION CXXIV. Who are meant by father and mother, in the fifth commandment?

ANSWER. By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts, and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

QUESTION CXXV. Why are superiors styled father and mother?

ANSWER. Superiors are styled father and mother, both to teach them in all duties towards their inferiors, like natural parents, to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations, and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents.

QUESTION CXXVI. What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?

ANSWER. The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, equals.

The Meaning of 'Father and Mother' in the Fifth Commandment

IN the fifth commandment, no other relations are mentioned but father and mother; yet it may be observed that by these all superiors in general are intended. Many are called fathers in scripture besides our natural parents. Superiors in age are so called. Thus it is said, 'Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters,

with all purity.' They also are called fathers who are superior in gifts; and accordingly have been inventors of arts which have been useful to the world. Thus Jabal is said to be 'the father of such as dwell in tents, and have cattle,'a that is, the first who made considerable improvements in the art of husbandry; and Jubal is said to be 'the father,' that is, the instructor 'of all such as handle the harp and organ,' or the first who made improvements in the art of music. Moreover, those are called fathers to whom we owe, under God, our outward prosperity and happiness. In this sense Joseph, though a subject, a young man, and, a little before, a prisoner, is called 'a father to Pharaoh;c that is, he was an instrument to support his greatness, and preserve him from the inconveniences of a seven years' famine. Again, princes, great men, and heads of families, are called fathers. Thus Naaman was so called by his servants. Further, men of honour and usefulness in the church are so called. Thus when Elisha saw Elijah ascend into heaven, he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.'e Joash, the king of Israel, used the same expression to Elijah, 'when fallen sick.' The apostle also takes by implication the name father to himself when he styles those to whom he had been made useful for their conviction, and enlightening in the doctrines of the gospel, 'My little children.'g Finally, good kings and governors are called fathers. Thus it is said, 'Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and queens thy nursing-mothers.'

Why Superiors are styled Father and Mother

We have an account, in one of the Answers we are explaining, of the reason why superiors are styled father and mother. This is, that they should behave towards their inferiors with the same love and tenderness as if they were natural parents. Authority is not only consistent with such love; but it ought to be exercised, by superiors

towards inferiors, under the influence of this love. Thus Job, when in his prosperity, was, as it were, a common father to all who were under him. Accordingly, he says, 'I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him;' and 'I was a father to the poor.'k Ministers, also, who, in some respects, are superior in office to others, when their reproofs are mixed with tenderness and compassion towards the souls of men under their care, are compared to 'the nurse that cherisheth her children;' as 'being affectionately desirous, and willing to impart to them, not the gospel of God only, but also their own souls, as being dear to them.'

The Bases and Nature of the Social Relations

We have, in another of the Answers under our consideration, an account of the general scope of the fifth commandment; and, as it requires the duties to be performed by every one in their several relations, these are considered either as superiors, inferiors, or equals. There are several sorts of relations in which persons are styled superior or inferior to one another. There are relations founded in nature, as that of parents and children. There are such relations as are political, designed for the good of mankind, living together as members of the same commonwealth, in which every one has a right to his civil liberties, which are to be enjoyed by the one party, and defended by the other. Of this sort is the relation of magistrates and subjects. There is also a relation founded in mutual compact and agreement, respecting things to be done on the one side, and gratifications to be allowed on the other. Of this kind is the relation between master and servant.

The only difficulty which arises from the account we have of the obligation of persons to give honour to others, respects superiors honouring inferiors. Now, let it be considered that superiors are not

obliged to show the same marks of honour to their inferiors, as inferiors are bound, by the laws of God and nature, to express to them. Yet there is a duty which the greatest men owe to the least. There is also a degree of honour which the lowest of men, as reasonable creatures or Christians, have, and which is put upon them by God; and this is to be regarded by those who are, as to their condition in the world, superior to them. Besides, the meanest and lowest part of mankind, are, in many respects, necessary and useful to those who are much their superiors; and are to be regarded by them in proportion to their being useful and necessary. Now, the performing of the duties which superiors owe to them, is called honouring them.

RELATIVE DUTIES

QUESTION CXXVII. What is the honour that inferiors owe to their superiors?

ANSWER. The honour which inferiors owe to their superiors, is, all due reverence, in heart, word, and behaviour; prayer, and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces, willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels, due submission to their corrections, fidelity to, defence, and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honour to them and to their government.

QUESTION CXXVIII. What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?

ANSWER. The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them, envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections, cursing, mocking, and all such refractory and scandalous carriage as proves a shame and dishonour to them and their government.

QUESTION CXXIX. What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?

ANSWER. It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel, and admonish them; countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well; discountenancing, reproving, and chastising such as do ill; protecting and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body; and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God, honour to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.

QUESTION CXXX. What are the sins of superiors?

ANSWER. The sins of superiors are, beside the neglect of the duties required of them, and inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform; counselling, encouraging, or favouring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly, careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger; provoking them to wrath; or any way dishonouring themselves, or lessening their

authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behaviour.

QUESTION CXXXI. What are the duties of equals?

ANSWER. The duties of equals are, to regard the dignity and worth of each other, in giving honour to go one before another, and to rejoice in each others' gifts and advancement, as in their own.

QUESTION CXXXII. What are the sins of equals?

ANSWER. The sins of equals are, beside the neglect of the duties required, the under valuing of the worth, envying the gifts, grieving at the advancement or prosperity one of another, and usurping pre-eminence one over another.

The Duties of Inferiors to Superiors

WE have in the first of these Answers an account of the honour which inferiors owe to their superiors. Here it will be necessary for us to premise some things concerning the measure of submission and obedience which inferiors owe to superiors, of what kind soever the relation be. When the authority with which God has invested superiors is abused, and the highest end of all sort of government, namely, the glory of God and the good of mankind, can never be attained, nor is, indeed, designed; or when the commands of superiors contradict the commands of God; we are then to obey him rather than men. Again, if we cannot obey the commands of superiors, as being unjust, we must pray that God would interpose, and would direct and overrule their authority, that it may not be abused by them, or become a snare or an occasion of sin to us. Though, however, we cannot yield obedience to them, in those things

which are contrary to the laws of God, we are not discharged from our obligation to obey their commands, in other things which are agreeable to these laws; for we are not to suppose that the abuse of their authority in some instances, divests them of it in all respects.

1. In now proceeding to consider the duties which inferiors owe to their superiors, we notice first that of children to parents. This is founded on the law of nature. Under God, children derive their being from their parents; and they are obliged to honour them from a sense of gratitude for that love, tenderness, and compassion which they have shown to them. The apostle says that this duty 'is right,' that is, equitable and highly reasonable; and that it is 'well-pleasing unto the Lord.'o This duty includes several things.

Children are sometimes to show the regard they have to their parents by outward tokens of respect. Thus Solomon, though his character, as a king, rendered him superior to all his subjects, expressed a great deal of honour by outward gestures to his mother. When she went to him to speak in the behalf of Adonijah, it is said that 'the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.'—Again, children ought to be ready to do their parents any acts, of service which are not unlawful or impossible, when commanded by them. Thus Joseph obeyed Jacob, when he sent him to see where his brethren were, and what they were engaged in;q and David obeyed Jesse, when he sent him to his brethren to the camp of Israel. This service is required more especially of children while they live with their parents, are maintained by them, and have not, by mutual compact, become servants to others.—Another duty which they owe, is, patient submission to their just reproofs, designed for their good. Thus the apostle says, 'We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.'s—

Further, they are to attend to and comply with their parents' wholesome advice and instruction. Thus it is said, 'A wise son heareth his father's instruction;' while, on the other hand, he is branded with the character of 'a fool' who 'despiseth it;'u—and it is added, 'He that regardeth reproof is prudent.'—Moreover, children are to express their duty to their parents, by a thankful acknowledgment of past favours; and accordingly ought to relieve them, if they are able, when their indigent circumstances call for it, and endeavour to be a staff, comfort, and support to them, in their old age. This conduct is exemplified in the message which Joseph sent to Jacob, when he invited him to come down to him into Egypt. So when Ruth bare a son to Boaz, her mother Naomi's companions blessed her, and said, 'He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age.'y

Children are also to pay deference to their parents' wishes, and, so far as it concerns the glory of God and their own future good, be advised by them in disposing of themselves in marriage, or any other important change of their condition and circumstances in the world. By this conduct they acknowledge their authority as superiors, and the care and concern which it is supposed they naturally have for their welfare as a part of themselves. Moreover, by this they pay a deference to their wisdom and judgment, as being superior in age, and probably, in wisdom, as well as relation. And this ought to be done out of a sense of gratitude for past favours received. Prudence too will, for the most part, dictate as much; especially when they depend on them for present comforts, or expect future advantages from them. This is also an expedient to maintain love and peace in families; which is often broken by the contrary practice. It may be recommended, likewise, from the laudable examples of it in good men. Thus Isaac submitted, as to his marriage, to the direction of his father Abraham; and Jacob was determined by the consent of

Laban.a Many more instances might be given to the same purpose. On the other hand, Esau's contrary practice is recorded in scripture as a vile instance of disobedience, 'which was a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah;' and it was, doubtless, an evidence that he had no regard to God or religion.—Nevertheless, this obligation is not without some exceptions. For we do not speak of parents who are so far deprived of judgment that they are not fit to determine this matter; nor of such as have divested themselves of the natural affection of parents, and, entertaining an ungrounded prejudice against some of their children, endeavour to expose them to ruin, that they may show more kindness to others. These forfeit that right which is otherwise founded in nature. Again, if parents, by refusing to comply with the desire of their children, plainly, in the judgment of the wisest of men, obstruct their happiness, and the glory of God; or if they give no reason for their not complying, or the reason given is contrary to the laws of God, or the common sense of all impartial judges; especially if the affair took its rise from them, and afterwards they changed their mind, without sufficient ground; these circumstances, without doubt, lessen, or, it may be, wholly take away the charge of sin in the child, in acting contrary to the will of his parents, and fasten the guilt on them. Further, the case is peculiar when children are so far from being dependent on their parents, that they depend on them. In this case, some deference and respect ought to be paid to them; and as it is the children's duty, it may be their interest to render them. For we can hardly suppose that parents who depend on their children, would oppose their happiness in an affair which is apparently contrary to their own interest, if they did not think that they had sufficient reason for doing so. Their opposition, therefore, ought to be duly weighed, that it may be known, whether their advice is expedient to be complied with or not. And if, in this or any other instance, children are obliged to act contrary to the will of their parents, they ought to satisfy them that their choice is made,

not out of any contempt of their authority, but from a conscientious regard to the glory of God, and that, in the opinion of the wisest and best of men, it is conducive to their happiness.

2. We shall now consider the duty of servants to their masters. This depends upon and is limited by the contract, which brought them into that relation, the not fulfilling of which renders them guilty of unfaithfulness. Nor is it less an instance of immorality for them to rob their masters of that time which they have engaged to serve, than it is to take away any part of their estate. But more particularly, servants ought to behave themselves in their calling with industry, being as much concerned for their master's interest as their own. In this manner Joseph, though a foreigner, and one who does not appear to have expected any reward for his service, but a maintenance, served Potiphar. In this manner also Jacob served Laban, though an unjust, severe, and unrighteous master.

This may lead us to inquire concerning the duty of servants, when their masters are froward, passionate, and unreasonable in their demands,—a circumstance which renders their service very irksome and unpleasant. But let it be considered that the master's passion, which is his sin, ought not to draw forth the corruption of his servant; for, sin indulged by one, is no excuse for its being committed by another. The apostle Peter supposes the case under consideration, and gives this advice: 'Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.' Again, if the master's demands are unreasonable, the servant must know the extent of his contract and obligation; and this he must, injustice, fulfil 'as unto Christ.'d As for those services which are reckoned unreasonable, and not agreeable to the contract, these, if demanded, are rather to be referred to the determination of others, since persons are apt to be partial in judging in their own cause.

There seems, indeed, to be an exception to what we have stated, in some instances which we find in scripture of the unlimited obedience of servants under the ceremonial law; which was not founded in nor the result of any contract between their masters and them. Accordingly, we read that persons became servants through poverty; by reason of which, they sold themselves for the payment of debts. In this case, indeed, there was a kind of contract; and the service to be performed ought, agreeably to the law of God and nature, to have corresponded with and been adjusted by the value of the debt contracted. Again, prisoners taken in war, were treated as servants, and, as such, sold to others. In this case, all the children that were born to them during their servitude, were the property of the master. These are called home-born servants, and had not so much liberty allowed them as those who were servants by mutual compact. Engagement by mutual compact is the method most common among us in which persons become servants; and in this case both parties are bound by the terms of agreement.

3. We proceed to consider the duty of the members of a commonwealth or body politic, to their lawful magistrates. The apostle says, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.' Here we may observe the necessity of civil government. This will appear if we consider mankind in general as prone to be influenced by passions which are not entirely under the conduct of reason, and which, if no check were given to them, would prove injurious to societies. We observe also that God has, in his law, ordained certain punishments to be inflicted, with a design to restrain these corruptions, and to keep the world in order. Now, that this end may more effectually be answered, it is necessary that some should be set over others, to administer justice, in chastising the guilty, and defending the innocent. Without such an institution, the world would be filled with confusion, and men would commit sin with

impunity, and more resemble brute creatures than beings who are endowed with reason, and are capable of moral government. Thus it is said, 'When there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes.'f

We proceed now to consider the advantage of civil government. It is in itself a blessing to mankind, when it does not degenerate into tyranny. Hence, good magistrates are a great instance of divine favour to a nation; as the queen of Sheba said to Solomon, 'Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.' And it is included among the blessings of the gospel-state, that 'kings should be their nursing-fathers, and their queens their nursing-mothers.'h Such are said, as David was, to be 'raised up to fulfil the will of God.' Nevertheless, civil government may be so administered that it may cease to be a blessing to the subjects. Thus Samuel describes the miserable state of a people, whose kings endeavour to establish their own greatness by enslaving and plundering their subjects, 'taking their sons and daughters' by force to be their servants, seizing their 'fields, their vineyards and olive-yards, and the tenth of their increase;' an expression which would oblige them to 'cry unto the Lord, because of their oppression.'k We have an instance of this in Rehoboam, who was as remarkable for his want of conduct as his father was for his excelling wisdom. His rough and ill-timed answer to his subjects, in which he gave them to expect nothing else but oppression and slavery, issued in the revolt of ten tribes from his government.

From this different method of the administration of civil government, whereby it is rendered either a blessing or an affliction to the subjects, we may infer some important lessons. When that which is in itself a blessing, is turned into a curse, the event may be looked upon as a punishment inflicted by God for the iniquity of a people. Thus he says, 'I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.'—Again, we have great reason to be well-pleased with the government we are under, and to bless God for it. We are not exposed to the slavery which some other nations are; who have no laws but what result from the arbitrary will of their prince, and who can call nothing they have their own. This should make us prize the liberties which we enjoy; and be a strong motive to us to give due and cheerful obedience to our rightful and lawful sovereign, and all magistrates under him, who rule in righteousness, and are a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to them that do well.—Further, there is matter of reproof to the restless tempers of those who are under the mildest government; which is administered beyond all reasonable exception, our enemies themselves being judges. Indeed, they would confess this, were they not blinded with prejudice; which puts them upon betaking themselves to raillery, instead of better arguments. These are reproved by the apostle, who says, 'Some walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil' even 'of dignities.'n

We are now led to consider the honour which subjects owe to their lawful magistrates. They are highly to resent, and endeavour, in their several stations and capacities, to check the insolence of those who make bold with the character of their magistrates and take the liberty to reproach them in common conversation. Such conduct is directly contrary to the law of God; which says, 'Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber. For a bird of

the air shall carry the voice; and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.'—Again, we are to support the honour of government, by paying those tributes which are lawfully exacted. Thus the apostle says, 'Render to all their due; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.'p—Further, we are to pray for a blessing from God on the administration of our civil governors, that it may be under the divine direction, and tend to answer the great ends of government, namely, the glory of God, and the welfare of the subject.

Here I cannot but observe, that no one on earth has a power of discharging subjects from their obedience to their lawful governors, who endeavour to rule them according to the laws of God and nature, and those fundamental constitutions that are agreeable to these. Hence, it is a most detestable position advanced by the papists, that the pope has a power to excommunicate and depose sovereign princes; though it does not appear that he has received any such authority from Christ, but herein intermeddles with a province which does not belong to him. For princes do not receive their crowns from the pope; and therefore are not to be deposed by him. The assumption of such power by him is directly contrary to the temper of the blessed Jesus, and of the apostles and primitive Christians; who did not encourage their followers to depose heathen kings and emperors; but, on the other hand, exhorted them to 'submit to them in all things' consistent with the glory of God, and the good of mankind, 'not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake.' The church has no temporal sword committed to her, all her censures being spiritual. Temporal punishments are left in the hands of the civil magistrate; concerning whom, the apostle says, 'He is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.'r On the other

hand, when speaking concerning those who have the, government of ecclesiastical matters committed to them, he says, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.'

The arguments generally used by the papists, to support the cause of rebellion, and their usurped power to depose magistrates who are not of their communion, are very weak, and, most of them, such as may easily be answered. They allege the commission given by Christ, to Peter, 'Feed my sheep.' They pretend, that to 'feed,' is the same as to govern, and that this implies a power of punishing; which they suppose to be extended so far that the bishop of Rome may depose sovereign princes, as occasion offers; and they say that this power was given to Peter and his successors, which the popes of Rome pretend to be. But this commission given by Christ to Peter, to 'feed his sheep,' imports his feeding them with knowledge and understanding, and not lording it over God's heritage. Thus our Saviour says, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.'u Moreover, their pretence that the bishops of Rome are Peter's successors, contains a claim of what they have not the least shadow of right to; and is, indeed, to place those in Peter's chair who are the greatest opposers of his doctrine.

Another argument they bring, tending to overthrow the power of the civil magistrate, is that, as the soul is more excellent than the body, and its welfare to be preferred in proportion; so the church is to take care of the spiritual concerns of mankind, to which all temporal concerns are to give place; and hence its power is greater than that of the civil magistrate. But this similitude does not prove the thing for

which it is brought. Though it is allowed that the soul is more excellent than the body, yet its welfare is not to be secured by inflicting corporal punishments, such as persecutions and massacres; to abet and encourage which, is to cast a reproach on religion, and will tend very much to weaken the interest of Christ in the world. Moreover, the magistrate is ordained by God to defend the religious as well as the civil liberties of his subjects. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts that prayers be made 'for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a peaceable and quiet life, in all godliness and honesty; and elsewhere we are exhorted to 'submit to governors, as unto them who are sent by the Lord, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.'y

There is another argument which they make use of, taken from Azariah the priest's opposing king Uzziah, for intruding himself into the priest's office, in burning incense in the temple. Thus it is said, 'When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord, to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men. And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.' To support their argument taken from this scripture; they observe that the priests who went in with Azariah are said to be 'valiant men,' and so ready to commit any hostilities against the king. Azariah also threatens the king, when he tells him, 'it should not be for his honour;' and peremptorily commands him to be gone out of the temple. This, they suppose, is a flagrant instance of the power of the church over the civil magistrate, in all those things which interfere

with what is sacred. Uzziah's sin, according to the law of that dispensation, was very great, and against an express command of God; who had ordered that none should officiate in the priest's office, but those who were of the family of Aaron. Again, Azariah and the rest of the priests did not attempt to depose him, but to prevent his going on in this sin; which would not be for his honour, as the high priest tells him. Nor does Azariah say this in a menacing way, as signifying that he would inflict some punishment on him, but as declaring what God would do against him, which would tend to his dishonour for this sin. Further, though the high priest, in God's name, commanded him to go out of the sanctuary; yet he did not lay violent hands on him, at least, till the leprosy was seen upon him. 'And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.'a This they did, because a leper was not, according to the law of God, to enter into the congregation, inasmuch as he would defile it. Finally, he was not properly deposed; but, by this plague of leprosy, rendered incapable of reigning. Hence, 'he dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.' This arrangement was agreeable to the law of God, touching the leper; in which it is said, 'All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean. He shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.'c It may be observed, too, that his son managed the affairs of the kingdom for him. The use, therefore, which is made by the papists of this scripture, to give countenance to their doctrine of deposing princes, is foreign to its true sense.

There is one more scripture example which the papists bring, whereby they defend their practice, not only of deposing, but of

murdering princes; and that is 2 Kings 11:15, 'But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges; and him that followeth her, kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord.' But Athaliah was plainly an usurper. Not only was she so by reason of her sex, since a woman was not to reign over Israel or Judah; but, to establish herself in the throne, she killed all the seed royal, except Joash, who escaped, being hid from her fury in an apartment belonging to the temple. Again, what Jehoiada did in deposing her, was not only with a good design to set up the lawful heir, but was done by an express command from the Lord.e Further, Joash was proclaimed, and anointed, and universally owned as king by the people, before Athaliah was slain.

The Sins of Inferiors against their Superiors

We are now to consider the sins of inferiors against their superiors. These are expressed in general terms, in one of the Answers we are explaining; namely, "neglecting the duties we owe to them, envying at, and contempt of their persons, places, and lawful counsels and commands, and all refractory carriage, that may prove a shame and dishonour to their government." But, more particularly, inferiors sin against their superiors in divulging their secrets,—and that either as to what respects the affairs of their families, or their secular callings in the world; in mocking, reproaching, or exposing their infirmities, —as it is said, 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it;' or in endeavouring to make disturbance or disorders in families or the commonwealth, through discontent with their station as inferiors, or a desire to rule over those to whom they ought to be in subjection. Servants sin, in neglecting to fulfil their

contract or do the service which they engaged to perform, when they entered into that relation; or in being disposed to perform the duties incumbent on them, only when they are under their master's eye, having no sense of common justice, or their obligation to approve themselves to God, in performing the duties they owe to man. Thus the apostle exhorts servants to 'be obedient to them which are their masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.'h Children sin, by being unnatural to their parents, refusing or neglecting to maintain them if they need it, especially when they are aged. By this conduct they appear to have no sense of gratitude for past favours, nor regard to that duty which nature obliges them to perform.

The Duties of Superiors to Inferiors

We are to consider the duties which superiors owe to their inferiors. Whatever circumstance of advancement one has above another in the world, is a peculiar gift of God, and should not give occasion to that pride of heart which is natural to fallen man, which puts him upon casting contempt on those who are below him. Much less should those who have advancement in the world oppress others who are in a lower station of life than themselves; but they should endeavour to do good to them, and thereby glorify God. Indeed, as every relation is mutual, and calls for its respective duties; so while superiors expect the duty which belongs to them from inferiors, it is equally just and reasonable that they should not neglect those duties which they themselves are obliged to perform in return, though these are of a different nature from those which they demand from them.

1. We shall first consider the duty of parents to children. This not only includes the using of their utmost endeavours to promote their

children's worldly advantage, as to their present or future condition in life; but they ought to have a just concern for their spiritual welfare. The latter is a duty very much neglected, though it is incumbent on all parents who have a sense of God and religion upon their spirits. The apostle calls it 'bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' When children are first capable of being instructed, or when they first take in the knowledge of common things; then it is the parent's duty to instil into them those things which are spiritual. It is, indeed, a difficult matter to speak to them about divine things, so as to lead them into the knowledge of them, and requires a great measure of wisdom and faithfulness. One of the first duties which they owe to their children, is acknowledging God's right to them, putting them under his care, giving them up to him, hoping and trusting in Christ that he will bestow on them the saving blessings of the covenant of grace, and that in their early life. Moreover, as children soon discover themselves to have a corrupt nature, this ought to be checked and guarded against, as much as is in our power. All habits of sin are of an increasing nature, and though it is difficult to prevent them, we shall find it much more difficult to root them out.

Now, that we may instil into the minds of children the principles of religion, as soon as they are capable of receiving instruction, various things are to be observed. First, parents must take great care that they neither speak nor act any thing before their children, which may tend to corrupt their minds, or which may afford a bad example of pernicious consequence for them to follow; nor ought they to suffer those passions to break forth which may render them mean and contemptible in the eyes of their children, or give them occasion, by example, to indulge the same passions.—Again, they must take heed that they do not, on the one hand, exercise severity for trifles, or for those inadvertencies which children are chargeable with, or, on the

other, too much indulge them in that incorrigibleness and profaneness which they sometimes see in them.—Further, they must separate from them all companions or servants from whom they may imbibe the principles of sin, and oblige those who have the immediate care of their education to instil into them the principles of religion, and, at the same time, to recommend to them the pleasure, beauty, and advantage of holiness in all, but especially in young ones. —Further, the examples which we have, either in scripture, or our own observation in the world, of those who have devoted themselves to God and been early religious, are to be frequently inculcated for their imitation, with all the affecting and moving expressions which it is possible for the parents to use, and with a particular application of these examples to their children's case. On the other hand, the miserable consequences which have attended persons neglecting to embrace the ways of God in the days of their youth, and the sore judgments which have often followed, are also to be set before them; as it is said, 'His bones are full of the sin of his youth.'—Again, reproofs for sin are to be given, with a zeal and concern for the glory of God, and yet with such affection as may convince children that, in those things in which they are ready to think their parents their enemies, they appear to be their greatest friends.—Moreover, they who have the care of children, ought, on the one hand, to take heed that they do not lead them into, or give them occasion to rest in, a formal or external appearance of religion; and, on the other hand, they are not to use any methods which may induce them to think that a burden or a reproach which they ought to esteem their delight and honour.—Further, those opportunities are more especially to be embraced, in which instructions are most likely to be regarded by them; as when they are inquisitive about divine things. An inquisitive state of mind should give the parent occasion to be particular in explaining to them matters about which they make inquiry. Thus God commands Israel, 'When thy son asketh thee in time to come,

What mean the testimonies and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord thy God commanded you? say unto him, we were Pharaoh's bondsmen;'l and so they were to relate to their children those dispensations of providence towards them which gave occasion to these statutes which he had appointed.—Finally, parents should let their children know that their obedience to God's commands will always entitle them to the greatest share in their affection, that this may be a motive and inducement to their performing it.

2. We are now to consider tho duty which masters owe to their servants. They ought to recommend the good ways of God to them, endeavouring to persuade them to be religious; and, by their exemplary conversation in their families, whereby they adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, afford them an additional motive to become so. They ought likewise to encourage religion in their servants, as well as diligence and industry. For, as the one tends to the advantage of those to whom their service is due; the other tends to the glory of God, and the good of the souls of those who are found in the practice of it. Masters should also endeavour to instruct their servants in the principles of religion, especially if ignorant. Moreover, they should allow them sufficient time for religious duties; which, if needful, ought to be taken out of that time in which they would otherwise be employed in their service. This they ought to do, considering that the best Christians are likely to make the most faithful servants.

3. We are now to consider the duty of magistrates towards their subjects. They ought to endeavour to promote their liberty, safety, and happiness, by the justice and clemency of their administration. Thus it is said, 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.' By this means they will lay their subjects under the highest obligation to duty and obedience; and the respect which they

have from them, will render the station in which they are more agreeable. They ought also to defend the rights of subjects, when injured, against their oppressors; that they may appear to be, as it were, their common fathers, to whom they have recourse in all difficulties, and from whom they find redress. They ought farther to encourage and support the common design of Christianity, by suppressing irreligion and profaneness, and every thing which is a scandal to the Christian name, or a reproach to a well-ordered government.

The Sins of Superiors against Inferiors

We are now led to consider the sins of superiors. One sin in their behaviour towards their inferiors, is pride and haughtiness. They commit this when they treat those who are below them with contempt and disdain; as though, because they are not, in many respects, their equals, they were not their fellow-creatures. This sin discovers itself either in reproachful words or actions. Thus the Pharisees treated those whom they apprehended inferior to them in gifts or station in the church, with contempt; so that they often made use of that aphorism, 'This people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.'—Another sin of superiors is, when masters exact severe and unmerciful labour, beyond what is reasonable, of their servants. This is little better than the oppression of the Egyptian task-masters; who commanded the Israelites to make brick without straw,o and beat them, and dealt severely with them, because they could not fulfil their unreasonable exactions.

Sin is committed by those who, being princes or generals, exercise inhuman cruelty, contrary to the law of nature and nations, towards their conquered enemies, when they have them in their power. This David seems to have been charged with, as a blemish in his reign;

when he put the men of Rabbah, after he had conquered them, 'under saws, and under harrows of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kilns. Thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon.' Such conduct seems hardly justifiable by martial law, and therefore must be reckoned a failing in him; unless indeed the Ammonites had done something extraordinary to deserve it, or had used Israel in a similar manner; for in that case it might be reckoned a just reprisal upon them. We may add, that magistrates do not behave to their subjects as they ought, and therefore commit sin, when they inflict punishment beyond what the law directs, or the crime deserves. Small offences are not to be punished with death, as capital crimes are; since the punishment must be greater or less, in proportion to the crime. Thus God enjoined a certain number of stripes for some crimes committed; and if the rulers inflicted a greater number, 'their brother would seem vile unto them,'q that is, they would treat him with greater severity than the nature of the crime demanded.

Again, superiors sin, when they take advantage of the necessities of the poor, in buying or selling. This is called a 'grinding the faces of the poor.'—Further, masters or parents sin, in giving undue correction to their servants or children for small faults; as when they punish the neglect of some punctilios of respect which are due to them, with greater severity than they do open sins against God; or when they are transported with unreasonable passion for trifles. By this conduct they render themselves hated by their dependents, and provoke them to wrath, rather than promote the end of chastisement, which is the glory of God and their good. This the apostle forbids parents to do; and he also speaks of 'the fathers of our flesh chastising us after their own pleasure,'t as being disagreeable to the divine dispensations, and consequently not to be justified in those who practise it.—Again, superiors sin, when they command

those things of their inferiors which are in themselves sinful, which they cannot in their consciences comply with; or when they demand those things which are impossible, and are enraged against them for not doing them.—Finally, superiors sin, when they surmise that their inferiors have committed a fault, which they resent and punish, without suffering them to vindicate themselves, though they request this favour in the most submissive way. This is to extend their authority beyond the bounds of reason.

The Duties of Equals

We shall now consider the duties of equals. They ought to encourage and strengthen the hands of one another in the ways of God; which is the great end and design of Christian societies. They ought to sympathize with one another in their weakness, warning and helping each other, when exposed to temptations or overcome by them. They ought to defend one another when reproached by the enemies of God and religion. They ought to love one another, and rejoice in each other's welfare. Finally, they ought to withdraw from the society of those who are a reproach to the good ways of God, or endeavour to turn them aside from them.

The Sins of Equals

We shall now consider the sins of equals. One sin is to entertain unjust and unfriendly quarrels, contrary to that love which ought to be amongst brethren.—Another sin is to affect or usurp pre-eminence over one another; as Diotrephes did, whom the apostle speaks of, who 'loved to have the pre-eminence amongst them.' Christ's disciples themselves were sometimes liable to this charge; especially when 'there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted greatest.'x This our Saviour is so far from commending in them, that he reproves them for it.—Again, it is a

great sin, when equals endeavour to make breaches amongst those who are otherwise inclined to live peaceably with one another. This is the wretched employment of tale-bearers, busy-bodies, make-bates, and slanderers, who delight to raise and propagate false reports; as the psalmist supposes some inclined to do, who are distinguished from those who 'do not backbite with their tongue, nor take up a reproach against their neighbour,' &c. This sin is reckoned one of those things which the Lord hates.z—Further, equals are guilty of sin, when they insult and take occasion to expose their brethren, for those weaknesses and infirmities which they see in them, not considering that they also are liable to the same themselves.—Finally, they are guilty when they endeavour to ensnare and entice others to sin. This vile practice Solomon takes notice of; and he cautions those who are tempted, against consenting to or complying with those who entice them.

THE REASONS ANNEXED TO THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXXXIII. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment the more to enforce it?

ANSWER. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, in these words, "That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," is an express promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and their own good, to all such as keep his commandment.

THE reasons annexed to the fifth commandment are included in the promise of long life to such as keep it. It is inquired by some, whether this promise is to be applied to none but the Israelites; since there is mention of the land which the Lord gave them, namely, Canaan. Now, though the Israelites might make a particular application of it to themselves; yet it extends to men in all ages and places. Accordingly, the apostle Paul, mentioning this commandment, and the promise annexed to it, instead of those words, 'That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,' uses a mode of expression which is applicable to us as well as them, 'That thou mayest live long on the earth.'

1. Here we may inquire whether this promise be made good as to the letter of it, to all who keep this commandment; especially as we find, that, according to the common methods of providence, some good men live but a short time in this world, while the wicked often live to a great age. That the lives of some good men have been short, needs not be proved. Abijah, the best of Jeroboam's family, in whom some good thing was found towards the Lord God of Israel, died when a

child. Josiah, who was one of the best of the kings that reigned over Judah, lived but thirty-nine years; for it is said that 'he was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty and one years.'d Enoch excelled all the patriarchs who lived before the flood, and was more honoured than they in being translated to heaven, without dying; yet lie continued but a little while in this world, if we compare the time he lived here with the time which men generally lived before the deluge. He lived but three hundred and sixty-five years; while several others are said to have lived above nine hundred years. Joseph, also, who was the most remarkable for showing honour to parents, and performing the duties belonging to other relations, of any we read of in scripture, lived but an hundred and ten years; while Levi, who had been a reproach to his father, and a dishonour to the family in general, lived an hundred thirty and seven years.f

2. We shall now consider how such dispensations of providence may be accounted for, consistently with the promise annexed to this commandment. Now, it may be observed that, when God takes his saints out of the world when young, his doing so is sometimes a peculiar instance of compassion to them, in taking them from the evil to come. Thus Josiah died, as was but now hinted, when young; but death was in mercy to him, that he might not see the evil which God would bring on Judah for their sins. Again, God's people are, at their death, possessed of a better world, which is the best exchange; so that, were the matter referred to their own choice, they would choose heaven before the longest life, and the best advantages they can enjoy in this world. Further, old age is not a blessing, unless it be adorned with grace. 'The hoary head is,' indeed, 'a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness;'h but not otherwise. Good men are not destroyed by the blast of God's wrath; but gathered, like a shock of corn, when fully ripe. They are meet for, and then received

into, a better world. Hence, 'the child' dying in Christ is said 'to die an hundred years old;' while 'the sinner, being an hundred years old, is accursed.'

3. We shall now inquire how far, or in what respects, we are to hope for and desire the accomplishment of the promises of temporal good things. Temporal good things are to be desired, not ultimately for themselves, but as subservient to the glory of God. And long life in particular is a blessing, so far as it affords more space to do service to the interest of Christ in the world. They are to be desired, also, with an entire submission to the will of God, and with a resolution to acknowledge that he is righteous, and to magnify his name though he deny them to us, considering that he knows what is best for us, and may do what he will with his own. We are further to desire that God would give us temporal good things in mercy, as pledges of eternal happiness, and not in wrath. Thus the psalmist says, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

4. We shall now inquire with what frame of spirit we ought to bear the loss of temporal good things, which we have been encouraged by God's promise to hope for. Here let it be considered that, if God does not fulfil his promise in the way and manner which we expect, in granting us temporal good things; yet we must justify him, and condemn ourselves; for none can say that he does not forfeit all blessings daily. We are hence to say, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar. He is a God of infinite faithfulness; but we are unfaithful, and not steadfast in his covenant.' Again, we are not to conclude that our being deprived of temporal good things which we expected, is a certain sign that we have no right to or interest in those better things which accompany salvation; as the wise man says, 'No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him.' Further, we are to

reckon the loss of temporal good things as a trial of our faith and patience; and endeavour, under such disappointments, to make it to appear that the world was not the main thing we had in view, but that Christ and spiritual blessings in him were the spring of all our religion.

5. It may farther be inquired what those things are which tend to make a long life happy, and for which alone it is to be desired. Life is sometimes attended with miseries which induce a believer to desire to depart and be with Christ, as the weary traveller desires rest. Now, though, in the promise annexed to the fifth commandment, we have no mention of any thing but long life; yet the apostle, when explaining it, adds that those who keep it shall have a prosperous life, without which long life would not be so great a blessing. Thus he says, 'That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long upon the earth.' Now, there are three things which tend to make a long life happy. First, experience of growth in grace, in proportion to our advances in age, according to that promise, 'They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.'n Secondly, a retaining of our natural abilities, and of that strength and vigour of mind which we formerly had. This some are deprived of, through the infirmities of old age; and so they may be said to outlive themselves. It was a peculiar blessing which God granted to Moses, concerning whom it is said, 'He was an hundred and twenty years old when he died,' and yet 'his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.' Thirdly, old age is a blessing when our usefulness to others, in our day and generation, is continued. Thus Joshua died an old man; but it was a peculiar blessing that he was useful to the end. For in the very close of his life 'he made a covenant with the people in Shechem;'p and laid strict commands on them to behave themselves towards God as they ought to do.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXXXIV. Which is the sixth commandment?

ANSWER. The sixth commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill."

QUESTION CXXXV. What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?

ANSWER. The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavours to preserve the life of ourselves, and others, by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defence thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit, a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labour, and recreations, by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness, peaceable, mild, and courteous speeches and behaviour, forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil, comforting and succouring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

QUESTION CXXXVI. What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defence; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge, all excessive

passions, distracting cares, immoderate use of meat, drink, labour, and recreations; provoking words, oppressing, quarrelling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.

The Duties Enjoined in the Sixth Commandment

IN explaining this commandment, we shall first consider the positive part of it; or the duties required in it. We should use all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others; and consequently we should avoid all those passions, and other things, which may afford an occasion to take it away, and live in the constant exercise of the duties of temperance and sobriety, as to what respects ourselves, and of meekness, gentleness, and forgiveness of injuries, as to what concerns others. In this commandment it is supposed that life is the most valuable blessing of nature. Hence, to take it away, is to do the utmost injury which can be attempted against us. The valuableness of the life of man appears in four things. First, it is the result of the union of the soul with the body; which is the principle of those actions that are put forth by us as intelligent creatures. Hence, life is to be esteemed in proportion to the excellency of the soul; which is the noblest part of the creation, angels excepted. Again, nothing can compensate or satisfy for the taking away of the life of man, how much satisfaction soever may be given for the loss of other things. Further, man is the subject of the divine image; which supposes us to have a more excellent life than any other creatures in this lower world, and is assigned as a reason of our obligation to preserve life. Finally life is given and continued to us, in order that the most valuable ends may be attained, conducive to the glory of God, the advancement of religion in the world, and the promoting of our everlasting happiness. We may hence take an estimate of its

excellency; and it contains the highest motive to us, to yield obedience to this commandment.

This leads us to consider the means which we are to use, to preserve our own lives, and the lives of others. As to the preservation of our own lives, we are not to rush presumptuously into danger of death, without a divine warrant; for to do so is to be prodigal of life. We are also to exercise sobriety and temperance, avoiding gluttony, drunkenness, lust, and all exorbitant passions; which tend to impair the health, as well as defile the conscience. Moreover, when occasion requires it, we are to have recourse to the skill of physicians, and make use of those medicines which may conduce to repair the weakness and decays of nature. As to our endeavours to preserve the lives of others, we are to caution them against those things which would tend to destroy their health, and, by degrees, their lives. We must also discover and detect all secret plots and contrivances which may be directed against them; and we are to support and relieve those who are ready to perish by extreme poverty, yea, though they were our enemies. We are also to defend those who are in imminent danger of death.s Nevertheless, we must not use unwarrantable means, though it were to save our own lives. In times of persecution, for example, we are not to renounce the truths of God, or give occasion to the common enemy to revile them, or speak evil of them, by avoiding to suffer for the cause of Christ. Preferring a profession of the truth to the preservation of life, was that noble principle by which the martyrs whom the apostle speaks of were actuated. 'They were tortured, not accepting deliverance;' that is, when they were exposed to the most exquisite torments, and their lives offered them if they would deny Christ, they would not accept of deliverance on so dishonourable terms. Neither are we, at any time, to tell a lie, or do that which is contrary to truth, though it were to save our lives.

The Sins Forbidden in the Sixth Commandment

We shall now consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. These are either the taking away of life, or the doing of that which has a tendency to take it away.

1. It is unlawful to take away the life of another. But this is to be considered with some exceptions or limitations. Life may be taken away in lawful wars. Thus we read of many wars begun and carried on, and much blood shed in them, by God's direction, and with his approbation and blessing; on which account, it is said that 'the war was of God.' Yet, when wars are proclaimed merely to satisfy the pride and avarice of princes, as in Benhadad's war against Ahab,x or in the war of the Romans on the countries round about them, merely to enlarge their own dominions by ruining others, or in those which the devil excites and antichrist carries on against the church, for their faithfulness to the truth; the law of God is broken, and all the blood shed in them is a breach of this commandment.—Again, it is no violation of this commandment, to take away the life of offenders, guilty of capital crimes, by the hand of the civil magistrate; for the doing of this is elsewhere commanded, and magistrates are appointed for that end.z [See Note T, page 386.]—Further, it is no breach of this commandment, when a person kills another without design, or the least degree of premeditated malice. Yet the utmost caution ought to be used, that persons may not lose their lives through the carelessness and inadvertency of others.—Moreover, in some instances, a person may kill another in his own defence, without being guilty of the breach of this commandment. But this is to be considered with certain limitations. If there be only a design or conspiracy against our lives, but no immediate attempt made to take them away; we are to defend ourselves, by endeavouring to put him who designed the execrable act out of a capacity of hurting us; and

we are to do this by having recourse to the protection of the law, whereby he may be restrained, or we secured. This was the method which Paul took, when the Jews had bound themselves with an oath to slay him. He informed the chief captain of their conspiracy, and had recourse to the law for his safety. If, again, there be a present attempt made against our lives, we should rather choose to disarm the enemy, or flee from him, than take away his life. But if this cannot be done, so that we must either lose our own life or take away his, we do not incur the least guilt, or break this commandment, if we take away his life to preserve our own; especially if we were not first in the quarrel, nor gave occasion to it by any injurious or unlawful practices.

Here it may be inquired whether it be lawful for two persons to fight a duel, upon a set challenge or provocation given. Now, when a war between two armies may be terminated, and the shedding of much blood prevented by a duel, it is not unlawful; provided it be by mutual consent, and with the approbation of those on both sides who have a right of making war and peace; and if the matter in controversy may be thus decided, without tempting providence. We have a remarkable instance of this, in the duel fought between David and Goliah. It is unlawful, however, for two persons, each seeming too prodigal of his life, to give and accept a challenge, and in prosecution of it to endeavour to put an end to each other's life, merely to gratify their own passion or pride. This, though falsely called honour, will, in reality, render them vile in the eyes of God, and notoriously guilty of the breach of this commandment.

Here we may consider the wicked practice of those who have obliged the poor wretches, who were under their command, to murder one another for their diversion. This Joab and Abner did, when they said, 'Let the young men arise and play before us; and every one thrust his

sword in his fellow's side.' There is also an unlawful diversion, which, though not altogether so barbarous and cruel, is, in some respects, a breach of this commandment, namely, when persons fight with and wound one another, without design of killing, merely to get a little money, while entertaining a number of unthinking persons with their folly. In this case they that fight, and they that look on, are equally guilty.d Thus concerning the sin of killing one another.

We shall now explain two or three difficulties which occur in scripture, relating to the actions of some good men, who seem to have been guilty of the breach of this commandment, but really were not so. It is inquired, whether Elijah was chargeable with the breach of it in destroying Baal's prophets, when 'he ordered that none of them should escape; and he brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.' Now, it may be observed that it was not a small inoffensive error which these prophets of Baal were punished for; but apostacy from God. That the persons deserved the punishment they received appears from various considerations. They were the advisers and ringleaders of all Israel's idolatry, and the abettors and principal occasion of the violent persecution which then raged against the Lord's prophets and true worshippers. Again, had they only been false prophets, and not persecutors, they were, according to the law of God, to be put to death.f Further, their punishment was inflicted after a solemn appeal to God, and an answer from heaven by fire, which determined, not only who was the true God, but who were his prophets, and consequently whether Elijah deserved death as an impostor, or Baal's prophets. Moreover, Ahab himself was present, and all his ministers of state, who had a right to execute justice on false prophets; and, it is highly probable, that they consented to their death, and that many of them had an immediate hand in it. Their acting thus might be occasioned by a sudden conviction in their consciences, proceeding from the miracle which they had just before

observed, or from the universal cry of the people against the false prophets. The occurrence, therefore, was plainly of the Lord, to whom Elijah brought a great deal of honour, and was far from being chargeable with the breach of this commandment.

It is farther inquired whether Abraham's offering Isaac was a breach of this commandment. This is proposed as a difficulty by those who do not pay that deference to divine revelation which they ought, nor consider that God cannot command any thing which is contrary to his perfections, and that his people do not sin in obeying any command which is given by him.—However, that this matter may be set in a just light, let it be considered that God, who is the sovereign Lord of life, may take it away when and by whom he pleases. Hence, Isaac had no more reason to complain of any wrong or injury done him by God, in ordering his father to sacrifice him, than any one else has who dies by his immediate hand, in the common course of providence.—Again, Abraham could not be said to act with the temper and disposition of a murderer; which those have who are guilty of the breach of this commandment, who kill persons in a passion or out of envy or malice, being void of all natural affection and brotherly love. Abraham acted plainly in obedience to God's command. His hand was lifted up against one whom he loved as well as his own life, and it may be better; and, doubtless, he would rather have been, had God so ordered it, the sacrifice than the offerer.—Further, he acted, as is more than probable, with Isaac's full consent. Hence some think that Isaac's faith was no less remarkable in the affair than that of Abraham. His willingness to be offered, evidently appears, from the fact that Abraham was in his feeble and declining age, and Isaac in his full strength; for it was not a little strength which was sufficient to carry wood enough to answer this occasion, which we read Isaac did. Besides, if Isaac had resisted, none was at hand to assist Abraham against him; and, doubtless, he would have

striven in this matter as one who desired to be overcome. We must suppose, therefore, that the transaction was so far from being a breach of this commandment, that it was one of the most remarkable instances of faith in scripture; and that God's design in ordering it was, that it might be a type whereby he would lead Abraham into the glorious mystery of his not sparing his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Christ's willingness to lay down his life a ransom for his people.

Some charge Moses with having been guilty of the breach of this commandment, in killing the Egyptian. But to vindicate him from this charge, let it be considered that the Egyptian whom he slew, not only smote an Hebrew, but did so wrongfully. As is observed in Acts 7:24, there was no offence given or just reason for this injurious treatment; and to oppress or abuse one who is in a miserable condition, as the Hebrews were at that time, is an heinous crime in God's account.—Moreover, to 'smite,' in scripture, is often taken for to 'slay;' so that it is not improbable, that the Egyptian slew the Hebrew; or if he did not, the injury he inflicted might be such as deserved death. Now, this punishment would have been executed in another manner, had not Israel been denied, at that time, the protection of the law.—Again, Moses was, at this time, raised up and called by God, to be a ruler and a judge, to defend the cause of his oppressed people; and in this action he first began to fulfil his commission. The people, indeed, refused to own him, and seemed to join with those who designed him evil for his interference; but for this reason their deliverance was put off forty years longer, while he was an exile in the land of Midian. Now, to slay a public enemy and oppressor, and, as is probable, one who had forfeited his life, and to do this with a commission from God to act as a ruler and a judge over his people, cannot be reckoned a breach of this commandment. Thus

concerning the violation of this commandment, as including the murdering of our neighbour.

2. This commandment is notoriously broken by those who lay violent hands on themselves. We have in scripture an account of no good man who was ever suffered to do this, but only of men of the most infamous character, such as Saul, Ahithophel, Judas, and others. This is a sin which is attended with many aggravations. It is to act as though our lives were at our own disposal. But they are to be considered as a talent which we are intrusted with by God to improve for his glory; and he alone has a right to dispose of them at his pleasure.—Again, self-murder argues, and arises from, the highest discontent and impatience under the hand of God; which is contrary to that temper which we ought to exercise as Christians, who profess subjection to him.—Further, it is contrary to nature and that principle of self-preservation which God has implanted in us. Indeed, he who does it, not only acts below the reason of a man, but does that which even brutes themselves are not inclined to.—Moreover, it is a giving place to and a gratifying of the devil, who acts agreeably to his character, as a murderer from the beginning, when he tempts men to destroy both soul and body at once.—Again, it is a presumptuous and bold resolving that, whatever measure of duty God has prescribed for us to fill up in this world, we will serve him no longer. If martial law punishes deserters with death, is there not a severe punishment due to those who do, as it were, desert the service of God by self-murder? Nothing is more certain than this, that if duty be enjoined by God, the time in which it is to be performed is also fixed by him, and not left to our own determination.—Further, self-murder is a rushing hastily into eternity, not considering the consequence, nor the awful tribunal of Christ, before which they must immediately appear, and give an account of this, as well as other sinful actions of life.—Finally, self-murder is done with such a frame of spirit, that a person cannot

by faith commit his soul into the hands of Jesus Christ; for to do so requires a better temper of mind than any one can be supposed to have who murders himself.

Here it may be inquired, since, as was before observed, no good man was ever guilty of this crime, whether Samson did not break this commandment in pulling down the house upon his own head, as well as upon the Philistines. Now, Samson's life, at this time, was a burden to himself, useless to his brethren, a scorn to the open enemy, and an occasion of their ascribing their deliverance to their idol, and probably would soon have been taken away by them. These circumstances, though they would not, in themselves, have been sufficient to justify this action; yet might justify his desire that God would put an end to his life, and release him out of this miserable world; especially if the event would redound more to his glory than any thing he could do for the future, or had done in the former part of his life. Besides, it plainly appears that God, in answer to his prayer, not only gave him leave to take away his own life, together with the lives of his enemies, but also wrought a miracle to enable him to do it. It was therefore a justifiable action, and no breach of this commandment.

3. We shall now consider the heinous aggravation of the sin of taking away the life of another unjustly, and the terrible judgments which those who are guilty of it have ground to expect. According to the divine law, this sin is to be punished with death, by the hand of the civil magistrate. Thus Joab, who had deserved to die for murders formerly committed, was slain according to David's order by Solomon; though he sought protection by taking hold of the horns of the altar.m Many other crimes might be expiated by sacrifices, which God ordained should be offered for that end; but no satisfaction was to be accepted for this sin but the blood of the murderer. And it is a

matter of dispute with some whether kings, who may pardon many crimes by virtue of their prerogative, can, according to the laws of God, pardon murder, without being supposed to extend their clemency beyond its due bounds?—Again, God often gives up those who are guilty of the sin of murder to the terrors of a guilty conscience, which is a kind of hell upon earth; as in the instances of Cain, Lamech, and others.o—Further, such are followed with many remarkable instances of divine vengeance; so that the blast of providence attends all their undertakings. Thus David, after he had killed Uriah, was followed with such rebukes of providence, that the latter part of his life was rendered very uneasy; and what the prophet foretold was fulfilled, that 'the sword should never depart from his house,' that is, as long as he lived.—Again, the judgments of God for this sin are often transmitted to posterity. Thus Simeon and Levi's murder of the Shechemites was punished in the tribes that descended from them; who, according to the patriarch's prediction, were 'divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel.'q Saul's slaying the Gibeonites was punished in David's time by a famine which it occasioned. And the murders which the Jews had committed on the prophets in former ages, were punished in the destruction of their state and nation; when 'all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth, came upon them.'s—Further, the lives of murderers are often shortened, and they brought to the grave with blood. Thus Absalom perished by the just judgment of God, for the murder of his brother, as well as his other crimes. And in this the psalmist's observation holds true, that 'bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.'

4. This commandment may be broken otherwise than by the taking away of the life of our neighbour. A breach of it may be committed by a person in his heart, when he has not an opportunity to execute his malicious designs, or is afraid to execute them on account of the

punishment from men which will follow. Thus the apostle says, 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.' Of this we have an instance in wicked Ahab, who 'hated Micaiah, because he prophesied not good concerning him, but evil.'x It is more than probable that his hatred would have broken forth into murder, could he have laid hold on the least shadow of pretence which might have put a colour on so vile an action. Jezebel also was guilty of this sin, who threatened to murder the prophet Elijah. The Jews, likewise, were guilty of it who were filled with malice against our Saviour; for which reason, they would have put him to death at that time, but they feared the people.z—Moreover, while this sin reigns in wicked men, there are some instances of it even in good men. Thus David carried his resentment too far against Nabal, though a churlish and ungrateful man, when he resolved in his passion, not only to take away his life, which was an unjustifiable action, but to destroy the whole family, the innocent with the guilty. He was afterwards sensible of his sin in this passionate resolution; and blessed God for his preventing it, by Abigail's prudent management. There is another instance of sinful and unaccountable passion which cannot be excused from a degree of heart-murder, in Jonah; who was very angry because God was gracious, and spared Nineveh, on their repentance. In this fit of passion he desires that God would take away his life, justifies his anger, and, as it were, dares him to cut him off; which was as bad a frame as ever any good man was in. All this, too, took its rise from pride, lest some should think him a false prophet, who did not rightly distinguish between what God might do and would have done had they not repented, and what he determined to do, namely, to give them repentance, and so to spare them: I say, rather than be counted a false prophet, which it may be was a groundless surmise, he was angry with God for sparing it.b

Here it will be inquired whether all anger is sinful, or a breach of this commandment? Now, as the apostle says, 'Be angry and sin not;' the words imply that there may be anger which is not sinful, but which, on the other hand, may rather be styled a zeal for God. Of this kind was that anger which our Saviour expressed against the Scribes and Pharisees, when he calls them 'serpents, a generation of vipers;'d and when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, on which occasion it is said, 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.' The apostle also reproved Elymas the sorcerer, who endeavoured to 'turn away the deputy from the faith,' with words that seemed full of anger, when he addressed himself to him in this manner, 'O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?'f And Peter could not reprove that vile hypocrite, Simon Magus, when he offered to purchase the conferring of the Holy Ghost, without expressing some anger and resentment, as the cause required, when he said, 'Thy money perish with thee,' &c. Yet, that he might let him know that it was only zeal for God that provoked his anger, he gave him friendly advice to repent of his wickedness.h

We may hence take occasion to inquire what the difference is between sinful anger or passion, and an holy zeal for God. Now, an holy zeal for God leads us rightly to distinguish between the person reproved, and his actions which give us occasion for reproof; so that we hate the sin, but not the person who commits it. Thus the psalmist says, 'I hate the work of them that turn aside.' But sinful anger is principally directed against the person with whom we are offended.—Again, the honour of God is the only motive which excites holy zeal; but pride or evil surmise is generally the occasion of sinful anger. Thus Jehu's executing the vengeance of God in cutting off Ahab's wicked family, was right, as to the matter of it; yet it had a great mixture of ambition, pride, and private hatred of them, as

those who he thought would stand in competition with him for the crown. Besides, he desired the applause and esteem of the people for the action, and therefore said to Jonadab, 'Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.'k Hence, true zeal for God is attended with many other graces; and sinful anger with many sins.—Further, holy zeal for God inclines us to express anger against his enemies with sorrow and reluctance, being grieved for their sin, and at the same time desiring their reformation and salvation; but sinful anger meditates revenge, is restless till it has accomplished it, and is pleased with having opportunities of executing it.—Moreover, holy zeal sets aside or is not much concerned about injuries, as directed against ourselves; but considers them as they reflect dishonour on the name of God, or are prejudicial to his interest in the world. Thus David said concerning Edom, 'Happy shall he be that dasheth thy little ones against the stones;' when, at the same time, he professed that it was for Jerusalem's sake that he desired the ruin of his enemies, and not his own; for he says, that he 'preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy.'n Sinful anger, however, designs or wishes evil to others, to promote our own interest and advantage.

We shall now consider the aggravations of sinful passion. It unfits a soul for holy duties. Accordingly, our Saviour advises his people, first to 'be reconciled to their brethren, and then come and offer their gift.' If we attempt to reprove sin, or persuade to duty, in a passion, it will tend to take away the force and hinder the success of the arguments we use. Sinful anger will occasion sorrow and shame, when reflected on in our most serious thoughts. It will expose us to Satan's temptations, and occasion a multitude of sins; and accordingly is called by the apostle, a 'giving place to the devil.'p It magnifies the smallest injuries, and excites our resentments beyond their due bounds. We do not consider, as we ought to do, that the injuries done against us are very small when compared with the sins

we commit, whereby we dishonour God. Further, sinful anger is opposite to a Christian temper, very much unlike that frame of spirit which our Saviour has recommended concerning loving our enemies, and is also contrary to his example, 'who when he was reviled, reviled not again.'r Finally, as it is a stirring up of our own corruptions; so it tends to stir up the corruptions of others, and provoke them to sin, as one flame kindleth another, and so increaseth itself.

We shall further inquire how we are to deal with those whom we converse with, who are addicted to passion or anger. We are to exercise a calm, meek, and humble disposition, bearing reflections with patience, and replying to them with gentleness; especially when it is more immediately our own cause, and not the cause of God, which is concerned. 'A soft answer turneth away wrath.' 'He that is slow to wrath, is of great understanding.'u Let us take heed, also, that we do nothing which tends to stir up the passions of any. If a superior is disposed to be angry, let us prudently withdraw from him. If it be an inferior, let us reprove him with faithfulness. If it be an equal, let us take away the edge of his anger, by meekness, love, and tenderness towards him, having compassion on his weakness. Let us bear injuries without revenging them, and 'overcome evil with good.'

[NOTE T. The Judicial Law.—The Civil Punishment of Death.—Are Christians—men who live under the New Testament dispensation, and recognise the doctrines and principles of the gospel—warranted, in any circumstances, to take away a man's life in punishment of his crimes? Most persons reply in the affirmative; yet they are exceedingly divided in opinion as to the circumstances or kinds of offence which warrant the infliction of death. All of them, however, who maintain any appearance of consistency in their reasonings, are of two classes,—those who regard the judicial law of Moses as a permanent model for every criminal code, and those who regard

every peculiar part of the Mosaic legislation as having been abolished by Christ, and who place their opinions on the authority of the permanent statements of revelation. The former plead for the civil penalty of death in connexion with several crimes; while the latter plead for it in connexion chiefly, if not solely, with the crime of wilful murder.

Dr. Ridgeley is of the class who appeal to the enactments of the judicial law; and he even seems to maintain that these enactments, just in the state in which they were made for the Israelites, are still in force. He does not anywhere say, in as many words, that the judicial law is permanently and universally binding; but, in several instances, when expounding the decalogue, and especially when treating of the results of transgression in the present life, he quotes its provisions in the same manner, and with the same drift, as if they were precepts of the moral law. In the passage, for example, to which this Note is appended, and in another about the middle of the section in which it occurs, he refers to the enactments recorded in Deut. 17:8–10, and 19:11, 12, on the subject of wilful murder, and exhibits them as permanent and universal authority for the civil magistrate inflicting on the perpetrator of that crime the punishment of death. Similar appeals he makes also on the subject of theft, and in other parts of his exposition of crime as affecting civil society. He probably—we may almost say, he certainly—would not have pronounced the entire judicial law to be of the same permanent and universal authority as the law of the ten commandments, had he looked the subject in the face, or proposed it to himself for investigation; yet, by the course he pursues in the instances in which he appeals to it, he fairly assumes the principle of its entire authority, and its binding power upon the conscience. No reason can be assigned for appealing to its enactments on the subject of murderers and thieves, which will not fully and equally apply to its enactments on all subjects whatever.

Hence, to interweave any portion of its provisions with the precepts of the moral law or to represent them as hearing with the same force on the general conscience as the permanent revelations of the divine will, is just in principle to contend that the judicial law, in its own proper nature, was not designed to be peculiar to the Israelites, but is of universal and enduring obligation.

Now, it will not, I think, be difficult to show, both that the judicial law was framed exclusively for the Israelites, and that it was actually abolished by the introduction of the New Testament dispensation. Not a few statutes were, in their very nature, adapted or applicable only to the Israelites. A king was ineligible unless he was a descendant of Jacob, and was forbidden to multiply horses, or to cause his people to return to Egypt, Deut. 17:15, 16. Daughters who possessed any inheritance were prohibited from allying themselves in marriage to any man who was not of the same tribe as their father, Numb. 36:6–13. Certain cities were appointed within the Israelitish territory, as sanctuaries for the manslayer, and were placed under peculiar regulations for his protection, Deut. 19:1–10. Every seventh year was made a year of release or of cancelling of all debt between Israelite and Israelite; strangers, however, or those who did not belong to the Israelitish commonwealth, being excluded from the benefits of the statute, Deut. 15:1–3. A man who had two wives was enjoined, if he hated the mother of his eldest son, and loved the mother of a younger son, to preserve the rights of the son of the hated wife, and not to allow the son of the loved wife to usurp the place of the first-born, Deut. 21:15–17. Garments of various sorts of stuff, as of woollen and linen, were forbidden to be used, Deut. 22:11. When a woman taken captive in war, was thought by any man to be a desirable wife, she was enjoined to be carried to his house, to have her head shaven and her nails pared, to put off the raiment of her captivity, to bewail her father and her mother a full month, and then,

if he should be pleased with her, to become permanently the man's wife, but if not, to be allowed to go whithersoever she chose, only not to be sold by him as a captive, Deut 21:10–18 When the Israelites made war against a city, they were commanded, if an answer of peace were made to them, to make the people tributaries and bondsmen, and, if an answer of defiance were given, to besiege them, and afterwards smite all the males with the sword and they were commanded also to carry on a war of extermination against the people inhabiting the territory assigned them for an inheritance,—to 'save alive nothing that breathed,' but 'utterly to destroy' the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, so that they might not learn from them the abominations of their idolatry, Deut. 20:10–18. Such are some of the enactments of the judicial law,—similar, in their peculiar nature, and in the individuality of their adaptation, to others which might be quoted. Now, who will say that these enactments, and such as these, are of permanent and universal authority, or that they were made with reference to any other people than the Israelites, or to any other time than the duration of the Israelitish commonwealth? Yet they stand on the same basis, and possess the same economical character, and are part of the same code, as those laws respecting retaliation, and theft, and murder, which are quoted in support of the opinion, that the civil magistrate is warranted in inflicting the punishment of death. Either, therefore, that opinion, as based on the provisions of the judicial law, must be abandoned, or the enactments which I have quoted, and others of a similar complexion, so manifestly adapted to the peculiar circumstances, and polity, and geographical position of the Israelites, ought to be embodied in the civil and criminal codes of every land.

For proof that the judicial law was abolished by the introduction of the Christian dispensation, we do not need to go farther than to one

of the two chapters whence Dr. Ridgeley draws his authority for the civil magistrate putting a murderer to death. The nineteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, after having stated the enactments respecting the cities of refuge, the inflicting of capital punishment upon wilful murderers, and the circumstances which should affect the validity of testimony, states, with particular reference to the injury done by a false witness, and with comprehensive allusion to all cases of murder, killing, and maiming, the doctrine of retaliation,—concluding with the words, 'Thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.' The same doctrine of retaliation, in nearly the same words, is, in two other passages, (Exod. 21:23; Lev. 24:20,) taught as a general principle of the judicial law, and in immediate connexion with statements respecting the capital punishment of murder, and the appropriate penalty for various bodily injuries inflicted by men or by brutes. Now, by turning to our Lord's sermon on the mount, we find that he quoted the words in which this doctrine is stated, with the express design of announcing that the principle which they inculcate, and, in consequence, all the enactments with which it was connected, or the entire judicial code in which it was engrossed, had cased to be authoritative, and were now superseded by the benign influence of principles which are of universal obligation. 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right check, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away,' Matth. 5:38–42. His design, from the seventeenth verse to the end of the fifth chapter, seems to be to show that the law in all its parts, or all the revelation made of the divine will, has its fulfilment in connexion with his mediatorial work. 'Think

not,' he said, 'that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.' He then intimates, by allusion to the righteousness on which the scribes and Pharisees depended, compared with the righteousness which qualifies for entering into that 'reign of heaven,' βασιλεια του ουρανου, which is 'within men,' and which is 'peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,' (Luke 17:21; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20 that the ceremonial law derived all its significancy from its foreshadowing his priestly work; so that it was necessarily abolished when he actually entered his priestly office. He next, by three examples, taken from the laws respecting murder, adultery, and divorce, shows that the moral law is to be understood so spiritually and comprehensively as to have cognizance of the thoughts and the affections; so that it maintains its authority and accomplishes its design in our world, only in connexion with his mediatorial administration. He then, by examples on the subjects of making oaths, of retaliating injuries, and of treatment of enemies, exhibits the notions which the Jews entertained of the judicial law, and shows that our manner of giving testimony, and our conduct toward those who injure or hate us, are to be regulated, not as they supposed by principles connected with the policy of the Israelitish commonwealth, but by principles which are applicable to all the nations and individuals of the earth, and which recognise the whole human race as a family of brethren, every one of whom is bound to love and cherish his fellows; so that the judicial law possesses significancy, and fulfils its ulterior design, only when beheld in the retrospect as part of that peculiar system which prefigured the work of the Messiah for the benefit of the human family, and the distinguishing constitution of his spiritual, separated church. He thus teaches that the three departments of the law are all, in the highest sense, fulfilled in connexion with his administration,—that the moral law is understood only when its precepts are written on the heart and put in the mind, in establishing with men who believe on

him the covenant which was ratified with his blood,—that the ceremonial law is understood only when it is seen pointing, in all its rites, to 'the everlasting righteousness which he brought in,' and the one offering which he made once for alt for man's transgression,—and that the judicial law is understood, not when interpreted, as among the Jews of his day, to be a literal rule of moral duty, but when regarded, in its institutions and in the polity with which it was connected, as teaching lessons quite as typical in their nature, or as peculiar and temporary in their character, as the economical and privileged condition of the people over whom it was established. Connected, too, as the particular enactment, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' is, in all the three places in the Pentateuch where it occurs, with the statutes respecting the punishment of injuries and murder, our Lord's language, 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil,' bears with direct force upon just that part of the judicial law which is quoted in defence of the civil magistrate's inflicting capital punishment.

Either, in fact, the judicial must be viewed as having been abolished by the introduction of the Christian dispensation, or it must be regarded, not merely as a model for Christian legislators, but as part of the moral law, or as obligatory upon man simply as an accountable being. The whole of what was strictly or distinctively the law of Moses, originated after the exodus from Egypt, and was superseded at the advent of our Lord. Its institutes were a shadow of which the mediatorial dispensation is the substance; and they are exhibited as in themselves mere form or letter, the spirit of which is to be found in the work and lessons of the Redeemer. 'The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' Whatever was set up by the Jewish legislator belonged to a state of things which was only introductory to the truth or reality set up by the Saviour. The

law, as given by Moses, or that portion of divine revelation which was given in the organizing of the Jewish economy, was 'the pedagogue of the church until Christ,' ὁ νομος παιδαγωγος ἡμων γεγονεν εις χριστον; but 'after faith came'—after the substance was introduced which the shadow prefigured—the church was no longer under the pedagogue,—she was released from his power, and brought away from his authority, ελθουσης δε της πιστεως, ουκετι ὑπο παιδαγωγον εσμεν. The law, as given by Moses, then, or what constituted distinctively and properly the Mosaic law, was all abolished at the advent of the Messiah. What is usually termed the moral law, however, or the law summed up in the ten commandments, formed no part of the abolished law; nor, on the other hand, did it form a distinctive part of the law as given by Moses, but was in force from the beginning of the world, and continued to be of universal obligation, and was merely reduced to a written form and repromulged with special solemnity after the exodus of the Israelites. Can the same thing be said respecting the judicial law? Were its enactments known from the beginning? were they obligatory upon all men? were they merely repromulged, and not originated, at the organization of the Israelitish commonwealth? No man will say that they were, or will pretend that, as to at least the period of their origin and the design of their original adaptation, they were other than a portion of the distinctive law of Moses. What follows, then, but that, along with the enactments of the ceremonial law, they were divested of their authority by the glorious event which gave the whole Mosaic institute its significancy—which 'brought forth judgment unto truth?' (Comp. Isa. 42:1–3; Matt. 12:14–21.) To argue, therefore, from any statement of the judicial law in support of opinions respecting a Christian country's criminal code, or respecting the propriety of the civil magistrate inflicting the punishment of death, is just as inconclusive as to argue, from statements of the ceremonial law, in support of opinions respecting the proper manner, or the

concomitant circumstances, of performing the duties of the Christian ministry.

We come now to glance at the opinion which vindicates the infliction of capital punishment on the principles of general revelation, apart from the authority of the judicial law. This opinion, with reference chiefly if not solely to the punishment of wilful murder, is based almost entirely on the text, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' So concentratedly is evidence made to rest on this text, that, if it can be satisfactorily explained in a way not to support the permanent right of punishing wilful murder with death, any other texts which are appealed to will, almost certainly, be surrendered.

Before remarking on the text itself, I would ask whether, among the institutions of divine appointment which existed in the patriarchal ages, or in the times before the giving of the Mosaic law, there were any which—incorporated, in modified forms, in that law—were abolished at the introduction of the New Testament dispensation? The offering of animals in sacrifice, the holding of the priestly office, the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath,—were not these institutions of divine appointment, as ancient as the days of Adam, and yet abolished at the advent of the Messiah? Particular reasons, indeed, may he assigned for their abolition,—reasons perfectly clear and convincing; yet to what do these reasons amount, but that the institutions were specifically adapted to a state of things which was precurrent to the light and spirituality and fulness of the Christian dispensation? Nor were institutions specifically adapted to that precurrent state of things, such only as directly prefigured the work of the Messiah, but did not affect man's social conduct,—or such only as corresponded with the institutions of the ceremonial law, but did not correspond with those of the judicial. The law of the seventh-day

Sabbath was not a ceremonial institution; and, as to some details of its observance and the penalties of its violation, it became as truly incorporated with the judicial law, as, in its basis, or in its embodying abstractly the doctrine of a sabbatic rest, it was an integral part of the moral. In connexion, too, with the very text, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,' there is recorded a divine institution which would seem to class with neither the moral law nor the ceremonial: 'And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it,' Gen. 9:5. This statute was afterwards repromulged, in an enlarged or more detailed form, as an enactment of the judicial law: 'If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death. If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. If the ox shall push a man-servant or maid-servant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned,' Exod. 21:28–32. No one can doubt—especially if he take the trouble to examine the connection with a series of judicial enactments in which it occurs—that this enactment belonged to that distinctive or peculiar polity which perished with the Israelitish commonwealth. Nor can there be reasonable question that the prior enactment made to Noah was of the same temporary character. The very incorporation of it afterwards with the judicial law, is presumptive evidence that it was so. But, even apart from that fact, who will say that the penal infliction of death upon every brute which sheds human blood, is of permanent and universal obligation? There are, then, at least two institutions of a prefigurative character

—the institution of priesthood and the institution of sacrifice—prior in date to the Mosaic law, and there are also at least two institutions not of a prefigurative character—the institution of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the institution of penally treating brutes which took away human life—likewise prior in date to the Mosaic law, which were superseded by the altered arrangements and the fuller revelations of the New Testament dispensation.

Now, since other institutions besides those of the judicial and the ceremonial law were abolished, a question is fairly raised whether one of these was not the institution of man's inflicting capital punishment upon a wilful murderer? The ante-Mosaic institutions which became abolished, were, in all the instances we have noticed, such as, after the exodus from Egypt, became incorporated with the Mosaic law. But the institution of capital punishment for murder was just as really and characteristically incorporated with that law, as the institutions of priesthood, sacrifice, and the seventh-day Sabbath. Does not this fact afford somewhat strong presumptive evidence that, like them, it partook of the distinctive or differential character of the Mosaic law, as precurrent and introductory to another state of things, and, in consequence, shared in the temporariness of its duration? Let us remark, however, the connexion in which the institution was established:—'And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man,' Gen. 9:5, 6. Who does not see that the enactment here has a twofold reference,—that, while the punishment of shedding human blood is the subject of it, that punishment is viewed in reference both to man and to beast? The same statute which enacts that the man guilty of shedding human blood should be put to death, enacts also that the beast guilty of

shedding human blood should be put to death; and it clearly speaks in reference to both, in the summary statement, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.'—To be consistent, therefore, every person who regards it as authority for the civil magistrate inflicting capital punishment on a murderer, ought to insist on his equally inflicting penal death on any ox or other beast which gores or kills a man. The Mosaic law, accordingly, when incorporating the one part of the statute, incorporated also the other; and so, in common consistency, ought every code which is framed on the assumption that the statute continues to be authoritative. Or if any party believe that the obligation has passed away to inflict penal death upon a brute which has shed human blood, he is bound, on his own principles, to believe also that the authority has passed away for inflicting capital punishment on a murderer.

But does the statute in question refer, after all, to the punishment of wilful murder? Does it not refer rather to the simple killing of a man without divine sanction, be the quality or aggravations of the action what they may? The statute has certainly one limitation; and expresses it with great distinctness: 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Here is explicit divine sanction for man putting the slayer of man to death, and consequent exemption of the former from the scope of the statute which he executes: the enactment, in its very terms, exempts the judicial slayer of one who slays. But is there any other limitation? Do not the terms employed distinctly include—with the exception of judicial executioners, or persons acting under divine sanction—all slavers of man whatever,—the slayer by inadvertence, the slayer through carelessness, and the slayer who intended to do no more than maim or wound, as well as the slayer from malice and murderous rage? No reason is found either in the language employed, or, so far as I am aware, in any known ante-Mosaic institution, for exempting any of the classes. But

if, on the contrary, the statute be viewed in the light which is thrown upon it by its subsequent incorporation with the Mosaic law, it will be seen to have distinctly included all, or, at the least, to have admitted limitations in reference to unintentional slaying which come far short of its being directed only against wilful murder. An Israelite who had undesignedly taken away human life, no matter by how mere an accident or with how much freeness soever from carelessness or culpable oversight, was not protected from the legal 'avenger of blood' unless he fled to a city of refuge, and obtained a public verdict declaring him entitled to protection within its walls; and even after he reached the city, and was pronounced by 'the congregation' free from the guilt of intentional murder, he could not, till the time of the high priest's death, pass to the outside of the city's gates, even for the shortest period or the shortest distance, without incurring the hazard of the legal loss of his life: see Numb. 35:9–34, compared with Lev. 24:17–22; Exod. 21:12–14; Deut. 19:4–13. Thus any slayer of man, however different in character, and however removed in degree of guilt, from a wilful murderer, was obnoxious, even under the detailed and extended jurisprudence of the Israelitish commonwealth, to penal death, and was able to escape it only by instantly and carefully availing himself of a special means of protection. Would not the inference, then, appear clearly to follow, that the original or ante-Mosaic statute respecting the shedding of human blood, had reference, not to murder only, but to killing of every inferior degree of aggravation? This inference is greatly strengthened by what the Mosaic enactment says respecting the avenger of blood. The whole scope of the language as to the cities of refuge, and the unintentional manslayer, and the mutual and legal position of parties concerned in an act of shedding human blood, seems to assume that the avenger of blood, or near kinsman of the person slain, possessed a legal right, without waiting any public verdict, or instituting himself any inquiry into motives or degrees of

guilt, to inflict upon the culprit, whether murderer, culpable homicide, or accidental manslayer, the penalty of death. Now, whence could this right have been derived, or on what authority could it have been pleaded, except the original statute, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed?' We are once more to remember, too, that this statute was directed, not only against every man, but also against every beast, who shed human blood. But surely no pretence will be made to distinguish degrees of guilt in the bite of dogs, the goring of oxen, or the kick of horses,—to distinguish between murder and manslaughter on the part of creatures which, if not destitute of what is or resembles reason, are altogether destitute at least of a moral sense? Yet if a distinction cannot be made in reference to brutes which shed human blood, it is difficult to see how a statute which applies alike to them and men, or which makes provision in the same language for both, can allow it to be mad in reference to men who shed human blood. Just as we interpret the statute with regard to brutes which kill, so should we interpret it with regard to men who kill. It would, therefore—somewhat obviously, I think—appear to have been enacted against all shedding of human blood whatever, manslaughter as well as wilful murder; and as, if quoted to support the doctrine of permanent authority to inflict capital punishment, it would prove too much, it must be regarded as having been adapted simply to an elementary state of society,—as having probably had connexion with the peculiar circumstances of the patriarchal dispensation,—or more probably still, as having concurred with the minor enactment against eating the blood of animals, to exhibit the value of 'blood in which is the life,' and inculcate indirectly the great doctrine of sacrifice,—and as having, through the medium of subsequent incorporation with the Mosaic law, passed down the current of temporary but significant institutions which were precurrent and introductory to the full revelations of the Christian dispensation.

I cannot, without writing matter which might fill a pamphlet or a small volume, attempt to do justice to the question of capital punishment; and—forbearing either to notice subordinate arguments in favour of the practice, or to state and illustrate any of some reasons which might be urged against it—must content myself with having examined the chief defence of it in the case of wilful murderers, as founded on the provisions of the Mosaic law, and on the enactment communicated to Noah. Yet before concluding this note, I may add one or two general remarks.

If the principal arguments in defence of punishing murder with death under the Christian dispensation, have been proved to be inconclusive, or built on mistaken premises, the subordinate arguments which are sometimes made to follow in their wake may fairly be expected to admit of easy refutation. If, too, the grand authority usually pleaded for capital punishment in the case of murder, have been proved peculiar to an age whose characteristic or distinctive institutions were superseded by the full revelation attending and following the Messiah's advent, it will hardly be pleaded in favour of capital punishment for other crimes. If, further, the chief of those defences of capital punishment for murder which are founded on the divine word, have been shown to rest on mistaken views or mistaken interpretation, other defences of the practice which are founded on mere expediency will scarcely be allowed to possess soundness or influence. An overthrow, or even a serious shaking, of the strongest arguments founded on appeal to the Bible for punishing wilful murder with death, will be felt, by every philanthropist and every cautious jurist, sufficient reason for his solemnly pausing before he commit himself to the advocacy or the continued sanction of capital punishment in any shape, or for any offence whatever.

One principle clearly and very frequently stated in the New Testament is, 'Avenge not yourselves: vengeance is mine—I will recompense, saith the Lord.' Under the old economy, men were employed, both upon ordinary and upon extraordinary occasions, as ministers of the divine anger, and were furnished with special oracles for direction in their work; but, under the new economy, they are no longer employed in the same way, or at least are not employed by receiving a commission or command, and can become instruments of vengeance only by that controlling administration which makes even the wrath of man to praise God, and brings good out of evil. Duty, or obligation to obey, or a command of heaven, now, in no case, calls upon man to take vengeance or to retaliate, but in every case, binds him to show mercy, to practise kindness, to exercise placability, to cherish love to all persons, even to private and inveterate enemies. Nor does the association or incorporation of men into communities, churches, or states, affect, in any degree, the character of the law under which they are placed as individuals. Man, be he situated how he may, is not removed from under the law which is established over him as an accountable being, and as a subject of the New Testament dispensation. A civil magistrate, or an administrator of equity in civil affairs, or a speculator in jurisprudence, either will entirely shut his eyes to the light of revelation, and act essentially in the same way as a practical infidel does in private life'; or he will acknowledge the principles, and bow to the authority, and yield to the guidance of revelation, and act in essentially the same way, or at least in the same spirit, as a sincere Christian does in the domestic circle. Benevolence, or an enlightened regard to the best interests or the only true welfare of those toward whom he acts, will oblige him, indeed, to practise as really physical severity upon offenders as amenity towards the unoffending; but, for just the same reason, it also obliges a private Christian in the domestic circle as really to lift the rod against a naughty child or to inflict privation upon an unfaithful servant, as to

distribute smiles and encouragements among the obedient and the gentle Transition from a private to a magisterial or civil sphere, does not and cannot alter the nature of a man's moral responsibilities it can, at the utmost, do no more than multiply or enlarge his occasions for exercising the benevolence, which is in all circumstances unqualifiedly incumbent upon him, in the way of privation and restraint upon its object, rather than in the way of encouragement and sympathy. The civil magistrate is warranted or empowered to inflict punishment, therefore, not on the principle of retaliation or of taking vengeance, but on the principle of benevolence or of doing good. His work is not to award retribution for actions, but to maintain equity among men, and promote the benefit of all Punishment, in his hands, is chiefly if not solely a means of preventing and eradicating evil. Even mere jurists, accordingly, or men who discuss the question of civil legislation on principles entirely apart from those of revelation, are somewhat unanimous in the opinion that the magistrate's office is simply to prevent crime and reclaim the criminal; and, when any of them ascribe to him a power of inflicting capital punishment, they, for the most part, suppose it to exist or to be legitimate, only in instances in which either the criminal is so hardened as to be past reclamation, or the crime is of such a nature as to render his death a necessary or most effective means of deterring others from committing it. Some condemn capital punishment in every case whatever; and others approve it only when, in their opinion, both ends of punishment—the preventing of crime and the reclaiming of the criminal—cannot be attained, and when, for the sake of securing one of them, the other must be sacrificed. But even the latter class of jurists have, in many instances, been recently brought to doubt, whether one end of punishment ought ever to give way wholly to the other, or whether, even in cases of robbery and murder, the prevention of crime and the public benefit may not be secured in perfect consistency with the

preservation of the criminal's life; and whenever they have arrived at conviction or even at hesitancy on this point, they have lifted their voices against the expediency of capital punishment. Not a few inductions, too, have been made from facts as to the absence, the infrequeney, or the diminution of capital punishment in Bavaria, in the United States of America, in Britain, and in other countries, on which conclusions have been built, respecting influence upon the prevention of crime, the public good, and the reclaiming of offenders, altogether unfavourable to the practice of capital punishment. Now, if a movement so decided in favour of reclaiming great criminals rather than putting them to death, have been made on grounds of mere expediency or of mere calculation of beneficial results, it ought surely to be very easily completed on grounds of appeal to the sublime and benevolent principles of the gospel. To drive away a miserable wretch from that state of being in which alone be has access to the means of grace,—to put a sudden termination to all his opportunities of being made wise to salvation, of seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near,—to stretch out, as far as a mortal can do, a vindictive hand against his soul, and smite him in his interests for eternity;—this is truly an act of frightful responsibility for man to perform, and would seem to be warrantable by nothing short of a most obvious divine sanction. If the enactment communicated to Noah be of the nature of moral law, or possess permanent and universal authority, it is no doubt a sufficient sanction; but if it be of the character which I have endeavoured to show, no sanction, so far as I am aware, can be pleaded,—no divine command, no commission from heaven, no authority whatever, except such appeals to expediency, or such conclusions from obscure and circuitous reason, as will hardly hinder a man who knows any thing of the benign and beneficent spirit of the gospel from standing aghast at the idea of touching the life even of a murderer.—ED.]

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXXXVII. Which is the seventh commandment?

ANSWER. The seventh commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

QUESTION CXXXVIII. What are the duties required in the seventh commandment?

ANSWER. The duties required in the seventh commandment, are chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behaviour; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eves, and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel, marriage by those that have not the gift of continency; conjugal love, and cohabitation, diligent labour in our callings, shunning all occasions of uncleanness, resisting temptations thereunto.

QUESTION CXXXIX. What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts, al. unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections, all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent, or light behaviour; immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages, allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews, and resorting to them; entangling vows of single life; undue delay of marriage, having more wives or husbands than one, at the same time; unjust

divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company, lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage-plays, and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness either in ourselves or others.

The Duties Required in the Seventh Commandment

THIS commandment respects, more especially, the government of the affections, and the keeping of our minds and bodies in such an holy frame, that nothing impure, immodest, or contrary to the strictest chastity, may defile us, or be a reproach to us, or insinuate itself into our conversation with one another. In order to this, we are to set a strict watch over our thoughts and actions, and avoid every thing which may be an occasion of this sin, and use those proper methods which may prevent all temptations to it. Hence, we ought to associate ourselves with none but those whose conversation is chaste, and such as becomes Christians; and to abhor all words and actions which are not so much as to be named among persons professing godliness. As for those who cannot, without inconveniency, govern their affections, but are sometimes tempted to any thing which is inconsistent with that purity of heart and life which all ought religiously to maintain, it is their duty to enter into a married state; which is an ordinance that God has appointed to prevent the breach of this commandment.

The Sins forbidden in the Seventh Commandment

We are thus led to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment.

1. Some of these sins are not only contrary to nature, but inconsistent with the least pretensions to religion; and such as were abhorred by the very heathen themselves, and, by the law of God, punished with death. When this punishment has not been inflicted, God has, by his

immediate hand, testified his vengeance against those guilty of the sin, by raining down fire and brimstone from heaven, as he did upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. These sins are called in this Answer, incest, sodomy, and unnatural lusts. To this we may add, offering violence to others, without their consent; and thereby forcing them to do what they could not even think of but with abhorrence. This is called rape; and by the law of God, the person guilty of it was punished with death.z

2. There are other sins whereby this commandment is violated, which, though more common, are, nevertheless, such as are attended with a very great degree of guilt and impurity. These are either such as are committed by those who are unmarried, namely, fornication, or by those who are married, as adultery. The latter, by the law of God, was punished with death; as containing several aggravating circumstances. For hereby the marriage contract is violated, and the mutual affection which is the end of that relation broken; and therefore the greatest injury is done to the innocent, as well as ruin brought on the guilty. Both these sins, however, agree in this, that they proceed from a corrupt heart, as our Saviour says, and argue the person who is guilty of them alienated from the life of God.

Another sin forbidden in this commandment, is polygamy, or having more husbands or wives than one, at the same time; together with that which often accompanies it, namely, concubinage. It is beyond dispute that many good men have been guilty of this sin, as appears by what is recorded in scripture concerning Abraham, Jacob, David, &c. Nor do we find that they are expressly reproved for it; which has given occasion to some modern writers to think that polygamy was not unlawful in those ages, but was afterwards rendered so by being prohibited under the gospel dispensation.' This opinion, indeed, cuts the knot of a very considerable difficulty; but it involves another

equally great; for, according to this opinion, polygamy does not appear to be contrary to the law of nature. I would rather choose, therefore, to take another method to solve the case, namely, that many bad actions of good men are recorded in scripture, but not approved of, nor proposed for our imitation. Of this kind I must conclude the polygamy and concubinage of several holy men, mentioned in scripture, to have been. That it may appear that this practice was not justifiable, let it be observed that some sin or other is often expressly mentioned as the occasion of it. Thus Abraham's taking Hagar was occasioned by Sarah's unbelief, because the promise of her having a son was not immediately fulfilled.d Jacob's taking Rachel to wife after Leah was occasioned by Laban's unjust dealing with him, and his own discontent arising from it; and his going in unto Bilhah was occasioned by Rachel's unreasonable desire of children; and his taking Zilpah, by Leah's ambitious desire of having pre-eminence over Rachel, by the number of her children. Again, the practice was generally attended with the breach of that peace which is so desirable a blessing in families; so that many disorders followed. Thus we read of an irreconcilable quarrel between Sarah and Hagar; and of Ishmael's hatred of Isaac, which the apostle calls 'persecution.'f We may notice, too, the contentions which there were in the family of Jacob and others; the envy expressed by the children of one wife against those of another; and the opposition which one wife often expressed to another, as that of Peninnah, one of the wives of Elkanah, to Hannah, the other. We must conclude, therefore, that Isaac's example is rather to be followed in this matter, who had but one wife; and whom he loved better than many of the patriarchs did theirs, whose love was divided among several.

It is objected that, if polygamy was a sin against the light of nature, it is strange that it should have been committed by good men, and that

they should have lived and died without repenting of it, or being in the least reproved for it, as we do not find that they were in scripture. We reply, that it was, indeed, a sin which they might have known to be so, had they duly considered it in all its circumstances and consequences. But this they did not; and therefore it was not so great a sin in them as it would be in us, who have clearer discoveries of the heinous nature of it. If we suppose that they repented of all sin agreeably to the light they had, they might be saved. This, though unrepented of, was no bar to their salvation, supposing they knew it not to be a sin; and God's not having explicitly reproved them for it, argues only his forbearance, but not his approbation of it.

It is farther objected that God says, by Nathan, to David, 'I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom;' and it is hence inferred that that which God gives, it is not unlawful for man to receive. But the meaning of that scripture in general is, that God made David king; and that then, according to the custom of the eastern kings, David took possession of what belonged to his predecessor, and consequently of his wives. God might thus be said to give David Saul's wives providentially, in giving him the kingdom; so that they were his property, that he might take them for his own, according to custom, if he was inclined so to do. This the kings of Judah generally did; though it does not follow that God approved of their doing so. So tyrants may be said to be raised up by God's providence and permission; yet he does not approve of their tyranny.

All that we shall add under this head, is, that polygamy is contrary to the first institution of marriage. God created but one woman as an help-meet for Adam: though, if ever there were any pretence for the necessity of one man's having more wives, it must have been in that instance, in which it seemed necessary for the increase of the world. But he rather chose that mankind should be propagated by slower

advances, than to give the least dispensation or indulgence to polygamy, as being contrary to the law of nature. The prophet takes notice of God's 'making but one;'i though he had 'the residue of the spirit,' and therefore could have given Adam more wives than one. The reason assigned was that 'he might seek a godly seed,' that is, that the children who should be born of many wives, might not be the result of the ungodly practice of their father, as it would be were this contrary to the law of nature; which we suppose it to be. This I rather understand by 'a godly seed,' and not that the character of 'godly' refers to the children; for these could not be said to be godly, or ungodly, as the consequence of their parents having one or more wives.—There is one scripture more which I cannot wholly pass over, which, to me, seems a plain prohibition of polygamy, 'Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life-time.' This respects either incest or polygamy; one of which must be meant by 'taking a wife to her sister.' Now, it cannot be a prohibition of incest, because it is said, 'Thou shalt not do it in her life-time;' which plainly intimates, that it might be done after her death. But it is certainly contrary to the law of God and nature, for a person to take his wife's sister after her decease, as well as in her life-time. Hence, the meaning is, 'Thou shalt not take another wife to her whom thou hast married; by which means they will become sisters.' Moreover, there is another reason assigned, namely, the envy, jealousy, and vexation which would follow; as the taking of another wife would be a means of vexing or-making the first wife uneasy. Hence, the sense, as is observed in the marginal reading, is, 'Thou shalt not take one wife to another,' or, 'Thou shalt not have more wives than one.' This is a plain prohibition of polygamy. But whether some holy men, in following ages, understood the meaning of this law, may be questioned; and therefore they were not sensible of the guilt they contracted by violating it. Thus we have considered some of the sins forbidden in

this commandment. To notice every particular instance of the breach of it, would exceed our intended brevity on the subject we are treating of.

The Aggravations of the Sins against the Seventh Commandment

We shall proceed to consider the aggravations, more especially, of the sins of fornication and adultery. These may also, with just reason, be applied to all other unnatural lusts which have been before considered as a breach of this commandment. Now, these sins are opposite to sanctification, even as darkness is to light, hell to heaven. Accordingly, the apostle opposes fornication and uncleanness, to sanctification.—Again, these sins are inconsistent with that relation we pretend to stand in to Christ, as members of his body; inasmuch as we join ourselves in a confederacy with his profligate enemies.m We may add, that they are a dishonour to and a defilement of our own bodies, which ought to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore should be consecrated to him.—Further, they bring guilt and ruin on two persons at once, as well as a blot and stain on the families of each. They also give a wound to religion, when committed by those who make any profession of it; as they 'give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.'—Further, they bring with them many other sins; as they tend to vitiate the affections, deprave the mind, defile the conscience, and provoke God to give persons up to spiritual judgments, which will end in their running into all excess of riot. We may add, that many sad consequences will follow the commission of these sins; as they tend to blast and ruin men's substance in the world, debase and stupify the soul, and deprive it of wisdom,p wound the conscience, and expose the person who is guilty of them, to the utmost hazard of perishing for ever. And if God is

pleased to give him repentance, it will be attended with great bitterness.r

The Occasions of the Sins against the Seventh Commandment

We are now to consider tho occasions of these sins, to be avoided by those who would not break this commandment. One of these is intemperance, or excess in eating or drinking. The former is a making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; the latter confounds and buries the little reason a person was master of, and makes him an easy prey to temptation. This was Lot's case; he kept his integrity in Sodom; yet being made drunk by his daughters in Zoar, he committed the abominable sin of incest with them.— Another occasion of these sins is idleness, consisting either in the neglect of business, or indulging too much sleep. Thus David first gave way to sloth, and then was tempted to uncleanness. It is observed that 'at the time when kings go forth to battle,'t and when he ought to have been with his army in the field, he tarried at Jerusalem, and slept in the middle of the day; for 'in the evening-tide he arose from off his bed.' Now, the heinous sin he was guilty of, which was the greatest blemish in his life, followed this indulgence.— Another occasion of these sins is pride in apparel or other ornaments, beyond the bounds of modesty, or for other ends than what God, when he clothed man at first, intended; when our attire is inconsistent with our circumstances in the world, or the character of persons professing godliness. This God reproves the Jews for, when grown very degenerate, and near to ruin. Jezebel, when Jehu came in quest of her, 'painted her face, and tired her head;' but her doing so did not prevent his executing God's righteous judgments upon her. All these things are mentioned as the sins for which Sodom was infamous; and gave occasion to those other abominations, which

provoked God to destroy them.x—We may add, as another occasion of these sins, the keeping of evil company. Thus it is said of the lewd woman, 'She hath cast down many wounded.' Bad company will hasten our own ruin; especially if we associate with lewd persons out of choice; for our doing so is a sign that our hearts are exceedingly depraved and alienated from God. If, however, providence cast our lot amongst bad company, we may escape that guilt and defilement which would otherwise follow, provided we bear our testimony against their sin, and are grieved for it, as Lot was for the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, among whom he dwelt.z Moreover, those places where there are mixed dancings, masquerades, stage-plays, &c., which tend to corrupt the principles and practices, and seldom fail of defiling the consciences and manners of those who attend on them, are nurseries of vice, and give occasion to the sins in question, and many others.

As for the remedies against unchastity, these are, exercising a constant watchfulness against all temptations to it; avoiding all conversation with those men or books which tend to corrupt the mind, and fill it with levity, under a pretence of improving it; but, more especially, retaining a constant sense of God's all-seeing eye, his infinite purity and vindictive justice, which will induce us to say as Joseph did, in a similar case, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'c

THE DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXL. Which is the eighth commandment?

ANSWER. The eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal."

QUESTION CXLI. What are the duties required in the eighth commandment?

ANSWER. The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts, and commerce between man and man; rendering to every one his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality, avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, and suretiship, or other like engagements; and an endeavour, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

THIS commandment supposes that God has given to every one a certain portion of the good things of this world; which he may lay claim to as his own, and which no other has a right to. The general scope and design of it, is to put us upon using endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate. As to ourselves, it respects the government of our affections, and the setting of due bounds to our desires of worldly things, that they may not exceed what the good providence of God has allotted for us, in order to our comfortable passage through the world. Thus Agar prays, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.' As to our endeavours to gain the world, it requires a due care and diligence to get and keep a competency, that we may not, through our own default, expose ourselves to those straits and necessities which are the consequence of sloth and

negligence.e God may, indeed, give estates to some without any pains, or care to get them; yet, even in this case, sloth is a sin which brings with it many hurtful lusts, which render riches a snare and a hinderance to their spiritual welfare. Hence, they who are in prosperous circumstances in the world, ought not to lay aside all care and industry to improve what they have, to the glory of God. But, on the other hand, they who are in a low condition ought to use a provident care and diligence, in order to their having a comfortable subsistence. Accordingly, this commandment obliges us to use all lawful endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate.

The Promotion of our Own Well-being

1. In promoting our own wealth and estate, we are first to practise frugality in our expenses, and to avoid profuseness. We are neither to give away our substance to unfit objects, namely, those who are in better circumstances than ourselves, who ought to be givers rather than receivers; nor are we to make large contributions to support a bad cause, or to consume our substance on our lusts. Likewise, when we are unwarily profuse in those expenses which would be lawful did they not exceed our circumstances or income in the world, we disregard the future condition of our families, and take a method to reduce ourselves and them to poverty.h Or, if our circumstances will admit of large expenses; yet, to abound in expenses, merely out of ostentation, and, at the same time, to withhold our liberality from the poor, is inconsistent with frugality.

2. We ought also to be diligent and industrious in our calling. In order to this, we are wisely to make choice of a calling in which we may glorify God, and expect his blessing for the promoting of our wealth and temporal prosperity. Hence, that business is to be chosen

which we are most capable of managing, and which has the fewest temptations attending it; especially if it does not burden the conscience by unlawful oaths, or by prostituting solemn ordinances, not designed by Christ as a qualification for it. Moreover, we are not to choose those callings in which gain is obtained by oppression or extortion, and which cannot be managed without danger of sinning; which will bring the blast of providence on all our undertakings. Hence, we are earnestly to desire God's direction in the weighty concern of choosing a profession; as well as to depend on him for success in it. When we have made choice of a lawful calling, we are to manage it in a way in which we may expect the blessing of God for the promoting of our wealth and temporal prosperity. Let us pursue and manage it with right and warrantable ends, namely, the glory of God, and, in subordination to this, our providing for ourselves and families, that we may be in a capacity to do good to others, and serve the interest of Christ in our day and generation. Let us take heed that our secular employments do not rob God of that time which ought to be devoted to his worship; and that our hearts be not so alienated from him that, while we are labouring for the world, we should live without God in it. Let us take heed that we do not launch out too far or run too great hazards in trade, resolving that we will be suddenly rich or poor; for our acting thus may tend to the ruin of our own families, as well as others.k Let us bear disappointments in our callings, with patience and submission to the will of God, without murmuring or repining at his wise and sovereign dispensations of providence.

The Promotion of our Neighbour's Well-being

This commandment obliges us to promote the wealth and outward estate of our neighbour. This we are to do by exercising strict justice

in our contracts and dealings with all men; and by relieving the wants and necessities of those who stand in need of our charity.

1. We are first to exercise justice in our dealings. Here we must take heed that we do not exact upon, or take unreasonable profit of, those whom we deal with, taking advantage of the ignorance of some and the necessities of others. Nor must we use any methods to supplant and ruin others, against the laws of trade, by selling goods at a cheaper rate than any one can afford them, thereby doing damage to ourselves, with a design to ruin those who are less able to bear such a loss. Again, those goods which we know to be faulty, are not, by false arts, or deceitful words, to be sold, as though they were not so.m On the other hand, the buyer is not to take advantage of the ignorance of the seller, as sometimes happens; nor is he to pretend that an article is worth less than he really thinks it to be. Further, nothing is to be diminished in weight or measure from what was bought; nor are worse goods to be delivered than what were purchased,o nor 'the balances to be falsified by deceit.'

2. We are to promote the good of our poor distressed neighbour, in works of charity; and we are to do this, not only by an inward sympathy, or bowels of compassion towards him, but according to our ability, by relieving him. As an inducement to this duty, we ought to consider that outward good things are talents given us, with the view that we may, by means of them, be in a capacity to help others, as well as be freed from needing help ourselves. And when we thus employ our substance, we may be said to improve what we have received from God, as those who are accountable to him for it, and testify our gratitude to him for outward blessings. Moreover, Christ takes acts of kindness, when proceeding from an unfeigned love to him, as done to himself. We may add, that there are many special motives, taken from the objects of our charity, namely, the pressing

necessities of some, the excelling holiness of others. In some instances, too, by an act of charity, whereby we relieve one, we do good to many; and when we relieve those who suffer for the sake of the gospel, there may be a tendency to promote the interest of Christ in general.

Let us consider here of whom works of charity are required. If this matter be duly weighed, we shall find that scarcely any are exempted from this duty, except it be those of whom it may be said that there are none poorer than themselves, or those who have no more than what is absolutely necessary to support their families or those who are labouring hard to spare out of their necessary expenses what will but just serve to pay their debts, or those who are reduced to such straits as to depend upon others, so that they can call nothing they have their own. This duty is incumbent on the rich, out of their abundance; and on those who are in middle circumstances in the world, who have a sufficiency to lay out in superfluous expenses. Even the poor ought to give a small testimony of their gratitude to God, by sparing a little, if they can, out of what they get in the world, for those who are poorer than themselves. If this be but a few mites, it may be an acceptable sacrifice to God; and if persons have nothing beforehand in the world, they ought to work for this end, as well as to maintain themselves and families.s

Let us next consider who are to be reckoned objects of our charity. These are not the rich, who stand in no need of it, and from whom we may expect a sufficient requital; nor those who are strong and healthy, but yet make a trade of begging, because it is an idle and sometimes a profitable way of living.u But those are to be relieved who are not able to work; especially if they were not reduced to poverty by their own sloth and negligence, but by the providence of God not succeeding their endeavours; and if while they were able,

they were ready to all works of charity themselves. We may add, that those are to be relieved who are related to us, either in the bonds of nature, or in a spiritual sense.y

We are now to inquire what part or proportion of our substance we are to apply to charitable uses. Here, as the circumstances of persons in the world are so various, as well as their necessary occasions for extraordinary expenses, it is impossible to give a general rule, to be observed by all. It must be premised, however, that our present contributions ought not to preclude all thoughts about laying up for ourselves or families, for time to come. Moreover, whatever proportion we give of our gain in the world, some abatements may reasonably be made for losses in trade; especially if what we give was not determined, or laid aside, for that use before the loss happened. As to the proportion of substance to be given, it ought to be left to the impartial determination of every one; who is to act in this matter under a conviction that he is accountable to God. The apostle lays down one general rule, 'Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.' But though we pretend not to determine the exact proportion which ought to be given, namely, whether a tenth part of our profits, or more, or less; yet it is highly reasonable that every one should contribute as much in works of charity as he lays out in mere superfluities, or, at least, spare a part out of his superfluous expenses for charitable uses. Moreover, there are some occasions which may call for large contributions. Thus the churches in Macedonia are commended, not only for their 'giving according to,' but 'beyond their power.'a Three things may be here considered.

First, the extreme necessities of those whom we are bound to take care of, and sometimes the distressed circumstances of the church of God, in general, require larger contributions than ordinary. Such

circumstances were the occasion of the command mentioned by our Saviour, of selling all and giving to the poor, which was put in practice in the infancy of the church, or the first planting of the gospel at Jerusalem.—Secondly, extraordinary instances of the kindness of God, in prospering us either in worldly or spiritual concerns, beyond our expectation, call for extraordinary expressions of gratitude to God in laying by for the poor.—Thirdly, when we have committed great sins, or are under very humbling providences, whether personal or national, being exposed to or fearing the judgments of God, which seem to be approaching; we are called to deep humiliation, and, together with this, proportionable acts of charity.

We are now to consider with what frame of spirit works of charity are to be performed Now, they are to be performed prudently, as our own circumstances will permit, and the necessity of the object requires; also seasonably, not putting this duty off till another time, when the necessities of those whom we are bound to relieve call for present assistance. We are also to perform this duty secretly, not desiring to be seen of men, or commended by them for it;d and cheerfully; also with tenderness and compassion to those whose necessities call for relief, considering how soon God can reduce us to the same extremity which they are exposed to who are the objects of our charity. It ought to be done likewise with thankfulness to God, who has made us givers rather than receivers;f and as a testimony of our love to Christ, especially when we contribute to the necessities of his members.

THE SINS FORBIDDEN IN THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXLII. What are the sins forbidden in the eighth commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the eighth commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving any thing that is stolen, fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing land-marks, injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious lawsuits, unjust enclosures, and depopulations; engrossing commodities to enhance the price, unlawful callings, and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbour what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness, inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming, and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate; and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.

Self-robbery

THIS commandment forbids, in general, all kinds of theft. This may include what is very seldom called by the name, namely, the robbing of ourselves and families. We may be said to do this, by neglecting our worldly calling; by imprudently managing it; and by lending larger sums of money than our circumstances will well bear, to those who are never likely to pay it again, or, which is in effect the same, by being surety for such. Moreover, we rob ourselves and families, by being profuse and excessive in our expenses; by consuming what we have, while pursuing our pleasures more than business; or by

gaming, whereby we run the risk of losing part of our substance, and reducing ourselves or others to poverty. On the other hand, we rob ourselves and families, when, out of a design to lay up a great deal for the time to come, we deprive ourselves and them of the common necessaries of life; which is, in effect, to starve for the present, in order to prevent our starving for the future. But, passing this by, we shall consider this commandment more especially, as it respects our defrauding others.

Theft

We break this commandment by taking away any part of our neighbour's wealth or worldly substance. This is generally known by the name of theft; and is punishable by human laws, and that, with the greatest severity, in proportion to its aggravations. Moreover, they who are guilty of it, are, without repentance, excluded from the kingdom of God. Let it be considered, however, that every kind of theft does not deserve an equal degree of punishment from men; for sometimes the owner of what was stolen receives but little damage. Yet in this case, some punishment short of death ought to be inflicted, to reform the wicked person, and deter him from going on in the breach of this commandment, from less to greater sins. By the law of God, a simple theft was punished with restitution of twice, and in some cases four times, as much as the damage which was sustained amounted to. In other cases, however, the theft was punished with death, when it had in it some circumstances which aggravated it in an uncommon degree. If an house, which ought to be reckoned a man's castle, be broken open, and that in the nighttime, when he is in no condition to defend himself or his worldly substance, in this case the law is not unjust which punishes the thief with death; and this is supposed in that law which says that he who kills one who 'breaks up' his neighbour's house by night, shall have

'no blood shed for him.'k But, in other instances, confinement and hard labour, may be as effectual a way to put a stop to this sin; and is rather to be chosen than punishment with death. Thus concerning this commandment, as broken by theft.

Breach of Trust

This commandment is farther broken, by unfaithfulness, or breach of trust; whether the trust be devolved on us by nature, as that of parents towards their children; or by contract, as that of servants, who are intrusted with the goods and secrets of their masters; or that which is founded in the desire and request of those who constitute persons executors to their wills, or guardians to orphans under age, provided they accept of this trust. If any of these violate their trust, by embezzling or squandering away the substance of others, or defrauding them to enrich themselves, their conduct is not only theft, but perfidiousness, and highly provoking to God, and deserves a more severe punishment from men than is usually inflicted.

Non-payment of Debt

This commandment may be said to be broken, by borrowing, and not paying just debts; as the psalmist says, 'The wicked borroweth and payeth not again.' Yet there are some cases in which a man is not guilty though he borrows and does not pay. If, for example, when he borrowed, there was a probability of his being able to repay; or if he discovered his circumstances fully to him of whom he borrowed, to whom it would appear whether there was any likelihood of his paying him or not; or if he gave full conviction, when he borrowed, that he was able to pay, but the providence of God, without his own default, has rendered him unable; in this case mercy is to be shown him, and he is not to be reckoned a breaker of this commandment. In various other cases, however, a person is guilty of the breach of it, in

borrowing, and not paying debts. If the borrower pretends that his circumstances are better than they are, and so makes the lender believe that, in a limited time, he shall be able to repay him; when, in his own conscience, he apprehends that there is no probability that he shall be able to do so, he is guilty of breaking this commandment. Again, when a person was in such circumstances at the time of his borrowing, that, by industry in his calling, he might be able to pay the creditor, but, by neglect of business, or embezzling his substance, he renders himself unable to pay, he is chargeable with the breach of this commandment. Further, if pity be shown, by compounding for a part, instead of the whole debt, in case of present insolvency; though the debtor, in form of law, is discharged with the creditor's consent, yet the law of God and nature obliges him to pay the whole debt, if providence makes him able hereafter; else he can hardly be excused from the breach of this commandment.

This leads us to inquire what judgment we may pass on the 'Israelites borrowing of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold,' which we read of in Exod. 12:35, whether in this matter they were guilty of the breach of this commandment. Now, the word which we render 'borrowed,' might as well be rendered 'asked,' or 'demanded.' We must hence suppose that the Egyptians were so desirous that the Israelites should be gone, apprehending that if they continued, they were all dead men, that they might have of them whatever they demanded as necessary for their expedition; while, if they came back, as they supposed they should, they would be obliged to return them. If this be the sense of the Hebrew word, there is no difficulty in the text, nor any appearance of the breach of this commandment. But as the sense of the word is indeterminate, signifying to 'demand,' as well as to 'borrow,' God's order imports the former; though the Egyptians might understand it in the latter, as denoting a borrowing with a design to restore. The Israelites, then, acted in this matter by

God's command, who has a right to take away the goods which one possesses, if he pleases, and give them to another; for he takes away nothing but his own. Now, that they had his warrant for borrowing or demanding these things of the Egyptians, appears from the second verse. Moreover, the reason why God ordered them to do this, if we look beyond his absolute sovereignty, was that the Israelites deserved what they received as wages for their hard service. Besides, the contribution might be reckoned a reward of the good offices which Joseph had done to Egypt, which had been long since forgotten. As to the Israelites, it is probable that they expected nothing else but to return again, and restore to the owners what they had borrowed of them, after they had sacrificed to God in the wilderness; at least, they were wholly passive, and disposed to follow the divine conduct by the hand of Moses. And when they were in the wilderness, they could not restore what they had borrowed, since the owners, as is more than probable, were drowned in the Red sea; their revenge and covetousness, as well as Pharaoh's orders, having prompted them to follow the Israelites. Or if some of the owners might have been heard of, as yet surviving, their right to what was borrowed of them was forfeited, by reason of the hostile pursuit of Pharaoh and his hosts, which put them into a state of war.

This may lead us farther to inquire what judgment we may pass on the many ravages and plunders which are generally made by armies engaged in war; whether they may be reckoned a breach of this commandment. Now, it is beyond dispute that, if the war be unjust, as all the blood which is shed is murder, or a breach of the sixth commandment; so all the damage which is done by burning of houses, or taking away the goods of those against whom it is carried on, is a breach of this commandment. But if we suppose that the war is just, that the damage is done only to those who are immediately concerned in it, and that it is an expedient to procure peace; it is

unquestionably lawful, and no breach of this commandment. Thus when the Israelites were commanded to destroy the inhabitants of the land of Canaan as criminals, they were admitted to seize on the spoil of other nations, who were more remote from them, when conquered by them. As for those plunders and robberies which are committed on private persons, who are not concerned in the war, any otherwise than as subjects of the government against which it is undertaken, especially if the losses they sustained have no direct tendency to procure peace, these can hardly be justified from being a breach of this commandment.

Oppression

This commandment is broken also by oppression; whereby the rich may be said to rob and even swallow up the poor. Now there are various ways by which persons may be said to oppress others. They may do so by engrossing those goods which are necessary for food or clothing in order to enhance the price of them; so that the poor are brought into great extremities. Again, persons are guilty of oppression when they enrich themselves out of the unmerciful labour exacted of their servants, whom they will hardly suffer to live, or eat the just reward of their service. Such a master was Laban to Jacob.p Landlords also are guilty of it when they turn their tenants out of their houses or farms, when they find that they get a comfortable subsistence by their industry, taking occasion thence to raise their rent in proportion to the success God gives them. Finally, the rich are guilty of oppression when they make the poor suffer by long delays to pay them their debts, that they may gain advantage by the improvement of that money which they ought to have paid them.

Litigiousness

A person may be said to break this commandment, by engaging in unjust and vexatious lawsuits. It is to be owned, however, that going to law is not, at all times, unjust. For it is sometimes a relief against oppression; and it is agreeable to the law of nature for every one to defend his just rights. On this account, God appointed judges to determine causes, to whom the people were to have recourse, that they might 'show them the sentence of judgment.' Yet we must conclude lawsuits to be in some cases oppressive. They are so when the rich make use of the law to prevent or prolong the payment of their debts, or to take away the rights of the poor, who, as they suppose, will rather suffer injuries than attempt to defend themselves. Lawsuits are oppressive also when bribes are either given or taken, with a design to pervert justice.r We may add, that the person who pleads an unrighteous cause, concealing the known truth, perverting the sense of the law, or alleging that for law or fact which he knows not to be so; and the judge who passes sentence against his conscience, respecting the person of the rich, and brow-beating the poor; are confederates in oppression, while their methods of proceeding are, beyond dispute, a breach of this commandment.

It is objected that our Saviour forbids going to law even to recover our just rights, when he says, 'If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.' We reply, that some things may be omitted for prudential reasons, which would not otherwise be unlawful to be done. Our Saviour does not forbid using our endeavours, in a legal way, to recover our right in all cases; but he forbids it more especially at that time, when his followers could hardly expect to meet with justice. It may be also that they were oppressed by fines or distress, laid on them for their embracing Christianity; and in this case he advises them patiently to bear

injuries, when they could hardly expect relief from their unjust judges.

Usury

This commandment is broken by extortion or oppressive usury. Thus it is said of the righteous man, 'He putteth not out his money to usury.' The word signifies 'biting usury;'u which is, beyond dispute, unlawful. We have elsewhere considered in what cases the Israelites might take usury, and when not. On the whole, it is certainly unlawful to exact more than the legal rate or worth of the loan of money; or to exact any usury of the poor,—especially for that which was borrowed to supply them with the necessaries of life.

Restitution

Having considered in what instances this commandment is broken, we proceed to show what a person ought to do who has been guilty of the breach of it, in any of the forementioned instances, in order to his making restitution for the injuries he has done to his neighbour. The making of restitution ought always to attend the exercise of sincere repentance in those who have been guilty of this sin; of which we have an instance in Zaccheus. The neglect of it will be like a worm at the root of ill-gotten estates, and will be little better than a continual theft.

It is objected, however, that it may be a prejudice to our reputation, by making our crime public, which before was only known to ourselves. But what we do in this matter, is not really a reproach, but an honour; and it is hardly to be supposed that he to whom we perform so just and unexpected a duty, will be so barbarous as to divulge or improve the transaction against us to our disadvantage. Besides, there are private ways of making restitution, whereby the

injured party may receive what is sent to him, and not know from whom it comes; or, good turns may be done to him in a way of compensation for the damages he has received, and he not know that they are done with this design; and, by this means, we disburden our consciences, perform a necessary duty, and, at the same time, prevent the supposed ill consequences which might follow.

It is farther objected that sometimes the making of restitution is impracticable; as when the person injured is dead, and we know of none who has a right to receive his property. Sometimes also we may have been guilty of so many instances of fraud and oppression, and to such a great number of persons, that it is next to impossible. But when it is impossible for us to make restitution to those whom we have injured, or when we know of none who survive them who have a right to receive it, the best expedient, I apprehend, we can make use of, is to give it to the poor; for as it is not in justice our own, we do, as it were, hereby give it to the Lord, who is the original proprietor of all things.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXLIII. Which is the ninth commandment?

ANSWER. The ninth commandment is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

QUESTION CXLIV. What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?

ANSWER. The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbour as well as our own; appearing, and standing for, and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbours; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name, sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging their gifts and graces; defending their innocency a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth, keeping of lawful promises, studying and practising of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of a good report.

QUESTION CXLV. What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment, are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbours as well as our own, especially in public judicature, giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth, passing unjust sentence, calling evil good, and good evil, rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtlul and equivocal expressions, to

the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, mid partial censuring, misconstruing intentions, words, and actions, flattering, vain-glorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others, denying the gifts and graces of God, aggravating smaller faults, hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins when called to a free confession, unnecessary discovering of infirmities, raising false rumours, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defence; evil suspicion, envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavouring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy, scornful contempt, fond admiration, breach of lawful promises, neglecting such things as are of good report, and practising or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering, what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

The Duties Required in the Ninth Commandment

IN explaining this commandment we are to consider first what the duties are which it requires.

1. We must endeavour to promote truth in all we say or do; and that as to what concerns either ourselves or others. As to what concerns ourselves, we are to guard against every thing which savours of deceit or hypocrisy; and, in our whole conversation, endeavour to be what we pretend to be, or to speak nothing but what we know or believe to be true upon good evidence,—the contrary to which is lying.—As to what concerns others, we must not neglect to reprove sin in them, how much soever our worldly interest may lie at stake. Thus Azariah reproved Uzziah, and Elijah, Ahab; though the attempt could not but be hazardous in each of them. Moreover, we must endeavour to

undeceive others who are mistaken; especially if the error they are liable to be of such a nature that it endangers the loss of their salvation. We are also to vindicate those who are reproached by others, to the utmost of our power, according as the cause will admit.

2. This commandment obliges us to endeavour to promote our own and our neighbour's good name. Our own good name consists, not in our having the applause of the world, but in our deserving its just esteem, and in our being loved and valued for our usefulness to mankind in general. Now, this esteem is not to be gained by commending ourselves, or doing any thing but what we engage in with a good conscience and the fear of God. In order to this, we must take heed that we do not contract an intimacy with those whose conversation is a reproach to the gospel. We must also render good for evil, and not give occasion to those who watch for our halting, to insult us as to any thing besides unavoidable infirmities.b This degree of honour in the world we ought first to endeavour to gain, especially so far as it is necessary to our honouring God, and being useful to others. Then we must be careful to maintain our good name; forasmuch as the loss of it, especially in those who have made a public profession of religion, will reflect dishonour on the ways of God, whence his enemies will take occasion to blaspheme. But if all our endeavours to maintain our character and reputation are to no purpose, and we are followed with reproach as well as hatred and malice, from an unjust and censorious world; let us look to it that if we 'suffer reproach,' it be 'wrongfully, not as evil-doers, but for keeping a good conscience in the sight of God;' which may be a means to make those who reproach us 'ashamed.'d Moreover, let us count the reproach of Christ, that is, reproach for his sake, a glory. Again, let us always value their good opinion most who are Christ's best friends, and expect little else but ill-treatment from his enemies; and then we shall be less disappointed when we are exposed to it.

And let us not, out of fear of reproach, decline any thing which is our duty, in which the honour of God and the welfare of his people is concerned; but in this case, let us leave our good name in Christ's hand, whose providence is concerned for and takes care of the honour, as well as the wealth and outward state, of his people.

We are also to endeavour to maintain the good name of others. In order to this, we must render to them those marks of respect and honour which their character and advancement in gifts or grace call for; yet without being guilty of servile flattery or dissimulation. If they are in danger of doing any thing which may forfeit their good name, we are carefully to reprove them, having a due regard to any good thing which is in them towards the Lord their God. And in maintaining their good name, we are to conceal their faults, when we may do so without betraying the interest of Christ; and especially when the honour of God and their good are better promoted than by divulging them.

The maintaining of the good name of others is not, however, without some exceptions. We are not to conceal the crimes committed by others. If private admonition, for scandalous sins committed, prove ineffectual, and the discovering of them to others may make the offender ashamed, and promote his reformation; we are not to conceal his crimes, though the divulging of them may lessen the esteem which others have of him; since it is better for him to be ashamed before men, than perish in his hypocrisy. Again, if the crime committed be such that shame, and the loss of his good name, be a just punishment due to it, we are not to conceal it, thereby to stop the course of justice. Further, when the honour and good name of an innocent person cannot be maintained, unless by divulging the crimes of the guilty, he who has forfeited his good name ought to lose it, rather than he who has not.

We shall close this head by considering what reason we have to endeavour to maintain the good name of others. To take away our neighbour's good name, is to take away one of the most valuable privileges he is possessed of. The loss of it may be inexpressibly detrimental to him; and sometimes may affect his secular interest; so that in taking it away, we may be said to take away his wealth and outward estate, and prevent his usefulness in that station of life in which providence has fixed him. Accordingly, we are to express a due concern for the honour and reputation of others as well as for our own. Thus concerning the duties required in this commandment.

The Sins Forbidden in the Ninth Commandment

We proceed to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. These are summed up in the general expression, 'bearing false witness;' and they may respect either ourselves or others. A person may be said to bear false witness against himself, in thinking either too highly or too meanly of himself. In the former respect, we value ourselves, or our supposed attainments, either in gifts or graces, too much. As regards these, we are, for the most part, mistaken, and pass a wrong judgment on them, and are ready to say, with the church at Laodicea, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not' that we are 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' On the one hand, some mistake the common gifts of the Spirit for grace, and conclude themselves to be something when they are nothing. But on the other hand, many conclude that they have no grace, and rank themselves among hypocrites and unbelievers, when their hearts are right with God, and they have had large experience of the powerful influences of his Spirit, but are not sensible of it. Thus Christ says to the church in Smyrna, 'I know thy poverty; but thou art rich.'i In these respects persons may be said to bear false witness against themselves.

But that which is principally forbidden in this commandment, is a person's bearing false witness against his neighbour. He does this either when he endeavours to deceive him, or when he endeavours to do him prejudice as to his reputation in the world. The one is called lying; the other backbiting or slandering. As to the former, our saying that which is contrary to what we know to be truth, with a design to deceive, is what we call telling a lie; and our doing that which is contrary to truth, may be deemed a practical lie; both of which are very great sins.

1. A person is guilty of lying, when he says that which is contrary to truth, with a design to deceive. This the old prophet at Bethel did to the prophet of the Lord; on which occasion it is said that he 'lied unto him.' Now, lying is something more than saying what is contrary to truth; for a person may do this and be guiltless. He may do so, for example, when there is some circumstance which discovers him to speak ironically; so that he does not appear to have a design to deceive those to whom he addresses his discourse. Thus when the prophet Micaiah said to Ahab, 'Go and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it,' namely, Ramoth-Gilead, 'into the hands of the king;'l it is plain that he spake the language of the false prophets, and that Ahab understood him in this sense, or suspected that he spake ironically. For he says, 'How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true?' The prophet then tells him, without irony, though in a metaphorical way which Ahab easily understood, 'I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd. And the Lord said, 'These have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace.'n This was an intimation, that, if he went up to Ramoth-Gilead, he should fall in battle. Hence, Ahab says to Joheshapha, 'Did I not tell thee, that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?' It thus appears that the prophet did not deceive him; though the mode of speaking which he at first made use

of, without considering it as irony, seemed to intimate as much.—Again, a person may say that which is contrary to truth, being imposed on himself, without any design to deceive another. This cannot, indeed, according to the description before given, be properly called a lie. Yet he may sin by asserting too positively that which he thinks to be true from probable circumstances or uncertain information; especially if what he reports carries in it matter of scandal or censure. This was the case of Job's friends. They did not tell a lie against their own consciences; yet they were too peremptory in charging him with hypocrisy, without sufficient ground. Hence, God imputes folly to them, in that 'they had not spoken of him the thing which was right.'

Here it may be inquired whether a person who designs not to deceive, nor speaks contrary to the dictates of his own conscience, but who promises to do a thing, and does it not, is guilty of lying. Now, if a person promises to do a thing, which at the same time he really designs, and afterwards uses all the endeavours he could to fulfil his promise, but something unforeseen happens in the course of providence to prevent the execution of it, he cannot, properly speaking, be said to be guilty of a lie; though we ought not to promise any thing but upon the supposition that God enables us to perform it. Again, if a person intends to do a thing, and, accordingly, promises to do it, but afterwards sees some justifiable reason to alter his mind, he is not guilty of a lie; since all creatures are supposed to be mutable. Thus the angels told Lot, that they would 'abide in the street all night;' but afterwards, upon his entreaty, they 'went into the house with him.' Our Saviour also, when he walked with his disciples to Emmaus, 'made as though he would have gone farther; but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; and he went in to tarry with them.'r But, notwithstanding this, if a person promises to do any thing which is of advantage to another, as the paying of a just debt,

&c., it is not a sufficient excuse to clear him from the guilt of sin, if he pretends that he has altered his mind, supposing that it is in his power to fulfil his promise. This conduct is, indeed, a breach of the eighth commandment; and, in some respects, it will appear to him to whom he made the promise to be a violation of it.

That we may more particularly speak concerning the sin of lying, which multitudes are chargeable with, let it be observed, that there are three sorts of lies. First, when we speak that which is contrary to truth, and the dictates of our own conscience, with a design to cover a fault or excuse ourselves or others. This we generally call an officious lie. Secondly, when a person speaks that which is contrary to the known truth, in a jesting way; and embellishes his discourse with his own fictions, designing to impose on others. This they are guilty of, who invent false news, or tell stories for truth which they know to be false. This is to lie in a jesting, ludicrous manner.t Thirdly, there is a pernicious lie, namely, when a person raises and spreads a false report with a design to do injury to another. This is a complicated crime, and the worst sort of lying.

Here there are two or three inquiries which it may not be improper to take notice of. One of these is, whether the midwives were guilty of an officious lie, when they told Pharaoh that 'the Hebrew women were delivered of their children, ere they came in unto them;' concerning whom it is said, in the following verse, that 'God dealt well with the midwives 'for this report, which carries in it the appearance of a lie. Now, they seem not to have been guilty of a lie; for it is not improbable, that God, in mercy to the Hebrew women and their children, might give them uncommon strength; so that they might be delivered without the midwives' assistance. Or if this was not the case with all the Hebrew women, but only with some or many of them, the midwives' report is only a concealing of part of the truth,

while they related, in other respects, that which was matter of fact. Now, a person is not guilty of telling a lie, who does not discover all that he knows. There is a vast difference between concealing a part of the truth, and telling that which is directly false. No one is obliged to tell all he knows to one who, he is sure, will make a bad use of it. This seems to have been the case of the midwives. Hence, their action was justifiable, and commended by God; they being not guilty, properly speaking, of an officious lie.

Another inquiry is, what judgment we must pass concerning the actions of Rahab, the harlot, who invented an officious lie, to save the spies from those who pursued them. It is said, 'she took the two men and hid them;' and, at the same time, pretended to those who were sent to inquire of her concerning them, that 'she wist not whence they were,' but that they 'went out of the city about the time of the shutting of the gate, though whither they went she knew not.' The main difficulty we have to solve is what the apostle says in apparent commendation of this action. 'By faith Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.'z Now, the apostle says, indeed, that she 'received the spies with peace,' that is, she protected them, and did not betray them into the hand of their enemies. But this act of faith does not relate directly to the lie which she invented to conceal them; for, doubtless, she would have been more clear from the guilt of sin, had she refused to give the messengers any answer relating to them, and so had given them leave to search for them, and left the event to providence. This, indeed, was a very difficult duty; for it might have endangered her life; and her choosing to secure them and herself, by inventing this lie, brought with it a degree of guilt, and was an evidence of the weakness of her faith. But, on the other hand, that faith which the apostle commends in her, respects some other circumstances attending this action. Accordingly, it is not said that by faith she

made the report to the messengers concerning the spies, but, that 'by faith she received them with peace.' Now, there are several things in which her faith was very remarkable. She was confident that 'the Lord would give them the land' which they were contending for. She makes a just inference relating to this matter, from the wonders which God had wrought for them in the Red sea.b She makes a noble confession, that 'the Lord their God is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath.' She put herself under the protection of the Israelites, and desired to take her lot with them; and she did this at the hazard of her life, though she might have saved it, and probably have received a reward, had she betrayed them. This I conceive to be a better vindication of Rahab's conduct than that which is alleged by some, who suppose that, by entering into confederacy with the spies, she put herself into a state of war with her own countrymen, and so was not obliged to speak truth to the men of Jericho. Such an interpretation is followed by many ill consequences, and gives too much countenance to persons deceiving others, under pretence of being in a state of war with them. As to what the Papists say in her vindication, that a good design will justify a bad action; this is not true in fact, and therefore not to be applied to her case.

It might be farther inquired what judgment we ought to pass on the method which Jacob took to obtain the blessing, when he told his father, 'I am Esau, thy first-born; I have done according as thou badest me;' whether he was guilty of a lie in this conduct. Now, there is not the least doubt that he was. Some, indeed, endeavour to excuse him, by alleging that he had, before this, bought the birth-right of Esau, and that on this account he calls himself Isaac's first-born. But this will not clear him from the guilt of a lie; for what he said would still have been an equivocation, and spoken with a design to deceive. Others own it to have been a lie; but extenuate it, from the consideration of God's having designed the blessing for him before

he was born.e But these do not at all mend the matter. For, though God may permit or overrule the sinful actions of men, to bring about his own purpose; yet his doing so does not, in the least, extenuate their sin. We may farther observe, in reference to this action and the consequence of it, that good men are sometimes liable to sinful infirmities, as Jacob was; who was followed with many sore rebukes of providence, which made the remaining part of his life very uneasy. He lived in exile twenty years, with Laban, an hard master, and an unjust and unnatural father-in-law. Again, great distress befell him in his return; occasioned first by Laban's pursuit of him, and then by the tidings which he received of his brother Esau coming out to meet him, 'with four hundred men.' As Esau was prompted by revenge, which he had long harboured in his breast, Jacob expected nothing less than the destruction of himself and his whole family. Further, he did not obtain deliverance from the hand of God without 'great wrestling;' and this attended with 'weeping,' as well as 'making supplication.'g And, though he prevailed, and so obtained the blessing, and therewith forgiveness of his sin; yet God so ordered it, that he should carry the mark of his success upon him as long as he lived, by touching the hollow of his thigh, which occasioned an incurable lameness.

Another inquiry is, whether the prophet Elijah did not tell a lie to the Syrian host, who were before Dothan, in quest of him, when he said, 'This is not the way, neither is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man you seek. But he led them to Samaria?' But if what he says to them be duly considered, it will appear not to be a lie; for he told them nothing but what proved true, according to the import of his words. He does not say, I am not the man ye seek, which would have been a lie; nor does he say, the man is not here; but he tells them, 'I will lead you to the place where ye shall find him,' or have him discovered and presented before you. Again, when

he says, 'This is not the way, neither is this the city;' he does not say, this is not the way to Dothan, neither is this the city so called; for then they would have been able to have convicted him of a lie, for they knew that they were at Dothan before they were struck with blindness. But the plain meaning of his words is, "This is not your way to find him, since the men of this city will not deliver him to you; but I will lead you to the place where you shall see him;" and 'so he led them to Samaria,' where their eyes were opened, and they saw him. What he said, therefore, was not a lie. And the reason of his management was, that the king of Israel and the Syrian host might be convinced that they were poor creatures in God's hand, and that he could easily turn their counsels into foolishness, and cause their attempts to miscarry with shame as well as disappointment.

It may be farther inquired, whether the apostle Paul was guilty of a lie, when, being charged with 'reviling God's high priest,' he said, 'I wist not that he was the high priest?' How was it possible that he should entertain any doubt concerning his being the high priest; a matter which none who were present could, in the least, question? Now, we may suppose that the apostle, when he says, 'I wist not that he was the high priest,' intends nothing, but "I do not own him to be the high priest, as you call him; for he is not an high priest of God's appointing or approving. Had he been so, he would have acted in a manner more becoming that character; and then I should have had no occasion to have told him, 'God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.' For to have said so would have been 'reviling him;' since I know that scripture very well which says, 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.' " He thus intimates that, though he was an high priest of man's making, he was not one of God's approving; and that accordingly he was to be treated with contempt, instead of that regard which was formerly paid to the high priests, when they were better men, and acted more agreeably to their character. No one who

deserves to be called God's high priest, would have ordered a prisoner who came to be tried for his life, instead of making his defence, to be smitten on the mouth. But, suppose we render the words agreeably to our translation, 'I did not understand that he was the high priest.' Paul may still be vindicated from the charge of telling a lie. The assembly was a confused one, and not a regular court of judicature, in which the judge or chief magistrate is known to all, by the place in which he sits, or the part he acts in trying causes. Again, the high priest, in courts of judicature, was not known by any robe or distinct habit which he wore, as judges now are; for he never wore any but his common garments, which were the same that other people were, except when he ministered in offering gifts and sacrifices in the temple. Hence, the apostle could not know him by any distinct garment which he wore. Further, through the corruption of the times, the high priest was changed almost every year, according to the will of the chief governor, who advanced his own friends to that dignity, and often-times sold it for money. It is therefore probable that Ananias had not been long high priest; and Paul was now a stranger at Jerusalem, and so might not know that he was high priest. Thus, if we take the words in the sense in which they are commonly understood, the apostle may be sufficiently vindicated from the charge of telling a lie.

It may be farther inquired, what judgment we may pass concerning David's pretence, when he came to Ahimelech, that 'the king commanded him a business, which no one was to know any thing of,' and that he had 'appointed his servants to such and such a place;' and also concerning his 'feigning himself mad,' before the king of Gath,l which dissimulation can be reckoned no other than a practical lie. In both these instances he must be allowed to have sinned; and therefore is not proposed as a pattern to us. All that can be inferred is, that there is a great deal of the corruption of nature remaining in

the best of God's people. What he told Ahimelech was certainly a lie; and all that he expected to gain by it, was only a supply of his present necessities; the consequence of which was the poor man's losing his life, together with all the priests, except Abiathar, by Saul's inhumanity. David seems to have been truly sensible of this sin; as appears from Psal. 34, which, as is intimated in its title, was penned on this occasion. Here he warns others against the same sin, 'Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile;' and he seems to relate his own experience when he says, 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.'n As to his behaviour before the king of Gath, which was a visible lie discovered in his actions, it can by no means be excused from being a breach of this commandment. It is, indeed, alleged by some to extenuate his fault, that he was afraid that his having killed Goliath, would induce Achish to take away his life; as appears from what is said in verses 11, 12. Yet it may be considered as an aggravation of his sin, that his fear seems to have been altogether groundless. For why should he suppose that the king of Gath would break through all the laws of arms and honour, since Goliath had been killed in a fair duel, the challenge having first been given by himself? Why should David fear that he would kill him for that, any more than for other hostilities committed in war? Besides, it is plain from what Achish says, 'Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? should this fellow come into mine house?' that the king of Gath was so far from designing to revenge Goliath's death on him, that he intended to employ him in his service, and take him into his house. But David's mean action made him despised by all; for it seems probable, by Achish's saying, 'Have ye brought this fellow to play the madman?' that he perceived it to be a feigned and not a real distraction. And this was overruled by the providence of God, to let the Philistines know that the greatest hero is but a low-spirited man, if his God be

not with him. On the other hand, if we suppose that there had been just ground for David's fear, the method taken to secure himself involved a distrust of providence. Providence would, doubtless, have delivered him without his dissembling, or thus demeaning himself, or using such an indirect method to effect his deliverance. Thus concerning the violation of this commandment, by speaking that which is contrary to truth.

II. This commandment is farther broken, by doing that which is contrary to truth. This is what we call hypocrisy. It may be considered, first, as a reigning sin, inconsistent with a state of grace; in which respect an hypocrite is opposed to a true believer. Hypocrites make a fair show of religion; but it is with a design to be seen of men. They are sometimes, indeed, represented as 'seeking' God, and 'inquiring early' or with a kind of earnestness after him, when under his afflicting hand; but their doing so is deemed no other than a 'flattering him with their mouth, and a lying unto him with their tongues;' inasmuch as 'their heart is not right with him.'q Elsewhere, too, they are said to 'love the praise of men more than the praise of God.'—Again, hypocrisy may be considered as that which believers are sometimes chargeable with, which is an argument that they are sanctified but in part; but this rather respects some particular actions, and not the tenor of their conduct. Thus the apostle Paul charges Peter with dissimulation; though the latter was far from deserving the character of an hypocrite as to his general conduct. And our Saviour cautions his disciples against hypocrisy, as that which they were in danger of being overtaken with;t though he does not charge them with it as a reigning sin, as he did the scribes and Pharisees, whom he compares to 'painted sepulchres;' nor were they such as the apostle speaks of, whom he calls 'double-minded men, who are unstable in all their ways.'x

That hypocrisy which we may call a reigning sin, may be known by a person's accommodating himself to all those whom he converses with, how much soever his doing so may tend to the dishonour of Christ and the gospel. Here we may take occasion to inquire whether the apostle Paul was, in any respects, chargeable with this sin, when he said, 'Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' For understanding this scripture, and vindicating the apostle from the charge of hypocrisy, let it be considered that the compliance he here speaks of, was with a design, not to gain the applause of the world, but to serve the interest of Christ. Nor did he connive at, or give countenance to, that false worship or those sinful practices of any, which were contrary to the faith or purity of the gospel. Hence, when he says, 'Unto the Jews I became as a Jew,' he does not mean that he gave them the least ground to conclude that it was an indifferent matter, whether they adhered to, or laid aside, the observance of the ceremonial law. For he expressly tells some of the church at Galatia who were disposed to judaize, that this was contrary to 'the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, a being again entangled with the yoke of bondage;' that 'if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing;' and, that they were 'fallen from grace,' that is, turned aside from the faith of the gospel.z In this sense, therefore, he did not become as a Jew, to the Jews. Nor did he so far comply with the Gentiles as to give them ground to conclude, that the superstition and idolatry which they were guilty of, was an harmless thing, and might still be practised by them. Hence, the amount of his compliance with the Jews or Gentiles, was nothing else but this, whatever he found

praiseworthy in them, he commended; and if, in any instances, they were addicted to their former rites or modes of worship, he endeavoured to draw them off from them, not by a severe and rigid behaviour censuring them, refusing to converse with them, or reproaching them for their weakness, but by the use of kind and gentle methods, designing rather to inform than discourage them; while, at the same time, he was far from approving or giving countenance to any thing which was sinful in them or unbecoming the gospel.

From what has been said concerning an hypocrite's being one who performs religious duties with a design to be seen of men, as our Saviour says of the Pharisees that 'they love to stand praying in the synagogues, or in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men,' we may inquire what may be said in vindication of the prophet Daniel from the charge of hypocrisy, concerning whom it is said that, when Darius had signed a decree prohibiting any one from asking a petition of any god or man, save of the king, he should be cast into the den of lions, 'he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber, towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.'b Now, he acted thus, not to gain the esteem or applause of men, a motive which they are charged with who are guilty of hypocrisy; but he acted in contempt of the vile decree of the Persian monarch. Again, he acted as he did at the peril of his life; and showed that he had rather be cast into the den of lions, than give occasion to any to think that he complied with the king in his idolatrous decree. Further, though it is said that 'he prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime,' we are not to understand that he set open his windows aforetime. His praying publicly at this time, was to show that he was neither ashamed nor afraid to own his God, whatever it should cost him. Hence, he was so far from being guilty of hypocrisy,

that his conduct is one of the most noble instances of zeal for the worship of the true God which we find recorded in scripture.

We proceed to observe that hypocrisy is a reigning sin when we boast of our high attainments in gifts or grace, or set too great a value on ourselves because of the performance of some religious duties, while we neglect others in which the principal part of true godliness consists. Thus the Pharisee paid 'tithe of mint, anise, and cummin,' while he 'omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.'—Again, hypocrisy, as a reigning sin, consists in exclaiming against and censuring others for lesser faults, while we allow greater in ourselves; like those whom our Saviour speaks of who 'behold the mote that is in their brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in their own;'d or, according to that proverbial way of speaking, 'strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.' These are very fond of exposing the ignorance of others; though they have no experimental, saving knowledge of divine truth in themselves. Or they are very froward to blame the coldness and lukewarmness which they see in some; while, at the same time, that zeal which they express in their whole conduct, is rather to advance themselves than the glory of God.—Further, persons are guilty of hypocrisy as a reigning sin when they make a gain of godliness, or of their pretensions to it. Thus Balaam prophesied for a reward; and accordingly it is said that 'he loved the wages of unrighteousness.'f—Finally, persons are guilty of it who make a profession of religion because it is uppermost, and are as ready to despise and cast it off, when it is reproached, or when they are likely to suffer for it. Thus the Pharisees, how much soever they seemed disposed to embrace Christ when attending on John's ministry; yet afterwards, when they saw that their doing so was contrary to their secular interest, they were 'offended in him,' and prejudiced against him, and said, 'Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?'

This sin of hypocrisy, which is a practical lie, has a tendency to corrupt and vitiate all our pretensions to religion. It is like 'the dead fly,' mentioned by Solomon, 'that causeth the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour;' and it will, in the end, bring on those who are guilty of it many sore judgments, some of which are spiritual. Thus it is said of the heathen, that 'because, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, and did not like to retain him in their knowledge; he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient,'i &c. As for the false hope and vain confidence which the hypocrite entertains, it shall leave him in despair and confusion, and be attended with unspeakable horror of conscience.l On this account hypocrites are said to 'heap up wrath,' and bring on themselves a greater degree of condemnation than others. We have thus considered this commandment as broken by speaking or acting that which is contrary or prejudicial to truth.

III. We proceed to consider that this commandment is broken by our doing that which is injurious to our neighbour's good name, either by words or actions. This is done in two ways, either before his face, or behind his back.

1. Doing injury to another, by speaking against him before his face. It is true, we give him hereby the liberty of vindicating himself; yet if the thing be false which is alleged against him, proceeding from malice and envy, our speaking against him is a crime of a very heinous nature. This crime is committed by those who, in courts of judicature, commence and carry on malicious prosecutions. Here the plaintiff, the witness, the advocate who manages the cause, the jury who bring in a false verdict, and the judge who passes sentence contrary to law or evidence as well as the dictates of his own conscience, with a design to crush and ruin him who is maliciously

prosecuted, are all notoriously guilty of the breach of this commandment. Again, those may be said to do that which is injurious to their neighbour's good name, who reproach them in common conversation. This is a sin too much committed in this licentious age; as though men were not accountable to God for what they speak, as well as for other parts of the conduct of life.

There are several things which persons make the subject of their reproach. Among these are the defects and blemishes of nature; such as lameness, blindness, deafness, impediment of speech, meanness of capacity, or actions which proceed from a degree of distraction. Many suppose that the apostle Paul was reproached for some natural deformity in his body or impediment in his speech. This is inferred from his representing some as saying, 'His letters are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.' Elsewhere, also, he commends the Galatians for not despising him on this account. 'My temptation,' says he, 'which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.'o The aggravations of this sin of reproaching persons for their natural infirmities, are very great. For, it is a finding fault with the workmanship of the God of nature, a thinking meanly of a person for that which is not chargeable on him as a crime, and which he can by no means redress. It is a censuring those who are, in some respects, objects of compassion; especially if the reproach be levelled against the defects of the mind, or any degree of distraction. It also argues a great deal of pride and unthankfulness to God, for those natural endowments which we have received from him, though we do not improve them to his glory.

Here we may take occasion to say something respecting the children's sin who reproached Elisha for his baldness, and the punishment which followed, namely, his 'cursing them in the name

of the Lord;' and 'two and forty' of them being 'torn in pieces by two she-bears out of the wood.' It may be inquired by some, whether this was not too great an instance of passion in that holy man, and too severe a punishment inflicted; inasmuch as they who reproached him are called 'little children.' The children, however, were not so little as not to be able to know their right hand from their left, or to discern between good and evil; for such are not usually trusted out of their parents' sight; nor would they have gathered themselves together in a body, or gone some distance from the city, on purpose to insult the prophet, as it is plain they did, understanding that he was to come there at that time. They must, therefore, have been boys of a sufficient age to commit the most presumptuous sin; and hence not too young to suffer such a punishment as followed. Again, their sin was great, in mocking a grave old man, who ought to have been honoured for his age, and a prophet, whom they should have esteemed for his character. In despising him, they despised God who called and sent him. Further, Bethel, where they lived, was the chief seat of idolatry, in which these children had been trained up; and it was a prevailing inclination to it, together with an hatred of the true religion, which occasioned their reproaching and casting contempt on the prophet. Finally, the manner of expression argues a great deal of profaneness, 'Go up, thou bald head;' that is, either go up to Bethel, speaking in an insulting way, as if they had said, 'You may go there, but you will not be regarded by the people; for they value no such men as you are;' or rather, it is as if they had said, 'You pretend that your predecessor Elijah is gone up to heaven; do you go up after him, that you may trouble us no longer with your prophecies.' These children, then, though young in years, were hardened in sin; and their conduct was not so much an occasional mocking of the prophet for his baldness, as a public contrivance, and tumultuous opposition to his ministry; which is a very great crime, and accordingly, was

attended with a just resentment in the prophet, and followed by that punishment which was inflicted.

Some reproach persons for their sinful infirmities; and do so in such a way that they are styled 'fools' who 'make a mock of sin.' We are guilty of this when we reflect on persons for sins committed before their conversion. These they have repented of, and God has forgiven; so that they should not be now charged against them, as a matter of reproach. Thus the Pharisee reproached the poor penitent woman, who stood weeping at our Saviour's feet, and said within himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.' This reproach respected not her present but her former condition. Again, persons are 'fools who make a mock of sin,' when they reproach others with levity of spirit for the sins they are guilty of at present; as when the shameful actions of a drunken man are made the subject of laughter; which ought not to be thought of without regret or pity.

It may be objected that sin renders a person vile, and is really a reproach to him; so that it may be charged upon him as such: especially as it is said concerning the righteous man, 'In his eyes a vile person is contemned.' Now, we are far from asserting that it is a sin to reprove sin, and show the person who commits it his vileness, and the reason he has to reproach and charge himself with it, and loathe himself for it. But the contempt which is to be cast on a vile person, does not consist in making him the subject of laughter, as though it were a light matter for him to dishonour God as he does; for his conduct should occasion grief in all true believers, as the psalmist says, 'I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not thy word.'t Accordingly, when the psalmist advises to 'contemn' such an one, the meaning is, that we should not make him our intimate or bosom friend; or that if he be in advanced

circumstances in the world, we are not to flatter him in his sin; whereby, especially when it is public, he forfeits that respect which would otherwise be due to him. In this sense we are to understand Mordecai's contempt of Haman.

Here we may take occasion to distinguish between reproving sin, and reproaching persons for it. The former is to be done with sorrow of heart, and compassion expressed to the sinner; as our Saviour reproved Jerusalem, and, at the same time, 'wept over it.' But, on the other hand, reproach is attended with hatred of him, and a secret pleasure taken in his sin and ruin. Again, reproof for sin ought to be with a design to reclaim the offender; whereas, reproach tends only to expose, exasperate, and harden him in his sin. Moreover, reproof for sin ought to be given with the greatest seriousness and conviction of the evil and danger which will follow; whereas they who reproach persons, charge sin on them under the influence of their own passions, without any concern for the dishonour which they bring to God and religion, or desire for their repentance and reformation.

Sometimes that which is the highest ornament and greatest excellency of a Christian, is turned to his reproach. In particular, some have been reproached for extraordinary gifts, which God has been pleased to confer on them. Thus the spirit of prophesy was sometimes reckoned, by profane persons, the effect of distraction. Joseph was reproached by his brethren, in a taunting way, with the character of a dreamer; because of the prophetic intimation which he had from God, in a dream, concerning the future state of his family.z When the apostles were favoured with the extraordinary gift of tongues, and preached to men of different nations, in their own language, 'some were amazed, and others mocked them, and said, These men are full of new wine.'—Again, raised affections, and extraordinary instances of zeal for the glory of God, have been

derided, as though they were matter of reproach. Thus Michal reproached David, when 'he danced before the ark;'b he being actuated by an holy zeal, and transport of joy; and so far from reckoning it a reproach, he counted that which she called vile glorious.—Further, spiritual experiences of the grace of God have sometimes been turned by those who are strangers to them, to their reproach, and termed no other than madness. Thus when the apostle Paul related the gracious dealings of God with him in his conversion, Festus charges him with being 'beside himself.'—Again, a person's being made use of by God, to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, has been charged against him, as though it were rebellion. Thus the Jews told Pilate, when he sought to release Jesus, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.' And that reformation which the apostles were instrumental in making in the world, by preaching the gospel, is styled 'turning the world upside down.'e—Further, humility of mind in owning our weakness, as not being able to comprehend some divine mysteries contained in the gospel, is reckoned matter of reproach by many; who call it implicit faith, and admitting of the greatest absurdities in matters of religion.—Further, giving glory to the Spirit, as the Author of all grace and peace, and desiring to draw nigh to God in prayer, or engage in other holy duties, by his assistance, is reproached by some, as though it were enthusiasm, and as though they who desire or are favoured with this privilege, were pretenders to extraordinary revelation.—Again, a being conscientious in abstaining from those sins which abound in a licentious age, or reproving and bearing our testimony against those who are guilty of them, is reproached with the character of hypocrisy, preciseness, and being righteous overmuch.—Finally, separating from communion with a false church, and renouncing those doctrines which tend to pervert the gospel of Christ, is called by some heresy. Thus the Papists brand the Protestants with the reproachful name of heretics. But we may answer, that this is rather our glory, and confess that

'after the way which they call heresy, so worship we the God of our fathers.' This sin is attended with many aggravations; for God reckons it as a contempt cast on himself.g They who are guilty of it, also, plainly intimate that they pretend not to be what they reproach and deride in others; so that if the latter be in the right way to heaven, those who reproach them discover that they desire not to go thither. In their whole conduct, indeed, they act as though they were endeavouring to banish all religion out of the world, by methods of scorn and ridicule; and if their design should take effect, this earth would be but a small degree better than hell.

When we are thus reproached for the sake of God and religion, let us not render railing for railing; but look on those who revile us as objects of pity, who do more hurt to themselves than they can do to us. Moreover, let us reflect on our own sins, which provoke God to suffer our being reproached; and beg of him that he would turn it to his own glory and our good. Thus David did, when he was unjustly and barbarously cursed and railed at by Shimei.i We ought also to esteem religion the more, because of the opposition and contempt which it meets with from the enemies of God. That very contempt and opposition, indeed, afford us some evidence of the truth and excellency of religion; as our Saviour says concerning his disciples, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' Again, when we are reviled for the sake of Christ and religion, let us take encouragement from the consideration that we have the same treatment which he and all his saints have met with.l Let us also consider that there are many promises annexed to our being so reviled. It is also an advantage to our character as Christians; for hereby it appears, that we are not on their side who are Christ's avowed enemies. Hence, we should reckon their reproach our glory;n or as the apostle says, 'take pleasure in

reproaches for Christ's sake,' or, as it is said elsewhere, 'Rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.'p Thus concerning our doing injury to our neighbour, by speaking against him before his face.

2. We shall now consider the injury which is done to others by speaking against them behind their back. This those are guilty of who raise or invent false reports of their neighbours, or spread those which are uncertain, or divulge those which ought to be kept secret, with a design to take away their good name. These are called talebearers, backbiters, slanderers; who offer injuries to others who are not in a capacity to defend themselves. Their malicious reports are often, indeed, prefaced with a pretence of great respect to the person whom they speak against. They seem very much surprised at and sorry for what they are going to relate; and sometimes signify their hope, that it may not be true; and desire that what they report may be concealed, while they make it their business themselves to divulge it. But this method will not secure their own reputation, while they are endeavouring to ruin that of another. They propagate slander in various ways. They do so by pretending that a person is guilty of a fault which he is innocent of. Thus our Saviour and John the Baptist were charged with immoral practices, which there was not the least shadow or pretence for. Again, they do so by divulging a real fault which has been acknowledged and repented of, and therefore ought to be concealed;s or when there is no pretence for making it public, but what arises from malice and hatred of the person. Further, they do so by aggravating faults or representing them worse than they are. Thus Absalom's sin in murdering Amnon was very great; but he who brought tidings of it to David, represented it worse than it was, when he said that Absalom had 'slain all the king's sons.' Again, persons propagate slander by reporting the bad actions of men, and, at the same, overlooking and extenuating their

good ones; and so not doing them the justice of setting one in the balance against the other. Further, they do so by putting the worst and most injurious construction on actions which are really excellent. Thus, because our Saviour admitted publicans and sinners into his presence, and did them good by his doctrine, the Jews reproached him as though he were 'a friend of publicans and sinners,'u taking the word 'friend' in the worst sense, as signifying an approver of them. Finally, persons propagate slander by reporting things to the prejudice of others, which are grounded on such slender evidence, that they themselves hardly believe them, or at least would not, had they not a design to make use of them, to defame them. Thus Sanballat, in his letter to Nehemiah, tells him that 'he and the Jews thought to rebel; and built the wall of Jerusalem, that he might be their king;' which it can hardly be supposed the enemy himself gave any credit to. Thus concerning the instances in which persons backbite or raise false reports on others.

We may add, that as they are guilty who raise slanders; so are they who listen to and endeavour to propagate them. It is not, indeed, the mere hearing of a report which we cannot but think to be attended with malice and slander which will render us guilty, for that we may not be able to avoid; but it is our encouraging him who raises or spreads it which renders us guilty. In particular, we sin when we hear malicious reports, if we conceal them from the party concerned in them, and so deny him the justice of answering what is said against him, in his own vindication, or when we do not reprove those who make a practice of slandering and backbiting others, in order to our bringing them to shame and repentance; and, most of all, when we contract an intimacy with those who are guilty of this sin, and are too easy in giving credit to what they say, though not supported by sufficient evidence, but on the other hand, carrying in it the

appearance of envy and resentment. Thus concerning the sins forbidden in this commandment.

We shall close this Head by proposing some remedies against slander. If the thing reported to another's prejudice be true, we ought to consider that we are not without many faults ourselves; which we would be unwilling, if others knew them, that they should divulge. If the thing reported be doubtful, we, by reporting it, may give occasion to some to believe it to be true, without sufficient evidence; so that our neighbour will receive real prejudice from that which to us is only matter of surmise and conjecture. But if, on the other hand, what is reported be apparently false, the sin is still the greater; and, by inventing and propagating it, the highest injustice is offered to the innocent, while we, at the same time, are guilty of a known and presumptuous sin. Again, such a way of exposing men answers no good end; nor is it a means of reclaiming them. Further, by our inventing or propagating slander, we lay ourselves open to the censure of others; and by endeavouring to take away our neighbour's good name, endanger the loss of our own.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

QUESTION CXLVI. Which is the tenth commandment?

ANSWER. The tenth commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

QUESTION CXLVII. What are the duties required in the tenth commandment?

ANSWER. The duties required in the tenth commandment are, such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbour, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him tend unto and further all that good which is his.

QUESTION CXLVIII. What are the sins forbidden in the tenth commandment?

ANSWER. The sins forbidden in the tenth commandment, are, discontent with our own estate, envying, and grieving at the good of our neighbour, together with all inordinate motions and affections to any thing that is his.

THE general design of this commandment is to regulate and set bounds to our desires; and it contains a prohibition of coveting those things which belong not to us. It is not to be split into two commandments, as the Papists pretend. They suppose that, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,' is the ninth, and, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,' &c. is the tenth commandment. But these are only particular instances of the breach of the same commandment. The argument taken from the repetition of the words, 'Thou shalt not covet,' is so very weak and inconclusive, that it would hardly have been made use of by them, had they not thought it necessary, some way or other, to make up the number ten; having, as was observed under a foregoing Head, determined the second commandment not to be distinct from but an appendix to the first.

The Duties Required in the Tenth Commandment

We proceed to consider the duties required in the tenth commandment. These may be reduced to two Heads.

1. Contentment with our own condition. By this we are not to understand that we are to give way to indolence or stupidity, but to exercise a composure of mind, acquiescing in the divine dispensations in every condition of life. Thus the apostle says, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.' This duty is applicable to all sorts of men. In particular, it is a grace which is to be exercised by those who are in prosperous circumstances in the world. Thus the apostle says, 'I know how to abound,'a and to be 'full,' as well as 'to suffer need.' We often find that they who have the greatest share of the good things of this world, are so far from being satisfied with it, that their covetousness increases in proportion to their substance. But such ought to consider that their conduct is most unreasonable and ungrateful, and may justly provoke God to take away the blessings which he has given them, or add some circumstance to them which will tend to embitter them. Moreover, it is a giving way to such a temper of mind as renders them really miserable in the midst of their abundance.

But what we shall principally consider, is how the grace of contentment is to be exercised by those who are in an afflicted state, together with the motives and inducements leading to it. We will suppose persons under bodily weakness or pain, which tends much to embitter the comforts of life, by which means they are made uneasy. Indeed, it is impossible, from the nature of the thing, for them not to complain or groan under the burdens which are laid on them; as the psalmist did, who speaks of himself as 'weary of his groaning.' Nor is such sense of suffering unlawful, provided they do not repine at, or find fault with, the methods of God's providence, in his dealing with them. There are, however, some things which may induce them to be content. If we consider that the body gave occasion to the entrance of sin into the world, and bears a part with the soul in all the sins committed and guilt contracted by it, it is no

wonder that we find it to have its share in those miseries to which the soul is exposed. Again, bodily diseases are our monitors, to put us in mind of the frailty of our present state. Hence, as they are the harbingers of death, we are forewarned by them to prepare for it, as making sensible advances towards it. Further, the greatest pains to which we are liable, are far short of what Christ endured for us; in which respect our afflictions are comparatively light, and convincingly evident not to be certain indications of our being rejected by God. Moreover, as God will not lay more on us than he will enable us to bear; so none of these afflictive dispensations shall have a tendency to separate the soul from Christ. Though we sometimes complain that affliction is a great interruption to the exercise of grace; yet this shall not be charged upon us as our fault, any otherwise than as it is the effect of that sin which is the procuring cause of all affliction. Besides, the heavier our afflictions are at present, the more sweet and comfortable the heavenly rest will be to those who have a well-grounded hope that they shall be brought to it.d

If our condition be low and poor in the world, we are not without some inducements to be content. Poverty is not in itself a curse, or inconsistent with the love of God; for Christ himself submitted to it; and his best saints have been exposed to it, and glorified God under it,f more than others. Moreover, how poor soever we are, we have more than we brought into the world with us, or than the richest person can carry out of it. And they who have least of the world have more than they deserve, or than God was under any obligation to give them.

Suppose we are afflicted in our good name, and do not meet with that love and esteem from the world which might be expected, but, on the other hand, are censured, reproached, and hated by those

whom we converse with; we should not be made, beyond measure, uneasy. We have reason to conclude that the esteem of the world is precarious and uncertain; and that they who most deserve it, have often the least of it. Thus our Saviour was one day followed with the caresses of the multitude, shouting forth their Hosannas to him; and the next day the common cry was, 'Crucify him, crucify him.' When the apostles Paul and Barnabas had healed the cripple at Lystra, they could at first hardly restrain the people from offering sacrifice to them; but afterwards the same people joined with the malicious Jews in stoning them. And Paul tells the Galatians, that 'if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him;' but, a little after, he complains that he was 'become their enemy, because he told them the truth.'i Besides, the esteem of men is no farther to be desired than as it may render us useful to them; and if God is pleased to deny this to us, we are not to prescribe to him what measure of respect he shall allot to us from the world, or usefulness in it. Moreover, let us consider that we know more evil abounding in our own heart than others can charge us with. Hence, how much soever they are guilty of injustice to us; our knowledge of ourselves affords us a motive to contentment. Besides, we have not brought that honour to God which we ought; therefore, how just is it for him to deny us that esteem from men which we desire?

Suppose we are afflicted in our relations, there are some motives to contentment. If servants have masters who make their lives uncomfortable, by their unreasonable demands or unjust severity, they ought to consider that their faithfulness and industry will be approved of by God, how much soever it may be disregarded by men; and a conscientious discharge of the duties incumbent on them, in the relation in which they stand, will give them ground to expect a blessing from God, to whom they are herein said to do service, which shall not go unrewarded. On the other hand, if masters are afflicted,

by reason of the stubborn and unfaithful behaviour, or sloth and negligence, of their servants; let them inquire whether this be not the consequence of their not being so much concerned for their spiritual welfare as they ought, or keeping up strict religion in their families, or whether they have not been more concerned that their servants should obey them, than their great Master who is in heaven.—Again, if parents have undutiful children, who are a grief of heart to them; let them consider, as a motive to contentment, whether they have not formerly neglected their duty to their parents, slighted their counsels, or disregarded their reproofs, or whether they have not reason to charge themselves with the iniquity of their youth, and inquire whether God be not now writing bitter things against them for it, or whether they have not neglected to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These considerations will fence against all repining thoughts at the providence of God, that has brought these troubles upon them. As a farther inducement to make them easy, let them consider, that if the undutiful conduct of their children does not altogether lie at their door, and that if they have been faithful to their children, in praying for and instructing them, God may hear their prayers, and send home their instructions on their hearts, when they themselves are removed out of the world. On the other hand, if children have wicked parents, whose conversation fills them with great uneasiness; let them consider that theirs has been the case of many of God's faithful servants, such as Hezekiah, Josiah, and others. And they may be assured that they shall have no occasion to use that proverb, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'

If we are afflicted by reason of the treachery and unfaithfulness of pretended friends, which wound us in the most tender part, we may be induced to be content. For we have no ground to expect perfection in the best of men, or that their love and favour is immutable; nor is

our conduct always such that we do not often forfeit the respect which we once had from others. Besides, if our friends deal deceitfully with us, or are unfaithful to us, without just ground, they do not act so, without the permission of the wise and overruling providence of God, who sometimes orders such affliction in order to take us off from a dependence upon men, or from expecting too much happiness from them,—which is to be sought for only in himself.n Moreover, when we find a change in the behaviour of friends towards us, our encouragement is that our chief happiness consists in the unchangeable love of God.

When we are afflicted in the loss of friends or near relations, we have also motives to contentment. There is no reversing or altering the decree of God, which fixes the bounds of men's continuance in this world. All the comfort we have in friends and relations is a peculiar blessing from God; and he sometimes afflicts us in the loss of them, that he may draw off our affections from the best creature-enjoyments, and induce us to take up our rest entirely in himself. Moreover, we had never any reason to look on our friends as immortal, any more than ourselves; and therefore ought to say as David did when he lost his child, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'q So far too as self-love is concerned in our bereavements, we have a reason to give a check to the excess of it, by the exercise of self-denial, and say with David, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;' or follow the example of Aaron, concerning whom it is said, that, when he lost two of his sons at once, by a public and awful stroke of divine justice, 'he held his peace.'s

If we are afflicted by the want of success or the many disappointments which attend us, in our lawful callings in the world, we have reason, notwithstanding, to be content. It is the sovereign

hand of God which orders our condition, as to the success or disappointments attending our lawful callings; and hence we are not to strive against our Maker, or find fault with his will, who may do what he pleases with his own. Again, a man's happiness does not really consist in the abundance of what he possesses, but rather in his having a heart to use it aright. Hence, we ought to say to ourselves, as God did to Baruch, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.'u Further, the world is a scene of vanity. We have no reason to expect too much from it, and hence ought not to be dejected at the loss of it; especially considering that such disappointments are the common lot of all sorts of men. Moreover, the providence of God sometimes denies us the good things of this world, that we may think it our duty and interest to lay up treasures in heaven.

Suppose we meet with afflictions as to our spiritual concerns, being under divine desertion or decays of grace, or wanting a sense of the love of God or those spiritual comforts which we once enjoyed from him; in this condition no believer can or ought to be easy, at least stupid, and unconcerned. But, on the other hand, he ought to be humbled for those sins which may give occasion to it, and press after the enjoyment of what he is, at present, deprived of. Yet contentment, as it is opposed to repining or quarrelling with God, is his present duty; and there are some inducements tending to it. A person may have the truth of grace, when he is destitute of the comfortable sense of it. And there are some great and precious promises made to believers, in this condition. Moreover, God has wise ends in such a dispensation; for hereby he brings sin to remembrance, humbles us for it, and guards us against presumption and confidence in our own strength.y He also puts us upon the exercise of suitable graces; and when he is pleased to comfort us after

such afflictions, we are better furnished to comfort others in a similar condition.

2. The next thing required in this commandment, is a charitable frame of spirit towards our neighbour; so that all our inward motions and affections should lead us to promote and rejoice in his good. This charitable frame of spirit ought to be exercised towards those who excel us in gifts or graces. These they receive from the hand of providence, as talents to be improved. Hence, if they have a greater share of them than ourselves, more is required of them in proportion.b If they excel us in grace, we ought rather to rejoice that, though we bring but little glory to God, others bring more; and it will afford us an evidence of the truth of grace, if, while we are humbled under a sense of our own defects, we are thankful for the honour which is brought to God by others.—Again, we ought to exercise a charitable frame of spirit towards those who are in more prosperous circumstances in the world; not envying, grieving, or repining at the providence of God, because their condition is better than ours. We are, therefore, to consider that the most flourishing and prosperous condition in the world is not always the best;d and that it is not without many temptations which often attend it. Besides, if it be not improved to the glory of God, it will bring a greater weight of guilt on their consciences. If, on the other hand, we enjoy communion with God, and the blessings of the upper springs, we have what is much more desirable than the most prosperous condition in the world, without it.f

The Sins Forbidden in the Tenth Commandment

We are now led to consider the sins forbidden in this commandment. These include that corrupt fountain whence the irregularity of our desires proceeds; or the streams which flow from it, and which

discover themselves in the lusts of concupiscence in various instances, as well as in our being discontented with our own condition.

1. As to the former of these, namely, the corruption of nature, it must be considered as contrary to the law of God, and consequently forbidden in this commandment. The Pelagians and Papists, indeed, pretend that the law of God respects only the corruption of our actions, which is to be checked and restrained by it, and not the internal habits or principle whence our actions proceed. Accordingly, they take an estimate of the law of God from human laws, which respect only the overt acts of sin, and not those internal inclinations and dispositions which persons have to commit it. But when we speak of the divine laws, we must not take our plan thence; for though man can judge only of outward actions, God judgeth the heart. Hence, the sin which reigns there, cannot but be, in the highest degree, offensive to him. And though the corruption of our nature cannot be altogether prevented or extirpated, by any prescription in the divine law; yet this is the means which God takes to reprove and humble us for it.

It is objected that the apostle James distinguishes between lust and sin: 'When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.' And it is hence inferred that the corruption of nature is not properly sin, and, consequently, not forbidden by the law. But lust may be distinguished from sin, as the habit or corrupt principle is from the act which it produces. Hence, the apostle's meaning in this scripture, is that lust, or irregular desires, are first conceived in the heart, and then actual sins proceed from them in the life; and both are abhorred by God, and contrary to his law. And they seem to be forbidden, in particular, in this tenth commandment.

Here we may observe the various methods which corrupt nature takes, in order to its producing and bringing forth sinful actions. First, the temptation is offered, either by Satan, or the world, with a specious pretence of some advantage which may arise from our compliance with it; and, at the same time, we consider not whether it be lawful or unlawful, and regard not the threatenings which should deter us from it. And we sometimes take occasion, from the pernicious example of the falls and miscarriages of others, to venture on the commission of the same sins; pretending that they are, many of them, more acquainted with scripture than we are; and that there seems to be no ill consequence attending their commission of those sins. Why, then, we ask ourselves, may not we give way to them? We pretend also that many, who have had more fortitude and resolution than we can pretend to, have been overcome by the same temptations; so that it is in vain for us to strive against them. Again, corrupt nature sometimes fills the soul with a secret dislike of the strictness and purity of the law of God; and, at other times, it suggests that there are some dispensations allowed, in compliance with the frailty of nature; and it hence suggests that we may venture on the commission of some sins. At length we take up a resolution that we will try the experiment, whatever be the consequence. Thus lust brings forth sin; which, after it has been, for some time, indulged, is committed with greediness, and persisted in with resolution, and, in the end, brings forth death.

2. We are now to consider the irregularity of those actions which proceed from the corruption of our nature, which are sometimes called the lusts of concupiscence: whereby, without the least show of justice, we endeavour to possess ourselves of those things which belong to our neighbour. Thus Ahab was restless in his own spirit, till he had got Naboth's vineyard into his hand; and, in order to gain his point, joined in a conspiracy to take away his life. David also coveted

his neighbour's wife; which was one of the greatest blemishes in his life, and brought with it a long train of miseries which attended him in the following part of his reign.k And Achan coveted those goods which belonged not to him, the wedge of gold, and the Babylonish garment; which sin proved his ruin.

This sin of covetousness arises from a being discontented with our present condition; so that whatever measure of the blessings of providence we enjoy, we are filled with disquietude of mind, because we are destitute of what we are lusting after. This must be considered as a sin attended with very great aggravations. It unfits us for the performance of holy duties; prevents the exercise of those graces, which are necessary in order to this; and, on the other hand, exposes us to manifold temptations, whereby we are rendered an easy prey to our spiritual enemies.—Again, it is altogether unlike the temper of the blessed Jesus, who expressed an entire resignation to the divine will, under the greatest sufferings. Indeed, it is a very great reproach to religion in general, and a discouragement to those who are setting their faces towards it, who will be ready to conclude, from our example, that the consolations of God are small, or that there is not enough in the promises of the covenant of grace to quiet our spirits under their present uneasiness.—Moreover, it is to act as though we expected or desired our portion in this world, or looked no farther than present things, which is contrary to the practice of the best of God's saints.—Further, it tends to cast the utmost contempt on the many mercies we have received or enjoy, which are, as it were, forgotten in unthankfulness; and it is a setting aside of those blessings which the gospel gives us to expect.—Again, it argues an unwillingness to be at God's disposal, and a leaning to our own understandings, as though we knew better than he, what was most conducive to our present and future happiness; and hence it is a tempting of God, a grieving of his Holy Spirit, and has a tendency to

provoke him to 'turn to be our enemy, and fight against us.'o—Further, it deprives us of the present sweetness of other mercies; renders every providence, in our own apprehension, afflictive; and those burdens which would otherwise be light, almost insupportable.—Moreover, if God is pleased to give us what we were discontented and uneasy for the want of, he often sends some great affliction with it. Thus Rachel, in a discontented frame, says, 'Give me children, or else I die.' She had, indeed, in some respects, her desire of children; but she died in travail with one of them.q—Finally, the sin of which we are speaking is such that they who are guilty of it will find it very difficult to be brought to a thorough conviction of the guilt which they contract by it, or to a true repentance for it. Thus Jonah, when under a discontented and uneasy frame of spirit, justified himself, and, as it were, defied God to do his worst against him; so that when it was said to him, 'Dost thou well to be angry?' he replied, in a very insolent manner, 'I do well to be angry, even unto death.' The justifying of ourselves under such a frame of spirit, cannot but be highly provoking to God; and whatever we may be prone to allege in our own behalf, will rather aggravate than extenuate the crime.

There are several things which a discontented person is apt to allege in his own vindication, which have a tendency only to enhance his guilt. He pretends, for example, that his natural temper leads him to be uneasy; so that he cannot by any means subdue his passions, or submit to the disposing providence of God. But the corruption of our nature, and its proneness to sin, are no just excuse for our depravity, but rather an aggravation of it; whereby it appears to be more deeply rooted in our hearts. Indeed, our natural inclinations to any sin are increased by indulging it. Hence, in this case, we ought rather to be importunate with God for that grace which may have a tendency to restrain the inordinacy of our affections, and render us willing to acquiesce in the divine dispensations, than to palliate and excuse our

sin; for our doing the latter only aggravates our guilt.—Again, some, in excuse for their discontented and uneasy frame of spirit, allege that the injuries which have been offered to them ought to he resented; that they are such as they are not able to bear; and that not to show themselves uneasy under them, would be to encourage persons to insult and trample on them. But while we complain of injuries done us by men, and are prone to meditate revenge against them, we do not consider the great dishonour which we bring to God, and how much we deserve to be made the monuments of his fury, so that we should not obtain forgiveness from him, who are so prone to resent lesser injuries done to us by our fellow-creatures.—Moreover, others excuse their discontent, by alleging the greatness of their afflictions; that their burden is almost insupportable, so that they are pressed out of measure, above strength, and are ready to say with Job, 'Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning.'t But our afflictions are not so great as our sins, which are the procuring cause of them; nor are they greater than some which befall others who are better than ourselves. Indeed, by indulging a discontented frame of spirit, we render them heavier than they would otherwise be.—Some, again, pretend that they are discontented and uneasy because the affliction they are under was altogether unexpected; so that they were unprovided for it, and so less able to bear it. But a Christian ought daily to expect afflictions in this miserable and sinful world, at least so far as not to be unprovided for them, or think it strange that he should be exercised with them. We have received many unlooked-for mercies; and why should we be uneasy because we meet with unexpected afflictions, and not rather set the one against the other? Besides, God is not obliged to forewarn us or give us notice of the trials which he designs we shall pass under; and when he deals thus with us, it discovers to us the necessity of our being always provided for them. Some of God's best children, too, have often been surprised with afflictive

providences, and yet have been enabled to exercise contentment under them. Thus the messengers who brought Job heavy and unexpected tidings of one affliction immediately following another, did not overthrow his faith, or make him discontented under the hand of God; for, notwithstanding all, 'he worshipped and blessed the name of the Lord.'y—Again, others allege that the change which is made in their circumstances in the world, from a prosperous to an afflicted condition in life, is so great, and lies with such weight upon their spirits, that it is impossible for them to be easy under it. But, when God gave us the good things we are deprived of, he reserved to himself the liberty of taking them away when he pleased, designing thus to show his absolute sovereignty over us. Hence, it is our duty before any affliction befalls us, according to the apostle's advice, to 'rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and to use the world as not abusing it;' and, after it befalls us, not to think it strange that we should be deprived of the world, inasmuch as 'the fashion of it passeth away.' Besides, the greater variety of conditions in which we have been or are in the world, afford more abundant experience of those dealings of God with us which are designed as an ordinance for our faith. Hence, instead of being discontented under them, we ought rather to be put on the exercise of those graces which are suitable to the change of our condition; as the apostle says, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.'a—Further, some allege that they have the greatest reason to be discontented, because of the influence which their afflictions have on their spiritual concerns, as they tend to interrupt their communion with God; and they are often ready to fear that these are indications of his wrath, and, as it were, the beginning of sorrows; which leads them to the very brink of despair. Now, it is certain that nothing more sharpens the edge of afflictions, or has a greater tendency to make us uneasy under them, than such thoughts as these; and not to be sensible of them, would be an instance of the greatest stupidity. Yet if our-fears

are ill-grounded, as they sometimes are, the uneasiness which arises from them is unwarrantable. Or if we have too much ground for these fears, we are to make use of the remedy which God has provided. Accordingly, we are to have recourse by faith to the blood of Jesus for forgiveness; and our doing so ought to be accompanied with the exercise of true repentance and godly sorrow for sin, without giving way to those despairing apprehensions which sometimes arise from a sense of the greatness of our guilt, as though it set us out of the reach of mercy; for such apprehensions will add an insupportable weight to our burden. And if, under the afflicting hand of God, we are rendered unfit for holy duties, and have no communion with him in them, the reason maybe, not the affliction, but that discontented, uneasy frame of spirit which we too much indulge under it. Hence, we are not to allege the affliction as an excuse for that murmuring, repining frame of spirit which we are too apt to discover while exercised with it.

The last thing to be considered is, the remedies against this sin of being discontented with our present condition. Let us, then, have a due sense of that undoubted right which God has to dispose of us and our condition in this world, as he pleases; inasmuch as we are his own.—Again, uneasiness under the hand of God, or repining at his dealings when he thinks fit to deprive us of the blessings we once enjoyed, is not the way to recover the possession of them. The best expedient for us to regain them, or some other blessings which are more than an equivalent for them, is our exercising an entire resignation to the will of God, and concluding that all his dispensations are holy, just, and good.—Let us consider, too, that God often designs to make us better by the sharpest trials; which are an ordinance to bring us nearer to himself. Thus David says, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.'—Moreover, we ought to consider that God's design in these

dispensations is to 'try our faith,' that it 'may be found afterwards unto praise, honour and glory,' as it will be, with respect to every true believer, 'at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'d—We may add, that there are many promises of the presence of God, which have a tendency, not only to afford relief against uneasiness or dejection of spirit, but to give us the greatest encouragement under the sorest afflictions, particularly that comprehensive promise, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'

MAN'S INABILITY TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS

QUESTION CXLIX. Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

ANSWER. No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

HAVING considered man's duty and obligation to keep the commandments of God, we are now led to speak of him as unable to keep them, and, on the other hand, as chargeable with the daily breach of them, which is an evidence of the imperfection of the present state. We endeavoured, under a foregoing Answer, to prove that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life; so that all the boasts of the Pelagians and others, who defend the possibility of attaining perfection here, are vain and unwarrantable. We also considered the reasons why God orders that it should be so; and therefore we shall, without enlarging so much on this subject as otherwise we might have done, principally take notice of what is to be observed in this Answer, under two general Heads.

The Nature and Limits of Man's Inability

We shall notice first in what respects, and with what limitations, man is said to be unable to keep the commandments of God. It is said that no man is able perfectly to keep them. By 'no man' here we are to understand, as is observed in the Shorter Catechism, no mere man; so that our Saviour is excepted, who yielded perfect obedience in our

nature. But there is another limitation, namely, that no man is able to keep the commandments since the fall; denoting that man, in his state of innocency, was able perfectly to keep the commandments of God. For he was made upright, and had the image of God, which consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness,h stamped on his soul; having the law of God written in his heart, and power to fulfil it. Indeed, to suppose the contrary, would be a reflection upon the divine government, and would argue man to have been created under a natural necessity of sinning and perishing; to suppose which is contrary to the goodness, holiness, and justice of God. Moreover, it is observed that no man is able, in this life, perfectly to keep God's commandments. An intimation is thus made that the glorified saints in heaven will be enabled to yield perfect obedience, notwithstanding the many imperfections they are now liable to. Again, as man is not able, of himself, or without the aids of divine grace, to obey God; so he is not to expect such assistance from him as shall enable him to obey him perfectly. There is no doubt that the grace of God could free us from all the remains of sin in this world, as well as in our passing from it to heaven; but we have no ground to conclude that it will. For 'the whole creation' is liable to the curse, which was consequent upon man's first apostasy from God; and under this it 'groaneth' till the present day.k Nor shall it be delivered from it, till the scene of time and things shall be changed, and the saints shall be fully possessed of what they are now waiting for, namely, the 'adoption, or the redemption of their bodies.' Besides, God is pleased to deny his people that perfection of holiness here which they shall attain to hereafter, that he may give them daily occasion to exercise the duties of self-denial, mortification of sin, faith and repentance, which redound to his-own glory and their spiritual advantage.

The Uniform and Constant Display of Man's Inability

We are now led to consider that we daily break the commandments of God, in thought, word, and deed.

1. We do so in thought; namely, when the mind is conversant about sinful objects, in such a way that it contracts defilement. It is a sign that the wickedness of man is very great, when 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil,' and that 'continually.'—Now, thoughts of men may be said to be sinful when they choose, delight in, and are daily conversant about things which are vain, empty of what is good, and have no tendency to the glory of God, or the spiritual advantage either of themselves or others. The least vain thought which contains an excursion from our duty to God, brings some degree of guilt with it. But when the mind is wholly taken up with vanity, so that it is turned aside from or takes no delight in those things which are of the highest importance, it will become vitiated and alienated from the life of God.—Again, the thoughts of men may be said to be sinful, when they are not fixed, or intensely set, on God and divine things, when engaged in holy duties. This may happen either when worldly cares or business, how lawful soever they may be at other times, have a tendency to divert our thoughts; or when our minds are conversant about spiritual things unseasonably, so as to be diverted from our present design. The latter case occurs, for example, when we are joining with others in prayer, and when—instead of bearing a part with them in the exercise of faith and other graces, or of our thoughts being employed about the same object with theirs—we are meditating on some other divine subject foreign to the occasion.—Further, our thoughts may be said to be sinful, when they are conversant about spiritual things without suitable affections, and, consequently, meditating on them as common things, in which we are not much concerned; as when we are destitute of those holy desires after God, or delight in him, when drawing nigh to him in holy duties, which his law requires. This will

more evidently appear when, by comparing the frame of our spirit in these duties with what we observe it to be in other instances, we find that our affections are easily raised when engaged in matters of less importance, but stupid and unconcerned about our eternal welfare, in holy duties. Such a state of mind is accompanied with hardness of heart and impenitence, and sometimes with uneasiness and weariness, as though they were a burden to us. On the other hand, our affections may be raised in these duties, and yet we be chargeable with a sinfulness of thought while engaging in them. This happens when the affections are raised by things of less importance, while other things which are more affecting are not regarded. A person, for example, may meditate on Christ's sufferings, and be very much affected with and enraged at the treachery of Judas who betrayed him, or the barbarity of the Jews who crucified him; while he is not in the least affected with the sin of the world which was the occasion of his death, or with the greatness of his love, which moved him to submit to it.—Again, our affections, when raised in holy duties, are sinful, when they are all that we depend upon for justification and acceptance in the sight of God, and when we vainly suppose that our tears will wash away our sins, while we are destitute of faith in the blood of Christ; or when we are concerned about the misery consequent on our sins, but are not in the least inclined to hate them, nor grieved at the dishonour brought by them to the name of God.—Let us here consider the causes of this state of the affections, and the remedies against it. If we do not find that our affections are raised in religious exercises, as they have been in times past, we ought to inquire into the reason; whether the evil be not attended with some great backslidings from God, which might first occasion it. Sometimes it proceeds from a neglect of holy duties, either public or private; at other times, from presumptuous sins, committed, or continued in, with impenitence. We often find, too, that our being too much embarrassed with the profits or pleasures of

this world, or immoderately engaged in our pursuit of them, stupifies and damps our affections, as to religious matters, so that they are seldom or never raised in holy duties. As to the remedies against this stupid and unaffected frame of spirit; we must not only repent of, but abstain from, those sins which have been the occasion of it; meditate on those subjects most suitable to our case, which have a tendency to inflame our love to Christ, and desire after him, and our zeal for his glory; and often confess and bewail our stupidity and unbecoming behaviour in holy duties; earnestly imploring the powerful influence of the Spirit of God, to bring us into, and keep us in, a right frame of spirit for them.

Again, we have reason to charge ourselves with sin, when guilty of blasphemous thoughts; when we have, by degrees, brought on ourselves a disregard of God, either by living in the neglect of holy duties, or allowing ourselves in the practice of known sins, when before we wore followed with blasphemous thoughts, we found that we gave way to some doubts about the divine perfections, or, through the ignorance, pride, and vanity of our minds, contracted an habitual disregard to or neglect of that holy reverence with which we ought to meditate on them; when we can hear those execrable oaths or curses by which some profanely blaspheme the name of God, without expressing our resentment with the utmost abhorrence and detestation; or when we find, that, being followed with blasphemous thoughts, our hearts are too prone to give in to them, as though they were the sentiments of our mind, whereby we do, as it were, consent to them, instead of rejecting them with the utmost aversion. But, on the other hand, blasphemous thoughts are not always to be charged on us as a sin. Sometimes they are chargeable on Satan, who, in regard to them, acts according to his character as God's open enemy, and endeavours to instil into us the same ideas which he himself has. These thoughts may be charged on him, when they are hastily

injected into our minds, not being the result of choice or deliberation, but are a kind of violence offered to our imagination; and when we cannot but discover the greatest detestation of them, as well as of that enemy of souls from whom they take their rise; and when, at the same time, we are enabled to exercise the contrary graces, and betake ourselves to God with faith and prayer, that he would rebuke the devil, and preserve our consciences undefiled, under this sore temptation, which we cannot but reckon one of the greatest afflictions that befalls us in this world. Thus concerning the sinfulness of our thoughts.

2. We are farther said daily to break the commandments of God in word. The apostle James speaks of the tongue as 'an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.' Evil-speaking, as was observed concerning the sinfulness of our thoughts, is attended with a greater or a less degree of guilt, as the vanity of the mind, and the wickedness of the heart, more or less discover themselves in it. Our Saviour speaks of the accountableness of man in the day of judgment for 'every idle word;'n intimating that there is no sin so small but what is displeasing to an holy God, a violation of his law, and brings with it a degree of guilt, in proportion to its nature. These, indeed, are the lowest instances of the sinfulness of words. There are others of so heinous a nature that they can hardly be reckoned consistent with true godliness, such as defaming and malicious words, which are sometimes compared to 'a sword,' or 'arrows,' or 'a serpent's tongue,' that leaves a sting and poison behind it.p But the sinfulness of our words extends itself yet farther, as they are directed against the blessed God; when persons 'set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth;' when they give themselves the liberty to talk profanely about sacred things, and openly blaspheme the name and perfections of God. This degree of impiety, indeed, all are not chargeable with. We may say, however, that

should God mark the iniquity of our words, as well as of our thoughts, who could stand?

3. We are said to break the commandments of God by deeds, that is, by committing those sins which are contrived in the heart, and uttered with our tongues. These have been considered under their respective heads, as violations respectively of the ten commandments, or doing those things which are forbidden in them. We therefore pass them over in this place, and proceed to speak concerning the aggravations of sin.

THE DEGREES OF SIN

QUESTION CL. Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves and in the sight of God?

ANSWER. All transgressions of the law of God are not equally heinous: but some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

THOUGH all sins are objectively infinite, and equally opposite to the holiness of God; yet there are some circumstances attending them of so pernicious a tendency that they render one sin more heinous than another; so that it is not to be thought of, without the greatest horror and resentment, and it exposes the sinner to a sorer condemnation, if it be not forgiven. Such sins strike at the very essentials of religion, and tend, as much as in us lies, to sap its foundation; as when men deny the being and perfections of God, and practically disown their obligation to yield obedience to him. Moreover, some sins against the second table, which more immediately respect our neighbour, are more heinous than others, in proportion to the degree of injury which they do him. Thus the taking away of the life of another, is

more injurious, and consequently more aggravated, than merely the hating of him; which is, nevertheless, a very great crime. Again, the same sin, whether against the commandments of the first or of the second table, may be said to be more or less heinous, in proportion to the degree of obstinacy, deliberation, malice or enmity against God, with which it is committed. But these things will more evidently appear under the following Answer.

THE AGGRAVATIONS OF SIN

QUESTION CLI. What are those aggravations which make some sins more heinous than others?

Aggravations from the Persons offending

ANSWER. Sins receive their aggravations,

I. From the persons offending, if they be of riper age, greater experience, or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office; guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others.

SINS are greater than otherwise they would be, when committed by those whose age and experience ought to have taught them better. Thus Elihu says, 'A multitude of years should teach wisdom.' Many things would be a reproach to persons of age and experience, which are more agreeable to the character of children, than those who are advanced in age. Again, if persons have had large experience of the grace of God, and been eminent for their profession, or gifts conferred on them, these circumstances will render a sin committed by them more aggravated; for where much is given, a proportionate improvement is expected, and where great pretensions are made to

religion, acting disagreeably to it enhances guilt and renders sin more heinous. Again, when a person is in an eminent station or office in the world or the church, so that either he is a guide to others, or the eyes of many are upon him, who will be apt to follow and receive prejudice by his example, if he commit a public and open sin, it is more aggravated than if it had been committed by another. Thus God bids the prophet Ezekiel 'see what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery.' And the prophet Jeremiah speaks of those who ought to have been guides to the people, namely, the priests and the prophets,t who transgressed against the Lord; and charges their transgression on them as an extraordinary instance of wickedness; which their character in the world and the church rendered more heinous, though it was exceedingly heinous in itself.

Aggravations from the Parties offended

II. Sins receive their aggravations, from the parties offended; if immediately against God, his attributes, and worship; against Christ, and his grace; the Holy Spirit, his witness, and workings; against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them, or any other, and the common good of all or many.

1. Though there is no sin but what may be said to be committed against God; yet some sins are more immediately against him, as they carry in them a contempt of his attributes and worship; whereby his name and ordinances are profaned, and the glory which is stamped on them little esteemed. Other sins reflect dishonour on our Lord Jesus Christ; either on his person, when we conclude him to be, or at least to act, as if he were no other than a mere creature; or on

his offices, when we refuse to receive instruction from him as a prophet, or to depend on his righteousness as a priest in order to our justification and acceptance in the sight of God, or to submit to him as a king who is able to subdue us to himself, and defend us from the assaults of our spiritual enemies, or when we despise his grace and neglect that salvation which he has purchased, and offers in the gospel.x Again, our sins are aggravated, when they are committed against the person of the Holy Ghost; when we deny him to be a divine person, or the author of the work of regeneration, supposing that grace takes its rise from ourselves, rather than from him; or when we do not desire to be led by the Spirit, or seek his divine influence, in order to our guidance, but, on the other hand, resist his holy motions and impressions, and act contrary to those convictions which he is pleased to grant us, by which means we are said to 'grieve' and 'quench the Spirit;' also when we reject and set ourselves against the witness of the Spirit, either by concluding that assurance of our interest in the love of God may be attained without it, and reckon all pretences to it no better than enthusiasm, or by supposing that the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God, without regard had to the work of sanctification, which always accompanies, and is an evidence of it, and so take that comfort to ourselves which does not proceed from the Spirit of holiness.

2. Sins are aggravated as committed more immediately or directly against men, and particularly those to whom we stand related in the bonds of nature, or who have laid us under the greatest obligations by acts of friendship to us. This is applicable to inferiors, who ought to pay a deference to their superiors. Those sins which are committed by such, contain the highest instance of ingratitude, and are contrary to the laws or dictates of nature, and therefore proportionately aggravated. Moreover, if sins are committed against the saints, they are reckoned by God an instance of contempt cast on

himself, whose image the saints are said to bear; and much more are they reckoned so if committed against them as saints. But though we do not proceed to this degree of wickedness, our crime is said to be greatly aggravated, when we lay a stumbling-block before those who are weak in the faith, which may tend to discourage them in the ways of God; for, by acting thus, we do what in us lies to 'destroy those for whom Christ died.'a This is an injury done, not so much to their bodies, as to their souls; which are wounded, and brought into great perplexity thereby. We must distinguish, however, between an offence given, and one unjustly taken. It is one thing for persons to be offended at that which is our indispensable duty,—in which case we are not to regard the sentiments of those who attempt to discourage us from it, or censure is for the performance of it; and it is another thing to give offence in matters which are in themselves indifferent, and might, without any prejudice, he avoided. In this case a compliance with the party offended seems to be our duty; especially if the offence takes its rise from conscience, rather than humour and corruption, and if our not complying with him would tend very much to discourage and weaken his hands in the ways of God, and therefore maybe reckoned an aggravation of our sin. Moreover, it is a farther aggravation of sin committed, when it appears to be contrary to the common good of all men. This guilt may be said to be contracted when there is an endeavour to hinder the success or preaching of the gospel; or otherwise, when the sin of one man brings down the judgments of God on a whole church or body of people. Of the latter kind was Achan's sin.c

Aggravations from the Nature and Quality of the Offence

III. Sins are aggravated from the nature and quality of the offence; if it he against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins; if not only conceived in the

heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation; if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience; public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments, and our own prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men; if done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance.

Sin is aggravated when it is committed against the express letter of the law; so that there remains no manner of doubt whether it be a sin or a duty. To venture on the commission of what plainly appears to us to be unlawful, is to sin with great boldness and presumption, whereby the crime is very much aggravated.—Again, sin is aggravated when it contains a breach of several of the commandments, and may be reckoned a complicated crime. Of this kind was the sin of David in the matter of Uriah, in which he was guilty of murder, adultery, dissimulation, injustice, &c.; also Ahab's sin against Naboth, which included not only covetousness, but perjury, murder, oppression, and injustice.—Sins are more aggravated when they break forth in words or outward actions, than if they were only conceived in the heart. It is true, sin in the heart has some peculiar aggravations, as it takes deeper root, becomes habitual, and is entertained with a secret delight and pleasure, and as it is the source and fountain whence actual sins proceed. Yet when that which was before conceived in the heart is discovered by words or actions, its being so adds an aggravation to it, as it brings a more public dishonour to God, and often a greater injury to men.—Sins are farther aggravated when they are of such a nature that it is impossible for us to repair the injuries done by them, or make restitution for them. Thus nothing can compensate for our taking away the life of another; or for our casting a reproach on the holy

ways of God, and thereby endeavouring to bring his gospel into contempt; or for our enticing others to sin, by which means we turn them aside from God, and endeavour to ruin their souls. Each of these is an injury which we cannot by any means repair; so that the crime is exceedingly aggravated.—Further, sin is aggravated if it be committed contrary to the very light of nature, such as would be offensive even to the heathen.e—Again, sins receive aggravations when committed against means, mercies, and judgments; as when we break through all the fences which are set to prevent them; when the grace of God, revealed in the gospel, is not only ineffectual to preserve from sin, though designed for that end, but turned into lasciviousness;g or when mercies are misimproved, undervalued, and, as it were, trampled on, and judgments, whether threatened or inflicted, are not regarded, or are unsuccessful in reclaiming us.—Sins are aggravated when they are committed against the checks and convictions of conscience; which is a judge and a reprover within our own breasts. To commit such sins is to offer violence to ourselves, and to make many bold advances towards judicial blindness, hardness of heart, and a total apostasy.—Moreover, sins are aggravated when they are committed against public or private admonitions, censures of the church or civil punishments, which are God's ordinance to bring men to repentance. If these means prove ineffectual to answer the designed end, the offenders will be left more stupid than they were before.—Sins are farther aggravated when they are contrary to our own prayers, vows, covenants, and promises made, either to God or men; when we confess any sins, or pretend to humble ourselves for them before God in prayer, and yet at other times indulge them, and are proud, self-conceited, and exalt ourselves against him; when we pray for strength against corruption, or for grace to perform holy duties, while, in reality, we have no love to these duties nor desire after them; when we praise him for mercies received, while we are habitually unthankful, and forgetful of his

benefits; or when we are very forward to make vows, covenants of engagements to be the Lord's, whereby we often lay a snare for ourselves, from some circumstances which attended this action, and more especially from our disregarding it afterwards.—Again, sins are aggravated from the manner of our committing them. They are so if they are done deliberately, with forethought or contrivance; as when persons are said to devise mischief upon their beds, and then, as to their conduct, to set themselves against that which is good. A sin is aggravated if it be done wilfully, that is, with the full bent of the will, making it the matter of our choice, and resolving to commit it whatever it cost us. A sin is aggravated when we do it presumptuously, either when we take encouragement to do it from the grace of God, or when his hand is lifted up against us, or we see his judgments falling very heavy upon others, and are not disposed to take warning, but grow more hardened and stupid than before.—Further, when sin is committed maliciously, impudently, and obstinately, it argues a rooted hatred against God; or when it is committed with delight, arising either from the thoughts we entertain of it before we commit it, or the pleasure we afterwards take in what we have done; or when we boast of what we have done, which is to glory in our shame,l—when we do, as it wore, value ourselves for having got rid of the prejudices of education, and all former convictions of sin, that so we may go on in it with less disturbance; or when persons boast of their over-reaching others in their way of dealing in the world, which they very often do in their secret thoughts, though they are ashamed to let the world know how remote they are from the practice of that justice which ought to be between man and man.—Again, sins are aggravated when they are frequently committed, or when we relapse into the same sin, after having pretended to repent of it.n

Aggravations from the Circumstances of Time and Place

IV. Sins are aggravated from circumstances of time and place; if on the Lord's-day, or other times of divine worship, or immediately before, or after these, or other helps, to prevent or remedy such miscarriages, if in public, or in the presence of others who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled.

When a sin is committed by us on the Lord's-day, it is a profaning of that time which God has sanctified for his service, and so renders us guilty of a double crime. Or when sins are committed at any other time which we occasionally set apart for divine worship, or in those seasons when God calls for fasting and mourning, or at other times when we have lately received signal deliverances, either personal or national, they also are particularly aggravated. Or when they are committed immediately before or immediately after we have engaged in holy duties, they in the former case render us very unfit for them, and, in the latter, effectually take away all those impressions which have been made on our spirits while engaged in the duties.

Again, sins receive aggravations from the place in which they are committed. If, for example, they are committed in those places in which the name of God is more immediately called on, they will, if visible, afford great matter of scandal to some, and an ill example to others, and, if secretly committed, will tend to defile our souls, and argue us guilty of great hypocrisy. Moreover, when we commit those sins which are generally abhorred in the places where providence has cast our lot, we render ourselves a stain and dishonour to those with whom we converse. Thus the prophet speaks of some who, 'in the land of uprightness,' will 'deal unjustly.' In particular, when we commit sins in the presence of persons who are likely to be provoked or defiled by them, we contract the guilt of other men's sins, as well as our own; and are doubly guilty, in being the cause, in many respects, of their transgressing.

There are several instances in which we may be said to contract the guilt of other men's sins. These I shall only mention briefly. When superiors lay their commands on inferiors, or oblige them, to do that which is in itself sinful; or, when we advise those who stand upon a level with us, to commit sin, or give our consent to the commission of it.—Again, when inferiors flatter superiors, or commend them for their sin. Thus, when Herod had courted the applause of the people, by the oration which he made to them, they, on the other hand, flattered him when they 'gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.'r—Again, when we have recourse to those places where sin is usually committed, and desire to associate ourselves with those whose conversation is a reproach to religion; or when we are sharers or partakers with others in their unlawful gains, first encouraging, abetting, and helping them, and then dividing the spoil with them.t—Again, when we connive at sin committed, or, if it be in our power, do not restrain or hinder the commission of it; or when we conceal it, when the farther progress of it might be prevented by our divulging it.—Again, when we provoke persons to sin, and so draw forth their corruptions; or when we extenuate sin, whether committed by ourselves or others, and so, in a degree, vindicate it, or plead for it; or lastly, when we do not mourn for or pray against those sins which are publicly committed in the world, and which are like to bring down national judgments.

THE DESERT OF SIN, AND THE WAY OF ESCAPE FROM IT

QUESTION CLII. What doth every sin deserve at the hands of God?

ANSWER. Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, deserveth his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come, and cannot be expiated, but by the blood of Christ.

QUESTION CLIII. What doth God require of us that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us by reason of the transgression of the law?

ANSWER. That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he requireth of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation.

The Desert of Sin

IN the former of these Answers, we have an account of the demerit of sin; in the latter, we have the character and disposition of those who have ground to conclude that they shall be delivered from the wrath and curse of God due to it. We have already considered some sins as greater than others, by reason of several circumstances which tend to enhance the guilt of those who commit them. Yet there is no sin so small but it has this aggravation, that it is a violation of the law of God, and is opposite to his holiness. Hence, it cannot but render the sinner guilty in his sight; and guilt is that whereby a person is liable to suffer punishment in proportion to the offence committed. It follows, then, that there is no ground for the distinction which the Papists make between mortal and venial sins. The former, they suppose, deserve the wrath and curse of God both in this and in another world; but as to the latter, namely, venial sins, they conclude that they may be atoned for by human satisfactions or penances, and

that they are, in their own nature, so small that they do not deserve eternal punishment. This is an opinion highly derogatory to the glory of God, and opens a door to licentiousness, in a variety of instances; and the contrary to it is contained in the Answer we are now explaining.

Now, let it be considered that it is one thing for a sin to deserve the wrath and curse of God, and another thing for the sinner to be liable and exposed to it. The former arises from the heinous nature of sin, and is inseparable from it; the latter is inconsistent with a justified state. Nothing can take away the guilt of sin, but the atonement made by Christ, and that forgiveness or freedom from condemnation which God is pleased to bestow as the consequence of the atonement. It is this which discharges a believer from a liability to the wrath and curse of God. Though, as was observed under the last Answer, one sin is greater than another, by reason of various circumstances which attend it or are contained in it; yet the least sin must be concluded to be objectively infinite, as it is committed against a God of infinite perfection, and as all offences are great in proportion to the dignity of the person against whom they are committed. Thus the sin which is committed against an inferior or an equal, and deserves a less degree of punishment, if it be committed against a king, may be so circumstanced that it will be deemed a capital offence, and render the criminal guilty of high treason; though at the same time, no real injury is done to him, but only attempted against him. In like manner, we must conclude that, though it is out of our power to injure or detract from the essential glory of the great God, yet every offence committed against him is great in proportion to his infinite excellency, and is therefore said to deserve his wrath and curse. Wrath or anger, when affirmed of God, is not to be considered as a passion in him, as it is in men; but it denotes his will to punish sin committed, which takes its rise from the holiness of his nature,

which is infinitely opposite to sin. Now the degree of punishment which he designs to inflict is stated in his law; and as that law denounces threatenings against those who violate it, the sinner is said to be exposed to its curse or condemning sentence, agreeably to the rules of justice, and the nature of the offence. This is what we are to understand, in this Answer, by sin deserving the wrath and curse of God.

The wrath and curse of God are farther considered as what extend to this life and that which is to come. Punishments inflicted in this life are but the beginning of miseries. Yet they are sometimes inexpressibly great; as the psalmist says, 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.' Sometimes there is but a very short interval between the sin and the punishment; as he case of Nadab and Abihu, Korah and his company, Achan, and many others. At other times, however, it is long deferred; though it will fall with great weight, at last, on the offender. Thus God sometimes punishes the sins of youth in old age; and when a greater degree of guilt has been contracted, writes bitter things against them.z But the greatest degree of punishment is reserved for sinners in another world; and is styled 'the wrath to come.' As these things, however, have been insisted on in some foregoing Answers,b we shall say no more respecting them in this place.

The Way of Escape from the Desert of Sin

We proceed now to notice what is farther observed, that this punishment cannot be expiated any otherwise than by the blood of Christ. This remark is fitly inserted after the account we have had of man's liability to the wrath of God by reason of sin; for when we have an afflicting sense of the guilt we have exposed ourselves to, nothing

else will afford us relief. What we have to consider, then, is how our guilt may be removed, or by what means the justice of God may be satisfied, and an atonement made for sin. This is said to be done no other way but by the blood of Christ, as was considered under a foregoing Answer; when we endeavoured to prove the necessity of Christ's making satisfaction, and the price which he paid in order to his making it. We also considered the fruits and effects of his satisfaction, as it has a tendency to remove the guilt of sin, and procure for us a right to eternal life.d We shall therefore pass over the consideration of the subject in this place; only we may observe, that, while our deliverance from guilt and punishment can be brought about by no other means than Christ's satisfaction, it is not inconsistent with what is contained in the following words, if rightly understood by us, to assert that God requires of us repentance, faith, and a diligent attendance on the outward means of grace; though we must not conclude them to be the procuring cause of our justification, or a means to expiate sin. Those are certainly very much unacquainted with the way of salvation by Christ, as well as with the great defects of their repentance and faith, who suppose that God is induced by our repenting and believing to pardon our sins, or deliver us from the wrath we have deserved. Yet we are not to think that impenitent unbelieving sinners have a right to determine that they are in a justified state, or have ground to claim an interest in the benefits of Christ's redemption. The graces of faith and repentance are necessary to evince our interest in what he has done and suffered for us, and are inseparably connected with salvation; though they do not give us a right and title to eternal life, as Christ's righteousness does. Under two foregoing Answers, we gave a particular account of repentance and faith. Concerning repentance, we observed that it is a special saving grace, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit; and we showed in what way he works it, and what the difference is between legal and evangelical repentance, as the former is often found in

those who are destitute of the latter. We also considered the various acts of repentance unto life; what the objects and acts of saving faith are; how it differs from that which is not so; the use of it in the whole conduct of our lives; and how it gives life and vigour to all other graces, and enables us to perform duties in a right manner.f We shall not, therefore, insist on this subject at present; but only speak of repentance and faith as means appointed by God, in order to our attaining complete salvation.

The means conducive to salvation are either internal or external. The former are inseparably connected with salvation; so that none who repent and believe shall perish. The graces of faith and repentance, together with all others which accompany or flow from them, are the fruits and effects of Christ's mediation; and hence are sometimes called saving graces. As they are wrought in the hearts of believers, and have a reference to salvation, they may be truly styled internal means of salvation; and, as such, they are distinguished from those outward and ordinary means of grace by which God is pleased to work them. The latter are the ordinances; which we are diligently to attend on, in hopes of obtaining these graces under them, till God is pleased to give success to our endeavours, and work grace in our use of them; and the efficacy of them is wholly owing to his power and is to be resolved into his sovereign will. This may be fitly illustrated by what is said concerning the poor impotent, blind, halt, and withered persons, waiting at the pool of Bethesda, for the angel's troubling the water; after which, he who first stepped in, was made whole.h We do not find that every one who waited there embraced the first opportunity, and received a cure; for some were obliged to wait many years, and if they were made whole at last, they had no reason to think their labour lost. This may be applied to those who have the means of grace. Many sit under them who receive no saving advantage, till God is pleased, in his accepted time, to work those

graces which render the ordinances effectual to salvation. The blessed success attending them is from God. He could, indeed, save his people without them, as he converted Paul, when going to Damascus, with a design to persecute the church there, and when not only unacquainted with the means of grace, but prejudiced against them. But this is not God's ordinary method. He has put an honour on his own institutions, so as to render it necessary for us to pray, wait, and hope for saving blessings, in attending on them. Thus, when he promises to 'put his Spirit' within his people, and 'cause them to walk in his statutes,' he adds, 'Yet for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' Accordingly, we are commanded to 'seek the Lord whilst he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near.'k By our attendance on his ordinances, we testify our approbation of that method which he has ordained for the application of redemption; and by our perseverance in it, determining not to leave off waiting till we have obtained the blessing expected, we proclaim the valuableness of that method, and subscribe to the sovereignty of God in dispensing those blessings to his people which they stand in need of, as well as pray and hope for them in his own time and way. Thus we are to wait on the means of grace.

It is farther observed, that we are to wait on the means of grace with diligence, and not in a careless and indifferent manner, as though we neither expected nor desired much advantage from them. This implies an embracing of every opportunity, and an observing of those special seasons in which God is pleased, in his gospel, to hold forth the golden sceptre of grace; as also our having earnest desires and raised expectations of obtaining that grace from him which he encourages us to wait and hope for. We are thus led to speak particularly concerning these outward means, as stated in the following Answer

THE ORDINANCES

QUESTION CLIV. What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?

ANSWER. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances; especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation.

The Import of the Ordinances

IN explaining this Answer, we shall first consider what we are to understand by the ordinances; which are here styled outward and ordinary means of grace. The first idea contained in them, is that they are religious duties, prescribed by God, as an instituted method in which he will be worshipped by his creatures. But what more especially denominates them ordinances, is the promise which he has annexed to them of his special presence, and the encouragement which he has given to his people in attending on them, to hope for those blessings which accompany salvation. As God works grace by and under them, they are called means of grace; as he seldom works grace without first inclining persons to attend on him in them, and wait for his salvation, they are called the ordinary means of grace; and as they have not in themselves a tendency to work grace, without the inward and powerful influences of the Holy Spirit accompanying them, they are distinguished from it, and accordingly styled the outward means of grace.

1. Now, the ordinances, as thus described, must be engaged in according to a divine appointment. No creature has a warrant to enjoin any modes of worship, pretending that these will be

acceptable or well-pleasing to God; since God alone, who is the object of worship, has a right to prescribe the way in which he will be worshipped. For a creature to institute modes of worship would be an instance of profaneness and bold presumption; and the worship performed would be 'in vain;' as our Saviour says concerning that which has no higher sanction than 'the commandments of men.' Whatever pretence of religion there may be, God looks upon such worshippers as well as those whose prescriptions they follow, with the utmost contempt, and will punish rather than encourage them. Thus the prophet reproves Israel for being guilty of defection from God, in engaging in that worship which he had not ordained, when he says, 'The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab; and ye walk in their counsels that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing. Therefore shall ye bear the reproach of my people.' And Jeroboam is often branded with having 'made Israel to sin,' for instituting ordinances of divine worship, and 'setting up calves in Dan and Bethel, making an house of high places, and priests of the lowest of the people,' and appointing sacred times in which they should perform this worship; all which were of his own devising, and became a share to the people.n It is certain that such appointments cannot be reckoned means of grace, or pledges of God's presence; and it would redound to his dishonour, should he be obliged to communicate the benefits of Christ's redemption by means of them, to any who, under a pretence of worshipping him in a way of their own devising, offer the highest affront to him.

2. If God is pleased to reveal his will concerning the way in which we are to worship him and to hope for his presence, it is our indispensable duty to comply with it, to implore his acceptance of us in it, and to be importunate with him that he would put a glory on his own institutions, and grant us his special presence and grace, that we

may be enabled to perform whatever duty he enjoins, in such a manner that the most valuable ends may be answered, and our spiritual edification and salvation promoted.

3. Though we consider the ordinances as instituted means of grace, yet a mere attendance on them will not of itself confer grace. This is very evident from the declining state of religion, in those who engage in the external part of it, and attend upon all the ordinances of God's appointment, and yet remain destitute of saving grace; who are stupid under the awakening calls of the gospel, and regard not its invitations to adhere steadfastly to Jesus Christ, whom in words they profess to own, though in works they deny him. The case of these persons is a convincing evidence, that it is God alone, who, having appointed these ordinances, can make them effectual to salvation. Thus concerning the nature of an ordinance, and in what respects it may be called an outward and ordinary means of grace.

Classification of the Ordinances

We are now to consider what are those ordinances by which Christ communicates the benefits of his mediation.

1. They are such as are engaged in by particular persons, in subserviency to their spiritual welfare, in order to the beginning or carrying on of the work of grace in their souls; such as meditation about divine subjects, self-examination, and all other duties which are performed by them in their private retirement, in hope of having communion with God.

2. There are other ordinances which God has given to worshipping assemblies, which are founded on that general promise, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' Those mentioned in this Answer, are the word, sacraments, and

prayer. Of these the sacraments are particularly given to the churches; the word and prayer, to all who are favoured with the gospel-dispensation. To these we may add, singing the praises of God; which, though it is not particularly mentioned in this Answer, is a duty in which we may expect to meet with his presence and blessing; and, accordingly, is an ordinance which God makes effectual to promote our salvation.

The Ordinance of Praise

Before we enter on the consideration of the following Answers, we shall say something concerning this duty, of singing the praises of God, as an ordinance which he has instituted; together with the manner in which it is to be performed.

1. We may inquire what ground we have to reckon it among the ordinances of God. That it is a divine ordinance must not be taken for granted, but proved; because there are many who deny it to be so. That it was an ordinance enjoined to and practised by the church under the Old Testament dispensation, appears from the many songs and psalms given, by divine inspiration, to be used by them in their solemn acts of worship. Not only were some of these sung by particular persons, but the whole church is represented as joining in them with united voices. Thus when Pharaoh's host was drowned in the Red sea, it is said, 'Moses and the children of Israel sang' the song which was given by divine inspiration for that purpose. And when Moses was inspired with the song recorded in Deut. 32, he was commanded to 'write it for them, and teach it to them, and put it in their mouths,' that they might sing it in their public worship; which he accordingly did.r And from the days of David, when public worship was more settled than it had been before, and many things relating to the order, beauty, and harmony of it, brought into the

church by divine direction, there was an order of men called singers who were to preside over and set forward this work. There was also a book of psalms given by divine inspiration for the use of the church, that they might not be at a loss as to the matter of praise in this ordinance. That the psalms were given them to be publicly sung may be inferred from the style of them, the words being often put in the plural number; which argues that they were to be sung, not by one person in the church, but by the whole congregation in their solemn and public acts of worship. Accordingly, we often find the whole multitude exhorted to sing the praises of God. Thus it is said, 'Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness;' and 'Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, &c for this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.'t Sometimes also the church are represented as exciting one another to this duty. Thus it is said, 'O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.' It may be observed, too, that how much soever the use of musical instruments in this worship may be concluded to have been particularly adapted to that dispensation, as it was typical of that spiritual joy which the gospel church should obtain by Christ; yet the ordinance of singing remains a duty, as founded on the moral law. Accordingly, we find that the practice of it was recommended, not only to the Jews, but to all nations. Thus it is said, 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth.'x The psalmist speaks to the same purpose, when he presses this duty upon 'all lands,' whom he exhorts to 'serve God with gladness; and to come before the Lord with singing.' Besides, it seems to be preferred before some other parts of worship, which were merely ceremonial. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will praise the name of God with a song. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock;'z that is, God is more glorified

hereby than he is by the external rites of ceremonial worship, especially when abstracted from those acts of faith which add an excellency and glory to them.

We are thus led to consider the singing of praises to God as an ordinance practised by the New Testament church. Some had songs given to them by inspiration; as the Virgin Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon. Sometimes also the members of particular churches had a psalm given in by extraordinary revelation;b and we can hardly suppose this to have been without a design that it should be sung in the church for their edification,—especially considering it as an extraordinary dispensation of the Spirit. And, as the singing of a psalm in the church is an act of public worship, it is reasonable to suppose that the whole assembly joined in it; so that this ordinance was not only practised by them, but had also a divine sanction, in the Spirit being the author of the psalm which was sung. Moreover, we sometimes read of the church singing an hymn, which was no other than a psalm or spiritual song, at the Lord's supper. Thus our Saviour, at the close of that ordinance, sung an hymn with his disciples,—that small church with whom he then communicated. At another time, when he was 'come nigh to the descent of the mount of Olives,' it is said that 'the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and to praise God with a loud voice.'d Here, by 'the multitude of the disciples,' we must understand all who followed him, and had a conviction in their consciences that he was the Messiah, from the miracles which they had seen him work. And we have an account of the short hymn which they sang: 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.' This was not, indeed, sung in a church-assembly; yet it was sung with 'a loud voice,' and in singing it they gave glory to God. And though some of the Pharisees were offended at it,f yet our Saviour, in the following words, vindicates their practice: and his doing so argues

that it was a branch of religious worship performed by them at that time, and a duty approved of by him. All that I would infer is, that as our Saviour gave countenance to the singing of the praises of God with united voices, it follows that we ought, on all occasions, to do the same thing, and consequently, that singing is an ordinance whereby the church ought to glorify God, and show forth his praise. Thus we have considered singing to be an ordinance, or a branch of instituted worship.

2. There are several things in which this ordinance agrees with some others; particularly with prayer in all the parts of it, and with the reading and preaching of the word. That it has something in common with prayer, appears from the subject of several of the psalms of David. Some of these are called prayers; and accordingly contain several petitions for blessings that the church stood in need of, together with various confessions of sin, as well as thanksgiving for mercies received. As to the agreement of this ordinance with the preaching or reading of the word, that, I think may be inferred in general from one of the ends of it mentioned by the apostle, namely, 'teaching and admonishing one another.' Singing the praises of God is what the psalmist styles, 'talking of all his wondrous works.'h The church also are said to 'speak to themselves,' or to 'one another' in this duty. Moreover, in some of the psalms the psalmist is represented as speaking to the church, and they as making their reply to him. Thus he advises them to 'lift up their hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord;'k and they answer him, 'The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.' The same thing may be observed in many other psalms, in which there is a frequent change of the person speaking. Indeed, the entire book contains many admonitions or cautions necessary to be observed by others, which they who sing direct and apply to each other. Again, in singing the praises of God, we take notice of or celebrate the dispensations of

his providence, either in a way of judgment or of mercy; and of this we have many instances in the book of psalms, as is very evident in all those which are properly historical.

3. We must, notwithstanding, suppose singing to be a distinct ordinance from preaching, prayer, or reading the word; for it is mentioned in scripture as such. What it principally differs in, is that it is designed to raise the affections; and it is certain that the modulation or tone of the voice has often a tendency to do so. And because the performing of religious worship with raised affections, is a great duty and privilege; God has appointed singing as an ordinance in some degree conducive to answer that end.

It is objected that, if the tone of the voice be reckoned an ordinance to raise the affections, vocal or instrumental music may be deemed sufficient, without making use of those words in singing which God has ordained, and in the use of which singing becomes a religious duty. We reply, that to have the affections raised, is no branch of religion, unless they are excited by those ideas of divine things in which it principally consists. That which is a means of raising the affections, may not have a tendency to excite religious affections. Hence, it is not merely singing, but celebrating the praises of God in it with raised affections, which is the duty and ordinance we ought to engage in. These two, then, must be connected together, and if God is pleased, not only to instruct us as to the matter about which our faith is to be conversant, but to give us an ordinance conducive to the exciting of our affections, it must be reckoned an additional advantage, and a help to our praising him in a becoming manner.

It is farther objected that those arguments which have been taken from the practice of the Old Testament church, to prove singing an ordinance, may, with equal justice, be alleged to prove the use of

instrumental music in religious worship; since we very often read of their praising God with 'the sound of the trumpet, psaltery, harp, organ,' and other musical instruments. This is the principal argument brought for the use of musical instruments by those who defend it and conclude it an help to devotion. But, though we often read of music being used in singing the praises of God under the Old Testament; yet if what has been said concerning its being a type of that spiritual joy which attends our praising God for the privilege of that redemption which Christ has purchased, the objection will appear to have no weight, the type being now abolished, together with the ceremonial law. Besides, though we read of the use of music in the temple-service, yet it does not sufficiently appear that it was ever used in the Jewish synagogues; the mode of worship observed in which more resembled that which is at present performed by us in our public assemblies. But what may sufficiently determine this matter, is that we have no precept nor precedent for it in the New Testament, either from the practice of Christ, or his apostles. Some, indeed, allege that the absence of any such precept or precedent overthrows the ordinance of singing, and pretend that this ought to be no more used by us than the harp, organ, or other musical instruments. But it might as well be objected that, because incense, which was used under the ceremonial law, together with prayer in the temple,n is not now to be offered by us, prayer ought to be laid aside; which is, as all own, a duty founded on the moral law.

4. In singing those psalms or songs which are given by divine inspiration, we are not to consider the subject of them as always expressive of the frame of our own spirits, or as denoting the dispensations of providence which we or the church of God are at present exercised with. This is necessary in order to our singing with understanding; and it may be inferred from what we have said concerning the agreement which there is between singing and

reading any of David's psalms. It must be allowed by all, that we ought to have the same acts of faith in the one, as we have in the other. This is evident from all compositions in prose or verse, whether divine or human. If the subject be historical, whatever the form be in which it is laid down, the principal things to be considered are the matters of fact which are related. If an history be written in prose, and the same should be turned into verse, though its being laid down in the form of a poem adds something of beauty to the mode of expression, yet the ideas which are conveyed, or the historical representation of things, are the same as if they had not been written in verse. The reading of the history in verse may perhaps add something of pleasure and delight to our ideas, just as singing, though the same in matter as respects the exciting of the affections, is a distinct ordinance from reading; yet the circumstance of the history being in verse does not give us different ideas of the matter narrated; and much less are we to take occasion thence to apply those things to ourselves which are spoken of others, unless parallel circumstances required us to do so. If this rule be not observed, I do not see how we can sing many of the psalms of David. Sometimes the subject of them is not agreeable to every age of life, or to the universal experience of particular persons. It would be very preposterous for a child, in singing those words, 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread,' or what is elsewhere said, 'Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not,'p to apply them in particular to himself. And when some other psalms are sung in a public assembly, in which God's peoplo are represented as dejected, disconsolate, and, as it were, sinking in the depths of despair, as when it is said, 'My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed;' 'I am counted with them that go down into the pit. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me. While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted,'r they

cannot be applied to every particular person in a worshipping assembly, as denoting that frame of spirit in which he is at present. Those expressions also which we meet with elsewhere, which speak of a believer as having full assurance of God's love to him, and of his right and title to eternal life, as when it is said, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,' cannot be applied to those who are in a dejected, despairing, or unbelieving frame of spirit. Moreover, those psalms which contain an historical account of some particular dispensations of providence towards the church of old, cannot be applied to it in every age, or to the circumstances of every believer. When it is said, for example, 'By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Sion,'t the words are not to be considered as expressive of our own case when we in the present day sing them. Or, when, on the other hand, the church is represented as praising God for particular deliverances, or expressing its triumphs in the victories obtained over its enemies,x the words are not to be applied by particular persons, to themselves, especially at all times. Again, when the psalmist makes use of those phrases which are adapted to the ceremonial law, as when he speaks of 'binding the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar,' or of 'offering bullocks upon it;'z the language cannot be taken in a literal sense, when applied to the gospel-state. And when we are exhorted to 'praise God with the psaltery,' &c., we are to express those acts of faith which are agreeable to the gospel-dispensation. The general rule, indeed, which is applicable to all psalms of a similar nature, is that with the same frame of spirit with which we read them, we ought to sing them. Sometimes we are to consider them as containing an account of those providences to which we are liable, rather than those which we are at present under; or of what we desire or fear, rather than of what we experience; and we are to improve them so as to excite those graces which ought to be exercised in like circumstances, when it

shall please God to bring us under them. With this frame of spirit, the psalms of David are to be sung as well as read; otherwise we shall be obliged to exclude several of them as not fit to be used in gospel-worship. I would, however, assert nothing which should give the least countenance to any of them not being sung; just as I would not affirm that they are not to be read in public assemblies.

To what has been said concerning our using David's psalms in singing the praises of God, it is objected that some of them contain such imprecations or desires that God would destroy his enemies, as are inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, or with that love which it obliges us to express towards our enemies, agreeably to the command and practice of the holy Jesus.c Now, before I proceed to a direct answer to this objection, it may be observed that it is generally alleged by the Deists with a design to cast a reproach on divine revelation. They hence take occasion outrageously to inveigh against David, as though he were of a malicious and implacable spirit. Indeed, they will hardly allow him to have been a good man; for the imprecations which occur in his psalms of the wrath of God on the church's enemies, are reckoned by them no other than the effects of his passion and hatred of them. Hence, say they, it is a preposterous thing to suppose that his psalms were given by divine inspiration. There are others, however, namely, some among the Socinians, who give a different turn to such expressions; and pretend that, under the Old Testament dispensation, it was not unlawful for persons to hate their enemies, or curse them, or imprecate the wrath of God upon them; though our Saviour thought fit, under the New Testament dispensation, to command what was directly contrary. That the hating of enemies was formerly lawful, they argue from what is said in Matt. 5:43, 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy;' while the new commandment which Christ substituted in the room of this, is contained in the

following words, in which he obliges us to 'love our enemies,' &c. But this interpretation gives a grossly mistaken view of that scripture which speaks of 'hating enemies;' for our Saviour, in mentioning it, does not design to refer to any thing said in the Old Testament, but only to expose the corrupt gloss of the scribes and Pharisees, given on some passages. We must conclude, therefore, that it was as unlawful to hate enemies before, as it is now under the gospel-dispensation. These things I could not but premise, before we came to a direct answer to the objection which we have stated.

Now, if what is alleged in that objection were true, it would certainly be unlawful to sing David's psalms; and, at the same time, it would be a very difficult matter to substitute any hymns and songs in their room, which would be altogether unexceptionable; and then the ordinance of singing would be effectually overthrown. We observe, however, that the words having been spoken by David, under divine inspiration, some of the scriptures referred to may, agreeably to the rules of grammar, be understood as a prediction of those judgments which God would execute on his implacable enemies. This is especially the case if the word which is supposed in the objection to contain the form of an imprecation, is put in the future tense as it often is; and if it be put in the imperative mood, as in other places in which it is said, 'Let death seize on them; let them go down quick into hell; let them be blotted out of the book of the living,' the mode of speaking, especially when applied to God, contains an intimation of what he would do, or of the wrath which he would pour forth, as a punishment of sin committed, persisted in, and not repented of. Indeed, in one of these psalms, namely, the sixty-ninth, in which the righteous judgments of God are denounced against sinners, the psalmist plainly speaks in the person of our Saviour, to whom the ninth and twenty-first verses are expressly applied in the New Testament. Hence, when he says, in the twenty-second verse, 'Let

their table become a snare,' the meaning is, that God would deny some of his furious and implacable enemies that grace which alone could prevent their waxing worse and worse under outward prosperity. When he says, in the twenty-third verse, 'Let their eyes be darkened,' the meaning is, they shall be given up to judicial blindness, as the Jews were; the providence of God permitting, though not effecting it. When it is said, in the twenty-fourth verse, 'Pour out thine indignation upon them,' the words are an intimation that this judicial blindness should come upon them. When he adds, in the twenty-fifth verse, 'Let their habitation be desolate,' the meaning is, that the land in which they dwelt should be destitute of its former inhabitants; and so the words contain a prediction of the desolate state of the Jewish nation, after they were destroyed and driven out of their country by the Romans. When he farther says, 'Add iniquity to their iniquity,' his words, as was observed elsewhere, may be explained consistently with the divine perfections;e so that the sense of them is not liable to any just exception. I have made these observations on this psalm, only to show that it is not necessary to suppose that these imprecations are always to be understood as what will warrant or give countenance to private persons to wish or pray for the destruction of their enemies. Moreover, if the evil denounced be of a temporal nature, as when the psalmist is represented as desiring that his enemies may be 'consumed as the stubble before the wind,' or as 'the wood that the fire burneth;' the desires are not those of one who meditates private revenge, or wishes to see the ruin of persons whom he hates. But they are the sentiments of the church of God in general, as acquiescing in his righteous judgments, which should be poured forth on those that hate him and persecute his people. Now, if either the church must be ruined, or those who set themselves against it removed out of the way, they cannot but desire the latter rather than the former. If such expressions be thus understood, there will be no

sufficient reason for the exception which is taken against the book of the psalms; nor will any one have just occasion to lay aside a part of them, as what cannot be sung by a Christian congregation.

It is farther objected, that if singing could be proved to be an ordinance to be used by particular persons, it will not follow that the whole congregation ought to join their voices together. It is sufficient, say the objectors, if one person sing, and others make melody in their hearts. United voices in singing will occasion confusion in the worship of God; and, when a mixed multitude join in it, it can hardly be supposed that they all sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. Hence, if one should sing, it is sufficient for those who are qualified to join in this ordinance, to say, Amen, or to have their hearts engaged as they have who join in public prayer, in which one is the mouth of the whole assembly. We reply, that to insinuate that singing with united voices is confusion, is to cast a great reproach on that worship which we often read of in scripture, which was performed in this manner. Thus Moses and the children of Israel sang the praises of God on occasion of their deliverance from the Egyptians; and their doing so was certainly an act of public worship, not performed by Moses alone, but by the whole congregation. In the New Testament, too, there is a very remarkable example of singing with united voices, our Saviour himself being present.h It is said that he and his disciples 'sang an hymn.' The word is in the plural number; so that they all joined with their voices in singing. Some observe, also, that it is not without design that it is said, 'He,' that is, Christ, 'blessed the bread,' and 'He gave thanks;'k they joining with him in this act only in their hearts, as the congregation joins with the minister who is their mouth in public prayer. But when the evangelist speaks of the ordinance of singing, he represents them as all joining with their voices. Accordingly, the word, as was just now observed, is in the plural number.

Another part of the objection respects the congregation's joining in the heart, with one who sings with the voice, in like manner as we do in prayer. Now, though he who joins in heart with another who prays, may be said to perform the duty of prayer, though he does not express his desires with his own voice; yet joining with the heart, while only one sings, cannot, properly speaking, be called singing, much less 'singing with the voice,' or 'singing with a loud voice,' as it is often expressed in scripture. The apostle, indeed, speaks of 'singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord.' This language, in some measure, seems to favour the objection; and it is inferred from it, that, if one sings with the voice, others may make melody in the heart. But I understand it otherwise. The apostle, as I think, is pressing the church to sing, that is, to make melody to the Lord; and is showing that, in order to this ordinance being performed in a right manner, the heart ought to go along with the voice. He thus intimates that there ought not only to be a melodious sound, by which the praises of God are sung, but together with this, suitable acts of faith ought to be put forth, whereby we worship him with our hearts, as well as our voices. What he says, therefore, does not prove that the melody spoken of respects only the frame of spirit, exclusive of the use of the voice in singing.

Another part of the objection is that, when a mixed multitude sing, some must be supposed to want two necessary qualifications for singing, namely, the Spirit and the understanding; and that their singing, while they want these, is to join in the external ordinance, while there is no harmony as to the internal frame of spirit, or the exercise of faith, which alone makes it pleasing to God. We reply, that a mixed multitude may join together in prayer, and that the word of God, and particularly the psalms of David, may be read in the public congregation. Now, though there are, perhaps, many present who do not understand the meaning of every particular

phrase used in the psalms of David, it does not fellow that these psalms ought not to be sung by us. We have already observed that there is no essential difference, especially as to what concerns the frame of our spirit, between singing and reading. It follows, then, that whatever psalm may be read may be sung. He who is not qualified to do the latter, is not qualified to do the former. The apostle, indeed, speaks of his 'praying and singing with the Spirit,' as well as 'with the understanding;' but the meaning is, that we ought to desire the efficacious influences of the Spirit, and press after the knowledge of the meaning of the words we use, either in prayer or singing. Yet the defect of our understanding, or our having a less degree of it than others, or than we ought to have, does not exempt us from a right to engage in this ordinance. Hence, we are not to refuse to join with those in singing the praises of God, whom we would not exclude from our society, if we were reading any of the psalms of David in public.

5. We are now to consider the matter to be sung. There are very few who allow singing to be an ordinance, who will deny it to be our duty to sing the psalms of David, and other spiritual songs which we frequently meet with in scripture. Some, indeed, have contested the expediency of a Christian assembly making use of several Old Testament phrases which are contained in these. Others have alleged that the phrases ought to be altered in many instances, especially in those which have a peculiar reference to the psalmist's personal circumstances, and others substituted for them to express matter of universal experience. But, if what has been said under the last Head be true, this argument will appear to have little weight; inasmuch as all the arguments which are brought in defence of making these alterations in the psalms as they are to be sung by us, will hold equally good as applicable to the ordinance of reading them, and, it may be, will as much evince the necessity of altering the phrases of

scripture in several other parts as well as in these. For if some psalms are not to be sung by a Christian assembly in the words in which they wore at first delivered, and consequently are not to be read by them, because the phraseology is not agreeable to the state of the Christian church, and needs to be altered when applied to our present use; the same may be said concerning other parts of scripture; and then the word of God, as it was at first given to us, is no more to be read than to be sung by us. As to the objection that it is inexpedient for us to make use of those words, and apply them to our case in our devotions, which David used in his with a peculiar view to his own condition, what was said under the fourth Head relating to the frame of spirit with which the psalms are to be sung, will very much weaken the force of it. The consideration stated there is what, in a great measure, determines my sentiments as to the ordinance of conjoint singing, as well as the matter of it; for I am well persuaded that if the words were to be considered as our own, as they ought to be when joining with another who is our mouth to God in prayer, there are very few psalms or hymns of human composition which can be sung by a mixed assembly. But as a divine veneration ought to be paid to the psalms, and they are to be read with those acts of faith which are the main ingredients in our devotions, we are to sing them with the same view, only with this difference that we are to make use of the tone of the voice as a farther help to the raising of our affections.

The next thing to be considered, is what version of the psalms is to have the preference in our esteem, as subservient to the design of this ordinance. It is not my business, under this Head, to criticise the various versions of the psalms. Nor can it be supposed that I have a regard to those poetical beauties in which one version excels another; for then I should be inclined to think some of those which I do not choose to make use of in the ordinance of singing, much preferable to others, for the exactness of their style and composition. But when

I am to sing the praises of God, in the words of David or any other inspired writer, or as nearly as possible in their words, what I principally regard is the agreeableness of the version to the original; and then the psalms may be sung with the same frame of spirit with which they are to be read, and I am not obliged, in singing, to consider the words as expressive of my own frame of spirit, any more than I am in reading them. But if the composition cannot properly be called a version, but is an imitation of David's psalms, then I make use of it in the ordinance of singing, with the same view as I would an hymn; but of this more shall be said hereafter. Now the versions which, I think, come nearest to the original are the New England and the Scotch. The latter, however, I think much preferable to the former; inasmuch as the sentences are not so transposed as in the other, and the lines are much more smooth and pleasant to be read. I should be very glad to see a version more perfect, which comes as near the sense of the original, and excels it in the beauty or elegance of its style. And it would be a very great advantage if some marginal notes were added, as a comment upon it; which would be an help to our right understanding of it.

I shall now give my thoughts concerning the singing of hymns. These, according to the common acceptation of the word, are distinguished from psalms,—and they generally denote an human composition, fitted for singing, the matter of which contains some divine subjects in the words agreeable to or deduced from scripture. The argument which is generally brought in defence of them is this: —Though scripture is a rule of faith whence all the knowledge of divine things is primarily deduced, and therefore has the preference, as to its excellency and authority, to any other composition; yet it is not only lawful but necessary to express our faith in the doctrines which it contains in other words than its own, as we do in prayer or preaching. Now if it be a duty to praise God with the voice, it is not

unlawful to praise him in words agreeable to scripture, as well as in the express words of it. Hence both may be proved to be a duty, namely, praising God in the words of David, and by other songs contained in scripture, and praising him in words agreeable to scripture, though of human composition. This is the best reasoning which I have met with in defence of the lawfulness of singing hymns, not as opposed to or excluding David's psalms, but as used occasionally, as providence directs us; that so our acknowledgments of benefits received may be insisted on with greater enlargement than they are in the book of psalms. For though there may be in that book something adapted to every case, yet the particular occasion of our praise is not so largely contained in the same section or paragraph; and therefore a hymn may be composed adapted to each occasion, in order to our praising God. But when, on the other hand, persons seem to prefer hymns to David's psalms, and substitute them for the latter, I cannot but disapprove of their practice. A late writer speaks on this subject with a great deal of moderation. Though he proves that scripture psalms should be preferred before all others, and more ordinarily sung; yet he thinks that hymns of human composition ought not wholly to be excluded, provided they be exactly agreeable to, and as much as may be, the words of holy scripture. There are other writers to whom I pay equal deference, who have concisely, though with a considerable degree of judgment, proved singing to be a gospel ordinance,p who argue against singing of hymns. Indeed, what they say in opposition to those who defend the practice from Eph. 5:19, and Col. 3:16, and allege that 'hymns' are distinct from 'psalms and spiritual songs,' and that we are to understand by them human compositions agreeable to scripture, as by psalms and spiritual songs we are to understand those which are contained in the very words of scripture, seems very just. What they say corresponds with the opinion of several judicious and learned men, who assert that these three words signify nothing else but those

psalms or songs which are contained in scripture. The question in debate with me, is not whether the psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs which are contained in scripture, are designed to be a directory for gospel-worship,—for that, I think, all ought to allow; but, whether it be lawful to sing a human composition which is agreeable to scripture, either as to its words or its sense,—especially when the subject of our praise is not laid down so largely in one particular section of scripture, as we desire to express it. In this case, if we were to connect several parts of scripture together, so that the design of enlarging on a particular subject might be answered, there would be less necessity to compose a hymn in other words. But as the occasions of praise are very large and extensive, and as it may be thought expedient to adore the divine perfections in our own words in singing, just as we do in prayer, considering the one to be a moral duty as well as the other; I will not pretend to maintain the unlawfulness of singing hymns of human composition, though some of much superior learning and judgment have done so. I would, however, always pay the greatest deference to those divine compositions which are given as the principal rule for our procedure in praise. Yet I cannot but express my dislike of several hymns which I have often heard sung. In some of these the heads of the sermon have been comprised; and others are so very mean and injudicious, and, it may be, in some respects, so unaccordant with the analogy of faith, that I cannot, in the least, approve of them. But if we have ground to conclude the composition, as to the matter and the mode of expression, unexceptionable, and adapted to raise the affections, as well as excite suitable acts of faith in extolling the praise of God, it gives me no more disgust, though it be not in scripture-words, than praying or preaching does when the matter is scriptural. Yet as, when we confess sin, acknowledge mercies received, or desire those blessings which are suited to our case, we always suppose that the words which he who is the mouth of the congregation uses, ought to

be such as all can join with him in, and in this, the reading of one of David's prayers, and the putting up of a prayer in the congregation, differ as to a very considerable circumstance; so the same ought to be observed in hymns. But, if an hymn be so composed that all who sing it are represented as signifying their having experienced those things which belong not to them, or as blessing God for what they never received; the use of it, I conceive, would be as unwarrantable a method of singing hymns of human composition as if the expressions were used in public prayer. There are, indeed, many hymns which have a great vein of piety and devotion, but are not adapted to the experience of the whole assembly that sings them. Hence, while a congregation may join in singing some hymns, I do not think they can well join in singing all; though the subject of them may be agreeable to the analogy of faith. The reason of this rests on the difference which we formerly stated between making use of a divine and of a human composition; in the former of which, the words are not always to be considered as our own or as expressive of the frame of our own spirits; while they are always to be so considered with respect to the latter.

Thus concerning the ordinance of singing; which we cannot but think included among those whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation. We are now led to consider the other ordinances; which are particularly insisted on in the remaining part of this work. That which next comes under our consideration, is the word read and preached.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE WORD

QUESTION CLV. How is the word made effectual to salvation?

> ANSWER. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ, of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will, of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions, of building them up in grace, and establishing their heart in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

HAVING had an account, in the foregoing Answer, of the ordinances by which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to his church, and what they are, and having also considered that singing the praises of God is one of those ordinances; we are now to consider another ordinance which is made effectual to salvation, namely, the word read or preached. We had occasion, under some former Answers, to speak of the word of God as contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and we considered it as the only rule of faith and obedience, and as having all the properties which are necessary to its being such, so that we may depend upon it as a perfect and infallible revelation of all things necessary to be believed and done, in order to our enjoying God here, and attaining eternal life hereafter. We are now to consider the word as made the subject of our study and inquiry; without which it would be of no use to us.

The Word is to be Read and Explained

We may observe in this Answer, then, something supposed; namely, that the word of God is to be read by us, and explained by those who are qualified and called to preach it. We are not, indeed, to conclude that the explanations of fallible men, how much soever they are fitted to preach the gospel, are of equal authority with the sacred oracles, as transmitted to us by those who received them by infallible

inspiration from the Spirit of God. The text is much more to be depended on than the comment upon it; and the truth of the latter is to be tried by the former. Yet the explanation of the word by qualified persons is to be reckoned a great blessing, which God is pleased to bestow upon his church, in order to our understanding and making a right use of the written word. Accordingly, preaching, as well as the reading of the word, is an ordinance which the Spirit of God makes subservient to the salvation of those who believe. It is farther supposed, however, that the word is to be read by us, and that we are to attend to the preaching of it. To neglect either of these is to despise our own souls, and deprive ourselves of the advantage of God's instituted means of grace. Hence, we are not to content ourselves with merely the reading of the word of God in our closets or families, but we must embrace all opportunities for hearing it preached in a public manner, the one being no less an ordinance of God than the other.

It is objected by some, that they know as much as ministers can teach them; at least, that they know enough, if they could but practise it. This objection sometimes savours of pride and self-conceit, in those who suppose themselves to understand more of the doctrines of the gospel than they really do. It can hardly be said concerning the greatest number of professors, that they either know as much as they ought, or that it is not possible for them to make advances in knowledge by a diligent attendance on an able and faithful ministry. However, that we may give the utmost scope to the objection, we will allow that some Christians know more than many ministers, who are less skilful than others in the word of truth. But it must be observed that there are other ends of hearing the word besides the gaining of knowledge, namely, the bringing of the doctrines of the gospel to our remembrance, and their being impressed on our affections; and for attaining these ends, the wisest and best of men have not thought it

below them to attend upon the ministry of those who knew less than themselves. Our Saviour was an hearer of the word before he entered on his public ministry;u and though it might, I think, truly be said of him, that though he was but twelve years old, he knew more than the doctors, in the midst of whom he sat in the temple, yet 'he heard and asked them questions.' And David, though he professes himself to have 'more understanding than all his teachers;' yet was glad to embrace all opportunities to go up into the house of the Lord; this being God's appointed means for a believer's making advances in grace.

The Word made Effectual to Salvation

There are several things particularly mentioned in this Answer, in which the Spirit of God makes the word, read or preached, effectual to salvation.

1. By the word the mind is enlightened and furnished with the knowledge of divine truths, which is a very great privilege. As faith is inseparably connected with salvation; so the knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel is necessary to faith, and this is said to 'come by hearing.' We must not content ourselves, however, with a mere assent to what is revealed in the word of God; but must duly weigh the tendency of it to our sanctification and consolation, and admire the beauty, excellency, and glory that there is in the great doctrines of the gospel, as the divine perfections shine forth in them to the utmost. We must also duly consider the importance of those doctrines which are contained in the gospel, and how they are to be improved by us to our spiritual advantage. And when we find our hearts filled with love to Jesus Christ, in proportion to those greater measures of light which he is pleased to impart to us, so that we grow in grace as well as in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ,z then the word may be said to be made effectual to our salvation, as our minds are very much enlightened and improved in the knowledge of those things which lead to it.

2. The word is made effectual to bring us under conviction; so that we see ourselves sinful and miserable creatures. In particular, we are hereby led to see those depths of wickedness which are in our hearts by nature, which otherwise could not be sufficiently discerned by us, much less improved to our spiritual advantage. Would we take a view of the manifold sins committed in our lives, with all their respective aggravations, so as to lay to heart the guilt that we have contracted by them; or would we be affected with the consideration of the misery which will follow, as we not only deserve the wrath and curse of God, but, without an interest in forgiving grace, are bound to conclude ourselves liable to it; we must be led into a knowledge of these things by the word of God. Again, if we would know whether our convictions of sin are such as have a more immediate reference to salvation, we must inquire whether they are attended with grief and sorrow of heart for the intrinsic evil of sin, as well as for its sad consequences;b or whether, when we have taken this view of it, we are led to apply for the remedy, and seek forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and strength against those corruptions which we have ground to charge ourselves with, and which have so much prevailed over us.

3. The word is made effectual to salvation, when what is contained in it tends to humble us and lay us low at the foot of God; when we acknowledge that all his judgments are right, or whatever punishments have been inflicted in execution of the threatenings which he has denounced have been less than our iniquities deserve; and when we receive reproofs for sins committed, with a particular application of them to ourselves, and are sensible of the guilt we have

contracted. But that we may make a right use of the word, for bringing us to this state of mind, let us consider what humbling considerations are contained in it which have a tendency to answer this end. The word of God represents to us the infinite distance which there is between him and us; so that the best of creatures are in his sight 'as nothing,e less than nothing, and vanity.' We here behold God as infinitely perfect, and men as very imperfect, and unlike him; and in particular, we behold him as a God of infinite holiness, spotless purity, and ourselves as impure, polluted creatures. This is a very humbling consideration. Again, the word of God discovers to us the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts; whereby we are naturally inclined to rebel against him; and whereby also we should, had it not been for his preventing and renewing grace, have run with the vilest of men in all excess of riot. It likewise leads us into the knowledge of the various kinds of sin which we have ground to charge ourselves with in the course of our lives, the frequent omission of those duties which are required of us, our great neglect of relative duties in the station in which God has fixed us, and the injury we have done to others, whom we have caused to stumble or fall by our example, or, at least, by our unconcernedness about their spiritual welfare. It also discovers to us the various aggravations of sins committed, as they are against light, love, mercies, and manifold engagements, which we are laid under; and the great contempt which we have cast on the blessed Jesus, in disregarding, or not improving, the benefits of his mediation. All these things, duly considered, have a tendency to humble us; and we are led into the discovery of them by the word of God.

4. The word of God is made effectual to salvation, as it has a tendency to drive sinners out of themselves, and to draw them to Jesus Christ. On the one hand, it shows them the utter impossibility of their saving themselves, by doing any thing which may bring them

into a justified state, and so render them accepted in the sight of God; and, on the other hand, it draws or leads them to Christ, whom they are enabled to behold by faith, as discovered in the gospel, to be a merciful and all-sufficient Saviour. The former is not only also antecedent, but necessary to the latter. For so long as we fancy that we have a sufficiency in ourselves to recommend us to God, and procure for us a right and title to eternal life, we shall never think of committing our souls into Christ's hand, in order to our obtaining salvation from him in his own way. Accordingly, the prophet brings in a self-conceited people as saying, 'We are lords, we will come no more unto thee.' No one will seek help or safety from Christ, who is not sensible of his own weakness, and of his being in the utmost danger without him. The first thing, then, which the Spirit of God does in the souls of men, when he makes the word effectual to salvation, is to lead them into an humble sense of their utter inability to do what is spiritually good or acceptable to God, or so to make atonement for the sins which they have committed against him that they may be brought into a justified state. It is, indeed, an hard matter to convince the sinner of this; for he is very prone to be full of himself, sometimes to glory, with the Pharisee,h in some religious duties he performs, and at other times to glory in his abstaining from those gross enormities which others are chargeable with. Or, if he will own himself to have exceeded many in sin; yet he is ready to think that, by some expedient or other, he shall be able to make atonement for it. This sets him at a great distance from Christ. As 'they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,' so persons of the character we are describing do not see their need of a Saviour, till they are convinced that they have nothing in themselves which can afford any relief to them, so as to deliver them from the guilt of sin and consequent misery. On this account our Saviour observes that 'publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God,'k or are made sensible of their need of Christ, being convinced of sin,

before the 'chief priests and elders,' who thought they had a righteousness of their own to justify them, and therefore refused to comply with the method of the gospel, in having recourse to Christ alone for this privilege. Now, the word of God is made use of by the Spirit to drive the sinner out of these strong-holds, and to show him that he cannot, by any means, recover himself out of that state of sin and misery into which he is plunged. It is a very hard thing for a person to be convinced of the truth of what our Saviour says, 'That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is an abomination in the sight of God,' that is, when it is put in the room of Christ and his righteousness; and to convince us of this is one of the great ends to which the word is made subservient, when rendered effectual to salvation. Moreover, the word of God draws the soul to Christ, so that it is persuaded and induced, from gospel-motives, to come to him, and, at the same time, enabled so to do by the almighty power of God, without which he cannot come to him.m The former draws objectively, the latter subjectively and internally. As to what the gospel does in this matter, it sets before us the excellency and glory of Christ as our great Mediator; represents him as a divine person, and, consequently, the object of faith, and as such 'able to save, to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him.' It considers him as having purchased salvation for his people; so that they may obtain forgiveness through his blood. It also discovers him as not only able but willing to save all that come to him by faith; so that he will in no wise cast them out.o It also represents him as having a right to us; we are his by purchase, and therefore it is our indispensable duty to give up ourselves unto him. It also makes known to us the greatness of his love, as the highest inducement to our giving ourselves up to him; the freeness, riches, and extensiveness of his grace, as ready to embrace the chief of sinners, and pass by all the injuries which they have done against him, and as giving them the utmost assurance that, having loved them in the world, he will love them to the end.

Thus Christ is set forth in the gospel; and when the word is made effectual to salvation, the soul is induced, or, as it were, constrained to love him, and to yield the obedience of faith to him in all things.

5. The word is made of use by the Spirit, as a means to conform the soul to the image of God, and subdue it to his will. The image of God in man is defaced by sin; so that he is not only rendered unlike him, but averse to him, stripped of all his beauty, and become abominable and filthy in his sight, and, as long as he remains so, is unmeet for communion with him, or for obtaining salvation from him. Now, when the Spirit of God communicates special grace to sinners, he stamps this image afresh upon the soul, which he renews in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; he sanctifies all its powers and faculties, and subdues the will, so that it yields a cheerful obedience to the will of God, and delights in his law after the inward man, and its language is, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' This change the Spirit of God works in the heart, by his internal efficacious influence; as was formerly observed, when we considered the work of conversion and sanctification as brought about by him. This effect is also ascribed to the word as a moral instrument; it is not attained without the word, and is indeed the principal end of the preaching of the gospel. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,'q and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

6. The word is farther said to be made effectual to salvation, as we are strengthened by it against temptation and corruption. By temptation those objects are presented to us which have a tendency to alienate our affections from God; and by corruption temptations are embraced and complied with, and the affections entangled in the

snare which is laid for them. Satan or the world presents the bait, and corrupt nature is easily allured and taken by it. The tempter uses many wiles and stratagems to ensnare us, and our own hearts are deceitful above all things, and without much difficulty turned aside, and so led captive by Satan at his will. But when the Spirit of God makes the word effectual to salvation, he takes occasion by it to detect the fallacy, lays open the designs of our spiritual enemies, and the pernicious tendency of them, and internally fortifies the soul against them, so that it is 'kept from the paths of the destroyer;' and this he does by presenting other and better objects to engage our affections, and leading us into the knowledge of those glorious truths which may prevent a sinful compliance with the solicitations of the devil. According to the nature of the temptation which may occur, we are directed to the precepts or promises contained in the word of God; which, being duly improved by us, have a tendency to keep the heart steady and fixed in the ways of God.

7. The word of God is made effectual by the Spirit, as he thereby builds the soul up in grace, and establishes it in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. The work of grace is not immediately brought to perfection, but is, in a progressive way, making advances towards it. We are first made holy by the renovation of our hearts and lives, and made partakers of those spiritual consolations which accompany or flow from the work of sanctification; and then we are built up in holiness and comfort, and so go from strength to strength, and are more and more established in the ways of God. Now this work is effected in us by the preaching of the word, whereby we are said to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;' so that every step we take in our way to heaven, from the time that our faces are first turned towards it, we are enabled to go on safely and comfortably, till the work of grace is perfected in glory.

BY WHOM AND HOW THE WORD IS TO BE READ

QUESTION CLVI. Is the word of God to be read by all?

ANSWER. Although all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation, yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves, and with their families, to which end the holy scriptures are to be translated out of the original, into vulgar languages.

QUESTION CLVII. How is the word of God to be read?

ANSWER. The holy scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them, with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them, with diligence and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.

THE word being made effectual to salvation, which was the subject last insisted on, supposes not only that we read it as translated into vulgar languages, but that we understand what we read, in order to our applying it to our particular case, and improving it for our spiritual advantage. These things are next to be considered, as contained in the Answers we are now to explain.

The Word to be read by and to all men

We have an account in the former of these Answers, of the obligation which all persons are under to read, or at least, attend to the reading

of the word of God.

1. It is to be read publicly in the congregation, by those who are appointed for that purpose. The church and all the public worship performed in it, are founded on the doctrines contained in scripture. Hence, every one who would be made wise to salvation, ought to be well acquainted with scripture. Besides, the reading of it publicly, as a part of the worship performed in the church, is not only a testimony of the high esteem which we have for it, but will be of great use to those who, through a sinful neglect to read it in families, or in their private retirement, or who, through the stupidity of their hearts, and the many incumbrances of worldly business, will not allow themselves time to do so, remain strangers to those great and important truths which are contained in it. Moreover, that the public reading of the word is a duty, appears from the charge which the apostle gives that the epistle which he wrote to the church at Thessalonica should 'be read unto all the holy brethren.' And he gives a similar charge to the church at Colosse.u We may add, that the scripture is not only to be read, but explained; which is the principal design of the preaching of it. This is no new practice. For the Old Testament was not only read, but explained in the synagogues 'every sabbath day;' and the explaining of it is called, by a metonymy, 'reading Moses,' that is, explaining the law which was given by him. Thus 'Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood, opened the book in the sight of all the people,' and, with some of his brethren who assisted him, 'read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading,' that is, the meaning of it.y In like manner our Saviour went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up and read a part of the holy scriptures in the prophecy of Isaiah; and when he had done so, he applied it to himself, and showed them how 'it was fulfilled in their ears.' It is supposed, therefore, that the word is to be publicly read.

The only thing in this Answer which needs explanation is the clause, 'All are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation.' We are not to suppose that there is an order of men whom Christ has appointed to be readers in the church, distinct from ministers. But the meaning of the expression may be, that all are not to read the word of God together, in a public assembly, with a loud voice; for to do so would tend rather to confusion than to edification. Nor ought any to be appointed to read, but such as are grave, pious, and able to read distinctly, for the edification of others. And who is so fit for this work, as the minister whose office is, not only to read the scripture, but to explain it in the ordinary course of his ministry?

2. The word of God is to be read in our families. This duty is absolutely necessary for the propagating of religion in them. It is indeed shamefully neglected; and the neglect of it is one great reason of the ignorance and decay of piety in the rising generation, and is also contrary to God's command, as well as the example of those who are highly commended for this practice. Thus, 'Abraham commanded his children, and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord.'b

3. The word of God ought to be read by every one, in private; and that not only occasionally, but frequently, as one of the great duties of life. Thus God says to Joshua, 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.'d And our Saviour commands the Jews to 'search the scriptures.' In some of his discourses with them too, though he was sensible that they were a degenerate people, yet he takes it for granted that they had not altogether laid aside this duty.f This practice, especially where the word of God has not only been read, but the meaning of it sought after and attended to with great diligence, is recommended as a peculiar excellency in Christians,

who, as attending to it, are styled 'more noble' than others who are defective in this duty. That it is the duty of every one to read the word of God, appears from the fact that it is given us with this design. If God is pleased, as it were, to send us an epistle from heaven, it is a very great instance of contempt cast on it, as well as on the divine condescension expressed in it, for us to neglect to read it. Does he impart his mind to us in scripture; and is it not our indispensable duty to pay the utmost regard to it?h Moreover, our own advantage should be a farther inducement to us to read the word of God; since his design in giving it was that we might believe, and that believing, we may attain life through the name of Christ. The word of God is sometimes compared to 'a sword,' for our defence against our spiritual enemies;k and is therefore designed for use, without which it is of no advantage to us. It is elsewhere compared to 'a lamp to our feet;' which is not designed for an ornament, but to guide us in the right way; so that we must attend to its direction. It is also compared to 'food,' whereby we are said to be 'nourshed up in the words of faith and good doctrine;' and as 'new-born babes' we are exhorted to 'desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.'m But this end cannot be attained unless the word be read and applied by us to our own necessities.

We are now led to take notice of the opposition which the Papists make to the general reading of scripture. They deny the common people the liberty of reading the scriptures in their own language, without leave given them from the bishop, or some other of their spiritual guides, who are authorized to allow or deny this privilege, as they think fit. As an instance of their opposition, they have sometimes burnt whole impressions of the Bible, in the open market place; as well as expressed their contempt by burning particular copies of scripture, or dragging them through the streets, throwing them in the kennels, and stamping them under feet, or tearing them

in pieces, as though the Bible were the vilest book in the world. Some persons have even been burnt for reading it. That it might be brought into the utmost contempt, the Papists have east the most injurious reproaches upon it, calling it a bending rule, a nose of wax, a dumb judge; and some have blasphemed it, by saying that it has no more authority than Æsop's fables, and have compared the psalms of David to profane ballads. By all this conduct, too, they pretend to consult the good of the people, that they may not be misled by scripture. They generally allege in their vindication, that they oppose, not so much the reading of the scripture, as the reading of those translations of it which have been made by Protestants; and they say that it is our Bible, not that which they allow to be the word of God, which they treat with such injurious contempt. The truth is, however, they do not so much bring objections against scripture, taken from some passages which they pretend to be falsely translated; but their design is, plainly, to keep the people in ignorance, that they may not, as the consequence of their reading it, imbibe those doctrines which will, as they pretend, turn them aside from the faith of the church. Hence, they usually maintain that the common people ought to be kept in ignorance, as an expedient to excite devotion; and that, by this means, they will be the more humble, and pay a greater deference to those unwritten traditions which are propagated by them, and pretended to be of equal authority with scripture, which the common people must take up with instead of it. Indeed, the consequence corresponds with their desire; for the people appear to be grossly ignorant, and think themselves bound to believe whatever their leaders pretend to be true, without exercising a judgment of discretion, or endeavouring to know the mind of God.

What the Papists generally allege in opposing the common people's reading the Bible, is that scripture contains 'some things hard to be understood,' as the apostle Peter expresses, 'which they that are

unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.' Now, it must be allowed that some things contained in scripture are hard to be understood; inasmuch as the gospel contains some mysteries which finite wisdom cannot comprehend; and the great doctrines of the gospel are sometimes unintelligible by us, by reason of the ignorance and alienation of our minds from the life of God, as well as from the imperfection of the present state, in which we know but in part. Yet they who, with diligence and humility, desire and earnestly seek after the knowledge of those truths which are more immediately subservient to their salvation, shall find that their labour is not lost. But in following on to know the Lord, they shall know as much of him as is necessary to their glorifying and enjoying him; as the prophet says, 'Then shall ye know if ye follow on to know the Lord.'o It is to be owned that there are some depths in scripture which cannot be fathomed by a finite understanding; and these should raise our admiration, and put us upon adoring the unsearchable wisdom of God, as well as excite us to an humble confession that 'we are but of yesterday, and know' comparatively 'nothing.' Yet there are many doctrines which we may attain a clear knowledge of, and improve to the glory of God in the conduct of our lives. Thus the prophet speaks of 'an highway,' called 'the way of holiness,' concerning which he says, that 'way-faring men,' who walk in it, 'though fools,' that is, such as have the meanest capacity as to other things, 'shall not err therein;'q that is, they who humbly desire the teaching of the Spirit, whereby they may be made acquainted with the mind and will of God, shall not be led out of the way by any thing which he has revealed to his people in his word. It is very injurious to the sacred oracles to infer that, because some things are hard to be understood, all who read them must necessarily wrest them to their own destruction. Besides, the apostle does not say that all do so, but only those who are 'unlearned and unstable;'—'unlearned,' that is, altogether unacquainted with the

doctrines of the gospel, not making them the matter of their study and inquiry; and 'unstable,' that is, such as give way to scepticism, or they whose faith is not built on the right foundation, but are inclined to turn aside from the truth with every wind of doctrine. This God's people may hope to be kept from, while they study the holy scriptures, and earnestly desire to be made wise by them unto salvation. [See Note U, page 472.]

The Papists farther allege against the common people being permitted to read the scriptures, that it will make them proud, and induce them to inquire into those things which do not belong to them, so that they will soon think themselves wiser than their teachers. They allege also that the reading of the scriptures by the common people has been the occasion of all the heresies which are in the world. But whatever ill consequences attend a person's reading of scripture are to be ascribed, not to the use, but to the abuse of it. Will any one say that we ought to abstain from eating and drinking, because some are guilty of excess in them, by gluttony and drunkenness? No more ought we to abstain from reading the scriptures, because some make a wrong use of them. As to its being supposed that by reading the scriptures some, through pride, will think themselves wiser than their teachers, we will allow they may do so, without passing a wrong judgment on themselves. But it is an injurious treatment of mankind, to keep the world in ignorance that they may not detect the fallacies, or expose the errors, of those who pretend to be their guides in matters of faith. As to the allegation that the reading of scripture has been the occasion of many heresies in the world, I am rather inclined to think that this evil ought to be charged on men's neglect of that duty, or, at least, on their not studying the scripture with diligence and an humble dependence on God for his blessing.

It may be observed, that whatever reasons are assigned by the Papists for their denying the people the liberty of reading the scripture, seem to carry a pretence of great kindness to them. The scriptures are pretended to be withheld from them that they may not be led out of the way, and do themselves hurt, just as it is a dangerous thing to put a knife or a sword into a child's or a madman's hand; and thus they suppose the common people to be ignorant, and would keep them so. But, whatever reasons they assign, the true reason why they so much oppose the reading of scripture is, that it detects and exposes the absurdity of many doctrines which are imbibed by them, and which will not bear to be tried by it. If they can but persuade their votaries, that whatever is handed down by tradition as a rule of faith, is to be received without the least hesitation, though contrary to the mind of God in scripture, they are not likely to meet with any opposition from them, let them advance doctrines never so absurd or contrary to reason.

It may be inquired whether they universally prohibit the reading of scripture? Now, it must be allowed that the vulgar Latin version of it may be read by any one who understands it, without falling under their censure. But then they are sensible that the greater part of the common people cannot understand it. Besides, though they should understand it, it is so corrupt a translation, that it seems plainly calculated to give countenance to the errors they advance. It hence appears from their whole management in this matter, that their design is to deprive mankind of one of the greatest blessings which God has granted them, and to discourage persons from the performance of a duty which is absolutely necessary to promote the interest of God and religion in the world. We must conclude, then, that it is an invaluable privilege that we are not only permitted but commanded to read the scriptures, as translated into the language which is generally understood by us.

We are thus led to consider the inference deduced in the latter part of the Answer which we are explaining, namely, that the scriptures are to be translated out of the original into vulgar languages. That this ought to be done is evident from the fact that reading signifies nothing where the words are not understood. Nor is every private Christian obliged to addict himself to the study of the languages in which the scriptures were written; for this is a work of so much pains and difficulty, that few have opportunity or inclination to apply themselves to it to any considerable purpose. Hence, the words of scripture must be rendered intelligible to all, and, consequently, translated into a language they understand. That this ought to be done may be farther argued from the care of providence as to the languages in which scripture was originally given. The scriptures were delivered to the Jews, in their own language. The greatest part of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew; and those few sections or chapters in Ezra and Daniel, which were written in the Chaldee language, were not inserted till they understood that language. And when the world generally understood the Greek tongue, so that there was no necessity for the common people to learn it in schools, and the Hebrew was not understood by those nations for whom the gospel was designed; it pleased God to deliver the New Testament in the Greek language. It is hence beyond dispute that he intended that the scripture should not only be read, but understood by the common people. Moreover, when the gospel was sent to various nations of different languages, the Spirit of God, by an extraordinary and miraculous dispensation in which he bestowed on them the gift of tongues, furnished the apostles to speak to every one in their own language; a dispensation which would have been needless, if it were not necessary for persons to read or hear the holy scriptures with understanding.

Directions for Beading the Word of God

We are now to consider how the word of God is to be read, that we may understand and improve what it contains to our spiritual advantage. On this subject there are several directions given in the latter of the Answers we are explaining.

I. We must read the scriptures with a high and reverent esteem of them, arising from a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God. That they are so, has been proved by several arguments. We will suppose that those who read them are persuaded that they are so; and their having this persuasion will beget a high and reverent esteem of them. The perfections of God, and particularly his wisdom, sovereignty, and goodness, shine forth with as much glory in his word, as they do in any of his works. It hence has a preference to all human compositions. Whatever is revealed in it is to be admired and depended on for its unerring wisdom and infallible verity; so that it is impossible for those who understand and improve it, to be turned aside by it from the way of truth. We are also to consider the use which God makes of it, to propagate his kingdom and interest in the world. It is by means of it that he convinces men of sin, and discovers to them the way of obtaining forgiveness of it, and victory over it; and thoroughly furnishes them unto every good work.u For this reason the wisest and best of men have expressed the highest esteem and value for it. The psalmist mentions the love he had to it, as a person who was in a rapture: 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' 'It is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.'y Such high veneration as this we all ought to have; otherwise we may sometimes be tempted to read it with prejudice, and may, in consequence, through the corruption of our nature, be prone to cavil at it, as we sometimes do at those writings which are merely human, and which savour of the weakness and imperfection of their authors;

and thus it will be impossible for us to receive any saving advantage from reading it.

II. We must, in reading the word of God, be sensible that he alone can enable us to understand it. To read the scriptures and not understand them, will be of no advantage to us. Hence, it is supposed that we are endeavouring to have our minds rightly informed and furnished with the knowledge of divine truths. But by reason of the corruption, ignorance, and depravity of our natures, this knowledge cannot be attained without a peculiar blessing from God attending our endeavours. We ought therefore to glorify him, by dependence on him, for this privilege,—sensible that all spiritual wisdom is from him. For if we would see a beauty and a glory in those things which are revealed in scripture, and be thoroughly established in the doctrines of the gospel, so as not to be in danger of being turned aside from them, or, especially, if we would improve them to our being made wise unto salvation, we must consider these objects of desire as the gift of God. It is he alone who can enable us to understand his word aright; for it is not less necessary that there should be an internal illumination of our minds, than that there should be an external revelation as the matter of our studies and inquiries. Thus our Saviour not only repeated the words of those scriptures which concerned himself, to the two disciples going to Emmaus; but 'he opened their understandings, that they might understand them.' Without this divine illumination, a person may have the brightest parts, and most penetrating judgment in other respects, and yet be unacquainted with the mind of God in his word, and inclined to embrace those doctrines which are contrary to it. In particular, if God is not pleased to succeed our endeavours, we shall remain destitute of the experimental knowledge of divine truths, which is absolutely necessary to salvation.

III. We must read the word of God with a desire to know, believe, and obey his will, revealed in it. If we do not desire to know or understand the meaning of scripture, it will remain no better than a sealed book to us; and, instead of receiving advantage from it, we shall be ready to entertain prejudices against it, till we lay it aside with the utmost dislike, and, in consequence, be utterly estranged from the life of God through the ignorance and vanity of our minds. We must also read the word of God with a desire to have our faith established by it, that our feet may be set upon a rock, and we may be delivered from all manner of doubts and hesitations, with respect to those important truths which are revealed in it. And we ought to desire, not only to believe, but to yield a constant and cheerful obedience to every thing which God therein requires of us.

IV. Our reading the word of God ought to be accompanied with meditation, and the exercise of self-denial. Our thoughts should be wholly and intensely taken up with the subject of it as persons who are studiously, and with the greatest earnestness, pressing after the knowledge of those doctrines which are of the highest importance, that our profiting in the study of it may appear to ourselves and others. As to the exercise of self-denial, all those perverse reasonings which our carnal minds are prone to suggest against the matter of divine revelation, are to be laid aside. If we are resolved to believe nothing but what we can comprehend, we ought to consider that the gospel contains unsearchable mysteries, which surpass finite wisdom; so that we must be content to acknowledge that we know but in part. There is a deference to be paid to the wisdom of God which eminently appears in every thing he has discovered to us in his word; and hence we must adore the divine perfections which are displayed in it, whilst we retain an humble sense of the imperfection of our own knowledge. Our reason is not to be considered as useless; but we must desire that it may be sanctified, and inclined to receive

whatever God is pleased to impart. We are to exercise the grace of self-denial also with respect to that obstinacy of our wills whereby they are naturally disinclined to acquiesce in, approve of, and yield obedience to, the will of God; so that we may be entirely satisfied that every thing which he commands in his word, is holy, just, and good.

V. The word of God is to be read with fervent prayer. 'If any man lack wisdom,' says the apostle, 'let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.' The advantage which we expect by reading the word, is, as was formerly observed, his gift; and hence we are humbly to supplicate him for it. There are many things in his word which are hard to be understood; so that we ought to say, whenever we take the scriptures into our hands, as the psalmist does, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.'c We may, in this case, humbly acknowledge the weakness of our capacities, and the blindness of our minds, which render it necessary for us to desire to be instructed by him in the way of truth. We may also plead that his design in giving us his word, was that it might be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths; so that we dread the thoughts of walking in darkness, when there is such a clear discovery of those things which are so glorious and necessary to be known. We may also plead that our Lord Jesus is revealed to his people as the prophet of his church; and that whatever office he is invested with, he delights to execute, as his glory is concerned in his doing so; so that we trust and hope that he will lead us, by his Spirit, into all truth. We may also plead the impossibility of our attaining the knowledge of divine things, without his assistance; and how much it would redound to his glory, as well as our own comfort and advantage, if he will be pleased to lead us into the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in him. This we cannot but importunately desire, being sensible of the sad consequences of

our being destitute of it; inasmuch as we should remain in darkness, though favoured with the light of the gospel.

VI. The word of God is to be read with diligence, and with attention to its matter and scope. We have hitherto been directed, in this Answer, to apply ourselves to the reading of scripture, with that frame of spirit which becometh Christians, who desire to know the mind and will of God;—that we ought to have our minds disengaged from those prejudices which would hinder our receiving any advantage from it, and to exercise those graces which the nature and importance of the duty require; that we ought to depend upon God, and address ourselves to him by faith and prayer for the knowledge of those divine truths which are contained in scripture. But, in this last Head, we are led to speak of some other methods conducive to our understanding scripture; which are the effects of diligence and of attention to the sense of the words of it, and the scope and design of them. This being an useful Head, I shall take occasion to enlarge on it more than I have done on others, and to add some things which may serve as a farther means to direct us how we may read the scriptures with understanding. I might here observe that they who are well acquainted with the languages in which they were written, and are able to make just remarks on the words, phrases, and particles used in them, some of which cannot be expressed in another language without losing much of their native beauty and significance, have certainly the advantage of all others. But as the greater part of mankind cannot enjoy this advantage, they being strangers to the Greek and Hebrew languages, they must have recourse to some other helps for the attaining of the desired end.

1. It will be of great use for them to consult those expositions which we have of the whole or some particular parts of scripture; of which some are more large, others concise,—some critical, others practical.

I shall forbear making any remarks tending to depreciate the performance of some expositors, or extol the judgment of others; only this must be observed, that many have passed over some difficulties of scripture, and by their omissions have given a degree of disgust to the more inquisitive part of Christians. The course they have pursued may be attributed, in some instances, to a commendable modesty, which we find not only in those who have written in our own language, but in those who have written in others, whereby they tacitly confess, either that they could not solve the difficulties which they pass by, or that it was better to leave them undetermined, than to attempt solutions which, at best, would amount to little more than probable conjectures. It may also be observed that others who have commented on scripture, seemed to be prepossessed with a particular scheme of doctrine, which, if duly considered, is not very defensible; and they are obliged, sometimes, to strain the sense of a text, that it may appear to speak agreeably to their own sentiments. Their expositions, however, may, in other respects, be used with great advantage.

We may add, that as the word preached is designed to lead us into the knowledge of scripture doctrines, we ought to attend upon and improve it, as a means conducive to this end, and to bless God for the great helps and advantages we enjoy. But more shall be said on this subject under some following Answers relating to the preaching and hearing of the word.

2. We ought to make the best use we can of those translations of scripture which we have in our own language. If we compare these together, we shall find, not only that the style in which one is written differs from that of another, agreeably to the respective times in which they were written, but that they differ very much in the sense they give of many places of scripture. Their differences may easily be

accounted for from the various acceptations of the same Hebrew or Greek word as may be observed in all other languages. There are also difficulties relating to the proper manner of translating some particular phrases, or to the various senses in which several particles are to be understood. Now, by comparing translations together, they who are unacquainted with the original, will be sometimes led into a sense more agreeable to the context and the analogy of faith, by one of them, than by another. But we will suppose the English reader to confine himself to the translation which is generally used by us. Though this cannot be supposed to be of equal authority with the original, or so perfect that it admits of no correction as to any word or phrase which it contains; yet I would be far from taking occasion to depreciate it, or to say any thing which may stagger the faith of any, as though we were in danger of being led aside by it from the way of truth. Some who plead for the necessity of a new translation of the Bible, pretend that we are in some such danger; though it is much to be feared, that if any new translation should be attempted, it would deviate more from the sense of the Holy Ghost, than that which we now have, and have reason to bless God for, and which, I cannot but think, comes as near the original as most that are extant. We shall therefore consider how this may be used to the best advantage, for our understanding the mind of God.

Now, let it be observed, that there is another translation of words referred to in the margin of our Bibles, which will sometimes give very great light to the sense of the text, and appear more emphatic, and rather to be acquiesced in. I shall give a short specimen of some texts of scripture which may be illustrated from the marginal reading. In Job 4:18, it is said, 'He put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly.' In the margin, it is observed that the words may be read, 'He put no trust in his servants, nor in his angels, in whom he put light.' This reading points out the excellency

of the nature of angels, and the wisdom with which they are endowed; and shows that, notwithstanding these, God put no trust in them, not having thought fit to make use of them in creating the world, nor having committed to them the government of it. Again, in Isaiah 53:3, it is said, speaking of our Saviour, 'We hid, as it were, our faces from him;' but in the margin it is, 'He hid, as it were, his face from us.' The latter reading implies that as he bore our grief, so he was charged with our guilt; and accordingly is represented, as having his face covered, as an emblem of his bearing it. Or it denotes his concealing or veiling his glory, as he who was really in the form of God, appeared in the form of a servant. Again, in Jer. 42:20, the prophet reproving the people, says, 'Ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, pray for us;' but in the margin it is, 'You have used deceit against your souls.' Here the marginal reading contains a farther illustration of the text; as it not only denotes their hypocrisy, but the consequence of it, namely, their destruction. This sense agrees very well with the threatening denounced in verse 22, that they should 'die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.' The same prophet, in chap. 10:14, speaking of idolaters, says, 'Every man is brutish in his knowledge;' but in the margin it is, 'Every man is more brutish than to know.' Here their stupidity is assigned rather to their ignorance than to their knowledge. Again, in Zechariah 12:5, it is said, 'The governors of Judah shall say in their hearts. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God;' but in the margin it is, 'The governors of Judah shall say, There is strength to me, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the Lord of hosts.' This reading seems more agreeable to what follows; which contains several promises of deliverance and salvation, which God would work for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Hence, we are not to suppose them saying, 'Jerusalem shall be our strength;' but, 'The Lord of hosts shall be our strength,' who is a safe-guard to Jerusalem, as well as to the governors of

Judah. Again, in Acts 17:23, it is said, 'As I passed by, and beheld your devotions;' but in the margin it is, 'the gods, whom ye worship,' or the things ye pay divine honour to; a reading which is very agreeable to the context, and the design of the apostle. Again, in chap. 22:29, it is said, 'They departed from him, which should have examined him,' meaning Paul; but in the margin it is, 'tortured him;' and this reading refers to the Roman custom of scourging, and thereby tormenting one who was under examination for supposed crimes. Again, in Gal. 1:14, the apostle says, 'I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals;' but in the margin it is, 'my equals in years;' a reading which seems much more agreeable to the apostle's design. Again, in Heb. 2:7, it is said in the text, 'Thou madest him,' that is, our Saviour, 'a little lower than the angels;' but in the margin it is, 'a little while inferior to them.' Here there is a reference to his state of humiliation, which continued, comparatively, but a little while.

Further, in order to our making a right use of our English translation, that we may understand the mind of God contained in it, let it be observed that, by reason of the conciseness of the style of the Hebrew and Greek texts, there are several words left out, which must be supplied to complete the sense, and that these are inserted in an Italic character. Now, it will not be difficult for us to determine whether the insertion be just or not; when we consider that the translators often take their direction in making it from some words, either expressed or understood, in the context. Thus in Heb. 8:7, 'If the first covenant had been faultless,' &c., the word 'covenant' is inserted, as it is also in verse 13, because it is expressly mentioned in verses 8–10. Again, in chap. 10:6, it is said, 'In sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure.' Here the word 'sacrifices' is supplied from the foregoing verse; and, for the same reason, 'offerings' might as well have been supplied, as it is verse 8. And, in verse 25, we are

commanded to 'exhort one another;' where 'one another' is supplied from the foregoing verse. Again, in 1 Pet. 4:16, 'If any man suffer as a Chrstian, let him not be ashamed,' the words, 'any man suffer' are inserted as agreeable to what is mentioned verse 15. Again, in Ephes. 2:1, 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,' the words 'hath he quickened' are supplied from verse 5; and our translators might as well have added, 'you hath he quickened, together with him,' namely, Christ. These instances I mention only as a specimen of insertions to complete the sense in our translation; and we shall find that the words supplied in other scriptures are, for the most part, sufficiently just. But if they be not so, they are subject to correction, without the least imputation of altering the words of scripture, while we are endeavouring to give the true sense of it; and we may be allowed, without perverting the sacred writings, sometimes to supply other words instead of them, which may seem more agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost. Thus, in Eph. 6:12, it is said, 'We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Here the word 'places' is supplied by our translators; and, in the margin, it is observed that it might as well be rendered 'heavenly places.' Now, because there is no spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, they choose, without regard to the proper sense of the Greek word, to render it 'high places;' while in chap. 3:10, where there is no appearance of such an objection, they render the same word, 'heavenly places;' though, I think, the word in both scriptures, might better be rendered 'in what concerns heavenly things.' Again, in 2 Cor. 6:1, it is said, 'We, as workers together with him, beseech you,' &c. Here, 'with him,' is supplied to complete the sense; but, I think, it might better have been left out, and then the sense would have been, ministers are 'workers together with one another,' and not 'together with God.' They are honoured to be employed by God, as moral instruments which he makes use of; but they have no other causality in bringing about the work of grace. The principal reason why the

words 'with him' are supplied, is that the supplement seems agreeable to the apostle's mode of speaking, in 1 Cor. 3:9, 'We are labourers together with God.' But, I think, those words might better be rendered, 'Labourers together of God;' meaning that we are jointly engaged in his work. There is, therefore, no reason from this passage to supply the words 'with him,' in the text just referred to.

3. If we would understand the sense of a particular text of scripture, we must consider its connection with the context. Accordingly, we must observe the scope, design, or argument insisted on, in the paragraph in which it is contained. Thus, in Rom. 8., the apostle's design in general, is to prove that there is 'no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' and to show who they are who may conclude themselves to be interested in this privilege, together with the many blessings which are connected with it or flow from it. In Heb. 1. the apostle's principal design is, as he intimates in the fourth verse, to prove the excellency and glory of Christ, as Mediator, above the angels; and this argument is particularly insisted on, and illustrated, in the following part of the chapter. In chap. 11. his design is to give an account of the great things the Old Testament church were enabled to do and suffer by faith; on which subject there is an induction of particulars. In Rom. 5. the apostle insists on the doctrine of original sin, and shows how sin and death first entered into the world, and by what means we may expect to be delivered from them; and so he takes occasion to compare Adam and Christ as two distinct heads or representatives of those who were included in the respective covenants which mankind were under,—by the former of whom, sin reigned unto death, and, by the latter, grace and righteousness unto eternal life. Again, in chap, 7., especially from verse 5, the general argument insisted on, is the conflict and opposition which there is between sin and grace, and the manner in which corrupt nature discovers itself in the souls of the regenerated,

together with the disturbance and uneasiness which it constantly gives them. In Psal. 88. we have an account of the distress which a soul is in, when under divine desertion, and brought to the very brink of despair. In Psal. 72., under the type of the glory of Solomon's kingdom, and the advantages his subjects should receive, the glory and excellency of Christ's kingdom is illustrated, together with the gospel state and its blessings. In Psal. 51. David represents a true penitent as addressing himself to God for forgiveness; though making particular reference to his own case, after he had sinned in the matter of Uriah. Again, the general argument of Isa. 53. is to set forth the sufferings of Christ whereby he made satisfaction for sin, together with the glory redounding to himself, and the advantages accruing to believers.

Further, we must, in examining any passage, consider the method made use of in managing the argument; whether it is close reasoning, and the deduction of consequences from premises; or whether it is an explanation of what was designed to inform the judgment, and was laid down before in a general proposition; or whether the principal design of the paragraph is to regulate the conduct of our lives, awaken our consciences out of a stupid frame, or excite in us becoming affections; and we are to observe how every part of it is adapted to answer these ends. Moreover, we are to consider who is the person speaking or spoken to; whether they are the words of God, the church, or the inspired writer; and, whether they are directed to particular persons, or to all men in general Here we may often observe that, in the same paragraph, there is an apostrophe, or turning of the discourse from one person to another. Nothing is more common than this in the poetical writings of scripture. Thus in the Psalms of David, sometimes God is represented as speaking to man, and then man as speaking to or concerning God. We may observe this, for example, in Psal. 137. In

verses 1–4, there is a relation of the church's troubles in Babylon; in verses 5, 6, the psalmist addresses his discourse to the church: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning;' in verse 7, he speaks to God, praying that he would 'remember the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof;' and in verses 8, 9, he turns his discourse to Babylon, as a nation destined to destruction. Again, in Psal. 2. he speaks concerning the rage of the heathen against Christ and his church, and that disappointment and ruin which they should meet with for it. In verse 6, he represents God the Father as saying concerning Christ, 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion;' in verses 7, 8, Christ is brought in as making mention of the decree of God relating to his character and office as Mediator, and the success of his kingdom as extended to 'the uttermost parts of the earth,' pursuant to his intercession, which was lounded on his satisfaction; and, in verses 10–12, the psalmist turns his discourse to those persecuting powers, or the kings of the earth, whom he had spoken of in the former part of the psalm, and instructs them what methods they should take to escape God's righteous vengeance. Such changes as these of persons speaking, or spoken to, may be observed in many of the psalms. Throughout the whole Book of Canticles, also, there is an interchangeable discourse between Christ and his church, which is sometimes called his spouse, at other times his sister. Sometimes he speaks to the church, and at other times of it. In other places the church is represented as speaking to him, or to the daughters of Jerusalem, namely, those professors of religion who had little more than a form of godliness. Again, we often find that there is a change with respect to the persons speaking, spoken to, or of, in the writings of the prophets, as well as in the poetical writings. This may be observed in Isa: 63., throughout the chapter. And, in Micah 7:18–20, there is a change of persons in almost every sentence: 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, &c. He retaineth not his

anger for ever; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.'

We are farther to consider the occasion of what is laid down in any chapter, paragraph, or book of scripture, which we desire to understand. Thus the particular occasion of the book of Lamentations, was the approaching ruin of Judah, and the miseries which they should be exposed to when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans. That this was the occasion of the book appears from the subject of it; though, it may be, that which was the more immediate occasion of it, was that the prophet might lament the death of good Josiah. This event the prophet probably had a peculiar eye to, when he says, 'The crown is fallen from our head;'h as well as the destruction of the whole nation which should soon follow, in which their civil and religious liberties would be invaded by their enemies, who would oppress them and lead them captive.—Again, the principal occasion of the apostle's writing the epistle to the Galatians. was that he might establish some among them in the faith of the gospel, who were much disposed to turn aside from him who had called them, and to embrace another scheme of religion which was subversive of the gospel. Accordingly, in chap. 1:6, by this 'other gospel' which he dissuades them from turning aside unto, we are to understand those doctrines which they had imbibed from those false teachers who endeavoured either to re-establish the observance of the ceremonial law, or to put them upon seeking righteousness and life from their observing the precepts of the moral law,—a course which tended to overthrow the doctrine of justification by Christ's righteousness, on which the apostle often insists both in this and in his other epistles.—This method of inquiring into the occasion of what is mentioned in particular paragraphs of scripture, will often

give light to some things contained in them. Thus we read, in Matt. 21:23–27, that the chief priests and elders asked our Saviour the question, 'By what authority doest thou these things?' Now, had this question proceeded from an humble mind, desirous to be convinced by his reply to it, or had he not often, in their hearing, asserted the authority by which he did those things; he would, doubtless, have told them that he received a commission to do them from the Father, and that every miracle which he wrought was, as it were, a confirming seal annexed to it. But our Saviour, knowing the design of the question, and the character of the persons who asked it, does not think fit to make any reply to it, rather choosing to put them to silence, by proposing another question to them which he knew they would not be forward to answer, relating to the baptism of John, namely, whether it was from heaven, or of men. This was certainly the best method he could have taken; for he dealt with them as cavillers, who were to be put to silence, and at the same time made ashamed.

4. In order to our understanding the sense of scripture, we must, so far as it is possible, compare the phrases or modes of expression as well as the subject insisted on, with what occurs in parallel places. In several of the historical parts of scripture, for example, we have the same history, or, at least, many things tending to illustrate it. Thus the history of the reign of the kings of Judah and Israel, is the principal subject of the books of Kings and Chronicles, one of which often refers to, as well as explains, the other, and, by comparing them together, we shall find that one gives light to the other. Thus it is said, in 2 Kings 12:2, that 'Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.' Here it is intimated that, after the death of Jehoiada, he did evil in the sight of the Lord. That he did so, however, is not particularly mentioned in this chapter, which principally insists on that part of

his reign which was commendable. But if we compare it with 2 Chron. 24, we there have an account of his reign after the death of Jehoiada, how he 'set up idolatry,' being instigated by his princes, who flattered him or 'made obeisance unto him;' how he disregarded the prophets sent to testify against these practices; and how he 'stoned Zechariah in the court of the house of the Lord,' for his faithful reproof and prophetic intimation of the consequence of his idolatry,—an act in which he showed the greatest ingratitude, and forgetfulness of the good things which had been done for him by his father, who set him on the throne. We have also an account of the time when the Syrians came up against him; how they overcame him with a small company of men; and how 'the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.'k—Again, in the Book of Kings we have but a short history of the reign of Azariah, otherwise called Uzziah, and of his being 'smitten by the Lord, so that he was a leper until the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house.' But in 2 Chron. 26. there is a larger account of him, of his success in war, and of the honour and the riches which he gained by it; and there is also a particular account of the reason of the Lord's smiting him with leprosy,—namely, his invading a branch of the priest's office.—Again, in the history of the reign of Manasseh, in 2 Kings 21., we have an account of only the vile and abominable part of it. But in 2 Chron. 33. we have an account not only of his wickedness, but of his repentance, together with the affliction which occasioned it.

Moreover, when we read the prophetic writings, we must, for our better understanding them, compare them with the particular history of the reign of those kings in whose time they were written, and with the history of the state of the Jewish church, of their alliances or wars with neighbouring princes, and of the sins which they were guilty of, which gave occasion to their being sometimes

insulted and overcome by them, till their ruin was completed in being carried captive into Babylon. Thus the seventh chapter of Isaiah gives an account of the attempt of Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, against Ahaz, and contains a prediction of their miscarriage in this attempt; it also foretells that the king of Assyria should be hired to assist Ahaz, but should, instead, deal deceitfully with him, so that he should deprive Judah of their ornaments, and impoverish them instead of being helpful to them. Now, of these matters we have a farther explanation in the history of Ahaz's reign, in 2 Kings 16. and 2 Chron. 28.—Again, we ought to compare the account, in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of Isaiah, of Sennacherib's invading Judah, and the blasphemous insult of his servant Rabshakeh, together with his defeat, and the remarkable hand of God which brought it about as an encouragement of Hezekiah's piety, with the historical account of the same occurrences, in 2 Kings 18. and 19. and 2 Chron. 32.—Again, we must compare the psalms of David with his life, or with the state of the church, which is particularly referred to in some of them, and which may be very much illustrated by other scriptures which have relation to the same dispensations of providence, or contain an historical account of them. Those psalms, for example, which were penned on particular occasions, mentioned in the respective titles prefixed to them, will be better understood if we compare the subject of them with the history they refer to. Moreover, we shall often find that when the same thing is mentioned in different places of scripture, there is something added in one, which farther illustrates what is contained in the other. Thus, in the account we have of the life of Joseph, in Gen. 39:20, it is said that he was 'put into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound;' and, in chap. 41:14, it is said that he was kept in 'the dungeon,' which is the worst part of the prison. But the psalmist, speaking of the same matter, in Psal. 105:18, adds that his 'feet were hurt with fetters,' and

he was 'laid in irons;' and thus affords a farther illustration of the history of his troubles.—Again, we read in Numb, 11:31, 32, of God's 'feeding Israel,' upon their murmuring in the desert for want of flesh, 'with quails in great abundance;' and the same event is mentioned in Psal. 78:27, where we have an account that these quails were a sort of 'feathered fowl,'—a fact which could not have been so well understood by the sense of the Hebrew word which we render quails. We have also an account, in Exod. 17:6, of God's supplying them with 'water out of the rock in Horeb;' and if we compare what is there said with Psal. 105:41, we shall find that this water issued thence in so large a stream, that it was like a river. The apostle Paul likewise gives farther light on the subject, when he says, speaking in a figurative way, that 'the rock followed them,' that is, the water which ran from it like a river, did not flow in a right line, but, by a continued miracle, changed its course, as they altered their stations, in their various removes from place to place in the wilderness; and he adds that God designed this event to be a type of Christ.

I might also observe that there many things in the life of David after his expulsion from Saul's court, which would argue him an usurper. He did not merely flee to secure his life, which, as a private person, he might lawfully do; but he raised a small army. Accordingly, it is said that 'every one that was in distress, or in debt, or discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men.' And Jonathan, who was heir-apparent to the crown, was forced to capitulate with him, and take an oath of him that he would grant him his life, concluding that he would be king after his father's death.q Nor was Saul's jealousy, which was attended with rage amounting to a kind of distraction, altogether without ground; and he intimates as much when he tells him, 'Behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king.' Accordingly, in the following verses, he makes him 'swear to

him, that he would not cut off his seed after him, or destroy his name out of his father's house.' Now, this conduct of David could hardly be justified, if we did not consider what we read in another part of scripture, that, before that time, God had taken away the kingdom from Saul, and ordered David to be anointed king in his stead,s though he had not the actual possession of the kingdom till after Saul's death.

I might farther observe, that the accounts contained in the books of Moses of the ceremonial law, and the various rites and ordinances of divine service contained in it, and also many expressions in the Old Testament which refer to it, ought to be compared with several things which are recorded in the writings of the apostle Paul, particularly, in a very considerable part of his epistle to the Hebrews, in which we have an account of the signification of the ceremonial observances as ordained to be types of the gospel-dispensation. Indeed, there are many scriptures of the Old Testament, which will be better understood by comparing them with others which refer to them in the New. Thus, Isa. 45:23, 'Unto me every knee shall bow,' appears to be very agreeable to what is said concerning our Saviour, in Phil. 2:10.; and it is not only spoken of the divine honour which should be paid to him, but relates, in a peculiar manner, to that glory which all shall ascribe to him, when they stand before his tribunal. This appears by comparing the passage with Rom. 14:10, 11.—Again, when we read, in Isa. 6:10, of God's sending the prophet to 'make the heart of the people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed;' it is not to be supposed that God is represented here as the author of their sin. This will plainly appear if we compare the passage with Matt. 13:15, where it is cited and farther explained; 'This people's heart is waxed fat, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes,' &c.

In Acts 28:26, 27, also it is referred to, and explained in the same sense, as charging their sin and the consequence of it upon themselves. By this method of comparing the Old and New Testament together, we shall be led to see the beautiful harmony of scripture, and how its predictions have been accomplished; which will tend very much to establish our faith in the truth of the Christian religion founded on it. But this point having been insisted on elsewhere, we pass it over at present, and proceed to make another observation.

There are several places in the New Testament which, being compared together, will give light to one another. Thus, in the four evangelists, which contain the history of the life and death of Christ, some things are left out or but briefly hinted at in one of them, which are more largely insisted on in another. Thus we read, in Matt. 12:14, 15, that 'the Pharisees went out and held a counsel against' our Saviour, 'how they might destroy him;' and that on that occasion 'he withdrew himself from thence; and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.' But Mark, speaking concerning the same thing, intimates that the Herodians were joined with the Pharisees in this conspiracy; and that he 'withdrew himself to the sea,' namely, of Tiberias, where he ordered that 'a small ship should wait on him, lest the multitude should throng him.' We have also an account of several places whence they came, namely, 'Galilee, Jerusalem, Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon,' so that a great part of them were Gentiles. Now, these additional particulars give light to what follows in Matt. 12:18, 21, where it is intimated that the occurrence was an accomplishment of what was 'foretold by the prophet Esaias,' that Christ should 'show judgment to the Gentiles,' and that, 'in his name the Gentiles should trust.' Hence, he wrought miracles to convince them that he was the Messias.—Again, it is said, in Matt. 13:12, 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall

have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.' Here some will be ready to inquire how that which a man hath can be said to be taken away, when he is supposed to have nothing; or how a person can be said to lose that which he never had. But if we compare the passage in Matthew with a parallel scripture, in Luke 8:18, we shall find it there said, 'Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have;' or as it is in the margin, 'that which he thinketh he hath.' Now, though a man cannot lose grace, who had it not; yet an hypocrite, who seems to have it, may lose that which he supposeth himself to have.—This method of comparing the four evangelists together, is attempted by several divines. Among these, a late writer, who is deservedly esteemed by all the Reformed churches, thinks that the inscription on the cross of Christ can hardly be determined, without comparing what is said of it by all the four evangelists. Mark says the words were, 'The King of the Jews;'z Luke says they were, 'This is the King of the Jews;' Matthew adds another word, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews;'b and John says the inscription was, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Hence, by comparing them all together, and supplying those words from one which are left out by others, we must conclude that the inscription was, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'

Again, as the Acts of the Apostles contains a brief history of the first planting of the gospel-church, and in particular, of the travels and ministry of the apostle Paul, it ought to be compared with some things occasionally mentioned in Paul's epistles, which will give farther light to its statements. Thus the apostle says, in 1 Cor. 15:8, 'Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time;' and speaks of himself, in ver. 9, as 'the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle; because he persecuted the church of God.' Now, this account of himself ought to be compared with Acts 9:1–6,

which gives an account of him as a persecutor before his conversion, and shows how our Saviour was seen of him. By comparing the two passages, it appears that Christ's being seen of him is not to be understood in the same sense as that in which he was seen by the rest of the apostles before his ascension into heaven; but of his being seen of him after his ascension, when, on the occasion mentioned in the latter passage, he appeared to him. If, again, we examine 1 Cor. 11:1, we shall find that Paul considers this sight of Jesus as having been a necessary qualification for the apostleship. Hence, when he speaks of himself as 'born out of due time,' he means that he was called to the apostleship, and qualified for it, out of due time; that is, not at the same time in which the other apostles were, but by this extraordinary dispensation of providence.—Again, when the apostle, in 1 Thess. 2:2, speaks of his having been 'shamefully entreated at Philippi,' his statement will be better understood if we compare it with Acts 16:16, 21, 22, et seq. And when he tells the Thessalonians, in the following words, 'We were bold in our God, to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention,' his words should be compared with Acts 17:1, et seq. Many instances of a similar nature might be given, from which the usefulness of comparing one scripture with another would farther appear. But, I design what I have stated as only a specimen, to assist us in the application of this direction; which a diligent inquirer into the sense of scripture will be able to make farther improvements upon.

5. In order to our understanding the scriptures, we must take notice of the several figurative modes of speaking which are used in them. For example, the part is often put for the whole. Thus the soul, which is one constituent part of man, is sometimes put for the whole man; as in Gen. 46:26, where we read of 'the souls' that came with Jacob into Egypt. And, in Rom. 12:1, the body is put for the whole man: 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your

bodies,' that is, yourselves, 'a living sacrifice to God.' So the blood of Christ, which is often spoken of in scripture as that by which we are redeemed, justified, and saved, is to be taken for the whole of his obedience and sufferings, both in life and in death; to which our salvation is to be ascribed, as well as to the effusion of his blood.

Again, the thing containing, is put for that which is contained in it. Thus the cup in the Lord's supper, is put for the wine.f And the thing signified is put for that which is the sign of it. Thus when it is said, 'This is my body;' the meaning is, this bread is a sign of my body, namely, of the sufferings endured in it.

Again, places are, by way of anticipation, called by those names which, in reality, were not given them, or which they were not commonly known by till some time after. Thus it is said that, as soon as Israel had passed over Jordan, they 'encamped in Gilgal, that is, in the place which was afterwards so called; for we read that it was called Gilgal because there they were circumcised, and so 'the reproach of Egypt,' occasioned by the neglect of that ordinance, 'was rolled away.'i Again, it is said, 'The kings that came up against Sodom,' when Lot was taken prisoner, 'had smitten all the country of the Amalekites.' Yet the country which was afterwards known by that name, could not be so called at that time; since Amalek, from whom it took its name, was not born till some ages after, he being of the posterity of Esau.l

Further, the time past or present is often, especially in the prophetic writings, put for the time to come. This mode of writing denotes the certainty of the performance of the prediction, as much as though it were actually accomplished. Thus it is said, 'He,' that is, our Saviour, 'is despised and rejected of men; he hath borne our griefs, he was wounded for our transgressions.' And elsewhere, The people that

walked in darkness have seen a great light.'n And, 'Unto us a child is born,' &c.

Further, one of the senses is sometimes put for another. Thus when it is said, 'I turned to see the voice that spake to me,' seeing is put for hearing, or for understanding the meaning of the voice which spake.

Again, positive assertions are sometimes taken in a comparative sense. Thus God says to Samuel, The people in asking a king, 'have not rejected thee, but me;' that is, they have cast more contempt on me than they have on thee, or they have offered a greater affront to my government who condescended to be their king, though they have been uneasy under thine administration as appointed to be their judge. So in Psal. 51:4, David says, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.' Yet he had sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba, having murdered the one, and tempted the other to commit adultery with him; he had sinned against the army, whom he occasioned to fall in battle, in execution of the orders he gave Joab, with a design to destroy Uriah. But though he had sinned against these parties, he says, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned;' that is, the greatest aggravation of my sin is, that it contains rebellion against thee. Elsewhere also God says, 'I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;' that is, more than sacrifice.

Again, there are several hyperbolical ways of speaking in scripture, whereby inore is expressed than what is generally understood. Thus the vessel in the temple in which things were washed, which was ten cubits from one brim to the other, is called 'a molten sea;' because it contained a great quantity of water; though, indeed, it was very small, if compared with the dimensions of the sea. In 1 Kings 10:27, it is said that 'Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones; and cedars as the sycamore-trees, which are in the vale for abundance.'

Now silver was not, strictly speaking, as plentiful as stones; but the language implies that there were vast treasures of it heaped up by the king and many of his subjects, and that there was no lack of it on the part of any one. In Judges 20:16, it is said there were 'some of the Benjamites left-handed, every one of whom could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss.' But this statement means only that they had an uncommon expertness in this matter. When, again, we read of some of the cities in the land of Canaan, that were 'great, and walled up to heaven;' the meaning only denotes that their walls were very high. In 1 Kings 1:40, it is said that, on occasion of Solomon's being anointed king, 'the people rejoiced with great joy; so that the earth rent with the sound of them.' Here the meaning is only that the shouts of the people were so great, that if the concussion of the air made by such means could have rent the earth, they would have done it.

Further, we sometimes find ironical expressions, and sarcasms used in scripture, with a design to expose the wickedness and folly of men. Thus, when our first parents sinned by adhering to the suggestions of Satan, who told them that they 'should be as gods, knowing good and evil;' God says, in an ironical way, 'Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil,'x &c. So the prophet Elijah exposes Baal's worshippers, and Micaiah, Ahab's false prophets, by using a sarcastic way of speaking. Job uses the same figurative way of speaking, when he reproves the bitter invectives and false reasonings of his friends: 'No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.'z Solomon uses the same way of address, when he says, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes. But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.' The man who trusts in his own righteousness for justification, is also exposed in the same way,

'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.'b And when our Saviour says to his disciples, having found them asleep, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners,' it is plain, from the following words, that he uses this figurative way of speaking; for he immediately adds, without an irony, 'Rise, let us be going.' Some think also that this is the method of speaking which our Saviour makes use of, when he reproves his disciples for the fond conceit they had that his kingdom was of this world, contending sometimes among themselves who should be greatest in it. Referring to that conceit, he bids them make provision for war, and take care to secure those two things which are necessary for it, money and arms. 'He that hath a purse,' says he, 'let him take it; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'d They did not, indeed, immediately perceive that he spake in an ironical way; and therefore replied, 'Lord, behold here are two swords.' He then said to them, still carrying on the irony. 'It is enough.' Hence, whether they understood his meaning or not, it seems to have been this: "If you are disposed to contend who shall be greatest, as though my kingdom were of a temporal nature, and to be erected and maintained by force of arms, do you think you have a sufficient treasure to hire forces to join with you, or buy arms for that purpose? or, do you imagine that you have courage enough to attack the Roman empire, and gain it by force? You say, you have two swords; can you suppose that these are enough? What a ludicrous and indifferent figure would you make, if you expected to come off conquerors by this means! No, they that take the sword shall perish with the sword; for my kingdom is not of this world. All the advantages and honours which you are to expect in it, are of a spiritual nature." This seems to be the meaning of this scripture,

rather than that which the Papists generally acquiesce in, namely, that by 'the two swords,' are meant the civil and ecclesiastical, both of which, as they pretend, are put into the Pope's hands.

Again, the scripture often makes use of a figurative way of speaking, generally called an hendyadis, whereby one complex idea is expressed by two words. This figure is very common in the Hebrew language. Thus when God promises his people that he would give them 'an expected end,' intending hereby their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; the words, if literally translated, ought to be rendered, as is observed in the margin, 'an end and expectation.' Our translators, however, were apprized that there is such a figurative way of speaking contained in them; and therefore they render them, 'an expected end.' This figure is sometimes used in the New Testament. Thus our Saviour tells his disciples, 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom;'g 'that is, I will give you ability to express yourselves with so much wisdom, 'that all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay it.' Some think, that the same way of speaking is used in John 3:5, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' that is, except a man be born of the Holy Spirit, or regenerated, a work which is signified by being born of water, he cannot, &c.

Finally, nothing is more common than for the Holy Ghost, in scripture, to make use of metaphors. These are a very elegant way of representing things, by comparing them with and illustrating them by others, borrowing from others such illustrations as add a very considerable beauty to the things illustrated. Thus repentance and godly sorrow, together with the blessed privileges which shall hereafter follow them, are compared to sowing and reaping. 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,

bringing his sheaves with him.' Thus, too, the prophet, by a metaphor taken from husbandry, sets forth the labour and pains which Israel had taken in sin, and exhorts them to be as industrious in pursuing what would turn to a better account. He says that they had 'ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity;' and advises them to 'sow to themselves in righteousness, and reap in mercy.'i This, he adds, they should do by 'seeking the Lord;' and 'it is time,' says he, 'to seek him, till he come and rain righteousness upon you;' which is necessary to a plenteous harvest of blessings, which you may hope for in so doing. He also reproves their adulteries by a metaphor taken from 'an oven heated by the baker;' and their hypocrisy by another taken from 'a cake not turned;'l and their being weakened and almost ruined hereby, he compares to the 'gray hairs' of those who are bowed down under the infirmities of age; and for their cowardice and seeking help from other nations, and not from God, he calls them 'a silly dove without an heart.'n We may observe that there is often a chain of metaphors in the same paragraph. Of this kind is that elegant description of old age, sickness, and death, which Solomon gives in exhorting persons to 'remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened.' By these expressions it is probable he intends the impairing of the intellect, the loss of those sprightly parts which once they had, or of the memory and judgment; on which account men are sometimes said to outlive themselves. He speaks also of 'the keepers of the house trembling,' that is, the hands and arms, designed for the defence of the body, being seized with paralytic disorders; 'the strong men bowing themselves,' that is, those parts which are designed to support the body being weakened, and needing a staff to bear themselves up; 'the grinders ceasing because they are few,' that is, the loss of teeth; 'they that look out of the windows being darkened,' that is, a decay of sight; 'rising up at the voice of the bird,' that is, their loss of one of the main props of nature, namely, sleep, so that

they may rise early in the morning, when the birds begin to sing, because their beds will not afford them rest. And 'the daughters of music being brought low,' denotes a decay of the voice and hearing, and being not affected with those sounds which were once most delightful. 'The almond-tree flourishing,' plainly signifies the hoary head. 'The grasshopper' being 'a burden,' is either a proverbial phrase importing a want of courage, strength, and resolution, to bear the smallest pressures; or, as others understand it, their stooping, when bowed down with old age. 'The silver cord loosed,' or 'the golden bowl broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,' signifies a decay of the animal spirits, a laxation of the nerves, irregular circulation of the blood, or the universal stoppage of it; when the frame of nature is broken, and man 'returns to the dust.' In the New Testament there are several metaphors used. Some of these are taken from the Isthmian and Olympic games, practised by the Greeks and Romans. Thus the apostle Paul compares the Christian life to 'a race,' in which 'many run,' but do not all 'receive the prize.'q He alludes also to another exercise, namely, wrestling; and recommends temperance as what was practised by the wrestlers as a means for their obtaining the crown. He likewises uses a metaphor, taken from another of the games, namely, fighting in hope of victory; by which he illustrates his zeal in the discharge of his ministry. In another place, he speaks of the Christian race, and the necessity of 'laying aside every weight,' namely, allowed sins, which would retard our course, or hinder us in the way to heaven. Again, he speaks of himself both as a minister and a Christian, as 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, and pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;'u where he plainly alludes to the posture, industry, and earnestness of those who run in a race. Elsewhere also he speaks of the difficulties, temptations, and opposition which believers are exposed to in the Christian life, and

advises them to 'put on the whole armour of God;' and so carries on the metaphor or allegory, by alluding to the various pieces of armour which soldiers make use of when engaged in battle, to illustrate the methods we ought to take that we may come off conquerors at last.

6. It will be very useful, in order to our understanding scripture, for us to know some things relating to the different forms of civil government, and the various changes made in it, among the Jews and other nations with whom they were conversant. At first we find that distinct families had the administration of civil affairs committed to them, and that the heads of them were, as it were, the chief magistrates, who had, in some instances, the exercise of civil power, especially if it did not interfere with that of the country in which they lived. Some think, indeed, that it extended to the punishing of capital crimes with death; and that Judah, who was the head of a branch of Jacob's family, when he passed this sentence concerning Tamar, 'Bring her forth, and let her be burnt,' did it as a civil magistrate. But if it be not to be deemed a rash and unjustifiable expression in him, when he says, 'Let her be brought forth, and burnt,' we must suppose the meaning to be, 'Let her first be confined till she is delivered of her child, and then tried by the civil magistrate, the consequence of which will be, her being burnt, when found guilty of the adultery charged upon her.' It hence does not appear that the heads of families, when sojourning in other countries, had a power distinct from that of the government under which they lived, to punish offenders with death; though I think, it is beyond dispute that they had a government in their own families which extended, in many respects, to civil affairs, as well as enforced an obligation to observe those religious duties which God required. It may be farther observed that this government extended so far that the patriarchs, or heads of families, had sometimes a power of making war, or of entering into confederacies with neighbouring princes for their own

safety, or for recovering their rights when invaded. Thus when Lot and the Sodomites were taken prisoners by the four kings who came up against them, we read that Abraham called in the assistance of some of his neighbours with whom he was in confederacy, and 'armed his trained servants, three hundred and eighteen, born in his house,' and rescued Lot and the men of Sodom from the hands of those who had taken them prisoners.

We have little more light as to this matter, so long as the government continued domestic, and the church was in the condition of sojourners. But when they were increased to a great nation, their civil as well as religious government was settled, by divine direction, under the hand of Moses in the wilderness. The first form of it was a Theocracy. God gave them laws in an immediate way; condescended to satisfy them, as to some things which they inquired of him about; gave them particular intimations how they should manage their affairs of war and peace; and appeared for them in giving them victory over their enemies, in a very extraordinary and sometimes miraculous way. But besides this great honour which God put on them, he established a form of government among them, under which they were divided into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; all of which divisions had their respective captains or governors, who are sometimes styled 'the nobles of the children of Israel.'b These governors were generally heads of considerable families among them; which were also divided in the same way, into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, in proportion to their largeness. Thus Gideon, speaking of his family, calls it, as the Hebrew word signifies, 'his thousand.' In the same manner, too, their armies were divided, when engaged in war. Thus when Jesse sent David with a present into the army to his brethren, he bade him deliver it to 'the captain of their thousand;'d who was the same description of officer whom, in our modern way of speaking, we call a commanding officer over a

regiment of soldiers. Again, when David's soldiers went out to war against Absalom, it is said, 'They came out by hundreds, and by thousands;' each distinct company or regiment having its commanding officer. Thus the government was settled as to civil and military affairs, in such a way that the head of the respective division had a power of judging in lesser matters. But as there were some affairs of the greatest importance to be transacted in the form of their government, by divine direction, God appointed seventy men of the children of Israel, to assist Moses in those matters in which they had more immediately to do with him. Accordingly, he 'gave them the Spirit,'f that is, the extraordinary inspiration of the Spirit, whereby he communicated his mind and will to them. This was the origin of the Sanhedrim; and those who composed that body had a power of judging in civil matters, throughout all the ages of the church, till the Jews were made tributary to the Romans. But after that period, they became as vile and contemptible as they had before been honourable in the eyes of just and good men. This appears from their tumultuous and unprecedented behaviour in the trial of our Saviour, and from the malicious prosecutions set on foot by them against the apostles, without any pretence or form of law.

After the death of Joshua, and the elders who survived him, there was an alteration in the form of government, occasioned by the oppression to which the Israelites were liable from their enemies; who insulted and vexed them, and sometimes plundered them of their substance. Then God raised up judges, who first procured peace for them by success in war, and afterwards governed them, though without the character or ensigns of royal dignity. This government not being successive, the Israelites were, on the death of these respective judges, brought into great confusion, every one doing that which was right in his own eyes, till another judge was raised up, as some future emergency required it. Thus the posture of their affairs

continued, as the apostle observes, 'about the space of four hundred and fifty years;' and then it was altered, when, through their unsettled temper, they desired a king, in conformity to the custom of the nations round about them. Though their request was displeasing to God, yet he granted it;h and so the government became regal. Then followed a succession of kings, set over the whole nation, till the division between Judah and Israel; when they became two distinct kingdoms, and so continued till their respective captivity. These things being duly considered, will give great light to several things contained in scripture; especially as to what relates to the civil affairs of the church of God.

But it will be necessary also that we take a view of the government of other nations, with whom they were conversant. We read of almost as many kings in scripture as there were cities in several of those countries which lay round about the Israelites. Thus, we read of many dukes and kings, whose power was much the same, who descended from Esau. These had very small dominions, each of them being, as is probable, the chief governor of one city, or at most of a little tract of land round about it. Indeed, except the Assyrian and other monarchies which were of a very large extent, and had none, under that character, who stood in competition with them while they subsisted, all other kingdoms were very small. Hence, four kings were obliged to enter into a confederacy, to make war with Sodom and the four neighbouring cities, which a very inconsiderable army might, without much difficulty, have subdued.k One of these four kings, indeed, is called 'king of nations;' but he is called so, not because he had large dominions, but because he was the chief governor of a mixed people from divers nations, who were settled together in one distinct colony. The king of Shinar there spoken of, too, is not the king of Babylon, who was too potent a prince to have stood in need of others to join with him in such an expedition; but he

was a petty king who reigned in some city near Babylon, and was tributary to the Assyrian empire. These four kings, with all their forces, were so few in number that Abraham was not afraid to attack them; which he did with success.—Again, we read, that in Joshua's time, the kings in the land of Canaan, whom he subdued, had each of them very small dominions, consisting of but one capital city, with a few villages round about it. We read of thirty-one kings who reigned in that country, which was not so big as a fourth part of the kingdom of England. Afterwards most of these kingdoms were swallowed up by the Assyrian empire. Accordingly, the king of Assyria, as Rabshakeh boasts, had entirely conquered the kings of Hamath, Arphad, Gozan, and Haran, with several others.m These had very small dominions, and therefore were easily subdued by forces so much superior to any which they could raise. Egypt, indeed, was more formidable; and therefore we often read in scripture of Israel's having recourse to them for help, and of their being blamed for trusting in them more than in God. In Arabia, also, there were some kings who had large dominions, as appears by the vast armies that they raised. Thus 'Zerah the Ethiopian came forth against Asa, with a thousand thousand men.' Yet, the church of God was able to stand its ground; for whether the neighbouring kings were many of them confederated against them, or the armies they raised exceedingly numerous, like the sand on the sea-shore, they had safety and protection as well as success in war, from the care and blessing of providence. Of these matters we have an account in the history of scripture relating to them.

7. It will be of some advantage, in order to our understanding the sense of scripture, for us to inquire into the meaning of those civil and religious offices and characters by which several persons are described, both in the Old and in the New Testament. As to the priests and Levites, we have had occasion frequently to insist on their

call and office. Among the former, one was styled 'high priest.' He not only was the chief minister in holy things under the Jewish dispensation; but presided over the other priests in all those things which respected the temple-service. There was also another priest who had pre-eminence over his brethren, and was next to the high priest in office. He seems to be referred to in 2 Kings 25:18, where we read of 'Seraiah, the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest.' This officer is not often mentioned in scripture; but is frequently spoken of by Jewish writers. They call him, as the author of the Chaldee paraphrase does on the text just quoted, the Sagan. Some think that this office was first instituted in Numb. 3:32, where we read that Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, was to be 'chief over the chief of the Levites, and to have the oversight of them that kept the charge of the sanctuary.' Elsewhere, also, we read of Zadok and Abiathar being by way of eminence, 'priests at the same time;' by which, it is probable, we are to understand, as many expositors do, that the one was the high priest, and the other the Sagan; who was to perform the office which belonged to the high priest in all its branches, if the high priest should happen to be incapacitated for it. Besides these, there were others who were styled 'chief priests.' These were the heads of their respective classes, and presided over them when they came to Jerusalem, to minister in their courses. There was also the president of the Sanhedrim, who is generally reckoned one of the chief priests. Moreover, when any one was, by the arbitrary will of their governors, in the degenerate and declining state of the Jewish church, deposed from the high priesthood, merely to make way for another favourite to enjoy that honour, he was, though divested of his office, nevertheless called 'chief priest.' This fact will give light to several scriptures in the New Testament, in which we read of many chief priests at the same time.p As to the Levites, they were not only appointed to be the high priest's ministers in offering gifts and sacrifices in the temple; but many of

them were engaged in other offices. Some instructed the people, in the respective cities where they dwelt, who were to resort to them for that purpose; or in synagogues, erected for this branch of public worship. Others were employed as judges in determining civil or ecclesiastical matters.

Again, we often read in scripture of scribes. These were of two sorts. Some were employed only in civil matters. We sometimes read of one person, in particular, who was appointed to be the king's scribe. Thus in David's reign, we read of Shemaiah the scribe; in Hezekiah's, of Shebna. This seems to have been a civil officer, not much unlike a secretary of state among us; and we seldom find mention made of more than one scribe at a time, except in Solomon's reign, when there were two.r But we often read, also, of scribes who were engaged in other works. It is generally supposed that many of them were employed in transcribing the whole or some parts of scripture, for the use of those who employed them in that work and compensated them for it,—a work which was necessary for the propagating of religion in those ages in which printing was not known. Moreover, there were others who explained the law to the people. Thus Ezra is styled, 'a ready scribe in the law of Moses.' This was an honourable and useful employment, faithfully managed by him and many others, in the best ages of the church. But, in our Saviour's time, there were scribes who pretended to expound the law and instruct the people, whose doctrines were very contrary to the mind of the Holy Ghost in Moses' writings, and whose way of preaching was very empty and unprofitable. Hence, it is said that our Lord 'taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'t

Further, we sometimes read in the New Testament of 'lawyers,' against whom our Saviour denounces woes, for opposing him and his gospel. This is supposed by some to be only a different name given to

the scribes. For they practised the law in public courts of judicature, and pleaded causes in the Sanhedrim, or taught in their schools or religious assemblies; and both of these things were done by the scribes. The evangelist Matthew, too, speaks of 'a lawyer' who asked our Saviour a question, 'Which is the great commandment?' while Mark, mentioning the same thing, calls the person 'one of the scribes.' The same thing, in substance, seems to be intended by both evangelists. Some suppose, indeed, that there was a difference between the lawyers and scribes, from its being said that when our Saviour had been reproving the scribes and Pharisees, 'one of the lawyers said unto him; Thus saying, thou reproachest us also,'y where the lawyers speak as though they were distinct from the scribes. Yet it is evident that, however they might be distinguished from them in other respects, they agreed with them as engaged in expounding the law; and are said, in the performance of this work, to have 'laden men with heavy burdens, grievous to be borne,' which they themselves 'would not touch with one of their fingers.'

As for those civil officers whom we read of in the Old Testament before the captivity, especially in David and Solomon's reign, they were either such as were set over the tribute, the principal of which was at the head of the treasury, or such as were employed under them, to see that the taxes were duly levied and paid. The latter are called 'receivers.'a Others were employed in keeping and adjusting the public records. Of these one was the chief; who, by way of eminence, is called 'the recorder.' Others were appointed to manage the king's domestic affairs; of whom the chief was 'set over the household.' Another is said to have been 'set over the host.'c He either had the chief command of the army, or was appointed to muster and determine who should go to war or be excused from it. There is still another officer whom we read of once in scripture, namely, he who 'counted the towers;' whose business seems to have

been to survey and keep the fortifications in repair. But these not being so frequently mentioned in scripture as others, we pass them over, and proceed more especially to consider some characters of persons which we meet with in the New Testament.

There was one sort of officers who were concerned in exacting the public revenues, after the Jews were made tributary to the Roman empire. These are called publicans. The chief of them were generally persons of great honour and substance, who sometimes farmed a branch of the revenue; and were, for the most part, Romans of noble extraction. We have an account of them in Cicero, and other heathen writers; but there is no mention of them in scripture. This honourable post was never conferred on the Jews. Yet we read of Zaccheus, who is said to have been 'one of the chief among the publicans,' though a Jew.f The meaning is, that he was the chief officer in a particular port, and had other publicans under him; whose business was constantly to attend at the ports, and take an account of the taxes which were to be paid there by those of whom they were exacted. Of the latter sort was Matthew, who is called 'the publican,' that is, one of the lowest officers concerned in the revenue. These were usually very profligate in their morals, and inclined to oppress those of whom they received taxes, probably to gain advantage to themselves, and were universally hated by the Jews.

There was another sort of men, often mentioned in the New Testament, who made the greatest pretensions to religion, but were most remote from it, and are justly branded with the character of hypocrites,—namely, the Pharisees, who made themselves popular by their external show of piety. There is not, indeed, the least hint of there having been such a sect amongst the Jews before the captivity; though, it is true, the prophet Isaiah speaks of a sort of people who much resembled them, who said, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to

me, for I am holier than thou.' From this passage it seems that there were some of similar principles in Isaiah's day; unless we suppose that the passage had its accomplishment when the sect of the Pharisees appeared in the world in a following age. The time when they appeared was not long after the reign of Alexander the Great, between two and three hundred years before our Saviour's time. They are generally described in scripture, as pretending to be more expert than all others in the knowledge of the law; but, in reality, making it void, by establishing those oral traditions which were contrary to its true intent and meaning. They are described also as setting up their own righteousness, and depending on the performance of some lesser duties of the law, as that from which they expected a right to eternal life. These were the greatest enemies, in their conduct, as well as their doctrines, to Christ and his gospel.

There was another sect who joined with the Pharisees in persecuting and opposing our Saviour; though otherwise they did not in the least accord with them. These were the Sadducees, who appeared in the world about the same time as the Pharisees. They were men generally reputed as profligate in their morals; and, for that reason, they were as much hated by the common people, as the Pharisees were caressed by them. They adhered to the philosophy of Epicurus; and took occasion from it, as they are said in scripture to have done, to deny the resurrection, angels, and spirits. It is true they did not desire to be thought irreligious, though they were really so; yet our Saviour describes them, as well as the Pharisees, as hypocrites and inveterate enemies to his gospel.

There was another sort of people, sometimes mentioned in the New Testament, namely, the Samaritans. These separated from the Jews, out of a private pique, and built a distinct temple on mount Gerizim; and for doing this they were excommunicated by the Jews, and

universally hated, so that there was no intercourse between them,m especially in those things in which one might be said to be obliged to another. They did very much corrupt the worship of God; so that Christ charges them with 'worshipping they knew not what.' It is also observed concerning them, that after the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria, they who were left in the and 'feared not the Lord, and he sent lions amongst them.'o On this occasion, a priest was dismissed by the king of Assyria, under pretence of 'instructing them in the manner of the God of the land;' and he erected a strange medley of religion, consisting partly of those corruptions which had been practised by the Israelites for some ages past, and partly of the heathen idolatry which they brought from Assyria. On this account it is said, 'They feared the Lord, and served their own gods after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.'

There is another sort of men, mentioned in the New Testament, called Herodians. These seem to have been a political rather than a religious sect. Some of the fathers, indeed, think that they were so called because they complimented Herod with the character of the Messiah; who, as they supposed, would be a very flourishing prince, and would reign over them, according to the ancient prediction of the patriarch Jacob, after 'the sceptre was departed from Judah.' But this seems to be a very improbable conjecture; for Herod the Great was dead, before we read any thing of the Herodians in scripture. Besides, the Jews had an opinion, about this time, that the Messiah should never die.r The most probable opinion is, that these Herodians were, in their origin, the favourites and courtiers of Herod, and disposed to adopt any alterations which he was inclined to make in the religious or civil affair of the Jews. From what is said concerning them in scripture, it is supposed that they were, for the most part, Sadducees. For, if we compare Matt. 16:6, with Mark 8:15, we shall find that our Saviour warns his disciples on occasion of their

having 'forgot to take bread,' to 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees,' as the former evangelist expresses it, and 'of the leaven of Herod,' that is, the Herodians, as it is in the latter. Now, though these Herodians, or court parasites, might take their rise in the reign of Herod the Great; yet a party of men succeeded them who held the same principles, and were disposed to compliment their governors with their civil and religious rights. These, however, more especially distinguished themselves, by their propagating principles of loyalty among the people. While the Jews, under a pretence that they were a free nation, were very unwilling to give tribute to Cæsar, —though they would not venture their lives, as Judas of Galilee and some others had done, by refusing it; these Herodians laid it down as an article of their faith, that they ought to pay tribute to Cæsar. Hence, when they came with this question to our Saviour, 'Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?' he soon discovered their hypocrisy, and knew the design of their question, as he might easily do from their being Herodians. Thus concerning the various characters of persons mentioned in scripture, as subservient to our right understanding of it.

8. After all these helps for understanding the sense of scripture, there is one more which is universally to be observed; namely, that no sense is to be given of any text, but what is agreeable to the analogy of faith, and has a tendency to advance the divine perfections, stain the pride of all flesh in the sight of God, and promote practical godliness in all its branches. Scripture must be explained agreeably to the analogy of faith. It is supposed that there is something we depend on, which we can prove to be the faith of scripture, or demonstrably founded upon it. This we are bound to adhere to; otherwise we must be charged with scepticism, and concluded not to know where to set our feet in matters of religion. Now, so far as our faith in the summary and assured view of divine truth is founded on

scripture, every sense we give of a text must be agreeable to it; otherwise we do as it were suppose that the word of God in one place destroys what in another it establishes, which would be a great reflection on that which is the standard and rule of our faith. I do not hereby mean, that our sentiments are to be a rule of faith to others; any farther than as they are evidently contained in scripture, or deduced from it. Yet that which we believe, thinking it to be the sense of scripture, is so far a rule to us that, whatever sense we give of any other scripture, must be agreeable to it; or else we must be content to acknowledge that we were mistaken in some of those things which we called articles of faith as founded on scripture.

Again, no sense given of scripture must be contrary to the divine perfections. Thus, when human passions are ascribed to God, such as grief, fear, desire, wrath, fury, indignation, &c., they are not to be explained as when the same passions are ascribed to men, in which sense they argue weakness and imperfection. And when any phrase of scripture seems to represent him as defective in power, as 'Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save?' we are to understand it as a charge that would be unjustly brought against God, if he did not appear in behalf of his people, by those who are disposed to reproach and find fault with the dispensations of his providence. But as we have taken occasion, in explaining many scriptures and doctrines founded upon them, to apply this rule, I shall content myself at present with having merely mentioned it.

Further, we are to explain scripture in such a way that it may have a tendency to promote practical godliness in all its branches: the promotion of which is the main end and design of scripture. Many instances might be given in which this rule is to be applied. When, for example, we are said 'not to be under the law, but under grace,'

we are not to understand the language as meaning that we are discharged from an obligation to yield obedience to whatever God commands, but as denoting our having been delivered either from the condemning sentence of the law, or from the ceremonial law, to which the gospel-dispensation, which is a display of the grace of God, is always opposed. Again, when it is said, 'Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?'y we are not to understand that there is any danger of our being too holy or strict in the performance of religious duties; but we are to view the passage as forbidding an hypocritical appearing to be more righteous than we are, or an entertaining of a proud and vain-glorious conceit of our own righteousness because we perform some duties of religion. Moreover, there are scriptures which are sometimes perverted, as though they intimated that prayer or other religious duties were not incumbent on wicked men. Thus it is said, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord;' 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination;'a 'What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?' But these scriptures imply, not that the wicked are not obliged to perform religious duties, but that it is contrary to the holiness of God, and a great provocation to him, when they regard not the frame of spirit with which they perform them, drawing nigh to him with their lips, when their heart is far from him, or laying claim to the blessings of the covenant of grace, while continuing in open hostility against him. To apply this rule fully, would be to go through the whole of scripture, and to show how all the great doctrines of religion which are founded upon it, have a tendency to promote practical godliness in all its branches. But this we have endeavoured to do in all those instances in which we have had occasion to give the sense of scripture; and therefore shall content ourselves with this brief specimen, and leave it to every one to improve the rule in his daily meditations, in

inquiring into the sense of scripture, in order to his being farther established in that religion which is founded on it.

[NOTE U. Scriptures 'hard to be understood.'—The passage, 'In Paul's epistles are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction,' is so stoutly quoted by Romanists against the Bible being read by the laity at all, and so often appealed to by careless Protestants as an excuse for its being read listlessly and infrequently, that a few remarks upon it, additional to those made by Dr. Ridgeley, may not be improper.

What the passage refers to are not words, but 'things;' and these may be as effectually wrested when heard as when read. But must we infer that to hear the doctrine of Christianity, as well as to read the word of God, is prohibited to the laity?—Only 'some things,' too, were 'hard to be understood;' so that, even if a prohibition of scripture were a fair consequence, only some parts of it, and not all, should be prohibited.—Again, the persons who wrested them, were not the laity as distinguished from the clergy, but 'the unlearned and the unstable,' as distinguished from the learned and the steady. Are not many of the Romish laity learned and steady, and many of the Romish clergy 'unlearned and unstable?' Should not, then, the scriptures, if prohibited at all, be prohibited to a portion of the clergy, and unprohibited to a portion of the laity?—But Peter does not speak of 'the unlearned' in the literary sense—for if he did he would include himself and the other apostolic fishermen of Galilee: he speaks of the unlearned in the moral sense, or in the sense of unacquaintance with the doctrine of Christianity, or inexperience of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. What misled and destroyed the persons to whom he refers was ignorance. Had they possessed the disposition of disciples, and 'asked wisdom of Him who giveth to all

men liberally and upbraideth not,' they would have found the scriptures unmingled light and life to their souls; but because they were uninformed in even the rudimental knowledge of the gospel, and were so unsteady as to be 'tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,' and yet attempted to analyze and probably affected to understand the most profound portions of scripture, they wrested them to their destruction.—Yet difficult as the portions were which they encountered, they are said to have done them damage, not by being read, but by being wrested. Before even froward and ignorant professors of religion, received injury from a text 'hard to be understood,' they distorted, racked, or dislocated it (στρεβλουσι); so that had they treated it with fairness, and allowed it to address them in its own freedom and energy, they would have found, as it lodged itself in their understanding, not a gory mass, but an agency of life and peace.—The very fact, also, of their wresting the scriptures is proof that they read them,—that they enjoyed unrestricted access to them,—that, up to the time when Peter wrote, the scriptures were laid freely open before even the uninstructed and uninitiated. Nor does Peter direct the warning which he gives against the reading of even 'things difficult to be understood:' he directs it altogether against the wresting of them, and, in doing so, clearly assumes the reading of them to be at once a common privilege and a common duty. Paul, indeed, had written the things in question 'according to the wisdom given to him,' and had formally addressed them to 'the faithful in Christ Jesus,'—to 'all the saints which are in all Achaia,'—to 'all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,' Eph. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2. Peter also formally addressed his first epistle, and he likewise practically addressed his second, or that which contains the very passage we are examining, 'to the strangers scattered abroad, throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia:' he addressed them simply as professed believers in the Saviour; he made no distinction of laity

and clergy, or of novices and adepts, but wrote indiscriminately to all. Nor did he write only on topics which had not been wrested: he wrote, just as truly as Paul, 'some things which were hard to be understood;' he wrote even on the same topics which, as discussed by Paul, had been wrested by the unlearned, 2 Pet. 3:15, and first clause of verse 16. Whatever the Holy Spirit had dictated either by his own pen or by the pens of Paul and other inspired writers, he expected to be prized, and therefore read, heard, or known, by all who named the name of Christ 'We have,' said he, 'a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts,' 1 Pet. 1:19. But surely a light shining in a dark place—and shining upon all or in the sight of all who are enveloped in darkness—is an emblem exhibiting any idea rather than that of a book which is prohibited to all whom it may interest, except a select few. How utterly unwarrantable then is it, view Peter's words respecting the wresting of the scriptures as we may, to regard them as, in any sense or degree whatever, a prohibition of the Bible to the laity, or an excuse for its being read seldom or with inattention 1—ED.]

THE PREACHING AND HEARING OF THE WORD

QUESTION CLVIII. By whom is the word of God to be preached?

ANSWER. The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.

QUESTION CLIX. How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?

ANSWER. They that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently; in season, and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God, and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

QUESTION CLX. What is required of those that hear the word preached?

ANSWER. It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear, by the scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their heart, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

WE have considered what method we are to take, in our private station or capacity, to understand the word of God. But we have great reason to be thankful, that he has ordained that it should be publicly preached or explained, as a farther means conducive to this end. Accordingly, we are led, in these Answers, to show who they are whom God has called to the work of preaching; how such ought to perform it; and with what frame of spirit we ought to attend on it.

By Whom the Word is to be Preached

The persons by whom the word of God is to be preached are only such as he has qualified with gifts sufficient for the work. They ought also when called to it, to be duly approved of by those among whom the providence of God directs them to exercise their ministry.

I. We shall first say something concerning the qualifications which are necessary in those who are employed in preaching the gospel. Here it is observed in general, that they must be sufficiently gifted for it. This is so evident that it would be unreasonable for any one to deny it; for no one is to attempt any thing which he is not able to perform,—especially if it be a work of the highest importance, and if the unskilful managing of it may have a tendency to do prejudice to the interest of Christ, rather than advance it. It would be a reflection on the wisdom of a master, to employ his servant in a work which he has no capacity for, or intrust him with an affair which is likely to miscarry in his hands. In like manner, we are not to suppose that God calls any to preach the gospel but those whom he has, in some measure, furnished for it. The best, it is true, may say, as the apostle does, 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' Yet he adds, that they who are employed by God in this work, are made 'able ministers of the New Testament.' It is, indeed, a difficult matter to determine who are sufficiently gifted for it; the work being so great, and our natural and acquired endowments very small if compared with it. But that we may briefly consider this matter, we shall offer two particular observations.

1. Some qualifications are moral; without which, they who preach the gospel would be a reproach to it. These qualifications respect, more especially, the conversation of those who are engaged in this work, which ought to be blameless and exemplary,—not only inoffensive, but such as they whom they are called to instruct may safely copy.

Thus the apostle says, 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.' And he advises the Corinthians to be 'followers of him;'e and commends the church elsewhere, for conforming themselves to his example, so far as it was agreeable to that of our Saviour; in which respect alone the best of men are to be followed.g Now, preachers being an example to their hearers, supposes that they have that which we call a moral qualification, as necessary to the work of the ministry. Without this, a person will do more hurt by his example, than he can do good by his doctrine; for he will lay a stumbling-block in the way of Christians, who would be ready to say, as the apostle does to some of those who were teachers among the Jews, 'Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?' or, dost thou live in the practice of those crimes, which thou condemnest in others, and exhortest them to avoid? This qualification, therefore, must be supposed to be necessary. Indeed, an experimental knowledge of divine truths, will greatly furnish preachers to communicate these truths to others, and incite them jealously to use their utmost endeavours that their hearers may be made partakers of the same experiences which they themselves have been favoured with. We are not to suppose, however, that this qualification alone will warrant a person's engaging in the work of the ministry; for then every one who has experienced the grace of God, might attempt it, how unable soever he be to manage it to the glory of God, and the edification of the church.

2. There are, therefore, other qualifications more directly subservient to the work of the ministry. These the apostle speaks of when he describes a gospel minister as one who is 'apt to teach,' and able 'rightly to divide the word of truth,'k and, 'by sound doctrine,' to exhort and 'convince gainsayers.' They who take upon them to explain scripture, and apply it to the consciences of men, ought

certainly, with great diligence and hard study, to use their utmost endeavours to understand it. They ought, also, to be able to reason, or infer just consequences from it; that so they may appear to be well-versed in those great doctrines on which our faith and religion is founded. This, indeed, must be confessed to be a work of difficulty; and, they who think themselves best furnished for it, will have reason to conclude, as the apostle says, that they 'know but in part, and prophesy in part.'m

Again, there are various parts of learning, which may be reckoned in some respects ornamental, which would tend to secure him who preaches the gospel from contempt. There are also others more immediately subservient to our understanding scripture, namely, being well-acquainted with those languages in which the Old and the New Testament were written, and able to make critical remarks on the style and mode of expression used in each of them; and being conversant in the writings of those, whether in our own or other languages, who have clearly and judiciously explained the doctrines of the gospel, or led us into the knowledge of those things which have a tendency to illustrate them. Moreover, as preaching includes an address to the judgments and consciences of men, I cannot but reckon it a qualification necessary for it, that all those parts of learning which have a tendency to enlarge the reasoning faculties, or help us to see the connection or dependence of one thing upon another, should be attended to, so that we may be fitted to convey our ideas with judgment and method. These qualifications are to be acquired. We pass by those which are natural, namely, a sufficient degree of parts, and such an elocution as is necessary for those who are to speak to the edification of an audience, without which all other endeavours to furnish themselves for this work, will be to very little purpose.

II. They by whom the word of God is to be preached, are to be duly approved and called to that office. A person may think himself qualified for it, without sufficient ground; and hence the question of his being qualified ought to be submitted to the judgment of others, by whose approbation he is to engage in this work. The first thing which is to be inquired into, is, whether he is called to it by God, not only by his providence, which opens a door for his preaching the gospel, but by the success which he is pleased to grant to his endeavours to become qualified for it. Yet, as persons may be mistaken, and think they have a divine call to this work, when they have not; it is necessary that they should be approved by those who are sufficient judges of their having such a call, that they may not be exposed to temptation, so as to engage in a work which they are not deemed sufficient for. It is not, indeed, in the power of ministers or churches, especially according to the present situation of things, to hinder an unqualified person, who has too high thoughts of his own abilities, from preaching to a number of people who are disposed to hear him; yet no one is bound, or ought in prudence or in faithfulness to God or man, to own any to be a minister whose gifts do not render him fit to be approved. Nor, on the other hand, can any judgment be passed on any one's fitness, without sufficient acquaintance or conversation with him; that, by this means, it may be known whether he be a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, and able rightly to divide the word of truth.

Here, I think, there is some difference between the approbation which ought to be passed on those who first engage in the work of preaching, and the call to the pastoral office. The latter supposes the former. Hence, a person ought first to be approved of, as fit to preach the gospel, in the opinion of those who are allowed to be competent judges of the matter. His being so approved of is necessary to his entrance on that work with reputation and acceptance. Without it, he

is to stand and fall to his own Master, and acquiesce in the approbation of those who are willing to sit under his ministry; while others are not bound, being destitute of sufficient evidence, to conclude him furnished for or called to it. As to the call to the pastoral office, though no one has a right to impose pastors on churches, yet it is the indispensable duty of every church to inquire, not merely whether the person whom they have a desire to call to that office, be such an one as is approved by the greater number of them, but whether the step they are taking be such as has a tendency to secure their reputation as a church of Christ, without exposing them to the just blame and censure of others who are in the same faith and order with themselves, that they may do nothing which is in the least offensive, or has a tendency to weaken the interest of Christ in his churches. It is true, no one can put a stop to their proceeding, if they are resolved to set over them one who is not only scandalous in his conversation, but inclined to preach what is subversive of the fundamental articles of our faith; yet they cannot be said, in such a proceeding, to act as a church which has obtained mercy from God to be faithful, or to engage in this important work with judgment. It is hence expedient that churches should set over them ministers approved by others as sound in the faith, as well as reckoned by themselves able to preach to their edification; and, in order to this, it is expedient that some ministers and members of other churches should be present at their investiture in that office to which they have called them, not merely to be witnesses of their faith and order in common with the whole assembly, but to testify by their presence their approbation of their proceedings, and give ground to the world to conclude that the persons whom they have called are owned by others as well as by themselves. It hence is necessary that ministers who are to join in begging the blessing of God on a church's proceedings, and giving a word of exhortation to them, should be satisfied concerning the fitness of him whom they have called to be

their pastor; for their being satisfied of his fitness is supposed by their being present, and bearing their respective parts in the service. This, I think, is intended by that expression of the apostle in which he advises Timothy to lay hands suddenly on no man; and not to be partaker of other men's sins; but to keep himself pure,' that is, without guilt, as being active in approving of those whom he ought not to approve of. I do not, by this, take the power out of the hands of the church, of setting a pastor over themselves; but only argue the expediency of their consulting the honour of the gospel in that matter, and acting so that they may have the approbation of other churches.

How the Word is to be Preached

We are now to consider how the word of God is to be preached by those who are qualified and approved for the work and called to perform it. We shall consider this both as to the doctrines to be insisted on, and as to the manner in which they are to be delivered.

I. What they are to preach, ought to be sound doctrine. We do not mean that it must be sound merely in the estimation of him who preaches it; for there is scarcely any one who does not think himself sound in the faith, how remote soever his sentiments may be from the true intent and meaning of the word of God. But we mean that those doctrines are to be preached which are called sound by the apostle, such as are agreeable to that 'form of sound words' which is transmitted to us by divine inspiration,p—'the doctrine which is according to godliness,' having a tendency to recommend and promote it. This is styled elsewhere, 'the faith once delivered to the saints;' which is not only to be preached, but 'earnestly contended for.'r The doctrines in question are such as have a tendency to advance the glory of God, and do good to the souls of men; such as

are relished by sincere Christians, who 'know the truth as it is in Jesus,' and are 'nourished up,' as the apostle says, 'in the words of faith and of good doctrine.' The teaching of these doctrines, as it has a peculiar reference to the gospel and to the way of salvation contained in it, is called 'preaching Christ,'t or a 'determining to know nothing,' that is, to appear to know or to discover nothing, 'save Jesus Christ and him crucified,' or to deliver nothing but what tends to set forth the person and offices of Christ, either directly or in its remote tendency. Our Saviour advises the church to 'take heed what they hear,'x signifying that we are to receive no doctrines but what are agreeable to the gospel. Sufficient intimation is thus given that only such doctrines are to be preached. The apostle calls the preaching of any other 'perverting the gospel of Christ;' and adds, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.' These are the only doctrines which God will own; because they tend to set forth his perfections, as they were at first communicated by him for that end.

II. We are now to consider the manner in which these doctrines are to be preached. This is laid down in several Heads.

1. They are to be preached diligently and constantly, in season and out of season. A minister is to consider the preaching of them the main business of life,—that which he is to 'give himself wholly to;' and all his studies are to be subservient to this end. He is to rejoice in all opportunities which he may have for leading those to whom he is called to minister, in the way to heaven; and be willing to lay out his strength, and those abilities which God has given him, to his glory. Thus the apostle says, 'I would very gladly spend, and be spent for you.'a The word, therefore, is not merely to be preached occasionally, as though it were to be hid from the world; or imparted only when the leisure or inclination of those who are called to preach it will

admit. The character which the apostle gives of gospel ministers, is that they 'watch for the souls of those to whom they minister;' that is, they wait for the best and fittest seasons to inculcate divine truths upon them. Their diligence in their work is particularly expressed by 'preaching the word, and being instant in season, and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine.' This statement implies that the word ought to be preached, not only on that day which God has sanctified for public worship, of which preaching is a part, but on all occasions when ministers are apprehensive that the people are desirous to receive and hear it.

2. The word of God is to be preached plainly. The apostle says, 'We use great plainness of speech.' This method of preaching is inconsistent with the using of unintelligible expressions; which is, as it were, a speaking in an unknown tongue, or an attempting to deliver things which neither the speakers nor their hearers well understand. The style ought to be familiar, and adapted to the meanest capacities; and it may be so without being exposed to contempt. It is particularly observed that preaching ought not to be 'in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.'d The great design of it is, not to please the ear with well-turned periods, or rhetorical expressions, or an affectation of showing skill in human learning, in those instances in which it is not directly adapted to edification, or rendered subservient to the explaining of scripture. A demonstrative way of preaching is not, indeed, opposed to the plainness which is here intended; but it is 'the demonstration of the Spirit.' This differs, indeed, from that which the apostles were favoured with; who were led into the doctrines they preached, by immediate inspiration. Yet we are to endeavour to prove, by strength of argument, that what we deliver is agreeable to the mind and will of God; and at the same time, we are to do this with plainness of address, as those who desire to awaken the

consciences of men, and give them the fullest conviction, proving from the scriptures, that what we say is true. This account the apostle gives of his ministry, as what was most adapted to answer its valuable ends.

3. The word of God is to be preached faithfully. This supposes that they who are called to this work, have the souls of those to whom they preach committed to their care; so that, if these perish for want of due instruction, they are, for their neglect, found guilty before God. Thus God says to the prophet, 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel;' and therefore the prophet was to 'give them warning.' If he did this he 'delivered his own soul;' but if not, God intimates to him that 'their blood should be required at his hand.' That ministers are thus set to watch for souls supposes that they are accountable to God for the doctrines they deliver. Hence, the apostle speaks of them as 'stewards of the mysteries of God,' of whom it is required that they should 'be found faithful.'g As a particular instance, he makes a solemn appeal to the elders of the church of Ephesus, that he had 'kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, nor shunned to declare all the counsel of God.' This faithfulness in the exercise of the ministry, is opposed to ministers having respect of persons from some obligation which they are laid under to them, or the prospect of some advantage which they expect from them; so that they are sparing in reproving those who are blame-worthy, for fear of giving offence or losing their friendship. It is also opposed to preaching those doctrines which are suited to the humours and corruptions of men; and neglecting to insist on the most necessary and important truths, because they apprehend that these will be entertained with disgust. To minister in the latter way, is to act as though their main design were to please men rather than God, and is very remote from the conduct of the prophet Isaiah; who, when he was informed that the people desired that the prophets

would 'prophesy smooth things' to them, and 'cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them,'i took occasion, how unwilling soever they were to receive his doctrine, to represent God as the Holy One of Israel, and to denounce the judgments which he would bring upon them. We may add that those are to be reckoned no other than unfaithful in their method of preaching, who, under a pretence of pressing the observance of moral duties, set aside the great doctrines of faith in Christ, and justification by his righteousness, which is the only foundation of our acceptance in his sight,—a blessing concerning which, in connection with moral virtue, we may say, without being supposed to have light thoughts of the latter, that the one ought in nowise to exclude the other. Nor can those be reckoned faithful who shun to declare those important truths on which the glory of God and the comfort of his people depend. Hence, if morality be rightly preached, it ought to be inculcated from evangelical motives, and connected with other truths which have a tendency more directly to set forth the Mediator's glory. These truths ought not to be laid aside as controverted doctrines, which all cannot acquiesce in, or which the tempers, or rather the ignorance and corruption of men, may be supposed will not bear.

4. The word of God is to be preached wisely. There is to be wisdom in the choice of those subjects which have the greatest tendency to promote the interest of Christ, and the good of mankind in general. There are many doctrines which must be allowed to be true, which are not of equal importance with others, nor so much adapted to promote the work of salvation, and the glory of God in that work. There are some doctrines which the apostle calls 'the present truth,' in which he instructs those to whom he writes. Accordingly, those truths are to be frequently inculcated which, because of their holiness, spirituality, beauty, and glory, are most opposite to the dictates of corrupt nature and carnal reason.—Again, those doctrines

are to be explained and supported by the most solid and judicious methods of reasoning, which are very much perverted and undermined by the subtile enemies of our salvation.—Moreover, whatever truth is necessary to be known, as subservient to godliness, which multitudes are ignorant of, is to be frequently insisted on, that they may not be destroyed for lack of knowledge; and those duties which we are most prone to neglect, in which the life and power of religion discovers itself, are to be inculcated as a means to promote practical godliness.

The wisdom of those who preach the gospel, farther appears in suiting their discourses to the capacities of their hearers. Some of these, it must be supposed, are ignorant and weak in the faith, and cannot easily take in those truths which are, with much more ease, apprehended and received by others. Now, for their sake, the word of God is to be preached with the greatest plainness and familiarity of style. Thus the apostle speaks of some who needed to be 'fed with milk,' being 'unskilful in the word of righteousness,' and, as it were, 'babes' in knowledge; while others, whom he compares to 'strong men,' were fed with 'meat,' which was agreeable to them. Here he doth not mean, as I apprehend, a difference of doctrines, as though some were to have nothing preached to them but moral duties, while others were to have the doctrines of justification, faith in Christ, &c. preached to them; but he means rather a different way of treating the subjects, as to the closeness and connection of the reasoning by which they are established, which some are better able to improve and receive advantage from than others.—Again, some hearers must be supposed to be wavering, and in danger of being perverted from the faith of the gospel. And for their sakes, the most strong and cogent arguments are to be made use of, and well managed, in order to their establishment in that faith; and those objections which are generally brought against it are to be answered.—Again, others are

lukewarm and indifferent in matters of religion; and need to have awakening truths insisted on with great seriousness and affection.—Moreover, others are assaulted with temptations, and subject to many doubts and fears about the state of their souls and the truth of grace; or, it may be, their consciences are burdened with some scruples about the lawfulness or expediency of things, and some hesitation of mind whether what they engage in is a sin or a duty. Now, that the word may be adapted to their condition, the wiles of Satan are to be discovered, cases of conscience resolved, evidences of the truth of grace or the marks of sincerity and hypocrisy plainly laid down, and the fulness, freeness, and riches of divine grace, through a Mediator, set forth as the only expedient to fence them against their doubts and fears, and keep them from giving way to despair.

5. The word of God is to be preached zealously, with fervent love to God and to the souls of his people. Thus it is said concerning Apollos, that 'being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord.' This zeal does not consist in a passionate, furious address, arising from personal pique and prejudice, or in exposing men for their weakness, or expressing an undue resentment of some injuries received from them; but it is such a zeal as is consistent with fervent love to God and to the souls of men. The love which is to be expressed to God, discovers itself in the concern ministers have for the advancing of his truth, name, and glory, and the promoting of his interest in the world, which is infinitely preferable to all other interests; and their love to the souls of men induces them to preach with concern and sympathy. Their hearers not only have the same nature in common with themselves, in which they must either be happy or miserable for ever; but they are liable to the same infirmities, difficulties, dangers, and spiritual enemies. Hence they who preach the gospel should express the greatest sympathy with them in their troubles, while they are using their utmost endeavours

to help them in their way to heaven. They are to be considered as being, by nature, in a lost, undone condition; and the success of the gospel is to be regarded as the only means to prevent their perishing for ever. With respect to those in whom the word of God is made effectual for their conversion, ministers are to endeavour to build them up in their holy faith, as persons who, they hope, will be their 'crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming.'

6. The word is to be preached sincerely, aiming at the glory of God, and the conversion, edification, and salvation of his people. Ministers must firmly believe the doctrines they deliver, and not preach them because they are the generally received opinion of the churches. For to preach them in that light is hardly consistent with sincerity; at least, it argues a great deal of weakness or want of judgment, as though ministers were wavering about those important truths which they think, in compliance with custom, they are obliged to communicate. Again, they must have no selfish and unwarrantable ends in preaching, namely, the gaining of the esteem of men, or promoting their own secular interest. Though what the apostle says is true, that 'the labourer is worthy of his hire,' and, 'they that preach the gospel, must live of the gospel;' the obtaining of temporal support ought not to be the principal end of a minister's labouring. The influence of such a motive is like what was threatened against the remains of the house of Eli, who were exposed to such a servile and mercenary temper, as to 'crouch for a piece of silver, and to say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.'p The glory of God is to be the principal end of their ministry; and, accordingly, they are to endeavour to approve themselves to him in the whole of their conduct in it. Thus the apostle speaks of himself as 'not seeking to please men; which, if I do,' says he, 'I should not be the servant of Christ.' This method of

preaching will be a means to beget, in the minds of men, the highest esteem for those who practise it.

More especially, the glory of God is to be set forth as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, or discovers itself in the work of salvation, brought about by him. This is the only expedient to render the preaching of the gospel conducive to answer the most valuable ends. And as, next to the glory of God, the conversion, edification, and salvation of men, are to be aimed at, such a method of preaching is to be used, as is best adapted to promote them. Sinners are to be led into a sense of their guilt and misery, while in an unconverted state; of the necessity of their believing on Christ to the salvation of the soul; and of the methods prescribed in the gospel for their recovery, and for their escaping the wrath to which they are liable. They are to be made acquainted with the gospel call, in which sinners are invited to come to Christ; and with his willingness to receive all that repent and believe in him. Moreover, as conversion is the peculiar work of the Spirit, they are to pray and hope for his grace, to give success to his ordinances, in which they wait for his salvation. [See Note V, page 481.] If God is pleased to send home the truth on the consciences of men, and enable them to comply with the gospel call, then the word is preached in a right manner, and their labour is not in vain in the Lord. As for those who are converted, their farther establishment and edification in Christ is designed, together with the increase of the work of grace which is begun in them. Accordingly, they are to be told of the imperfection of their present state, and what is still wanting to fill up the measure of their faith and obedience; and they are to be warned of the assaults which they are likely to meet with from their spiritual enemies, and of the wiles and devices of Satan, to interrupt the actings of grace, overthrow their confidence, or disturb their peace. They are also to be directed how they may improve the redemption purchased by Christ, for the

mortifying of sin, the obtaining of victory over temptation, and the increasing of their faith in him. Ministers, in addressing themselves to them, are to explain difficult scriptures, that they may grow in knowledge; and discover to them the evidences of the strength and weakness of grace, tending to promote the one, and prevent the other. The promises of the gospel likewise are to be applied to them for their encouragement; and they are to be excited to go on in the ways of God, depending on Christ, and deriving strength from him, for the carrying on of the work which is begun in them.

The Hearing of the Word

We are now led to consider what the hearer's duty is, who desires to receive spiritual advantage from the word preached. This respects his behaviour before, in, and after his hearing the word.

1. Before we hear the word, we are to endeavour to prepare ourselves for the solemn work which we are to engage in. We are duly to consider how we need instruction, or at least, to have truths brought to our remembrance and impressed on our hearts. We are to consider also that this is an ordinance which God has instituted for that purpose; and that, as it is stamped with his authority, so we may depend on it that his eye will be upon us, to observe our frame of spirit under the word. We ought likewise to have an awful sense of his perfections, to excite in us an holy reverence and the exercise of other graces, necessary to our engaging in this duty in a right manner; and inasmuch as these are God's gift, we are to be very importunate with him in prayer for them. Among other things, we are to desire that he would assist his ministers in preaching the word, so that what shall be delivered by them may be agreeable to his mind and will; that it may be delivered in such a way that it may recommend itself to the consciences of those who hear it; that their

understandings may be enlightened, and they enabled to receive it with faith and love; and that all those corruptions or temptations which hinder the success of it may be prevented. These and similar things are to be desired of God in prayer; not only for ourselves in particular, but for all those who shall be engaged with us in this ordinance.

We might here consider the arguments or pleas which we may make use of in such prayer. These are taken from those promises which God has made of his presence with his people, when engaged in public worship. We may also plead the insufficiency of man's instructions, without the Spirit's teaching, or leading us into all truth; and that Christ has promised that the Spirit shall be given to his people for this end.s We may also plead our own inability to hear the word of God in a right manner; the violent efforts which are made by our corrupt nature to hinder our receiving advantage by it; and what endeavours Satan often uses in conjunction with it, to 'catch away,' as our Saviour expresses it in the parable, that seed which was sown in the heart, so as to make it become unfruitful. We may likewise plead the afflictive sense we have of the ill consequences which will attend our hearing the word and not profiting by it, whereby the soul is left worse than it was before; as the apostle says that, in the course of his ministry, he was to some 'the savour of death unto death.'u We may also plead the glory which will redound to God, by the displays of his grace, in making the word effectual to salvation; and the great honour he hereby puts on his own institution, inasmuch as he thus sets his seal to it. We may also plead that through the ordinance of the word God usually dispenses his grace; that he has encouraged us to hope and wait for it in it; that multitudes of his saints, both on earth and in heaven, have experienced his presence with them under the word, whereby they were first enabled to believe in Christ, and afterwards established

more and more in that grace which they were made partakers of at first from him; and that, therefore, we hope and trust that we may be admitted to participate of the same privilege.

2. There are several duties required of us in hearing the word. In particular, we are to try the doctrines which are delivered, whether they are agreeable to scripture, and founded on it, that we may not be imposed upon by the errors of men, instead of the truths of God. Moreover, we are to endeavour to exercise those graces which are suitable to the work we are engaged in. We are, as the apostle says, to 'mix the word with faith,' and express the highest love and esteem for the glorious truths which are contained in it, discovering the greatest readiness to yield obedience to every thing God commands, and thankfulness for whatever he has promised to us. Moreover, we are to hear the word with a particular application of it to our own condition, whether it be in a way of admonition, reproof, exhortation, or encouragement, and to see how much we are concerned to improve it to our spiritual advantage.

3. We are now to consider those duties which are to be performed by us, after we have heard the word preached. Some of these require privacy or retirement from the world. We are, in retirement, to meditate on, digest, and apply what we have heard; and at the same time, we are to examine ourselves, and so take a view of our behaviour, while we were engaged in public worship, in order to our being humbled for sins committed, or thankful for grace received. But this subject having been particularly considered under another Answer, relating to our sanctifying the sabbath in the evening of it, I shall pass it over at present.

There is another duty incumbent on us, after we have heard the word, which may conduce to the spiritual advantage of others,—it is,

that the word which we have heard be the subject of our conversation. We are to take occasion to observe the excellency, beauty, and glory of divine truths, which are communicated in scripture. We are not to hear the word as critics, making our remarks on the elegance of style, the fluency of expression, or other gifts which we are ready to applaud in the preacher, on the one hand, nor exposing and censuring the defects which we have observed in his method of address, on the other. We are rather to take notice of the suitableness of the truths delivered to the condition of mankind in general, or to our own in particular, and observe how consonant the word preached has been to the holy scriptures, the standard of truth, and how it agrees with the experiences of God's people. We are also to take occasion to inquire into the meaning of scripture, especially some particular texts which have been insisted on, or in some measure explained, in the preaching of the word, in order to our farther information and improvement in the knowledge of divine things.

The last thing which is observed in this Answer, is that, after having heard the word of God, we are to endeavour to bring forth the fruit of it in our lives. This consists in a conversation becoming the gospel; and in our being induced by the word to 'deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' We ought also to express a becoming zeal for divine truths, defending them when opposed, and endeavouring to establish others in them; so that we may recommend religion to them, as that which is the most solid foundation for peace, and leads to universal holiness; and that thus we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

[NOTE V. Are unconverted persons to be exhorted to pray?—Here, and in other places, Dr. Ridgeley speaks of unconverted men

praying; and not a few ministers even exhort them to practise prayer as a means of their conversion. But is an unconverted man able to pray? Or—as in the case of believing—is there any warrant from scripture to expect, that, in his making an effort to pray, he will receive the grace or Spirit of prayer,—or that any adaptation exists between an unrenewed man's attempting to exercise prayer, and the production within him, by the Divine Spirit, of the dispositions and the faith with which prayer is associated? Prayer, it must be remembered, is the act or exercise of a believing soul. 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.' A man cannot desire the removal of evils which he does not believe to exist; nor can he desire the enjoyment of blessings which either are wholly unknown to him, or are so figured out by his mind as to be utterly misconceived and depreciated. Even, in fact, when the understanding is spiritually enlightened to 'know the things which are freely given to us of God,' and much more when it is in a state of ignorance, error, and delusion, it fails, without a special accompanying work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, to excite the holy desires of genuine prayer. Believers themselves 'know not what they should pray for as they ought; but the Holy Spirit maketh intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered.' How, then, can men who are destitute alike of faith and of spiritual knowledge offer true prayer? 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.'

But I may be reminded that faith its If cannot be exercised by an unrenewed man, and that yet he is expressly and often enjoined in scripture to believe. The cases of believing and of praying, however, are widely different. An effort to believe, an inquiry into the truths which are submitted to faith, a fixation of the mind on the doctrines to which assent is required, is just to put the soul into that attitude,

to have it brought into that contact with the gospel, in which the Divine Spirit enlightens and renews it. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' An adapted instrumentality is set up by the renovator of the heart and the enlightener of the understanding, for performing his saving work upon the sinner; and this instrumentality, as brought into contact with the mind, is the way, the path, the approach by which faith comes. To have the mind fixed on vacancy, or on what is foreign to its good, is to have it directed to what not even the grace of the Holy Spirit will make a means of enlightening it; while to have it fixed, in the way of inquiry, or perusal, or reflection, on the gospel, is to have it directed to 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,'—to what he makes 'the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation,'—to the very thing the spiritual import of which he teaches, the divine evidences of which he discloses, and the details of which he makes matters of the soul's unfeigned and joyous assent. There is thus a direct adaptation of hearing the word to believing it,—of fixing the attention on divine truth to receiving the grace of faith; and this adaptation is exhibited and enforced in each of the numerous instances in which unconverted hearers of the word are directly commanded to believe. But is there any such adaptation between an effort to pray and receiving the grace of prayer,—or rather, between an effort to pray, and the conversion of the sinner? Is conversion, or the spirit of true prayer, anywhere said to come by attempts to pray? Is there suitable instrumentality, or instrumentality of any kind or degree, in the thoughts or desires of an unconverted man's attempt at devotion, to work the regeneration of his soul, or the impartation to him of the faith and holy affections of true prayer? Are commands, in any instance, addressed to the unrenewed to offer prayer as an act of passing from spiritual death to spiritual life,—or, still more, to offer it as a means of experiencing conversion? Few persons, if any, will answer these questions in the affirmative; and yet they would require

so to answer them, in order even to maintain the alleged parallel between the Bible's commands to unrenewed men to believe, and the exhortations which ministers frequently address to unrenewed persons to pray.

Prayer is, no doubt, the duty of every man; but so is love to God, humility, self-denial, Sabbath-sanctification, almsgiving, honesty,—everything, in fact, which the divine law enjoins. Yet who—if he would maintain consistent or scriptural views of the economy of salvation—would inculcate, upon spiritually dead men, moral duties, as means, or antecedents, or concomitants, on their own part, of their being made spiritually alive? To hear, to listen, to hearken, to consider one's ways, to search the scriptures, to seek the Lord, are duties enjoined on unconverted men which they may perform simply as enjoying access to the divine word; to believe and to repent, are duties enjoined on them, which they may perform by the enlightening and renovating work of the Divine Spirit within them, through the instrumentality of the word which they were hearing or considering; and to pray, to praise, to love, to obey, to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, are duties enjoined on them, which they may perform when they are no longer unconverted, but are made alive unto God, and have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. True prayer is the cry of the new-born soul,—the desire of the babe for the sincere milk of the word,—the hungering of a spiritually active being for the bread of life and the righteousness of the reign of grace. 'Behold, he prays!' said the Lord to Ananias, respecting Saul of Tarsus; 'behold, he prays!' That the man who had breathed out slaughter against the disciples, and who had persecuted them even unto strange cities, now prayed,—that he breathed the affections and exercised the faith of one who approached with spiritual desires the throne of the divine grace,—was the evidence to which the Lord of glory himself pointed that the man had been

'renewed in the spirit of his mind,' and had 'put on Christ.' Even the evangelical writers and preachers, indeed, who incautiously at times recommend prayer as a means of conversion or a precurrent duty to believing, in general describe it as, in its own nature, the act or the exercise only of a true convert or believer in Jesus,—as 'the pulse of the soul,' the breathing of sanctified desires, the expression of feelings and the uttering of thoughts which only the indwelling Spirit of God produces and sustains.

But, it may be asked, Is formal prayer, or an attempt to pray, on the part of children, or of nominal professors of religion who furnish no satisfactory evidence of being believers in Christ, to be discouraged? This question may be answered by another, Is honesty, veracity, or external obedience to any divine command whatever, to be discouraged? Surely not. Yet while labour is expended in showing to all whom we instruct what the divine law is, what duties it requires, what intimate connexion there is between each part of obedience and true happiness or well-being; every care must be used to exhibit prominently the way of salvation,—to show that 'entrance into life,' or experience of justification and regeneration, is on the foreground of all duty,—to press as of immediate obligation the commands to believe and repent,—and to guard most sedulously against the impression being maintained or produced that formal prayer or external moral obedience, in any form whatever, either is life itself or is a means leading to its possession.—ED.]

THE SACRAMENTS

QUESTION CLXI. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

ANSWER. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves, or any virture derived from the piety and intention of him by whom they are administered; but only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted.

QUESTION CLXII. What is a sacrament?

ANSWER. A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit, unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another, and to distinguish them from those that are without.

QUESTION CLXIII. What are the parts of a sacrament?

ANSWER. The parts of a sacrament are two; the one, an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ's own appointment; the other, an inward and spiritual grace, thereby signified.

QUESTION CLXIV. How many sacraments hath Christ instituted in his church, under the New Testament?

ANSWER. Under the New Testament, Christ hath instituted in his church only two sacraments Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

IT has pleased God, in setting forth the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, to impart his mind and will to man, in various ways, besides the discovery which he makes of himself in the dispensations of his providence. These are more especially reducible to two general Heads, namely, his making it known by words, which is the more plain and common way by which we are led into the knowledge of divine truths; and his making it known by visible signs, which are sometimes called types, figures, or sacraments. The former we have already insisted on; the latter we now proceed to consider. Here we are first to explain the nature, and show what are the parts, of a sacrament, as we have an account of them in the two last of these Answers; and then we are to consider how the sacraments become effectual means of salvation, as explained in the first of the Answers.

The Nature and Parts of a Sacrament

1. In order to our understanding the nature and parts of a sacrament, we shall first consider the meaning of the word. It is certain that the word 'sacrament' is not to be found in scripture, though the thing intended by it is there expressed in other words. For this reason, some have scrupled to make use of it, and chosen rather to make use of other phrases more agreeable to the scripture-mode of speaking. But though we are not to hold any doctrine which is not founded on scripture; yet those which are contained in it may be explained in our own words, provided they be consonant to it. The Greek church knew nothing of the word 'sacrament,' it being of Latin original. Instead of it, they used the word 'mystery;' thereby denoting that there is in the sacraments, besides the outward and visible signs, some secret or hidden mystery signified. The Latin church used the word

'sacrament,' not only as signifying something which is sacred, but as denoting that thereby they were bound as with an oath to be the Lord's. Thus the psalmist says, 'I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments;' and God by the prophet, says, 'Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.'b The word 'sacrament' was used, indeed, by the Romans, to signify the oath which the soldiers took to be true and faithful to their general, and to fight, courageously under his banner. But the primitive Christians signified by the word, that, when they were called to suffer for Christ, which was, as it were, a fighting under his banner, they did in the ordinance of the supper, as it were, take an oath to him, expressing their obligation not to desert his cause. Now, as this notion is agreeable to the end and design of a sacrament, whatever be the origin of the use of the word, I think we have no reason to scruple the using of it, though it be not found in scripture. Christians, however, ought not to contend or be angry with one another about this matter, it being of no great importance, if we adhere steadfastly to the explanation given of the ordinance in scripture. [See Note W, page 490.]

2. We shall now consider the nature of a sacrament, as described in one of the Answers we are explaining. Here it is observed concerning it, that it is 'an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ.' What we are to understand by an ordinance, and its being founded on a divine institution, which is our only warrant to engage in it, was formerly considered. Indeed, every duty which is to be performed by God's express command, and which he has designed to be a pledge of his presence, and a means of grace, is a branch of religious worship, and may be truly styled an holy ordinance. Now, that the sacraments are founded on Christ's institution, is very evident from scripture. Thus he commanded his apostles, to 'baptize all nations;' and, as to the

sacrament of the Lord's supper, he commanded them to 'do' what is contained in it, 'in remembrance of him.'d

The persons for whom the sacraments were instituted, are the church, who stand in an external covenant-relation to God, and, as the apostle says, are 'called to be saints.' It is to them, more especially, that Christ, when he ascended up on high, gave ministers, as a token of his regard to them; that thus those may be edified who are styled 'his body.'f And, though these ministers are authorized to preach the gospel to all nations,—a work which is necessary for the gathering of churches out of the world; yet they are never ordered to administer the sacraments to all nations, nor indeed to any—especially the sacrament of the Lord's supper—till they profess subjection to Christ, and by doing so join in the fellowship of the gospel. As the sacraments under the Old Testament dispensation were to be administered to none but the church of the Jews, the only people in the world who professed the true religion; so, under the gospel dispensation, none have a right to sacraments but those who are professedly devoted to him.

3. We are now to consider the matter of the sacraments. This is set forth in general terms; and is also called in one of the Answers we are explaining, the parts of a sacrament. These are an outward and visible sign, and an inward and spiritual grace signified by it. Or, a sacrament, as it is otherwise expressed, signifies, seals, and exhibits to those who are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of Christ's mediation. These words are often used, but not so well explained as might be desired.

It is called a sign, in which, by a visible action, some spiritual benefits are signified. This is undoubtedly true. And it is a reproach cast on God's holy institutions, to deny, as some do, that the

sacraments are divine ordinances, and to style them carnal ordinances, beggarly elements, or a re-establishing of the ceremonial law; without distinguishing between significant signs which were formerly ordinances to the Jewish church, but are now abolished, and those signs which Christ has given to the gospel church. We must consider that a sacrament, as a sign, agrees in some things with the preaching of the word. Christ and his benefits are set forth, both by it and by preaching, as objects of our faith. The same ends also are desired and attained by both; namely, our being affected with the blessings purchased by him, and making a right improvement of them, together with our enjoying communion with him; and they are both sacred ordinances, instituted by Christ, and therefore to be attended on in an holy manner. But, on the other hand, they differ, with respect to the way or means by which Christ and his benefits are set forth. In the preaching of the word, there is a narration of what he did and suffered; and, on this account, the apostle says, 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' But, in the sacraments, there is a representation of the same thing by signs; on which account we may use in reference to them the words of the prophet, 'Mine eye affecteth mine heart,'h as there is the external symbol of Christ's dying love, which is an inducement to us to love him again. They also differ in this, that, not only are the sacraments designed to instruct, but, in our observance of them, we signify our engagement to be the Lord's.

The sacraments are also said to seal the blessings which they signify; and accordingly they are called, not only signs, but seals. It is a difficult matter to explain and clearly to state the difference between these two words, or to show what is contained in a seal that is not in a sign. Some think that it is a distinction without a difference. The principal ground which most divines proceed upon, when they distinguish between them, is its being said concerning Abraham, He

received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.'k But the same thing might have been affirmed concerning circumcision or any other significant ordinance, if the words 'sign' and 'seal' were supposed to be of the same import; for it is not said he received the ordinance of circumcision, which is not only a sign, but a seal,—but he received that which was a sign, or a seal of the blessing about which his faith was conversant. But that we may explain this matter, without laying aside those words which are commonly used and distinguished in treating on this subject, it may be observed that a sign is generally understood as importing any thing which has a tendency to signify or confirm something which is transacted, or designed to be published and made visible. Accordingly, some signs have a natural tendency to signify the things intended by them; as the regular beating of the pulse is a sign of health, smoke the sign of fire. Other things not only signify but represent that which they give us an idea of, by some similitude which there is in it, as the picture does its original. Other things are significant only as they are ordained or designed to be so by custom or appointment. Thus, in civil matters, a staff is a sign of power to exercise an office; the seal of a bond or conveyance, is the sign of a right which is in that document conveyed or made over to another to possess. It is in this latter point of view that the sacraments are signs of the covenant of grace. They do not naturally represent Christ and his benefits; but they signify them by divine appointment. But, on the other hand, a seal, according to the most common acceptation of the word, imports a confirming sign. Yet we must take heed that we do not, in compliance with custom, include more in our ideas of this word than is agreeable to the analogy of faith. Let it be considered, therefore, that the principal method God has taken for the confirming of our faith in the benefits of Christ's redemption, is his own truth and faithfulness, whereby the heirs of salvation 'have strong consolation,'m or else the internal testimony of the Spirit of

God in our hearts. The former is an objective means of confirmation; and the latter is a subjective means, and is called by the apostle our 'being established in Christ, and sealed, having the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' This, however, is not the sense in which we are to understand the word as applied to the sacraments. If we call them confirming seals, we intend nothing else but that God has, to the promises that are given us in his word, added these ordinances; not only to bring to mind the great doctrine that Christ has redeemed his people by his blood, but to assure us that they who believe in him shall be made partakers of redemption. Hence, these ordinances are a pledge to them of redemption; and in regard to them God has so set his seal that, in an objective way, he gives believers to understand that Christ and his benefits are theirs. At the same time, they are obliged by faith, as well as in an external and visible manner, to signify their compliance with his covenant; and their doing so we may call their setting to their seal that God is true, as we may allude to that expression of our Saviour, 'He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.'o The sacraments are God's seals, as they are ordinances given by him for the confirmation of our faith, that he would be our covenant God; and they are our seals when we profess in the observance of them, as we ought also to do by faith, that we give ourselves up to him to be his people, and desire to be made partakers in his own way, of the benefits which Christ hath purchased. Thus concerning tho sacraments, as being signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

There is another expression, used in this Answer, which needs a little explanation; namely, the sacraments being said, not only to signify and seal, but to 'exhibit the benefits of Christ's mediation.' 'To exhibit' sometimes signifies to show or present to our view. If the word be so understood in this place, it imports the same as when it is said that the sacraments are signs or seals of the benefits of Christ's

mediation, or significant ordinances for directing and exciting our faith, as conversant about what we are to understand by them. Again, 'to exhibit' sometimes signifies to give, communicate, or convey. And as 'exhibiting,' in the definition which we have of a sacrament in the Shorter Catechism, is not only distinguished from signifying and sealing, but is described as that by which Christ and his benefits are 'applied' to believers; I am inclined to think that it is in this latter sense that the word is to be understood in the Answer which we are explaining. If so, we must distinguish between Christ's benefits being conveyed, made over, exhibited, or applied, by the gift of divine grace, through the effectual working of the Spirit; and this being done by an ordinance, as an external means of grace. Accordingly, I am bound to conclude that, as the Spirit of God gives the benefits of redemption to believers who engage in a right manner in the observance of the ordinances; so this grace is represented, and God's people have ground to expect, as far as an ordinance can be the means of it, that they shall be made partakers of these benefits. We may also observe that, though the sacraments are appointed to signify to all who partake of them, that Christ has purchased salvation for his people, or that the work of redemption is brought to perfection; yet it is they only who engage in the observance of them by faith, who can look upon them as signs or seals to confirm their faith, that they have a right to the benefits of Christ's redemption, as not only signified but exhibited or applied to them. The sacraments are thus signs to those who believe, in a sense in which they are to none others.

4. We are now to consider the persons to whom the sacraments are given. These are described as those who are within the covenant of grace. To be within the covenant of grace, implies either a being externally in covenant with God, or a being internally and spiritually so, as interested in its saving blessings. They who are externally in

covenant, are such as are visibly so; who are called by God's name, professedly devote themselves to him, and lay claim to him as their God. These, if they are no otherwise in covenant, are said to be in Christ as the branch which beareth no fruit is said to be in the vine. They are like those whom the prophet speaks of, when he says, 'Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness.'q They have the ordinances, which must be reckoned a very great privilege; they have the external overtures of divine grace, the convictions and strivings of the Spirit; and thus they enjoy those means by which God is sometimes pleased to work special grace; and when that special grace is wrought in them, they may conclude themselves to have more than the external blessings of the covenant. Accordingly, some are internally or spiritually in covenant, children of God by faith. These are such as are true and real members of Jesus Christ, by a federal or conjugal union with him. They have the same mind as was in him, and receive vital influences from him, being made partakers of the Spirit. They have, not only professedly, but by faith, embraced him in all his offices; and have surrendered themselves to him to be entirely his, their understandings to be guided and directed, their wills and affections to be governed by him; and are desirous to be disposed of by him, in the whole conduct of their lives. As to the privileges which they partake of, they have not merely a supposed but a real interest in all the benefits which Christ has purchased; they have a right to his special care and love, which will render them safe and happy, both here and hereafter.

Now, with respect to both classes, they are supposed to attend on the sacraments. The former, indeed, have not a right to the saving blessings signified by them. Hence, if they know themselves to be strangers to the covenant of promise, they profess, by engaging in the

ordinance of the supper, to lay claim to that which they have no right to. Yet, if their wanting an interest in the covenant be not discernible in their conversation, which is blameless in the eye of the world; men, who are not judges of their hearts, have no warrant to exclude them from the sacraments. But, on the other hand, not only have they who are savingly or internally in covenant, a right to these ordinances in common with others, but Christ and his benefits, as was before observed, are exhibited and applied to them, as they have ground to conclude by faith that they have an interest in all the blessings which he has purchased.

5. We are now to consider what those benefits are which Christ communicates to his people in the sacraments, and which are signified by them. Some are common to the whole church. These are relative and external, rather than internal; and by possessing them, the church are distinguished from those who are without. They are advantages; though not such as are of a saving nature. Thus the apostle says, 'What advantage hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision?' And he replies, 'Much every way,' or, in many respects; as if he had said, 'Circumcision is an honour which God has put on the church, as taking them into a visible relation to himself, and giving them the means of grace, in possessing which they are more favoured than the rest of the world.' Again, there are benefits of Christ's mediation which are more especially applicable to believers. God makes every ordinance, and the sacraments in particular, subservient to the increase of their faith and all other graces. As faith is wrought under the word, it is, as will be considered under a following Answer, farther established and increased by the Lord's supper. And as believers have, in this ordinance, an occasion to exercise their love to one another; so they have communion with Christ. This has a tendency to carry on the work of grace begun in the soul, and to enhance their love to Christ, who is eminently set forth

and signified in the ordinance; and, from the view they have of their interest in him, arises a stronger motive and inducement to hate all sin in the whole course of their lives.

How the Sacraments become Effectual Means of Salvation

We are now to consider how the sacraments become effectual means of salvation; or whence their efficacy is derived to answer that great end. Now, they do not become effectual means of salvation by any power in themselves. For we are not to suppose that they are more than ordinances, by which God works those graces which we receive under them, and which it is his prerogative alone to confer. Again, the efficacy of the sacraments is not derived from the piety or intention of those by whom they are administered; who, though they are styled 'stewards of the mysteries of God,' as persons to whom the administration of the ordinances is committed, yet have not the least power to confer that grace which is Christ's gift and work. Thus the apostle says, 'Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave unto every man?'t The Papists, however, suppose that the efficacy of the sacraments arises, partly from an internal virtue which is in them to confer grace, which they illustrate by a far-fetched similitude, taken from the virtue there is in food to nourish the body, forgetting that no external act of religion can have a tendency to nourish the soul, without the internal efficacious grace of the Spirit accompanying it; and partly from the design or intention of the priest who administers them, as they are consecrated and designed by him with the view of being efficacious. There is also an absurd notion maintained by some Protestants, as well as the Papists, namely, that the sacrament of baptism, administered to infants, washes away the guilt of original sin, and gives them a right and title to heaven; so that by virtue of it they are saved, if they happen to die before they commit actual sin. This

account of the manner in which the sacraments become effectual to salvation, is absurd to the last degree; for it puts a sanctifying and saving virtue into that which is no more than an outward and ordinary means of grace. As to the efficacy of the sacraments arising from the intention of him who administers them, it lays the whole stress of our salvation on the secret design of men, in whose power it is supposed to be to render the ordinances means of grace, or to prevent them from being so. But to think thus is in the highest degree derogatory to the glory of God.

The sacraments become effectual means of salvation only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they were instituted. As, 'without Christ we can do nothing,' so without his blessing we can receive nothing. Ordinances are only the channel through which grace is conveyed. But Christ is the author and finisher of faith; and he conveys his grace by his Spirit, when he brings the heart into a good frame, and excites suitable acts of faith and love in those who are engaged in the ordinances, and maintains the lively impressions of them, which have a tendency to promote the work of grace in the whole conduct of their lives.

What the Sacraments of the Gospel Dispensation are

We proceed to consider what sacraments Christ has instituted under the New Testament dispensation. It has pleased God, in every age of the world, to instruct his people by sacramental signs, as an addition to other ways in which he communicates his mind and will to them. Even our first parents, in their state of innocency, had the tree of life; which was a sacrament or ordinance for their faith, that if they retained their integrity, and performed the conditions of the covenant which they were under, they would be led into a farther conviction that they should certainly attain the blessings promised in

that covenant. Some think, too, that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was another sacramental sign, whereby they were given to understand that, if they sinned, they should die. And paradise in which they were placed, was a sacrament, or kind of type of the heavenly state; inasmuch as there is an allusion to it in that promise, 'To him that over-cometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the midst of the paradise of God;' and heaven is, in another place, called 'paradise.'y Others think the sabbath was a sacramental sign to our first parents, of that eternal sabbatism which they should celebrate in a better world, in the event of their yielding perfect obedience as the condition of the covenant they were under. I desire, however, not to be too peremptory as to this matter. It is enough to my present purpose, to consider the tree of life as a sacrament; for from its having been so, it appears that God instituted such signs from the beginning of the world. But this subject having been insisted on elsewhere, we pass it over, and proceed to consider that, after the fall of man, there were sacramental signs, instituted as ordinances for the faith of the church in the promised Messiah. Sacrifices, in particular, were instituted, which signified his people's expectation that he would make atonement for sin by the shedding of his blood. Under the ceremonial law there was a large body of sacramental ordinances, or institutions, otherwise called types of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him. Some of these were occasional; as manna, the water out of the rock, and the brazen serpent in the wilderness, &c. Others were standing ordinances in the church, as long as the ceremonial law continued; as circumcision, the passover, and many things contained in the temple-service. These were the sacraments under the Old Testament. But, having taken occasion to say something concerning them elsewhere,a I shall confine myself to those sacraments which Christ has instituted under the New Testament; which are only two, Baptism and the Lord's supper.

The Papists, indeed, have added five more to them, though without a divine warrant; and, to give countenance to what they have done, they pervert the sense of some scriptures, occasionally brought for that purpose. One of the sacraments which they have added, is what they call holy orders. By this they authorize persons to perform the office of priests, or deacons; and they do so by the imposition of hands, and at the same time pretend to confer the Holy Ghost. The former they suppose to be the sign, the latter the thing signified. But this was not designed to be a sacrament given to the church; for the sacraments are ordinances which belong to all believers, and not only ministers. As for imposition of hands, whether it be considered as an ancient form of praying for a blessing on persons, or as used in setting others apart to an office; it seems principally to have had respect to those extraordinary gifts which the early Christians expected to qualify them for the discharge of their duties. Now, as these gifts have now ceased, the imposition of hands cannot be reckoned a sacramental sign; and the blessing conferred, namely, the Holy Ghost, from whom they received those extraordinary gifts, is no longer to be signified by it.

Another sacrament which the Papists add, is that of confirmation. By this they pretend that children who, in baptism, were made members of Christ, are strengthened and confirmed in the faith, and receive the Holy Ghost in order to their performing their baptismal vow. But, whatever engagement they are laid under by the ordinance of baptism, it is God alone who can confirm or strengthen them, and enable them to walk conformably to their engagement. And the grace which they need, it is not in the power of men to bestow; nor can it be conferred by any ordinance.

Another sacrament the Papists speak of, is penance. In this, after auricular confession made to the priest, and some external marks of

sorrow expressed by the penitent, the latter is to perform some difficult service enjoined, which they call penance; whereby he makes satisfaction for his sins, and so is afterwards absolved from them. But this is an abominable practice; by which persons are rather hardened in sin, than delivered from it. It is derogatory to Christ's satisfaction, and has not the least appearance of a sacrament or ordinance of God's appointment.

Another sacrament which they have added, is extreme unction. This they found on James 5:14, 15, where the apostle speaks of 'sick' persons being 'anointed with oil in the name of the Lord;' and where it is said, 'the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' But, though the practice of anointing the sick with oil was observed in the first age of the church, while the miraculous gift of healing was continued; yet, since that miraculous gift has now ceased, no such significant sign is to be used. As for forgiveness of sins, mentioned by the apostle, it seems not to have been conferred by the use of that sign, but was humbly expected and hoped for, as an answer of prayer. It is therefore a very preposterous thing to, reckon this anointing among the sacraments, under the gospel dispensation. [See Note X, page 490.]

Another sacrament which the Papists add, is that of matrimony. For this they have very little shadow of reason. They suppose that the apostle calls 'matrimony' 'a great mystery;' and this word the Greek church used to signify a sacrament. But Paul means, not that marriage is a mystery, but that the union between Christ and his church, which is illustrated by the conjugal union, is so.c Indeed, matrimony is an ordinance given, not to the, church, but to mankind in general, heathens as well as Christians. Hence, nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that it is one of the sacraments Christ

has instituted in the gospel church. According to the Papists' opinion, too, the priests are excluded from this sacrament, and forbidden to marry, just as the laity are excluded from the sacrament of holy orders; so that when they pretend to add to those institutions which Christ has given to the church, or invent sacraments which he has not ordained, they betray, not only their folly, but their bold presumption. We must conclude, therefore, that there are only two sacraments which Christ has given to his church, namely, baptism, and the Lord's supper. These are particularly considered in some following Answers.

[NOTE W. The Design of Observing the Lord's Supper.—Dr. Ridgeley, though he afterwards exhibits the impropriety of various sorts of phraseology on the subject of the Lord's supper, not used in scripture, is disposed to pass uncensured the current language which represents the observance of that ordinance as the taking of an oath to the Lord, on the part of soldiers fighting under his banner, that they will not desert his cause. But the rule appears to be without exception that whatever phraseology complicates an idea as stated in scripture, or attaches to it relations which scripture does not represent as belonging to it, tends only to obscure it or to make false impressions of it upon the mind. Even conceding—as it is difficult to do—that the passages in Psalms and Isaiah, 'I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments;' 'Unto me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear,' sanction the taking of an oath in any literal sense to God, or do more than enjoin that general fidelity or that cleaving of heart to God which may well be metaphorically represented by a civil subject's taking an oath of allegiance to his king; it would not, I suspect, be easy to show how the taking of the oath consists in observing the Lord's supper, or how it is even distinctively connected with that act, or connected with it more than with any act of faith or of prayer, or with any prominent

part whatever of a believer's entire course of spiritual obedience. How, again, shall we identify Christian soldiership with the observance of the Lord's supper? A Christian is a warrior, and a pursuer, and a sentinel, only as he fights against the corruptions of his nature, 'against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places,' and as he chases down into weakness and inaction the evil influences within and without which assail him, and keeps a vigilant outlook upon the lures of sin and the movements and stratagems of his spiritual foes. But if, by any effort of the fancy, his soldiership is to be depicted in connection with his observing the Lord's supper, he would be most appropriately represented in that act, not as swearing fidelity to the banner under which he serves, but as uniting in a demonstration of public joy and celebration in honour of the glorious Captain who redeemed him from captivity and made him a soldier, and who has pledged his unerring skill, and his unfailing faithfulness, and his unconquerable power, to lead him on to victory. But why identify what is meant either by the metaphor of swearing to the Lord, or by that of being good soldiers of Jesus Christ, with any one specific act of the Christian's life, and still less with that of his observing one of the various ordinances of Christ's appointment? To eat the last supper—according to the view which the scriptures give of the design of the act—is simply to 'remember Christ,'—to 'show the Lord's death till he come' Why should not this simple and most graphic and impressive view of its design be esteemed sufficient? Or is anything added to the amplitude, the clearness, the solemnity, the deep significancy of the view, by blending with it the notions of soldiership and of swearing to the Lord? What illustrating ray is thrown upon the idea of 'showing the Lord's death,' by speaking of Christians taking an oath to the Lord, or of their pledging themselves not to desert the banner under which they fight? Few men, if they reflect a little, will fail to feel, and to feel sensitively, that the mixture

of ideas tends at best to obscure and confuse; and, as evils very numerous and of serious magnitude have resulted from the use of complex and mystic phraseology on the subject of the Lord's supper, they will prefer to speak of that ordinance, and of the design and spirit of observing it, in the beautifully simple and sublimely expressive terms of scripture.—ED.]

[NOTE X. Extreme Unction.—The persons of whom the Apostle James speaks, were not—as in the case of extreme unction among the Romanists—the dying, but the sick. The object of anointing them, was not, like that of extreme unction, to prepare them for death, but to raise them up to health. The effective instrument or means of benefitting them, was, not a sacramental virtue, but 'the prayer of faith.' The 'oil' with which they were anointed, was not, like the substance employed in extreme unction, a balsam or a compound unguent, but pure 'oil,'—olive oil; nor, like the Romish balsam, which must be consecrated by a bishop in order to its being effective, was the oil holy, but common. The anointers were πρεσβυτεροι,—a word which, viewed in the light of some texts of scripture, is synonymous with 'bishops,' and, viewed in the light of other texts, means seniors, Acts 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5, 7; 1 Pet. 5:1–5; 1 Tim. 5:1, 2; Luke 15:25; John 8:9: they were not, as in the administration of extreme unction, one person, but πρεσβυτεροι, more persons than one. Finally, the anointing—whether regarded as practised in an ordinary way, or as practised in connection with the supernatural gifts of the apostolic age—was in accordance, not with a religious rite, but with the eastern mode of the practice of physic, or medical science.

Another passage, quoted by Romanists in support of the doctrine of extreme unction, is Mark 6:13, 'And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.' But this passage, like the former, refers to the use of pure oil, to the

application of it to the sick, to the eastern method of dealing with diseases, and to the restoration of the anointed persons to health. The administrators, too, were the seventy disciples, none of whom were in those 'holy orders' which are essential to the validity of extreme unction, but which, according to the Romanists, were not instituted till the night before our Lord's crucifixion; and the persons to whom the anointing was administered, were not members of the communion in which extreme unction is practised, but Jews and Samaritans, who lived before the Christian church, and much more the Romish community, was organized. The anointing, besides, was accompanied by the casting out of devils,—a practice which the Church of Rome affects to perpetuate with regard to infants, but which she does not sanction in connection with extreme unction, or in reference to the dying.

Strangely enough, the passages in the gospels which speak of the woman's anointing our Lord with an alabaster-box of very precious ointment, are adduced as another argument in favour or extreme unction, Matt. 26:6–13; Mark 14:8, 9; John 12:7. Though a serious refutation is hardly requisite, a few of many points of contrast between the anointing which these passages mention and the administration of extreme unction, may be stated. Comparing the two, then, we see ointment opposed to chrism; precious ointment of spikenard, opposed to a vulgar compound of oil and balsam; anointing of the head or the feet, opposed to anointing of the ears, the nose, the eyes, the mouth, the hands, and the breast; anointing to prepare the body for burial, opposed to anointing to prepare the soul for the invisible state; anointing of the Saviour in acknowledgment of his divine excellencies, opposed to anointing of the sinner to 'take away the remainders of sins;' anointing one in perfect health, opposed to anointing one in mortal sickness; anointing by a woman belonging to the laity, opposed to anointing by a man invested with

'holy orders;' anointing suited to one who should die by violence, opposed to anointing of such a nature that they who die by violence are the only persons to whom it may not be administered; anointing which cost the administrator very large expense, opposed to anointing whence the administrator draws a considerable portion of his official gains.

One set of arguments against the doctrine of extreme unction, may be drawn from its own inconsistencies or absurd assumptions and consequences. Extreme unction is said to 'cleanse from the remainders of sins;' but, as it allows all or most who enjoy it to pass into the penal fire of purgatory, it must be an inefficacious rite, or a mere pretence. All pretended grace or virtue derived from it, evanishes, or is declared to be nugatory, if the patient be restored to health; so that it is a mere fiction, existing only in name. Extreme unction is sold for money, may be vitiated by 'want of intention' in the priest, forms a chief source of episcopal revenues, and often, from the suddenness of death, or the distance and inaccessibility of a priest, cannot be obtained; and, on these grounds, it could hardly have been instituted as a necessary or even an important means of preparation for dying, among a community many of whom are poor, dispersed, and subject to diseases of summary operation. The administration of the rite, by working on the patient's imagination, shutting him up from food, and withdrawing from him medicine and cordials adapted to promote his recovery, very frequently puts a premature termination upon life, and cannot, for one moment, be supposed to be sanctioned by Him who has said, 'Thou shalt do no murder.'

Another set of arguments against extreme unction, may be drawn from the want of adaptation in the rite to accomplish its professed object, or work out moral results. External applications, or physical

influences on the body, cannot benefit spirit or man's moral nature. Nor is sin, as to its seat, or as to the influences which originate, aggravate, or accompany it, to be found in the outward organs of sense. Corrupt thought is conceived, and guilty action is produced, not by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, but by willing and lusting,—not by acts of perception through the bodily organs, but by acts of volition and desire in the heart. The seat and the instruments of moral disease, therefore, are brought under a healing influence, not when the eyes, nose, ears, mouth, and hands, but when the understanding and the will are touched,—not by a ministration of oil and balsam, but by the communication of grace, by the influence of truth, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, by the application of the atoning merits of 'the Lord our righteousness.' 'Bodily exercise profiteth little.' 'Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (—touch not, taste not, handle not; which all are to perish with the using—) after the commandments and doctrines of men?' 1 Tim. 4:8; Col. 2:20–23.

A third set of arguments against the doctrine of extreme unction, may be drawn from its inconsistency with several great doctrines of revelation. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to redeem from all iniquity; and it delivers from the fear of death, and from its sting, and leaves only its 'shadow,' 1 Cor 15:55; Ps. 23:3; 2 Cor. 5:1–10. 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.' Believers in the Saviour are 'justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' 'There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' Yet extreme unction declares that, in every Christian, there are 'remainders of sins' which it only, or future penal fire, has efficacy to take away! Apart, also, from the administration to them of any rite, and viewed simply as persons justified through the merits of Christ's atonement,

and sanctified by the operation of the Holy Spirit, Christians are represented in scripture as enjoying 'peace,' 'triumph,' union to Christ, living hope that maketh not ashamed, confident expectation of passing from the body to be present with the Lord. They hence depend in no degree upon anything outward, but altogether on the merits of the Saviour; and, be they situated how they may, they eventually 'fall asleep in Jesus.' See Psal. 23:3; Phil. 3:3; and many other passages.

A fourth set of arguments against extreme unction, may be drawn from the silence respecting it of the divine word, and of early Christian antiquity. Direct denunciation or incidental mention of it in the Bible, would at least prove that it is not of recent origin, and might afford scope for unprincipled but ingenious criticism to attempt to find for it a scriptural sanction. But the utter silence of scripture regarding either it, or anything which resembles it—for we have shown that James 6:14, 15, and kindred passages, refer to matters entirely different—proves it to be destitute of divine sanction, and, at the same time, excites a suspicion of its claiming no very high antiquity Extreme unction was quite unknown in the early centuries. Narratives of the death-bed scenes of saints, and writings on the ordinances, rites, and ceremonies observed among the Christians, as well as theological and historical works of other classes, afford no trace of its having existed till long after the establishment of the papacy. Extreme unction does not date higher than about the hear 900 or 1000.—ED.]

BAPTISM

QUESTION CLXV. What is Baptism?

> ANSWER. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.

THE method in which we shall endeavour to explain this Answer is the following. We shall first prove that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by Christ, in which there is to be, some way or other, the application of water. We shall next show that baptism is to be performed in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Lastly, we shall explain what is signified in baptism, and what engagements are laid upon the person baptized.

The Nature and Authority of Baptism

First, then, we are to prove that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by Christ, in which there is to be, some way or other, the application of water.

1. There must be the application of water, either by dipping the person who is to be baptized into the water, or by pouring or sprinkling water upon him; otherwise the observance does not answer the proper and literal sense of the word 'baptize.' It is true, we sometimes find the word used in a metaphorical sense. Thus our Saviour speaks of 'the baptism that he was to be baptized with;' whereby he intends the sufferings he was to endure in shedding his blood upon the cross. Elsewhere also it is taken, by a metonymy, for the conferring of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the

disciples were given to expect after Christ's ascension into heaven, and which the apostles were made partakers of at the day of Pentecost, when there appeared to them cloven tongues, like as of fire, that sat upon each of them, as a sign that they should be filled with the Holy Ghost, and speak with other tongues, and be inflamed with an holy zeal for Christ's glory and interest. Such seems to be the sense of the word 'baptism,' as understood figuratively. We understand the word, however, in its most proper sense; and therefore suppose that baptism must be performed with water.

As to the mode of baptism, or the application of water, whether the water is to be applied to the person baptized, or he to be put into it, I purposely waive the consideration of the subject, till we are led to speak concerning the subjects of baptism, that we may insist on the several matters in controversy between those who maintain and those that deny infant baptism, which we shall have occasion to do under the next Answer. For I am ready to persuade myself, that what I shall advance under the present Answer, and also what I shall afterwards say respecting the improvement of baptism, will not be much contested by those who differ from us as to the subjects of baptism, and the mode of administering it.

2. We are now to consider that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament. It hence differs from those baptisms or washings which were frequently practised under the Old Testament dispensation; concerning which the apostle says, that it 'stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings,' or baptisms.f We read of many instances in which persons were washed under the ceremonial law. Washing was an ordinance used in the consecration of persons to holy offices; as it is said, 'Aaron and his sons were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and washed with water,' when they were consecrated to be priests. Again, when they ministered in holy

things, or came near the altar, it is said, 'they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses.'h For this reason the laver was set between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and water was put there to wash in; and they washed their hands and their feet in it. This ceremony was used also when the Israelites were subject to various uncleannesses. Thus, in the method of cleansing the leper, he was to 'wash himself;' and, 'after that,' he might 'come into the camp.'k The same thing was to be done by those who were liable to uncleannesses of another nature. These ceremonial washings, when applied to persons, seem to have been ordained to signify their consecration or dedication to God, in some of the instances before mentioned; and, in others, they signified the means which God had ordained to cleanse the soul from moral impurity, which was denoted by the ceremonial uncleannesses which they desired to be purified from. These ordinances, indeed, expired along with the rest of the ceremonial law. Yet it is very evident from the institution of gospel baptism, that the sign is retained; though there are some circumstances in the thing signified by it, in which it differs from those baptisms which were formerly used by the Jewish church. The Israelites were hereby devoted to God, to observe that peculiar mode of worship which he prescribed by the hand of his servant Moses; we are devoted to God as those who hereby signify our obligation to walk according to the rules prescribed by Christ in the gospel. They used this ordinance to signify the cleansing virtue of the blood of Jesus, who was to come, and the Spirit that was to be poured forth in consequence of his coming; we use it to signify or express our faith in what Christ has accomplished, and in the grace which the Spirit in consequence works. Hence we call it an ordinance of the New Testament.

3. Baptism was instituted by Christ. This is evident from the commission he gave to his apostles, not only to preach the gospel to

all nations, but to 'baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' This he appointed to be a standing ordinance in the church, throughout all ages; and on this account he promises, in the following words, that he will 'be with' his ministers, in fulfilling the commission which he gave them to execute; 'unto the end of the world.' We must conclude, therefore, that it is a standing ordinance in the church, and not designed to be observed only during the first age, till Christianity universally obtained. This we assert in opposition to the Socinians. They suppose that baptism was, indeed, instituted by Christ; but that the design of it was only that it should be an external badge or sign of the heathens' embracing the Christian religion, as they were formerly initiated into the Jewish church by the ceremonial washing which was then in use. The contrary to this opinion, however, will appear from what we shall have occasion to say under a following Head, when we consider what baptism was a sign and seal of; which is as applicable to the church in our day as it was to those who lived at the planting of it.

The Form of Baptism

It is further observed that baptism is to be performed in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In this solemn act of dedication, there is a professed acknowledgment of the divine Triunity. Accordingly, baptism is an act of religious worship; in which God's right to the persons baptized is publicly owned; and in which an intimation is made, that all saving blessings which are desired or expected in the ordinance, are given by the Father, through a Mediator, purchased by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit. Much more is included than a being baptized by the authority of these divine persons; which is all that some of the Antitrinitarians will allow to be meant by 'in their name.' For though no ordinance can be rightly performed but by a divine warrant, yet this warrant is

equally extended to the administering or observing of any other ordinance. Hence, a being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, signifies more than this; namely, a person's being dedicated to them. In this dedication, a solemn profession is made that these divine persons have a right to all religious worship, which we are obliged to perform, as well as that all our hope of salvation is from them. Some think that this idea, which is principally intended in the form of baptism, would be better expressed, if the words of institution were rendered, 'Into the name of the Father,' &c. The same phrase is so rendered elsewhere; as when the apostle speaks of a person's being 'baptized into Christ,'p and explains it as denoting a 'putting on Christ,' or a professing, as it is said, that we are Christ's. Thus they who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are denoted to be professedly their servants and subjects; under an indispensable obligation to put their trust in them, and to hope for all saving blessings from them, according to the tenor of the gospel.

It is inquired by some, whether it be absolutely necessary, in the administration of this ordinance, explicitly to make mention of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Some assert that it is not; because we read of persons being 'baptized in the name of Jesus,' and 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,'s without any mention of the name of the Father, or of the Holy Ghost. It does not appear, however, that this was the express form of words used in baptizing those who are mentioned in the passages referred to; but it argues, only that the ordinance was administered, and that, in its being so, Christ's name and glory were proclaimed. Though the other divine persons are not particularly mentioned, it does not follow that the persons who administered the ordinance did not adhere to the express words of institution which were given to the apostles. It might as well be argued, that John did not baptize in the name of any

of the divine persons, since, when we read of his baptism, it is said, 'I baptize you with water.' But it does not follow that he did not baptize them in the name of God; inasmuch as he plainly confesses, that 'God sent him to baptize with water.' But that this matter may be set in a just light, we must distinguish between a person's omitting to mention the Son or the Holy Ghost in the form of baptism, as denying them to be divine persons,—in which case the ordinance is invalid; and his doing so for no other reason but because he thinks we are not to be tied up to a particular form of words, but may sometimes baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and at other times in the name of Jesus. In the latter case, I will not say that the ordinance is invalid. Yet his manner of administering it will be highly offensive to many serious Christians, and can hardly be reckoned an instance of faithfulness to Christ; who has, by an express command, intimated what words are to be used.

What Baptism Signifies and Entails

We are now to consider what is signified in baptism, and what engagements are laid on the person baptized. There are some, especially among the Socinians, who maintain that it is only an external or visible badge of Christianity in general, signifying a person's right to be called a Christian, or a professor of that religion which was instituted by our Saviour. Their design in advocating this notion seems to be, that they may evade the force of the argument which we bring to prove the divinity of the Son and the Spirit, from their being the object of that religious worship which, according to our explanation, is contained in the form of baptism. Did they intend, by being a Christian, the same thing as we do, namely, a subjection to Christ as a divine person, or a professed obligation which we are laid under to worship God the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit, we should have no contention with them about this

matter. But as we are not agreed as to the meaning of being a Christian, especially as they mean no more by it than our being obliged to adhere to a certain scheme of religious worship, prescribed by Christ, of what kind soever it be, in the same manner as a person is called a Mahommedan, because he embraces Mahommed's Alcoran as a rule of faith; we cannot think their account of baptism, as being an external badge of Christianity, to be a sufficient explanation of what is intended by it as a sign or significant ordinance.

There are several things, mentioned in this Answer, of which it is said to be a sign and seal, namely, our ingrafting into Christ, and obtaining remission of sins by his blood, our regeneration by his Spirit, our adoption, and resurrection unto eternal life, which include all the benefits of Christ's mediation. These have been particularly explained under some foregoing Answers. But there is one which contains all the rest. Accordingly, baptism is generally described by divines, as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of all the duties, obligations, and privileges which are either enjoined or bestowed in it. What this covenant is, what its blessings are, and how the grace of God is manifested in it, have likewise been considered under some foregoing Answers. All that I shall now add concerning it is, that it contains all the promises in which our salvation is included, and that of these there is one which comprehends all the rest, and by which the covenant is often expressed,—namely, that God will be 'a God unto his people,'x 'their shield and exceeding great reward,' that he will 'put his laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and will be to them a God, and they shall be to him a people.'z There are very great privileges contained in this relation,—namely, our being under the special care and protection of Christ; having a right to what he has purchased, and to that inheritance which he has laid

up in heaven for his children; and enjoying communion with him here, and being made happy with him hereafter.

Now, the main thing to be considered, is, how baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant. We are not to suppose that this, or any other ordinance, confers the grace of the covenant, as the Papists pretend; for it is, at most, but a significant sign or seal of the covenant, while the grace of the covenant is the thing signified by it. There are, as was formerly observed, two ways by which persons may be said to be in covenant with God. There is a being in covenant professedly or visibly; and to exhibit persons as thus in covenant, is the immediate intent and design of this ordinance. But there is also a being in covenant, as laying hold on the grace of the covenant, when we give ourselves up to Christ by faith, and, in consequence, lay claim to the blessings of his redemption. Now, baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace in both these senses, though in different respects. The ordinance itself is a professed dedication to God, or an acknowledgment that the person baptized is obliged to be the Lord's; and signifies his right to the external blessings of the covenant of grace, which are contained in the gospel-dispensation. There is also more than this contained in a person's being given up to God in baptism, whether it be by himself, as in those who are baptized when adult, or by his parents, as in the case of infants; for the person who dedicates, expresses his faith in Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, and hopes for the saving blessings which he has purchased for his people. It is one thing for this ordinance to confer these blessings, and another for it to be an instituted means in which we express our faith and hope that the blessings shall be bestowed, the person being devoted to God with that view.

There are two things which are more especially signified in baptism, namely, privileges expected, and obligations acknowledged. The

privileges expected are such as accompany salvation, and are the special gift of the Holy Ghost, namely, the taking away of the guilt and pollution of sin, and our being made partakers of all the blessings which Christ has purchased, and which God the Father, in him, has promised to the heirs of salvation. I do not say that all who are baptized are made partakers of these privileges; but they are given up to God, or give themselves up to him in this ordinance, in the hope of obtaining them. Moreover, there is in baptism a public profession or acknowledgment of our obligation to be the Lord's. This is, from the nature of the thing, implied in its being a dedication to God. When we make a surrender of ourselves to him, we declare that we are willing to be his servants and subjects, and entirely at his disposal. Our doing this is contained in a fiducial act of self-dedication to God, and cannot be done by one in behalf of another. It is to be feared that many who give themselves up to God in this ordinance when adult, though they make a profession of their faith, yet do not give themselves up by faith. That matter, however, is known only to the heart-searching God. Now, as in this ordinance we express our faith and hope concerning the privileges just mentioned; so we, in this act of dedication, confess that God has a right to us, and that it is our indispensable duty to be his. Hence, by baptism, either we are by our own consent, as in self-dedication, professedly the Lord's; or our being so is acknowledged by those who have a right to dedicate, and thereby to signify our obligation; and as their act is highly just and reasonable, the persons devoted are obliged to stand to it, or else are brought under a great degree of guilt, in not being steadfast in God's covenant.

There is one thing more mentioned in this Answer, namely, that the person baptized is solemnly admitted into the visible church. But I choose to pass over this matter; since it is hard to understand what some mean by the visible church, and by a person's becoming a

member of it by baptism. We have elsewhere considered the difficulties involved in the description of the visible church; together with the admission of persons into church communion, and their qualifications for it. If by being admitted into the visible church, we are to understand that a person has a right to all the ordinances of the church by baptism, without being admitted afterwards into it by mutual consent; the notion is contrary to the faith and practice of most of the reformed churches. If, on the other hand, they mean by it, that there is a public declaration of our hope that the person baptized shall be made partaker of those privileges which Christ has purchased for and given to his church; it is no more than what has been already explained in our considering the baptismal expectations and obligations. But whether this can properly be called an admission into the church, I leave to be determined by those who better understand what they mean, than I do, when they say that this is done in baptism.

THE SUBJECTS AND MODE OF BAPTISM

QUESTION CLXVI. Unto whom is Baptism to be administered?

ANSWER. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized.

Who are Excluded from Baptism

IN this Answer, which principally respects the subjects of baptism, we have, first, an account of those who are excluded from this

privilege, namely, such as are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise. The visible church is here considered in the most large and less proper acceptation of the word, as denoting all who profess the true religion. In this respect it is opposed to the Jews and heathen; and also to those who, though they live in a Christian nation, are grossly ignorant of the gospel, and act as though they thought that it did not belong to them, not seeing themselves obliged to make any profession of it. These may be ranked among infidels, as much as the heathen themselves; and, according to this sense of the word, are not members of the visible church, and, while in that condition, are not to be admitted to baptism. That they should be excluded from this ordinance is agreeable to the sentiments and practice of most of the reformed churches; and cannot but be reckoned highly reasonable, by all who consider baptism as an ordinance in which a public profession is made of the person's being devoted to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If he be considered as adult—and of such we are now speaking—there is a signification, and thereby a profession made, that he gives himself up to God; and, if the ordinance be rightly applied, there must be an harmony between the inward design of the person dedicating, and the true intent and meaning of the external sign; and this harmony is, by divine appointment, a visible declaration of his adhering by faith to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and embracing that salvation which takes its rise from them. Now, this declaration must be made by faith, else the ordinance is engaged in after an hypocritical manner, and so will tend to God's dishonour, and the prejudice rather than the advantage of him to whom it is administered.

The Profession of Faith made in Baptism

We are now to consider the necessity of those making a profession of their faith in Christ and obedience to him, who, being adult, are admitted to baptism. It was supposed, under the last Head, that if there be not an harmony between the internal frame of spirit in the person baptized, and the intent of the external sign, the ordinance is not rightly applied to him, inasmuch as he pretends to dedicate himself to God, while in reality he does not do so by faith. But it is further necessary, that he should make it appear that he is a believer by a profession of his faith; otherwise he who administers the ordinance, together with the assembly who are present, cannot conclude that they are performing a service which is acceptable to God. For their sakes, therefore, as well as for his own, the person to be baptized ought to make a profession of his subjection to Christ, as what is signified in this ordinance. That he should do so is agreeable to the words of institution, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them,' &c.; and, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved,'d &c. I am sensible that some who have defended infant baptism, or rather attempted to answer an objection taken from this and similar scriptures against it, have endeavoured to prove that the Greek word signifies, 'make persons disciples;' that it is a metaphor taken from the practice of a person's being put under the care of one who is qualified to instruct him, whose disciple he is said to be, in order to his being taught by him; and that, therefore, we are made disciples by baptism, and afterwards are 'taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded.' This meaning of the Greek word is taken notice of in the marginal reading of our Bibles; which supposes that the passage may be rendered, 'make disciples of all nations.' But, I cannot think this sense of the word so defensible, or agreeable to the design of our Saviour, as that of our translation, namely, 'Go, teach all nations;' which agrees with the words of the other evangelist, 'Go, preach the gospel to every creature.' Besides, if

we have recourse to the sense in question, to defend infant baptism, we do not rightly consider that it cannot well be applied to adult baptism, which the apostles were first to practise; for it cannot be said concerning the heathen, that they are first to be taken under Christ's care by baptism, and then, instructed in the doctrines of the gospel by his ministers.f [See Note Y, page 512.]

Moreover, a profession of faith in those who are baptized when adult, is agreeable to the practice of the Christian church at the planting of it. Thus it is said, 'They that gladly received the word were baptized.' We might also notice the case of the jailer, and of the eunuch, who were first converted, and then baptized.'h But, if it be retorted upon us that we are giving up the cause of infant baptism, it must be observed, that what we have stated does not in the least affect it; for when our Saviour gave his commission to the apostles to teach or preach the gospel to all nations and baptize them, it is to be supposed that their ministry was to be exercised among the adult, and that these were then utter strangers to Christ and his gospel. Hence, it would have been a preposterous thing to put them upon devoting themselves to him, before they were persuaded to believe in him; nor could they devote their children till they had first dedicated themselves to him.

Infant Baptism

We are now led to consider the right of infants to baptism. This right they have if those who are required to dedicate them to God are believers; or if they are the offspring of parents of whom only one is a believer.

I. The right of the infant-seed of believers to baptism will appear if we consider baptism as an ordinance of dedication. It is the indispensable duty of believers to devote themselves, and all they

have, to God. This duty is founded in the law of nature, and is the result of God's right to us and ours. Whatever we have received from him, is to be surrendered or given up to him; whereby we own that he is the proprietor of all things, that we depend upon him for them, and that they are to be improved to his glory. This is, in a particular manner, to be applied to our infant-seed, whom it is our duty to devote to the Lord, as we receive them from him. Yet, there is this difference between the dedication of persons and the dedication of things, to God, that we are to devote the former to him in hope of their obtaining the blessings which they are at present capable of, or shall stand in need of from him hereafter. This, I think, is allowed by all Christians. Nothing is more common than for some, who cannot see it their duty to baptize their children, to dedicate or devote them to God by faith and prayer; and this they do in a very solemn manner, and with expectation of spiritual blessings, as an encouragement of their faith, so far as they apprehend them to be capable of receiving them. Now baptism, in the general idea of it, is an ordinance of dedication or consecration of persons to God. If this be not allowed, I cannot see how it can be performed by faith, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or how the observance of it can be a visible 'putting on of Christ,' as the apostle styles it.

It is objected that this proposition would not be denied, if baptism were to be considered as an ordinance of self-dedication. But then, we are told, it would effectually overthrow the doctrine of infant baptism; for as infants cannot devote themselves to God in this ordinance, it is not, as an ordinance of self dedication, to be applied to them. We reply, that as there is no other medium which, I apprehend, can be made use of to prove that the solemn act of consecration or dedication to God in baptism is to be made only by ourselves, but what is taken from an assumption of the question in dispute by those who assert that infants are not to be baptized; so, if

this method of reasoning were allowed, we might as well say, on the other hand, that infants are to be baptized, and that therefore baptism is not an ordinance of self-dedication, since they cannot devote themselves to God. Now, this would militate against what, I think, is allowed by all, that baptism, when applied to the adult, is an ordinance of self-dedication. Hence, what I would more directly assert in answer to the objection, is that baptism is an ordinance of dedication, either of ourselves or of others; provided the person who dedicates, has a right to that which he devotes to God, and can dedicate it by faith. When I do, as it were, pass over my right to another, there is nothing required but that I can lawfully do it, considering it as my property; and this is no less to be doubted concerning the infant-seed of believers than I can question whether an adult person has a right to himself, when he gives himself up to God in this ordinance.

It follows then, that parents, who have a right to their infant-seed, may devote them to God in baptism, provided they can do so by faith. Hence, a profession of faith is necessary only in those who are active in this ordinance, not in those who are merely passive. This we are obliged to maintain against those who often intimate that children are not to be baptized, because they are not capable of believing. Or, if we say that they are capable of having the seeds of faith, though not the acts of it, they who are opposed to us generally reckon this insufficient to support our argument; inasmuch as it cannot well be determined what infants have the seeds of faith, and what not. I think, too, that those arguments which are generally brought to prove that the infants of believing parents, as such, have the seeds of faith, on the account of which they are to be baptized, can hardly be defended; because many good men have wicked children. Hence, what we insist on in this argument is, that believing parents may give up their children to God in baptism, in hope of

their obtaining the blessings of the covenant, whether they are able to conclude that they have the seeds of grace or not. They may devote them to God in hope of regeneration; though they cannot know them to be regenerate; as all ordinances are to be performed with the view that they may be rendered effectual means of grace. Accordingly, as is observed in this Answer, infants descending from parents, either both or but one of whom profess faith in Christ, are to be baptized. For one parent has as much a right to the child as the other; so that the unbelief of one does not exclude the other from giving it up to God by faith, in hope of its obtaining the saving blessings of the covenant of grace.

II. The right of the infant-seed of believers to baptism, may be farther proved from their being capable of the privileges signified in it, and under an indispensable obligation to perform the duties which they who dedicate them to God make a public profession of, as agreeable to the design of this ordinance. None are to be excluded from any of those ordinances which Christ has given to the church, but they who, either in a natural or in a moral sense, are to be deemed incapable subjects of them. Some, indeed, are incapable of engaging in ordinances by reason of a natural unmeetness for them. Thus infants are not to be admitted to the Lord's supper, being under a natural incapacity; and ignorant and profane persons are not to be admitted to it, being under a moral incapacity; and, for the same reason, a wicked man, when adult, is not a proper subject of baptism. But if there be neither of these bars to exclude persons, they are not to be denied the advantage of any ordinance. This, I think, will be allowed by all. Hence, the only thing I need prove, is that infants are not incapable of the principal things signified in baptism. That they are not incapable of being dedicated to God, has been proved under the last Head; and now we shall consider several privileges signified in baptism which they are equally capable of.

1. Baptism is an external sign of that faith and hope which he has who dedicates a person to God, that the person dedicated shall obtain the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. Now, that infants are capable of these blessings, none will deny who suppose them capable of salvation. If we suppose infants not to have regenerating grace, which is neither to be affirmed nor denied, it being a matter at present unknown to us; yet they are capable of having it, for the reason just assigned; and though they cannot, at present, put forth any acts of grace, they will be capable of doing so as soon as they are able to discern between good and evil. They are not excluded by their infant state, from being under Christ's special care; which is, doubtless, to be extended to elect infants as well as others. They are capable also of being discharged from the guilt of original sin; and though they are not now capable of laying claim to this privilege, yet they may be enabled to do so afterwards. Now, if infants are capable of these privileges, certainly the person who dedicates them to God,—and who has a right to do so, inasmuch as they are his property, and he is able to dedicate them by faith—may devote them to God in the exercise of this grace, and in a fiducial expectation that they shall obtain these privileges. Indeed, when we engage in this ordinance, we ought, in consequence, to expect some saving blessings, as much as when we engage in any other ordinance of divine appointment.

It is objected that, though a person may devote his child to God in hope of his obtaining saving blessings, yet he cannot exercise any act of faith that he shall obtain them. It is hence inferred that, though he may perform this duty with a degree of hope, or at least of desire, yet he cannot do it by faith; so that if children are to be devoted to God by faith, they are not the subjects of this ordinance. But we reply, that some things may be said to be done by faith, when we have not a certain ground to expect saving fruits and effects. Suppose an infant

expiring, and the tender parent concerned about its salvation, whether or not he has a certain expectation that it shall be saved, he may and ought to be earnest with God by faith and prayer, that the child may be happy when taken out of the world; and if he finds that he has the lively exercise of faith with respect to this matter, he will possess some degree of hope that God, who excited this grace in him, will own it by giving the blessings which he desires; which is the only comfort that a parent can take in the loss of his infant-seed. Now, may there not be this act of faith, when he dedicates him to God in baptism? Did we assert that giving up our children to God by faith necessarily infers their obtaining saving blessings, the objection would have some force. Or did we assert, that there could be no faith exercised without our being certainly persuaded that there should be a saving effect; it might then be argued, that because we are not certain that infants shall be saved, we cannot give them up to God by faith. But if there may be faith, where there is not this certain persuasion, or any ground by which this matter maybe determined, I think it will follow that infants may be devoted to God by faith, as well as with a desire of their obtaining saving blessings. Hence, the objection in question does not take away the force of our argument. We are far from supposing that baptismal dedication necessarily infers saving blessings, or is inseparably connected with them, so that the one cannot be without the other. It is sufficient to our purpose to suppose that infants are capable of those blessings which faith desires, and, it may be, hopes for, and consequently of those things which are principally signified in baptism.

2. Infants are under an indispensable obligation to perform the duties which are incumbent on those who are given up to God in baptism, and which are signified by that ordinance. This respects some things future; they being at present incapable of performing any duty. Indeed, obligations to perform, duties may respect the time

to come as well as the time present; as when a person is bound to pay a just debt, the obligation is valid, though it is not expected that the debt should be immediately paid. Thus infants are professedly bound, when given up to God, to be the Lord's. Whether they will ever give themselves up to him by faith or not, is unknown to us; yet the obligation will take place as soon as they are capable of doing good or evil. Hence, the parent may bind his child to be the Lord's, inasmuch as the obligation is just, being founded in God's right to obedience. And when he has laid his child under it in this ordinance, he ought afterwards strictly to charge him to stand to it, as he would not contract double guilt, in neglecting, not only to perform an indispensable duty, but to pay that debt of obedience which has been so solemnly acknowledged in this ordinance. These arguments, taken from the nature and design of the ordinance of baptism, give me the fullest conviction concerning our warrant to apply it to infants. But,

3. It appears that the infant seed of believers are to be consecrated or devoted to God in baptism, because they are included in tho covenant in which God has promised that he will be a God to his people, and to their seed. The latter are, on this account, styled 'holy.' Concerning Israel, it is said, that 'they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.'l The 'branch' is said to be 'holy,' together with 'the root.' It is said, also, that 'the children of the promise are counted for the seed,'n that is, included in that covenant in which God promised that he would be a God to children, together with their parents; as he says to Abraham, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and to thy seed after thee, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' In this sense, I think, we are to understand the apostle's words, 'The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the' believing 'wife, and the unbelieving wife by the' believing 'husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.'p By these and other expressions of a similar nature, we

are not to understand the special saving grace of regeneration and sanctification; for that is not a privilege which descends from parents to children by birth; as our Saviour says, 'We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Hence, when some who are on the other side of the question, think that we intend hereby the saving blessings of the covenant, or that holiness which is an internal qualification or meetness for heaven, they do not rightly understand our meaning. Some, indeed, may have given occasion to conclude that they intend this, who speak of the grace of regeneration as conferred in baptism, and assert that that ordinance entitles persons to salvation, if they happen to die before they are adult, and that, if afterward they appear, by the wickedness of their conversation, to be in an unconverted state, they fall from grace. This is what I do not well understand; nor do I intend, when I speak of the infants of believers as an holy seed, that they are all internally regenerated or sanctified from the womb. What I mean is, that they are included in the external dispensation of the covenant of grace: which must be reckoned a greater advantage than if they had descended from Indians, who are strangers to it. I am sensible, indeed, that they who deny infant baptism, suppose that the holiness of the children spoken of by the apostle, in the scripture just referred to, who descended from parents of whom one only was a believer, implies nothing else but their being legitimate. But that does not seem to be his meaning; for marriage is an ordinance of the law of nature, which all without distinction have a right to, heathens as much as Christians; and the children of the one are as legitimate as those of the other. There is hence something else intended by their being 'holy,' and this is the same thing which is meant in the other scriptures just referred to, which speak of an external relative holiness, whereby God must be supposed to have a greater regard to them than to others who are styled 'unclean.' Now, if this does not infer, as was before observed, their being internally regenerated or

sanctified; it is at least not a word without an idea affixed to it. We must hence understand by it, an holiness in the lowest sense of the word; as children are said to be 'an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb his reward.' Or it denotes the obligation they are laid under, by the privilege of their descending from believing parents, to adhere to their fathers' God; and this obligation, as has been already observed, is professed or acknowledged when they are dedicated to him in baptism. Such is the use which I would make of this account of them in scripture, to prove their right to be devoted to God in this ordinance.

Nor, I think, do we adopt the interpretation which we have given without some warrant from scripture. When God told Abraham, in the promise just mentioned, that he would be 'a God unto him, and to his seed,' which is the foundation of their federal holiness; this is assigned as a reason why they should be devoted to God in circumcision; for we cannot but conclude circumcision, as we do baptism, to have been an ordinance of dedication or separation to God. Again,t when the apostle pressed the Jews amongst the mixed multitude to whom he had preached to 'repent and be baptized,' and encouraged them to hope for 'the gift of the Holy Ghost;' he assigned as a reason, that 'the promise was to them, and to their children,' that is, the promise of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed; and he adds, 'and to them that are afar off,' that is, the Gentiles, who might claim this promise when they believed, and whom the apostle calls elsewhere, 'children of the promise, as Isaac was.' These, who are styled before conversion a people 'afar off,' were alter it reckoned the spiritual seed of Abraham, and so had a right to the blessings of the covenant, that God would be a God to them. Now, by a parity of reason, in the same sense in which the seed of Abraham were children of the promise, the seed of all other believers are to be reckoned so, till, by their own act and deed, they renounce their

external covenant relation. We may hence infer, that if they stand in this relation to God, their doing so is publicly to be owned; and accordingly they are to be given up to him in baptism, there being in this ordinance a professed declaration of their covenant relation.

It has just been inferred, that as the infant seed of believers under the Old Testament had a right to circumcision, because they were included in the covenant which God made with their fathers; so they have a right to baptism. Now, this inference is not to be wholly passed over; though I am sensible, they who deny infant baptism will not allow it. Some have argued in opposition to it, that circumcision was ordained to be a sign and seal of that covenant of peculiarity which God made with the Jewish church, or of those blessings which they were made partakers of, as a nation excelling others, in name, honour, and glory. But this view of circumcison, I think, comes far short of what the apostle says respecting it, namely, that it was 'a seal of the righteousness of faith.' Indeed, when we call that dispensation a covenant of peculiarity, we intend nothing else but some external privileges annexed to the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. Hence, Abraham's faith was conversant both on the righteousness of faith, which respected his own salvation and that of his spiritual seed, and on those privileges of a lower nature which they who were, in other respects, his seed, were made partakers of by virtue of the covenant in which God promised that he would be a God to him and to his seed. Moreover, it is generally denied by those who are on the other side of the question, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision. This, therefore, remains to be proved, in order to our establishing the consequence, that as children were to be devoted to God by circumcision under the law, so they are to be devoted unto him by baptism under the gospel-dispensation. Now, that this may appear, let it be considered that God has substituted some ordinances, under the gospel-dispensation, for others which were

observed under the ceremonial law. Thus the Lord's supper is instituted in the room of the passover; otherwise the apostle would never have alluded to the one when he speaks of the other, saying, 'Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast,' &c. Now, we have as much ground to conclude that baptism comes in the room of circumcision, as we have that any gospel ordinance comes in the room of any other which belonged to the ceremonial law. For the apostle says, 'In whom ye are circumcised by the circumcision made without hands, buried with him in baptism.'z Here he speaks of the thing signified by circumcision and of baptism as being the same, namely, our communion with Christ in his death; so that the thing signified by baptism, is styled, as it were, a spiritual circumcision. Now, as these two ordinances signify in substance the same thing, and are set the one against the other in this scripture, we may, I think, infer that baptism comes in the room of circumcision. Besides, as the first visible profession which the Israelites made, especially by any significant ordinance, that they were the Lord's, which is what we understand by an initiating ordinance, was made in the observance of circumcision; it follows that, if baptism is the only initiating ordinance under the gospel, as circumcision was under the law, it comes in the room of it; or else no other ordinance does. But if it be said that no ordinance comes in the room of circumcision, then the privileges of the church under the present dispensation, are, in a very disadvantageous circumstance, less than they were under the former; and if infants received any advantage by being devoted to God by circumcision of old, but are not to be devoted to him by baptism now, their condition is much worse than that of those who were the children of such as lived under the legal dispensation. We know, however, that God has not, under the present dispensation, abridged the church of its privileges, but rather increased them.

It is objected that infants have no right to baptism, because they cannot believe and repent. These graces, it is said, are often mentioned in scripture as a necessary qualification of those who have a right to this ordinance; as might be sufficiently proved from those scriptures in which persons are said first to believe and repent, and then to be baptized. Hence, in order to men's believing and repenting, and then being baptized, the gospel, according to our Saviour's direction, was first to be preached. We read also of persons 'gladly receiving' it, and 'then being baptized;'b and therefore Philip would not baptize the eunuch till he professed his faith in Christ. Moreover, say the objectors, baptism is called an ordinance of repentance: as none have a right to it but those who repent. Thus it is said, 'John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;'d and elsewhere, that he 'baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' Now, we do not deny the necessity of faith and repentance to baptism in those who are adult. Under a foregoing Head, we considered that none are to be baptized if adult, till they profess faith in Christ and obedience to him; and that their profession ought to be accompanied with repentance, otherwise it is not true and genuine. We there freely owned also, that the gospel was to be preached by the apostles to those who were immediately concerned in their ministry, before either themselves or their infant-seed were to be baptized. Yet these concessions do not overthrow the doctrine of infant baptism; for that, as was before proved, depends upon different qualifications. Faith is, no doubt, necessary in the person who dedicates or devotes to God. But if, as has been stated, every one who is able to dedicate his child to God by faith, is under obligation to do so,—as much as he who is able to dedicate himself to him by faith when adult, is bound to do it; then we are to have regard only to the faith of him who dedicates, and to hope for the saving privileges of faith and

repentance, and all other graces, as divine blessings to be bestowed on the person devoted to God, as the great end which we have in view in this solemn action.

There is another objection, which is concluded by some to be unanswerable,—namely, that there is neither precept nor example in the New Testament, which gives the least countenance to our baptizing infants; so that it cannot be reckoned a scripture doctrine, and consequently is not from heaven but of men. We reply, that consequences justly deduced from scripture are equally binding with the words or examples contained in it. If this be not allowed, we shall hardly be able to prove many doctrines which we reckon to be, not only true, but of great importance. It would be endless to enter into a detail of particulars, to illustrate and confirm this matter; and I cannot but think it unnecessary, since they who deny infant baptism, do not deny the validity of just scripture consequences. Hence, all I need say is, that, if the method we have taken to prove infant baptism appears to be just, and if the premises be true, the conclusion deduced must be allowed, namely, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized, though a command to baptize them is not found in express words in scripture. I cannot but think that the objection would equally hold good against Christ's dying for infants as well as others, or against their being capable of justification, regeneration, and the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. It might also be as well inferred that they are not to be devoted to God in other instances than that of baptism, or that we have not the least ground to expect their salvation; for it would be as hard to prove these points from express words of scripture as that they are to be baptized.

Here I cannot but take notice of the method which the learned Dr. Lightfoot takes to account for the silence of scripture as to this

matter. It is, in substance, as follows:—He says, that baptism was well enough known to the Jews, as practised by them under the ceremonial law; by which he means the ordinance in general, as including a consecration to God, to worship him in the way which he then instituted; and accordingly they are said to have been 'baptized into Moses.' He adds, that the apostle, speaking concerning this matter, and referring to what was done 'in the cloud, and in the sea,'g supposes that the whole congregation, of which the infants they had in their arms were a part, were solemnly devoted to God at that time. Now, this I cannot but conclude to be more agreeable to the sense of the word 'baptize,' than that which some critics give, who suppose that nothing is intended by it, but their being wet or sprinkled with the water of the sea, as they passed through it; for that was only an occasional baptism, which could not be well avoided. But, if I may be allowed a little to alter or improve on his method of reasoning I rather think that the apostle's meaning is, that the whole congregation was 'baptized into Moses,' soon after they were delivered from the Egyptians, while they were encamped at the sea-shore. At that time, God, for their security, spread a cloud for a covering to them; and then, as the kind hand of providence had led the way, and brought them under a renewed engagement, they expressed their gratitude, and their obligation to be God's people, by their universal dedication to him in baptism. But, to return to the author just mentioned, he adds that, when Jacob was delivered from Laban, and set about the work of reforming his household, he ordered them, not only to 'put away the strange gods that were among them,' but 'to be clean;' by which, as he observes, the Jews confess that baptism, or a dedication to God by washing, is intended. He also observes, that the ordinance of baptism in general, before Christ instituted gospel baptism, was so well known by the Jewish church, that they no sooner heard that John baptized, than they came to his baptism; and they did not ask him, Why dost thou make

use of this rite of baptizing? But, What is thy warrant, or 'Who sent thee to baptize?' He farther adds, that both John and Christ took up baptism as they found it in the Jewish church; by which he means the ordinance in general, without regard to some circumstances in which Christ's baptism differed from that which was practised under the ceremonial law. Now, this ordinance was, as he observes, applied by the Jewish church to infants as well as grown persons. Hence, our Saviour had no occasion, when he instituted this ordinance with those circumstances, agreeable to the gospel state, in which it differs from the baptism which was before practised, to command his apostles to baptize all nations, that is, all who were the subjects of baptism, and infants in particular.

It is farther objected that our Saviour was not baptized in his infancy; that his example is to be followed; and that, therefore, no one is to be baptized till he be adult. We reply, that every circumstance or action in the life of Christ is not designed to be an example to us. Indeed, there were some things signified in his baptism which are not in ours; inasmuch as in its application to him, it did not signify his being cleansed from the guilt and power of sin. The only thing in which what was signified in his baptism agrees with ours, is that he devoted himself to God; not, indeed, as expecting salvation through a Mediator as we do, but as denoting his consent to engage in the work for which he came into the world, which he now began to perform in a public manner, and which he fulfilled in the course of his ministry, while he went about doing good. Now, it was not convenient that this devotement of himself should be done in his infancy; for though the work of redemption began from that time, yet his proving himself to be the Messiah, especially his doing so in a public manner, did not take place till he was thirty years of age; and then he was baptized, that his baptism might be an ordinance for the faith of his church, that he was engaged in the work of our redemption. Moreover, it

must be considered that John's baptism, which circumstantially differed from that which was practised in the Jewish church, as well as our Saviour's, was not instituted till the year before Christ was baptized. Hence, our Saviour could not be baptized agreeably to the alteration that was made in baptism at this time, had he been baptized in his infancy.

It is farther objected that infant baptism is a novelty, and was not practised by the church in the earliest ages from the apostles' time. But, even if this could be proved to be true, I should regard arguments deduced from scripture consequences much more than the sense of antiquity. The principal use of the writings of the fathers, in my opinion, is to lead us into the knowledge of what relates to the historical account of the affairs of the church in their respective ages. The main thing supposed in the objection is, that infant baptism was not practised in the early ages of the church. But the contrary to this will appear, if we consider some things mentioned by the fathers. Thus Justin Martyr says, that we have not received the carnal but the spiritual circumcision by baptism; and that all persons are enjoined to receive it, in like manner, as they were enjoined to receive circumcision of old. Here he refers to that saying of the apostle, 'We are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, buried with him in baptism.' Hence he supposes that baptism comes in the room of circumcision. He likewise speaks of their being brought to the water, and there regenerated, by which he means, baptized, in the same manner as we are, in the name of the Father, our Lord and Saviour, and the Holy Ghost.k Cyprian also, in a council in which there were sixty-six bishops convened—in answer to a question under debate, whether the time in which this ordinance was to be performed, ought to be the same with that in which children were circumcised under the law—delivered it, not only as his opinion, but as one which he supposes to have been received by all, that infants

ought to be baptized before the eighth day. Irenæusm speaks of Christ's sanctifying and saving persons of every age, infants not excepted; and says that they are therefore to be regenerated,—by which he means, baptized, as the fathers often put the thing signified for the sign. Gregory Nazianzen speaks to the same purpose, that baptism may be performed as circumcision was, on the eighth day; but that it ought not to be omitted any longer than till the children are two or three years old. I might add the testimony of Augustin, who asserts that the baptism of infants had been practised by the church, in foregoing ages, from our Saviour's time. Now, had this not been matter of fact, it would, doubtless, have been disproved by Pelagius and his other antagonists.

It is farther objected, by those who deny infant baptism, that the practice of many, in the ancient church, who deferred baptism till they were adult, argues that they did not think it lawful for any to be baptized in infancy. Thus Constantine the Great, as Eusebius observes, was not baptized till a little before his death. It is well known, also, that Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustin, and others of the fathers, were not baptized till they came to a state of manhood; and Tertullian, who lived in the second century, exhorts persons to defer baptism, and adds, that it is the safest way to delay the baptism of infants till they are capable of engaging for themselves, having arrived at years of discretion. But particular instances, or the sentiments of some of the fathers, are not sufficient to prove that infant baptism was not practised by the ancient church. As to what is alleged concerning Constantine not having been baptized till a little before his death, and Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, &c., not till they were adult, the facts may be accounted for, by supposing that their parents did not embrace the Christian religion while they were infants; so that they ought not to be baptized till they could give themselves up to God by faith. This a

late learned writer attempts to prove.q Moreover, some who have been converted, have neglected baptism, out of a scruple they have had of their unfitness for it, as many, in our day, do the Lord's supper. Others, it may be, might have neglected to baptize their infants, or to be baptized themselves till they apprehended themselves near death: being misled by a false supposition, which was imbibed by several, that baptism washed away sin, so that the nearer they were to their end, the more prepared they would be, by this ordinance, for a better world. But whether baptism was neglected for this or any other reason, does not much affect the argument we are maintaining; our design being principally to prove, that it was practised in the early ages of the church; and, in what instances soever it was omitted, it was not because they denied that the infants of believing parents had a right to it. As to several things mentioned by the authors before cited, and others who treat on the subject, whereby they seem to maintain the absolute necessity of baptism to wash away the pollution of sin, or as to their asserting that it is as necessary to salvation as regenerating grace, we have nothing to say to their sentiments. Yet whatever they speak in defence of infant baptism is a sufficient evidence that it is not a practice of late invention. As to Tertullian's advice, to defer baptism till persons were capable to engage for themselves, his caution argues that infant baptism was practised by some; and this is the principal thing designed to be proved. Besides, tho reason the assigns for the neglect of baptism, is that the sureties who undertook to instruct the baptized in the doctrines of religion, often promised more than they made conscience of performing, and so brought themselves into a snare; and that hence, for their sakes, infant baptism, which could not be administered without sureties, had better be delayed. Now this proves only that he was against infant baptism for some prudential reasons; not that he thought it was in itself unlawful to be practised. We may conclude, therefore, that the objection taken from

infant baptism being supposed to be a novelty, does not weaken the cause we are maintaining. Thus concerning the subjects of baptism.

The Mode of Baptism

We are now to consider the mode of baptism, or what we are to understand by the word 'baptism.' It is said, in the foregoing Answer, to be the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. There has been a great dispute in the world concerning the meaning of the word βαπτιζω, by which this ordinance is expressed; and from this dispute have arisen different modes of administration. Some think that the word signifies only the putting of a person or thing into water, so that it is covered, or as it were buried in it. This is otherwise expressed by the word 'dipping.' Others, whose opinion I cannot but acquiesce in, conclude that baptism may as well be performed by the application of water, though in a different manner, either by pouring or sprinkling. Accordingly, they think that the word signifies using the means of cleansing by the application of water, whatever be the form or mode. This argument depends very much upon the sense in which the word is applied to the action denoted by it, either in scripture or in other writings. But, as the sense of it, as used in scripture and other writings, is well explained by the learned and judicious Dr. Owen, agreeably to the view we have given of the word, I have no occasion to make any critical remarks upon it by referring to those writers in which the word is found. Besides, the greater number of Christians are not so well versed in the Greek language as to be able to judge whether those methods of reasoning, which are taken from the use of the word which we render 'baptize,' are sufficiently conclusive. Hence, when it is asserted that many who are undoubtedly very good masters of the Greek tongue, have determined that it signifies all manner of washing with water, as well as dipping into it, they will

reckon any critical inquiry into the meaning of the word very fruitless and unprofitable. Yet, we are obliged to mention the subject; because great stress is usually laid on the sense of the word, to establish that mode of baptism which is always used by those who are on the other side of the question. I shall only add to what the learned Dr. Owen has observed, that it does not appear to me that the word βαπτιζω always signifies to wash, by dipping into water, but that it also means to wash by the application of water in some other way; because it is sometimes applied to things which were too large and cumbersome, and therefore could not well be cleansed in that way. Thus it is said that the Pharisees 'held the washing,' or, as it is in the Greek, the baptism not only 'of cups and pots, and brazen vessels,' which might, indeed, be washed by immersion, but of 'tables,' or, as it may be rendered, of 'beds,' or those seats on which the Jews, according to the custom of the eastern nations, lay at their ease when they eat their meals. These, I conceive, were washed in some way different from that of dipping or plunging in water; and even if it were possible that they might be washed in that way, still the word may be applied to innumerable things which cannot be baptized by immersion. Hence, the general sense which we have given of it, that it signifies to wash, whether by dipping into the water, or by the application of water to the thing washed, may justify our practice with respect to the mode of baptism commonly used by us.

It is objected that the mode used by us is not properly baptism, but rantism; or, that to sprinkle or pour, is not to baptize. But this method of begging the question in controversy, is never reckoned a fair way of arguing. If baptism be a using of the means of cleansing by the application of water, which is the thing we contend for, then the word 'baptize' may as well be applied to sprinkling or pouring as to any other mode of washing. Besides, if the thing signified by the action of baptizing, namely, the blood of Jesus, together with the

gifts and graces of the Spirit which are applied to those to whom God makes baptism a saving ordinance, be sometimes set forth by sprinkling or pouring clean water upon a person, then it cannot well be concluded that sprinkling or pouring is not baptizing, though it differs very much from that which they who contend with us about this matter generally call baptizing. That the word sprinkling or pouring is sometimes used in scripture, to signify the conferring of those spiritual gifts and graces which are signified in baptism, is very evident. Thus it is said, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;' and the blood of Christ is called 'the blood of sprinkling.'x In a spiritual sense, therefore, sprinkling is called cleansing from sin. Moreover, the graces of the Spirit conferred in regeneration, are represented by 'sprinkling clean water;' and this mode of speaking would never be used, were not sprinkling a means of cleansing. Some think, too, that the apostle, when ho speaks of our 'drawing near to God, having our bodies washed with pure water,'z intends the ordinance of baptism; and that he refers to the spiritual meaning of it when he speaks of 'having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.' But, if his words do not denote the ordinance of baptism, they at least allude to the ceremonial cleansings under the law, which were often performed by sprinkling. We cannot but assert, therefore, that sprinkling water in baptism, is as much cleansing as any other mode used. Moreover, sometimes the thing signified in baptism, is represented by a metaphor taken from pouring; which, if our mode of baptizing be just, will not seem disagreeable to it. Perhaps, indeed, the explanation of the metaphor turns upon this mode of baptizing; as the conferring of the Holy Ghost, which they who were baptized were given to expect, is often called 'pouring out the Spirit.'

There is another objection which is concluded by many to be unanswerable, namely, that when we read of baptism in the New

Testament, the person baptized is said to have 'gone down into the water.' This the eunuch did; and immediately afterwards he is said to have 'come up out of the water.' Now this language, it is supposed, can be applied to no other mode of baptism than that of immersion. The whole strength of this objection depends upon the sense which is given of the Greek particles which we often render 'into' and 'out of.'c Hence, the objection will have no weight with any but those who are unacquainted with the Greek language; for it is well known to all who understand it, that the former of these particles often signifies 'to,' as well as 'into,' and the latter 'from,' as well as 'out of.' Innumerable instances, were it needful, might easily be given from scripture and other Greek authors, in which the words are applied to things which, according to the natural signification, cannot be understood as denoting 'into' or 'out of.' There is one scripture which no one can suppose is to be taken in any other sense but what is agreeable to our present purpose,—namely, that in which our Saviour bids Peter 'go to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh thence,'e &c. Here, by 'go to the sea,' we can understand nothing else but, go to the sea-shore; and yet the word is the same as that which is, in some other places, rendered 'into.' There are other scriptures in which persons are said to 'go to the mountain,' or some other places, in respect to which it would be very improper to say, that they went into them; though the word is the same as that which in other instances we render 'into.' Again, the word which is sometimes rendered 'out of,' is frequently rendered 'from,' and can be understood in no other sense. Thus, when it is said, 'The queen of the south came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon;'g the words cannot be understood of her coming 'out of' but 'from' the parts of the earth referred to. But, this matter being so well known to all who read the New Testament in the original, it is needless for me to give any other instances. As to the eunuch's 'going into the water,' I cannot think any thing else is intended, but that he

descended or alighted from his chariot to the water, that is, by a metonymy, to the water-side, in order to his being baptized by Philip. It is no uncommon mode of speaking, to say that a person goes down to the river-side to take water, or to the well to draw it; so that the interpretation I have given is no strain on the sense of the word. I am the rather inclined to adopt this opinion that some modern travellers, taking notice of the place where the eunuch was baptized, intimate that it was only a spring of water, and therefore without sufficient depth to plunge the body in. Some ancient writers, who lived between three and four hundred years after our Saviour's time, as Jerome and Eusebius, intimate the same thing. If it be said, that these may be mistaken as to the place, inasmuch as the particular spot of ground in which this water was, is not mentioned in scripture; I will not lay much stress upon the matter. I cannot but observe, however, that the place is represented by a diminutive expression; for it is said, 'they came to a certain water,' that is, probably, a brook which was by the way-side; not a river, or a great collection of water. It is observed, too, that Philip, as well as the eunuch, 'went down into the water;' though none suppose that he was plunged in the water. It does not, therefore certainly appear, from the sense of the word, that the eunuch was plunged, unless the matter in controversy be taken for granted, that baptism can be performed in no other way than by plunging. Moreover, 'to go down to the water,' does not always signify, in other scriptures, going down to the bottom of the water. Thus, when the psalmist speaks of those who 'go down to the sea in ships,'i he does not mean those who go down to the bottom of it; so that going down to the water, does not always signify being plunged in it. As for what is said concerning Philip and the eunuch's 'coming up out of the water,' it may very fairly be understood of their returning from the water-side, and of the eunuch's going up again into his chariot. Besides, I cannot but think that, in this and all other places where persons are said to

'come up out of the water,' the expression denotes an action performed with design, and in the perfect exercise of the understanding on the part of him who does it. But this idea does not correspond with the situation of one who is at the bottom of the water, and cannot well come up thence, unless by the help of him who baptizes him. The sense which we have given of the words 'coming up out of the water,' is agreeable to what is said concerning our Saviour at his baptism, 'Jesus went up straightway out of the water.' But here there seems to be a mistake in our translation: for the words απο του ὐδατος should have been rendered 'from the water;' and the idea expressed by them is of the same import as the sense of the Greek particle εκ, when a person is said to 'come up out of tho water.'

It is further objected, that it seems very evident that John the Baptist used no mode but that of immersion; because he chose those places to exercise this part of his ministry in, which were well supplied with water, sufficient for this purpose. Accordingly, we first read of his removing from the wilderness of Judea, in which 'he preached tho doctrine of repentance,' and told the people that 'the kingdom of heaven,' that is, the gospel-state, which was to begin with the appearing of the Messiah, 'was at hand;' then we read of his removing to the banks of the river Jordan, for the conveniency of baptizing those who came to him for that purpose; and afterwards, we read of another station in which he resided, namely, '*Æ*non, near to Salim,' it being assigned as the reason that 'there was much water there.' Now, say the objectors, if he had baptized by sprinkling or pouring a little water on the face, he had no need to remove out of the wilderness of Judea; for whatever scarcity of water there might be there, it was no difficult matter for him to be supplied with enough to serve his occasion, had this been his mode of baptizing. But though John removed to Jordan and *Æ*non, that he might be

well supplied with water, as he daily wanted large quantities of it; it does not necessarily follow, that he did this for the sake of practising immersion. Nor does it sufficiently appear to me, that Ænon afforded water deep enough for a person to be immersed; for it seems to have been but a small tract of land, in which it is hardly probable that there were many lakes, or rivers of water, which is as much as can be said concerning a well-watered country. I think, the wordsm ought to have been rendered 'many waters;' by which we are to understand, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Ænon was a place of springs or small brooks of water. This place John chose that he might be supplied with water for his use; but it does not, I think, necessarily follow, that he baptized by immersion. Besides, if there had been a great collection of waters there, there would have been some indications of them at this day; but I believe, it would be hard to prove that there are any such. As to the other part of the objection, that it was a very easy matter for him to have been supplied with water in the wilderness of Judea, to baptize by sprinkling or pouring, by his having it brought to him in vessels for that purpose; we reply, that if he had only poured water on the head or face, there is no need to suppose that he was so sparing of it as not to use above a spoonful, especially when it was so easy a matter for him, by his removing to another station, to be better supplied; If there was but a little water poured on every one who came to be baptized by him, it would require a very great quantity of water to baptize the vast multitudes who came; for it is said, that 'Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were baptized of him.' It is one thing for a little water to be brought in a bason to baptize a person or two, and another thing for this to be done in the case under consideration. Moreover, it is certain, that in hot countries, particularly in Judea, and more especially in the wilderness of that country, there was a very great scarcity of water. Accordingly, we read that sometimes water was so valuable a thing, that it was reckoned a very

considerable part of a man's estate. Thus Isaac was envied by the Philistines for all the wells his father's servants had digged; and then we read of their stopping them up, and of his digging other wells; and also of the strife between the herdsmen of Gerar and his herdsmen, for the possession of them.o We read likewise, that when Abraham sent Hagar away from him with Ishmael, he gave her bread, and 'a bottle of water;' and that 'when the water was spent in the bottle, she cast the child under one of the shrubs,' despairing of his life; which she needed not have done, if water was so easy to come by as is supposed in the objection. It is certain that a person may travel many miles in those desert places without finding water to quench his thirst. This farther appears from Samson's having been 'ready to die for thirst,' after the great victory he obtained over the Philistines. On that occasion, God wrought a miracle to supply him, a fact which can hardly be accounted for, if there had been as great plenty of water in that country as there is in ours. The scarcity of water, then, I apprehend to have been the reason of John's removal to Jordan and Ænon; so that that removal does not necessarily prove that his design was to baptize in the way pleaded for by those on the other side of the question. Moreover, as it does not sufficiently appear to me, from any thing contained in the objection, that John used immersion in baptism; so it seems most agreeable to some circumstances which attended it, to conclude that he did not. There was, for example, no conveniency for the change of their garments, nor servants appointed to help them in changing them; though attention to this matter would seem to have been necessary to answer the occasion. Some have supposed, too, that immersion might endanger the health of those who were infirm among them; and especially that John's health would be endangered, who was obliged to stand many days together in the water, or at least the greater part of each day, while he was administering this ordinance. They who were baptized must immediately have retired when the

ordinance was over, or their health would have suffered; unless we have recourse to a dispensation of providence, which must have been next to miraculous. I am sensible, indeed, that some say that none ever suffered by being immersed in baptism in our day; and if the observation be true, it is a kind providence which they ought to be thankful for.

But if, after all that has been said on this matter, it will not be allowed that baptism signifies any thing else but dipping in water; then I might farther allege that it might be done by dipping the face, which is the principal part of the body, without plunging the whole body. This might answer the design of the ordinance as well as the other; since it is not the quantity used in a sacramental sign, which is so much to be regarded as the action performed, together with the matter of it. If the smallest piece of bread, and a spoonful of wine are used in the Lord's supper, they are generally reckoned as well-adapted to answer the design of the ordinance, as if a great quantity of each were received by every one who partakes. Now, as to our present argument, the washing of a part of the body is deemed sufficient to signify the thing intended, as much as if the whole body were washed. We see an illustration of this in the instance of our Saviour's washing his disciples' feet. When he told Peter, that 'if he washed him not, he had no part in him,' he called washing his feet, washing him, by a synecdoche, of a part for the whole; and when Peter replied, 'Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,' Jesus answered, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'s Here, I think, he means that the action signified that the cleansing, which is the spiritual meaning of washing, was as complete as if the whole body had been washed with water; for though one design of the action might be to teach the disciples humility and brotherly kindness, yet it also signified their being washed or cleansed by his blood and Spirit.

There is another objection on which very much stress is generally laid, which I should not do justice to the cause I am maintaining, if I should wholly pass over. This objection is taken from these words of the apostle, 'So many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death. Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.' From this passage it is argued that there ought to be a similitude between the sign and the thing signified, and, consequently, that baptism should be performed in such a way that, by being covered with water, there might be a resemblance of Christ's burial, and by being lifted up out of the water, a resemblance of his resurrection. Hence, say the objectors, this ordinance signifies not only the using of the means of cleansing with water, but the mode, namely, being plunged, or as it were buried, in water. We reply, that it is not agreeable to the nature of a sacramental sign in any other instance, that there should be an analogy between the thing done, and what is signified by it, any otherwise than by divine appointment. Accordingly, we observed under the foregoing Answer, that a sacrament has not a natural tendency to signify Christ and his benefits. Thus eating bread and drinking wine do not signify the body and blood of Christ, any otherwise than as this signification is annexed by our Saviour to the action performed. Now, the same, I think, may be applied to baptism; especially our consecration and dedication to God in it. If any other external sign had been instituted, to signify the blessings of the covenant of grace, we should have been as much obliged to make use of it as we are of water. I conceive, then, that the apostle, in this scripture, refers, not to our being buried in water or taken out of it, as a natural sign of Christ's burial and resurrection, but to our having communion with him in his burial and resurrection. This, I think,

would hardly be denied by many on the other side of the question, did not the objection just mentioned, and the cause they maintain, render it expedient for them to understand the words in another sense.

I forbear to say more as to the subjects and the mode of baptism. As I should have been unfaithful had I said less; so I have not the least inclination to treat in an unfriendly way those who differ from me, having a just sense of their harmony with us, especially a great part of them, in those doctrines which have a more immediate reference to our salvation.

Abuse of the Ordinance of Baptism

As there are some who appear to be grossly ignorant of the thing signified in baptism, who seem to engage in it as though it were not a divine institution, concluding it to be little more than an external rite or form to be used in giving the child a name, and induced to observe it rather by custom than by a sense of the obligation they are under to give up their children to God by faith; so there are others who attribute too much to it. They assert that infants are regenerated by it; and that if they die before they commit actual sin, they are undoubtedly saved, inasmuch as they are by baptism made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. This opinion seems to be an ascribing of that to the ordinance, which is rather expected or desired in it than conferred by it.

As for the child being signed with the sign of the cross, signifying hereby that he should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but should manfully fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil; how much soever these duties may be a branch of that baptismal obligation which he is professedly laid under, I cannot see what warrant persons have to make use of this external

sign and symbol; for it can be reckoned no other than an ordinance for their faith, though destitute of a divine institution.

There is another thing practised by some in baptism which is greatly abused, namely, requiring that some should be appointed as sureties for the child. These personate it, and engage, in a solemn manner, in its behalf, that it shall fulfil the obligation which it is laid under. They thus not only undertake more than what is in their power to perform; but, the greater part of them, it is to be feared, hardly think themselves obliged to show any concern about the children afterwards. What is farther exceptionable in this matter is, that the parents, who are more immediately obliged to give their children up to God, seem to be, as it were, excluded from having any hand in the matter. I have nothing to except against the origin of this practice; which was in the second century, when the church was under persecution. The design of it was laudable and good, namely, that if the parents should die before the child came of age, so that it would be in danger of being seized by the heathen, and trained up in their superstitious and idolatrous mode of worship, the sureties promised, that they would deal with it as if it were their own child, and bring it up in the Christian religion. Yet this kind and pious concern for its welfare might have been better expressed at some other time than at its baptism; and so have prevented it from being thought an appendix to that ordinance. Now, however, through the goodness of God, the children of believing parents are not reduced to those hazardous circumstances; and therefore the obligation to have sureties is less needful. But to vow, and not perform, is not only useless to the child, but renders that only a matter of form which the sureties promise in this sacred ordinance to do.

The only thing I shall add under this Answer, is, that if we have been baptized, either in our infancy, or when adult, we are obliged, in

faithfulness, as we value our own souls, to improve it to the glory of God, and our spiritual welfare in the whole conduct of our lives. And this leads us to what is contained in the following Answer.

[NOTE Y. The Connexion of Discipleship and Baptism.—The verb μαθητευω, both from its etymology, and from the use made of it in passages in which it occurs, certainly appears to mean 'to make disciples,' or 'to disciple.' If a person is discipled to Christ, or placed in the ranks of Christian discipleship, by being drawn out from the world; and brought, in real or presumptive position, into connexion with the work and cause of the Saviour, he may clearly be said to be discipled, if an adult, when he makes a firm and consistent profession of faith in Christ, and if an infant, when his interest in the work of the Redeemer is recognised, and his circumstances are such as afford a warrant, should he survive his infantile state, of his being 'brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Though we cannot know who among infants shall die in infancy, and who among them shall live till years of understanding; yet we must recognise infants as such, or all of mankind who, by dying in infancy, are distinctively of the infantile class, as partakers of the great salvation, and as ranking with believers in Christ. See Note headed 'Infant Salvation,' appended to Quest. xxvii. Sect. 'The Condition of those who die in Infancy.' Now while, on this ground, we do not seem warranted to regard all infants whatever as in a state of discipleship, we certainly do seem warranted—and not only warranted, but commanded—to regard all as eligible to be put into that state,—and to be put into it simply by being brought to the Saviour. 'Then were there brought unto Jesus little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence;' (Matt. 19:13–15;) or, as another evangelist reports,

'he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them,' Mark 10:16. Here little children or infants are distinctly commanded to be brought to Christ,—to be brought to him, on the ground that 'of them is the kingdom of heaven;' and, in connexion jointly with their being of the class who as such, or dying in infancy, are all saved, and with their being brought to the Redeemer, they have conferred upon them external marks of his favour as distinguishing as any which he ever conferred upon adults who professed to renounce the world and follow him,—they are taken into his arms, have his hands placed upon them, and receive his blessing. Are they not, then placed truly and literally in the condition of discipleship? The very language used in reference to their being brought to Christ, is, in fact, exactly that which the scriptures currently employ in reference to the discipling of adults. 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' said the Saviour in reference to infants; and, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' he says in reference to adults. For an adult, therefore, to renounce idolatry and irreligion, and make an open and credible profession of attachment to the Saviour, seems to be no more, as to the position into which it puts him, or the external character with which it invests him, than for an infant to be brought to Christ,—to be carried to him to receive his blessing,—to be placed in circumstances in which he shall, from the first openings of his understanding, hear the Saviour's name, and witness the true worship of God, and enjoy the benefits of evangelical instruction. An infant in these circumstances, then, or one who is born of devout parents, or who is daily commended to God in prayer by devout guardians, or who breathes the same air with a true Christian who tends him, and watches over him, and 'gives him to the Lord,' is really discipled,—be is in the school of Christ,—he ranks, not with a community of idolaters or of practical infidels, but with the community of those who have said, 'We are the Lord's, and have called themselves by the name of Jacob; who have

subscribed with their hand unto the Lord, and surnamed themselves by the name of Israel,' and to whom the Most High has promised, 'I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses,' Isa. 44:3–5.

If infants brought to Christ, then, are discipled, what follows but that they must be baptized? The command is, 'Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' The discipling appears clearly to be quite distinct from both the baptizing and the teaching, and to be the basis, the antecedent or the limit of their being administered. Persons, in the first instance, are to be brought to Christ,—to be inducted into his school,—to be led into a fair profession of adhesion to him, if adults, and placed in circumstances of Christian nurture, if infants; and then, as many as are thus discipled, are to be baptized or made subjects of the initiatory Christian ordinance, and afterwards taught all those lessons which are suitable to the condition of Christian discipleship. The apostles, in other words, were commanded, in our Lord's commission, to make disciples, to administer baptism, and to instruct believers,—to draw men into the condition of Christ's followers, to organize them into churches, and to impart to them all the elements and details and higher departments of a believer's knowledge. According to Mark, indeed, the first part of the commission was, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' Mark 16:15. But we are not, from this reading in Mark, to infer, as Dr. Ridgeley does, that preaching the gospel and discipling are convertible terms,—and still less, that discipling all nations is the same thing as 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded.' Κηρυσσειν το ευαγγελιον, the phrase used by Mark, and translated to 'preach the

gospel,' is, as every one admits, of radically the same import as the verb ευαγγελιζειν: indeed, both, when the latter is used in reference strictly to the gospel, are capable only of one and the same translation. Now, it is said respecting Paul and Barnabas at Derbe, 'When they had preached the gospel to that city, and had discipled many, ευαγγελισαμενοι τε την πολιν εκεινην, και μαθητυσαντις ἱκανους, they returned again to Lystra.' Here preaching the gospel and discipling are quite distinct: the former had reference to 'the city,' or the general body of the inhabitants, while the latter had reference only to 'many,' or to such of the inhabitants as were induced to renounce Judaism or idolatry, and profess apparently sincere adoption of the Christian faith. Discipling, therefore, was not the work of preaching the gospel, but the aim of those who engaged in it, and the outward or visible result of their labours. The apostles are hence said, by one evangelist, to have been commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature,—and, by another evangelist, to have been commissioned to disciple all nations, simply because they are viewed by the former in reference to their work itself, and by the latter in reference to its object,—or by the one in reference to the means they should employ, and by the other in reference to the end they should accomplish. Discipling and preaching are related to each other as a work and its result, or as an instrument and its effect. Nor is discipling, on the other hand, to be identified with 'teaching all things whatsoever Christ had commanded.' The apostles themselves were made disciples when they knew only the general truths respecting the work and person of the Messiah, and were called disciples, and treated as such during the whole period of their learning his detailed commands, or his particular instructions regarding the nature of his kingdom and the duties of his subjects. If discipling were effected only by 'teaching all things whatsoever Christ has commanded,' or by men's acquiring all the particulars of Christian knowledge, no persons whatever could, in any propriety of

language, be viewed as disciples till they join 'the spirits of the just made perfect,' or till at least they become old men and fathers in Christ. But if the teaching mentioned in the apostolic commission be distinct from discipling, so also is baptizing. Either baptizing men and teaching them all things must jointly constitute the discipling of them, since the two are mentioned conjointly after the command to disciple; or they must both be distinct from it, and subsequent to it, in order and occurrence. Discipling, therefore, being manifestly distinct from the 'teaching of all things,' it is no less distinct from baptizing; nor, as I have already shown, is it less distinct from preaching the gospel. It follows the last of these, and precedes the first and the second. The order of the four is, preaching the gospel, discipling, baptizing, and teaching all things which our Lord has commanded. What, then, is discipling,—what can it be but bringing men into the position of disciples of the Saviour,—drawing them away from the world, and attaching them to his cause,—attracting them from the school of error and delusion, and placing them in the school of the Redeemer? But all adults who make a consistent profession of believing the gospel, and all infants who are brought to Christ, or placed in circumstances to be 'trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' are thus discipled. What follows, then, but that all such infants, as well as adults, are to be baptized,—the command being, 'Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?'—ED.]

THE IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM

QUESTION CLXVII. How is our baptism to be improved by us?

ANSWER. The needful, but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long; especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others, by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it; the privileges and benefits conferred and stated thereby, and our solemn vow made therein, by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism and our engagements, by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament, by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace, and by endeavouring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit, into one body.

Our obligation to improve Baptism

IN explaining this Answer we may observe that our baptism, together with the engagements which we are therein laid under to be the Lord's, is to be improved by us. This duty is too much neglected. As baptism is an ordinance or means of grace for our attaining spiritual blessings, we are not only guilty of a sinful neglect, but we lose the advantage which might otherwise be expected, if we do not improve it so as to answer its valuable end. And when we consider it as a professed dedication to God, or as a bond and obligation laid on us to be entirely and for ever his, it cannot but be reckoned the highest affront offered to the divine Majesty, and a being unsteadfast in his covenant, for us practically to disown the engagement, or, in effect, to deny his right to us.

Now, it is farther observed, that this duty is much neglected; and the reasons of neglecting it are various. Many have very low thoughts of this ordinance, and understand not its spiritual intent or meaning, or what it is to improve it. These reckon it no more than an external rite, established by custom, and commonly observed in a Christian nation, without duly weighing the end and design for which it was instituted, or what is signified by it. Others suppose that there is nothing in it but a public declaration, that the person baptized is made a Christian, or has that character put upon him. They know not what it is to be a Christian indeed, being utter strangers to the life and power of religion, and the spiritual blessings hoped for in our baptismal dedication, or, through the grace of God, consequent upon it. Others have, indeed, right apprehensions of the sign and the thing signified; yet, through the prevalency of corruption, and the pride and deceitfulness of their hearts, they do not fiducially give themselves up to God, nor desire the spiritual and saving blessings of the Covenant of grace. These, therefore, do not improve their baptism; and it is to be feared, that this is the condition and character of the greater number of professors.

How Baptism is to be improved

We are thus led to consider how baptism is to be improved by us. We shall notice this in several instances.

1. We are to improve baptism when we are present at the administration of it to others. We are not, indeed, at that time, so immediately concerned in the ordinance, as the person who is publicly devoted to God in it, yet we are not to behave ourselves as unconcerned spectators.

We are to join in the celebration of the ordinance with suitable acts of faith and prayer, as the nature of the ordinance calls for them; and

to adore the persons in the Godhead, whose name and glory are mentioned in it. We are also to apply ourselves to God for the grace of the covenant which is signified by it, that he would be our God, as well as the God of the person who is particularly given up to him in baptism. We are likewise to bewail the universal depravity of human nature, and that guilt which we bring with us into tho world, which is signified in infant baptism. This, together with the habit of sin which we have contracted, is confessed by those who are baptized when adult, which we cannot but see a great deal of in our daily experience. We ought also to entertain becoming thoughts of the virtue of the blood of Christ, and of the power of the Holy Ghost, which alone can take away the guilt of sin, and render this ordinance effectual to salvation; and we are to desire, not only with respect to the person baptized, but with respect to ourselves, that we may be made partakers of that grace which they and we equally stand in need of.—Again, we ought to confess before God, with sorrow and shame, how defective we have been, as to the improvement of our baptismal engagements,—that, though we have been devoted to him, our hearts and affections have been very prone to depart from him. And we ought to adore and acknowledge the goodness and faithfulness of God, in that, though we have been unsteadfast in his covenant, through the treachery and deceitfulness of our hearts, yet he has been ever mindful of that covenant, and made good its promises to all his servants who have put their trust in him.

2. Our baptism is to be improved by us, in the time of temptation, in order to our resisting it, and preventing our being entangled and overcome by it. If the temptation takes its rise from the world, or we are induced from our prosperous circumstances to lay aside or be remiss in our duty to God, we should consider that, in having been devoted to God in our infancy, or in having given ourselves up professedly to him when adult, it has been intimated and

acknowledged that he is our portion, better to us than all that we can enjoy in the world. Hence, we ought to acquiesce in him as such, and say. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none,' or nothing, 'upon the earth that I desire besides thee.'—Moreover, if we are tempted to be uneasy and to repine at the providence of God, by reason of the many evils which befall us in the world, we ought to consider that, when we were given up to God, we came under an implied obligation to be content to be at his disposal, and to be satisfied with whatever he allots for us, not questioning the care and justice of his providence, in which we were under an indispensable obligation to acquiesce. Hence, when God tries us, by bringing us under various afflictions, our baptismal engagement obliges us to say, 'It is the Lord, let him do with us what seemeth good in his sight.'—Again, if we are exposed to the temptations of Satan, or those inward suggestions whereby sinful objects are presented to our thoughts, and a false gloss put upon them to induce us to desire them, we are to improve our baptismal engagement, by considering that it contains a solemn acknowledgment of God's right to us, exclusive of all right to us on the part of others. We hence shall dread the thoughts of submitting to be vassals to Satan, which is, in effect, to disown that allegiance which we owe to God, and to say that other lords shall have dominion over us; and we shall feel induced to adhere steadfastly to God, as the result of our having been devoted to him in this ordinance.—Further, if we are afraid of being ensuared by those wiles and methods of deceit which Satan often makes use of, and which are not always discerned by us, we are to consider that we have been devoted to Christ in baptism, and that—if we have, in any instance, improved this solemn transaction—we have given ourselves up to him, in hope of being under his protection, and interested in his intercession, so that though we are 'sifted as wheat,' our 'faith may not fail.'y—Moreover, when we are assaulted, and, as it were, wounded with Satan's fiery darts, whereby great discouragements

are thrown in our way, the guilt of sin magnified as though it were unpardonable, and the stain and pollution of it represented to be such as can never be washed away; and when we are ready to conclude that our state is hopeless, and that the comforts we once enjoyed are irrecoverably lost; we are to improve our baptism by considering that remission of sins was the blessing desired and hoped for in our observing the ordinance, inasmuch as it was signified by it. We are hence to be sensible that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that, as we were given up to him in hope of obtaining this privilege, and have been enabled since then to give ourselves up to him by faith, and by doing so to improve our baptismal engagement, so we trust that he will appear for us, rebuke the adversary, establish our comfort, and enable us to walk as those who desire to recommend his grace to others, that they may be encouraged to adhere to him, by the comfortable sense which we have of his love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

3. Our baptismal engagement is to be improved by us, before and after we are brought into a converted state. Unregenerated persons are to improve it, as it should afford them matter of deep humiliation that, though they have been devoted to God, and called by his name, and made partakers of the external blessings of his covenant, yet they have been alienated from the life of God, and strangers to the internal saving blessings of the covenant. There was a profession made in baptism, that they stood in need of Christ's mediation to deliver them from the guilt of sin, and of being cleansed from the pollution of it, which is of a spreading nature; but they have, notwithstanding, given way to it, and, how pure soever they have been 'in their own eyes, are not yet washed from their filthiness.' Now, such may take occasion from their baptismal engagement to plead earnestly with God for converting grace. Their receiving of this is the only means whereby they may know that he has accepted of

their solemn dedication to him; or that they are born not only of water but of the Spirit, and are made partakers of the thing signified in baptism, without which the external sign will not afford any saving advantage. We may also plead with God, that as we are professedly his, he would assert his own right to us, overcome us to himself, and make us 'willing in the day of his power.'a

Again, if we are brought into a state of grace, our baptismal engagement is constantly to be improved by us, in order to the growth and increase of grace. If, especially, we are sensible of great declensions in it, or that it is not, in all respects, with us as it once was; if we are sensible of deadness and stupidity in holy duties, and stand in need of being quickened, excited, and brought into a lively frame of spirit, or to be restored after great backslidings; if we would have sin mortified, and its secret workings in our heart subdued; we ought to consider that, having been 'baptized into Jesus Christ,' we were 'baptized into his death,' and that we are in consequence obliged to 'walk in newness of life,' so that 'sin should not reign in our mortal bodies.' If we hope and trust that we are made partakers of the saving blessings signified in this ordinance, we then desire to improve the relation we stand in to Christ, as a matter of encouragement that, when we are oppressed, he will undertake for us. If we are destitute of assurance of his love, and of our interest in him, we are to improve the consideration of our being his, not only by professed dedication, but by a fiducial adherence to him; and our doing so will encourage us to hope that he will enable us to walk holily and comfortably before him, and lift up the light of his countenance upon us, as our reconciled God and Father. Moreover, in the whole course of our conversation, it will be of use for promoting the life of faith, which consists in an entire dependence on him as those who are sensible that we can do nothing without him, to consider that, when we were first devoted to him, it was

acknowledged, and from the time when we were enabled to give ourselves up to him by faith, we have been always sensible, that we stand in need of daily supplies of grace from him, as all our springs are in him. Our baptismal engagement is further to be improved, as it is an inducement to us to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness. Practical religion will be promoted in all its branches, when we consider that we are not our own, and therefore dare not think of living as we list, or of serving divers lusts and pleasures, but that we are obliged to make his revealed will, whose we are and whom we desire to serve, the rule of all our actions. Lastly, we ought to walk in brotherly love, as being 'baptized by the Spirit into one body.'c They who are partakers of the saving blessings signified by baptism, have ground to conclude themselves members of Christ's mystical body, or of the invisible church of which he is the head. This is a spiritual baptism, being the effect of divine power, and the special work of the Holy Ghost; and certainly it will be an inducement to all who are partakers of it, to walk together in brotherly love, as those who are favoured with the same privileges, and hope to enjoy that complete blessedness in which they who were before devoted to Christ shall be for ever with him. Thus concerning the ordinance of baptism.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

QUESTION CLXVIII. What is the Lord's Supper?

ANSWER. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate, feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, have their union and communion with him confirmed, testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.

QUESTION CLXIX. How hath Christ appointed bread and wine to be given and received in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

ANSWER. Christ hath appointed the ministers of his word, in the administration of this sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to set apart the bread and wine from common use, by the word of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer, to take and break the bread, and to give both the bread and the wine to the communicants, who are, by the same appointment, to take, and eat the bread, and to drink the wine, in thankful remembrance, that the body of Christ was broken and given, and his blood shed for them.

QUESTION CLXX. How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's Supper, feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein?

ANSWER. As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal, or carnal, but in a spiritual manner, yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.

WE are now led to speak concerning the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This is considered either absolutely in itself, or as compared with baptism. Accordingly, it is inquired, wherein these ordinances agree or differ. In considering the nature of the Lord's supper, it is farther inquired, how they who are to partake of it ought to prepare themselves for it before they engage in it. There are also two cases of conscience answered: the one respects those who are not satisfied concerning their meetness for observing the ordinance; the other respects those who ought to be kept from it, however desirous they may be to partake of it. We have also an account of the duties of communicants while they are engaged in this ordinance; or those that are incumbent on them after they have attended on it. These things are particularly insisted on in the Answers which we are now led to consider, and in some others which follow. In explaining them we shall observe the following method. First, we shall notice the general description of this ordinance, as it is called a sacrament of the New Testament; and here we shall be led to speak concerning the person, our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom it, in common with other ordinances, was instituted. Secondly, we shall consider the persons by whom the Lord's supper is to be administered, namely, the ministers, or pastors of particular churches; inasmuch as it is an

ordinance given only to those who are in church-communion. Thirdly, we shall consider the matter of it, or the outward elements, namely, bread and wine. Fourthly, we shall consider the minister's act, antecedent to the church's partaking of this ordinance, in setting apart the elements from a common to a sacred use; which is to be done by the word and prayer, joined with thanksgiving. Fifthly, we shall notice the actions, both of the minister and of the people: the one breaks the bread, and pours out the wine, in order to their being distributed among those who are to receive them; the other, namely, the communicants, partake of them, and join with him in eating the bread and drinking the wine. Sixthly, we shall consider what is signified by this ordinance, namely, the body and blood of Christ: these are supposed to be, not corporally and carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of the receivers; and on this account, they may be said to feed upon the body and blood of Christ, and to apply the benefits of his death to themselves. Lastly, we shall notice the persons who hope to enjoy these privileges, and partake of the Lord's supper in a right manner: these are said worthily to communicate; and here we shall consider also the ends which they ought to have in view, namely, their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, their enjoying communion with Christ, and that love which they are obliged to express to one another as members of the same mystical body.

The Lord's Supper an Ordinance of the New Testament

We are first to consider, then, that the Lord's supper is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by our Saviour. That it is an ordinance, is evident from the fact that it is founded on a divine command; and that it is so founded, appears from the words of institution, 'Take, eat, this is my body; and he took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it,' &c. Its being founded on divine

authority is intimated also by the apostle, when, speaking particularly concerning it, and the manner in which it is to be observed, he says, 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.'e Moreover, there is a blessing annexed to our partaking of it in a right manner. This may plainly be inferred from the apostle's distinguishing those who receive it 'worthily' from others who receive it 'unworthily,' or in an unbecoming manner. The former are said to 'come together for the better,' the latter 'for the worse;' and to partake of the Lord's supper for the better, is to partake of it for our spiritual advantage, which supposes that there are some blessings annexed to it which render it not only a duty, but an ordinance or means of grace. Again, that it is a gospel ordinance of the New Testament, appears from the time of its being instituted by our Saviour, as well as from the end and design of it. It is particularly intimated that Christ instituted this ordinance immediately before his last sufferings, as a memorial of his dying love. Thus the apostle says, 'The same night in which he was betrayed he took bread.'g And that it was designed to continue as a standing ordinance in the church throughout all ages, appears from what he adds, 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.'

Some modern enthusiasts, however, deny it to be an ordinance, as they also do baptism; concluding that no ceremony, or significant sign, is consistent with the gospel dispensation. As for our 'showing forth the Lord's death till he come,' they suppose that by this phrase is meant, till he come by the effusion of the Spirit; and they hence infer that if it was an ordinance at first, it ceased to be so when the Spirit was poured forth on the church, in the beginning of the gospel dispensation. Now, in reply to this opinion, and the reasons assigned for it, let it be observed that ceremonial institutions are not inconsistent with the gospel dispensation. They may not be designed

to signify some benefits to be procured by Christ, as those did which were instituted under the ceremonial law; but they may be considered as rememorative signs of the work of redemption, which has been brought to perfection by him. Again, when the apostle, in the scripture just mentioned, says, 'we show the Lord's death till he come,' his words cannot be meant concerning our Lord's coming in the plentiful effusion of the Spirit; inasmuch as this privilege was conferred on the church in the apostle's days, at the very time when he speaks of their showing forth his death. Hence, he doubtless intends by the expression Christ's second coming, when this ordinance and all others which are now observed in the church, as adapted to its present imperfect state, shall cease. We must conclude, therefore, that the Lord's supper was designed to be continued in the church in all ages, as it is at this day.

By whom the Lord's Supper is to be Administered

We are now to consider the persons by whom this ordinance is to be administered. These are only such as are lawfully called, and set apart to the pastoral office, whose work is to feed the church, not only by the preaching of the word, but by the administration of the sacraments, which are ordinances for the church's faith, in which they are said to receive and spiritually feed upon Christ and his benefits. Hence, God promises to 'give his people pastors according to his own heart, who should feed them with knowledge and understanding.' Now, that none but these are appointed to administer this ordinance, is evident from the fact that they who partake of it are said to have communion with him and with one another in it for their mutual edification and spiritual advantage. It hence belongs, not to mankind in general, but to the church in particular. And, to prevent confusion, Christ has appointed one or more proper officers in his churches, to whom the management of

this work is committed; who are called to it by the providence of God, and the consent and desire of the church to whom they are to minister.

The Elements used in the Lord's Supper

We are now to consider the matter or the outward elements to be used in the Lord's supper. These are bread and wine. Thus it is said, 'Jesus took bread;' and 'he also took the cup.' Here 'the cup' is, by a metonymy, put for the wine; for our Saviour, referring to this action, speaks of his 'drinking the fruit of the vine.'l As to the bread which is to be used in this ordinance, there was a very warm debate between the Latin and the Greek church concerning it. The former, as the Papists do at this day, regard it as absolutely necessary that it should be unleavened bread, inasmuch as that kind of bread was used by our Lord when he instituted the ordinance; for the time at which he did so was that of the passover, when no leaven was to be found in their houses. Those who advocate this opinion also make the unleavened bread a significant sign of the sincerity and truth with which the Lord's supper ought to be eaten; for which they refer to these words of the apostle, 'Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' But there seems here to be an allusion only to the use of unleavened bread in the passover; which, it may be, might have a typical reference to that sincerity and truth with which all the ordinances of God are to be engaged in. Nor does it sufficiently appear that the apostle intends that the bread used in the Lord's supper should be of this kind, or that it was designed to signify the frame of spirit with which this ordinance is to be celebrated. On the other hand, the Greek church thought that the bread ought to be leavened, according to our common practice at this day, it being the same that was used at other times. This opinion seems most eligible,

as it puts a just difference between the bread used in the passover, which was a part of the ceremonial law, and that used in a gospel institution, which is distinct from it. But, I think, there is no need to debate either side of the question with too much warmth, it being a matter of no great importance. As for the wine which is to be used in this ordinance, it is a necessary part of it; and hence the Papists are guilty of sacrilege in withholding the cup from the common people.n [See Note Z, page 524.]

The Setting Apart of the Elements in the Lord's Supper

We are now to consider what the minister is to do antecedent to the church's partaking of the Lord's supper. He is to set apart the outward elements of bread and wine from a common use to this particular holy use. On this account, the elements may be said to be 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer.' The words of institution contain an intimation that these elements are to be used in the ordinance by Christ's appointment; for without that appointment, no significant sign could be used in any religious matters. As for prayer, the offering or it is agreeable to Christ's practice; for he 'took bread and blessed it,' or prayed for a blessing on it. It appears, too, from the apostle's words, that this action was accompanied with thanksgiving, 'When he had given thanks, he brake it;'p and the giving of thanks is agreeable to the nature and design of the ordinance, as herein we pray for the best of blessings, and express our thankfulness to God for the benefits of Christ's redemption.

Here I cannot but observe how the Papists pervert this ordinance in the manner of consecrating the bread. This the priest does only by repeating these words in Latin: 'This is my body.' They thence take occasion to advance the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation; and suppose that, by these words pronounced, the bread is changed into

the body and blood of Christ. This they assert contrary to all sense and reason, as well as the end and design of the ordinance. For, from this opinion it will follow, that man has a power to make the body and blood of Christ. Another consequence of it will be that the human nature of Christ is omnipresent; an idea which is inconsistent with a finite nature, and with those properties which belong to it as such, and from which it is to be concluded that his human nature is nowhere but in heaven. Besides, there is the greatest contradiction in supposing that it is bread, as having all the qualities of bread, while our senses are so far imposed on that we must believe that it is not so, but Christ's body. The opinion also supposes that Christ has as many bodies as there are consecrated wafers in the world; which is a monstrous absurdity. It likewise confounds the sign with the thing signified, and is very opposite to the sense of those words of scripture, 'This is my body.' For the words imply no more than that the bread, which is the same in itself, after the words of consecration that it was before, is an external symbol of Christ's body, that is, of the sufferings which he endured in it for his people. [See Note 2 A, page 525.]

The Actions performed in observing the Lord's Supper

We are now to consider the actions both of the minister and of the church, when engaged in the Lord's supper, namely, breaking, distributing, eating the bread, pouring forth and drinking the wine, for the ends appointed by Christ in instituting this ordinance. Whether our Saviour gave the bread and wine to every one of the disciples in particular, is not sufficiently determined by the words of institution. For though Matthew and Mark say, 'He gave the bread and the cup to the disciples;' Luke, speaking concerning either the cup used in the passover, or that in the Lord's supper, represents our Saviour as saying to his disciples, 'Take this and divide it among

yourselves.'r Now, these words seem to intimate that he distributed it to one or more of them, to be conveyed to the rest, that they might divide it among themselves. This corresponds with the practice of several of the reformed churches in our day, and seems most expedient when the number of the communicants is very great, and the elements cannot be so conveniently given by the pastor into the hand of every one.

Here I may observe how the Papists pervert this part of the Lord's supper. They will not permit the common people to touch the bread with their hands, lest they should defile it; but the priest puts it into their mouths. For this purpose it is made up into small, round wafers; and the people are ordered to take great care that they do not use their teeth in chewing it, and are told that to do so would be, as it were, a crucifying of Christ afresh, as offering a kind of violence to what they call his body. But these things are so very absurd and unscriptural, that they confute themselves. And their consecrating a wafer to be reserved in a case prepared for that purpose, and set upon the altar in the church to be worshipped by all who come near it, savours of gross superstition and idolatry.—We may farther observe, that they deny the people the cup in this ordinance, but not the priests; for what reason it is hard to determine. They also mix the wine with water. This custom, though it does not seem to be agreeable to Christ's institution, was often practised by the ancient church, whence the Papists took it. But their making it a sacramental sign of Christ's divine and human nature, united in one person, is much more unwarrantable. Nor can I approve of what others suppose, namely, that it signifies the blood and water which came out of his side, when he was pierced on the cross.—Moreover, I can hardly think some Protestants altogether free from the charge of superstition, when they so tenaciously adhere to the use of red wine, as bearing some small resemblance to the colour of Christ's blood.

Others choose to bear their testimony against this ungrounded opinion, by the using of white wine, without supposing that any thing is signified by it more than by red; and others choose to use one sort at one time, and another at another, to signify that this is an indifferent matter. The latter, I think, are most in the right.—Again, the practice of the Papists and some others, in receiving the Lord's supper fasting, in order that the consecrated bread may not be mixed with undigested food, is not only unwarrantable, but superstitious, as well as contrary to our Saviour and his apostles having partaken of the Lord's supper at its institution, immediately after having eaten the passover, and to what the apostle suggests, when he reproves the church at Corinth for eating and drinking to excess immediately before they partook of the Lord's supper, advising them to 'eat and drink,' though with moderation, 'in their own houses.'—Further, the administering of the Lord's supper privately, as the Papists and others do, to sick people, seems to be contrary to the design of its being a church ordinance. And when, to give countenance to this practice, it is styled, as by the Papists, 'a viaticum,' or a means to convey the soul, if it should soon after depart out of the body, to heaven, they are much more remote from our Saviour's design in instituting this ordinance; nor do they rightly understand the sense of the scripture whence they infer the necessity of it, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,'t when they apply it to this purpose.

There is another thing which must not be wholly passed over, namely, the various gestures used in receiving the Lord's supper. The Papists not only receive it kneeling, but they allege that they ought to do so, being obliged to adore the body and blood of Christ, which, as they absurdly suppose, is really present, inasmuch as the bread is transubstantiated, or turned into Christ's body and blood. The Lutherans, with equal absurdity, assert that the body of Christ is

really, though invisibly, present in the bread; and this they call consubstantiation. Some other Protestants, indeed, plead for the receiving of the Lord's supper kneeling, supposing Christ to be spiritually, though not corporally, present in it. They do not worship the bread and wine, but our Saviour; and this, they suppose, they ought to do with the becoming reverence of kneeling. What I would take leave to say on this subject, is, that we humbly hope and trust that Christ, according to his promise, is present with his people in all his ordinances; yet it is not supposed that we are obliged to engage in every one of them kneeling. But what determines the faith and practice of all reformed churches who do not use this gesture in the Lord's supper, is, that it is contrary to the example of our Saviour and his apostles when it was first celebrated; for that example ought to be a rule to the churches in all succeeding ages. It maybe said, that this is a gesture most agreeable to prayer, or at least that sitting is not so. But the Lord's supper is not an ordinance principally or only designed for prayer; for whatever prayers we put up to God in observing it are short, ejaculatory, and mixed with meditations, and they may be performed with an awful reverence of the divine Majesty, such as we ought to have in other acts of religious worship, though we do not use the gesture of kneeling. Besides, we think ourselves obliged to receive the Lord's supper sitting, that being a table gesture in use among us, in the same manner as that which our Saviour and his apostles used was among the eastern nations. As for the reformed Gallican churches, they receive the Lord's supper, for the most part, standing; which, being a medium between the extremes, they suppose to be most eligible. But this not being a table gesture, and so not conformed to that which was used by our Saviour and his apostles, I cannot think it warrantable. Some, however, make the gesture of standing or sitting a significant sign. Tho former they regard as a sign of our being servants, ready to obey the will of Christ, our great Lord and Master, or, as others explain it, a sign of

our being travellers to the heavenly country; and the latter, or sitting, they regard as a sign of our familiarity or communion with Christ. But these opinions are rather the result of human invention, than founded on a divine institution; for we have not the least account in scripture of such things being signified by the gesture used.

What is Signified in the Lord's Supper

We are now led to consider the thing signified in this ordinance, and in what respect Christ is said to be present in it, together with the benefits expected from him, as we are said to feed upon him by faith for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. I cannot but think that the general design of the ordinance is not much unlike that institution of the ceremonial law which ordained that, alter the sacrifice was offered, part of it should be reserved to be 'eaten in the holy place.' This was a significant feast upon a sacrifice. In like manner, the Lord's supper, which comes in the room of the passover, is ordained to be a feast on Christ's sacrifice. So the apostle speaks of it when he says, 'Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast,'x &c. The fiducial application of Christ and the benefits of his death, is the principal thing to be considered in this gospel festival. There are, however, some cautions necessary to be observed with respect to the things signified in it, which may be useful to us in directing us how our faith may be exercised in a right manner.

1. Though the Lord's supper was instituted in commemoration of Christ's love, expressed in his death, which was the last and most bitter part of his sufferings for our redemption; yet he did not design by it to exclude his other sufferings in life, nor, indeed, his whole course of obedience from his incarnation to his death. For, it is very evident that the death of Christ is often considered in scripture, by a

synecdoche, as denoting his whole course of obedience, both active and passive, which is the matter of our justification. Hence, the whole of his obedience is to be the object on which our faith is to be conversant in the Lord's supper, as well as his sufferings in or immediately before his death.

2. When Christ's sufferings upon the cross are said to be signified by the bread and wine, we are not to conclude that these sufferings are to be so distinctly or separately considered that the bread broken is designed to signify the pains which he endured upon the cross, when his body was as it were broken, its tendons, nerves, and fibres snapped asunder, and his joints dislocated, by being stretched on the cross, and the wine poured forth to signify the shedding of his blood, when his hands and feet were pierced with the nails and his side with the spear. For all these things are to be made the subject of our affectionate meditation in every part of this ordinance, while we are taken up with the contemplation of his last sufferings. That they should thus be jointly meditated on seems to give countenance to the practice of many of the reformed churches, in consecrating and distributing the bread and wine together. It is true, many think, on the other hand, that the elements are to be separately consecrated, as well as separately distributed, this practice being most agreeable to what is said concerning Christ's blessing the bread and giving it to his disciples, and afterwards taking the cup and giving it to them. Still, if this be allowed, it is not necessary for us to infer that each of the elements is designed to signify some distinct part of Christ's sufferings on the cross; but only that the ordinance is to be continued, the whole including two external and visible signs, each of which signifies the means whereby he procured our redemption. Indeed, when the wine is poured forth, and set apart for another part of this ordinance, we are not so much to enter on a new subject in our meditation, though the sign is different from that of the bread, as

to proceed in thinking on and improving the love of Christ, in his 'humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'z Now, all this is signified by this sign, as well as the other; and neither of them is adapted to this end, otherwise than by divine appointment.

3. We must take heed that we do not make more significant signs in the bread and wine than Christ has done. Some suppose that almost every ingredient or action used is to be applied to signify some things which he did or suffered for our redemption. It is a very great liberty which some take in expatiating on this subject, and applying it to this ordinance. We have a specimen of this in a hymn, composed to be sung as a thanksgiving after receiving the Lord's supper. In that hymn the corn, as first living and growing, and afterwards cut down, and by thrashing, separated from the husk, and then ground in the mill, and baked in the oven, are all made significant signs of the sufferings and torments which our Saviour endured. The corn being united in one loaf, is made a sign of the union between Christ and his church. In like manner, the grapes being gathered, pressed, and made into wine, is supposed to signify our spiritual joy, arising from Christ's shedding his blood. Many grapes making one vine, is also supposed to signify that believers should be united by faith and love. What lengths is it possible for the wit and fancy of men to run, when they have a fruitful invention, and are disposed to make significant signs, and apply them to this ordinance without a divine warrant!

4. When we meditate on Christ's sufferings, our faith, as Dr. Goodwin observes, is not principally to be fixed on the grievousness of them. We are not to endeavour only to have our hearts moved to a relenting, and compassion expressed towards him, and indignation against the Jews who crucified him, together with an admiring of his noble and heroical love displayed in his sufferings. Some persons, if

they can get their hearts thus affected, judge and account what they feel to be grace; whereas, it is no more than what any similar tragical story of some great and noble personage, full of heroic virtues and ingenuity, yet inhumanly and ungratefully used, does ordinarily work in ingenuous spirits, who read or hear of it. When our contemplation of Christ's sufferings reaches no higher than this, it is so far from being faith, that it is but a carnal and fleshly devotion, and such as Christ himself, at his suffering, found fault with, as not being spiritual, when he said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children,'c that is, not so much for my being thus unworthily handled by those for whom I die, as for yourselves. Moreover, it was not the malice of the Jews, the falseness of Judas, the fearfulness of Pilate, the iniquity of the times he fell into, that wrought our Saviour's death. God the Father had a higher design in that event; and this our faith is constantly to be conversant about, considering the death of Christ as the result of an eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, and of that covenant which he came into the world to fulfil, and of his being made sin for us, to take away our sins by atonement. We may add, that the highest and most affecting consideration in Christ's sufferings, ought to include the idea of his being a divine person; which is the only thing that argued them sufficient to answer the great ends designed by them, as it rendered them of infinite value; and it was on this account that his condescension, expressed in his sufferings, might truly be said to be infinite. These things, I say, we are principally to rest in, when we meditate on Christ's sufferings in this ordinance; though the sufferings themselves, which are exceedingly moving and affecting in their kind, are not to be passed over; since the Holy Ghost has, for this end, given a particular account of them in the gospels, not merely as an historical relation of what was done to Christ, but as a convincing evidence of the greatness of his love to us.

Thus concerning Christ's death, showed forth or signified in this ordinance.

We are farther, under this Head, to consider how Christ is present, and how they who engage in it aright feed on his body and blood by faith. We are not to suppose that Christ is present in a corporal way, so that we should be said to partake of his body in a literal sense. But he being a divine person, and consequently omnipresent; and having promised his presence with his church in all ages and places, when met together in his name; in this respect he is present with them, just as he is in other ordinances, to supply their wants, hear their prayers, strengthen them against corruption and temptation, and remove their guilt by the application of his blood, which is presented as an object for their contemplation in a more peculiar manner in this ordinance. As for our feeding on or being nourished by the body and blood of Christ, these are metaphorical expressions, taken from and adapted to the nature and quality of the bread and wine by which Christ's body and blood are signified. What we are to understand by them is, our graces being farther strengthened and established, our being enabled to exercise them with greater vigour and delight, and our deriving these blessings from Christ, particularly as founded on his death. Our being said to feed upon him, in particular, denotes the application of what he has done and suffered, to ourselves; and, in order to this, we are to bring our sins, with all the guilt which attends them, as it were, to the foot of the cross of Christ, confess and humble our souls for them before him, and by faith plead the virtue of his death, in order to our obtaining forgiveness, and, at the same time, renew our dedication to him, while hoping and praying for the blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace which were purchased by him.

There is another thing signified in this ordinance, as a farther end for which it was instituted,—namely, we are to have communion with one another, and thereby to express our mutual love as members of Christ's mystical body, who have the same end in view, and make use of the same means, namely, Christ crucified, as we attend on the same ordinance in which this is set forth, and have the same common necessities, infirmities, and corruptions, and the same encouragements for our faith. Hence, we ought to sympathize with one another, and, by faith and prayer, be helpful to those with whom we join in this ordinance, while we are representing our own case in common with theirs, before the Lord.

The Qualifications of Communicants

We are now led to consider what ought to be the qualifications of those who have a right to the Lord's supper, and are obliged to partake of it. These are expressed in general terms, by the apostle, by 'discerning the Lord's body.' Now, this a person cannot do, who is ignorant of the design of his death; so that there must be some degree of knowledge in those who are qualified for this ordinance. There must also be an afflictive sense of the weight and burden of the guilt of those sins which are daily committed by us, and an apprehension arising thence of our need of the merits of Christ to take them away, and that his death is designed to answer this end. And, that the ordinance may be observed for our real advantage, as we are said to feed on Christ by faith, it is supposed that this grace is wrought in us, or that we are effectually called out of a state of unregeneracy to partake of gracious communion with Christ; whereby we may be said to be fitted to have fellowship with him in this ordinance, and so partake of it in a right manner, for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

[NOTE Z. Half Communion.—Romanists defend their practice of withholding the cup in the ordinance of the Lord's supper from the laity, chiefly by arguments which assume the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and which, in consequence, beg not only the question at issue, but another question of higher import. When they say that the wafer is a whole Christ, and does not need to be accompanied by the cup,—that the putting of the cup into the hands of the laity would endanger 'the spilling of the blood,' or expose it to sacrilegious or unsanctified usage,—that whole communion could not be practised consistently with due attention to a supreme adoration of both the blood and the wafer,—they do little else than exhibit some awkward consequences which follow from their doctrine of transubstantiation, and furnish tools which might be effectively used for uncasing that doctrine, and laying open its deformity.

They say, however—as an argument founded on the highest authority—that our Lord, in instituting the eucharist, gave the cup to the apostles in their official capacity, and not as church-members, and therefore gave it to them alone. But how came our Lord's form of address, when giving the cup, to be exactly the same as when giving the bread? Did he give the bread also to the apostles officially, and so make no institution whatever of the ordinance for the people? What authority, too have the Romish priests to take the cup? Are they the apostles, or even their successors? Besides, the principle on which the argument—or rather the allegation—rests, would set aside almost every divine command. For if it were admitted that the command, 'Drink ye all of this cup of the new covenant in my blood,' was addressed to the apostles alone, it might, with equal justice, be maintained that the decalogue, or written moral law, was addressed to the Israelites alone,—the charges as to being, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves,' to the seventy alone,—the commission to carry

the gospel to kings and princes, to Paul alone,—the command, 'Give thyself to reading,' to Timothy alone,—the injunctions as to church-order and discipline and rules of prophesying, to the Corinthians alone,—and most of our Lord's discourses, especially the consolatory discourse on the eve of his passion, to the twelve alone. All the Bible was, in the first instance, addressed to particular communities and individuals, except only the Catholic epistles; and even these were addressed to Christians of the first century, residing within certain limits. Yet all scripture is authoritative to every person in every age to whom it comes, and is profitable to 'the man of God,' or every individual who believes it, that he may be 'thoroughly furnished unto every good work.' 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through faith and patience of the scriptures, might have hope.'

Another argument in favour of the practice of half communion, is founded on the disjunctive 'or,' in the words, 'Whosoever shall eat this bread, or (η) drink this cup of the Lord,' 1 Cor. 11:27. But the words, in order to suit the purpose for which they are quoted, would require to be, 'Whosoever eateth of this bread, or whosoever drinketh of this cup.' As they stand, they contain only one nominative to both clauses, and can designate only one party,—who, therefore, both 'eats' and 'drinks.' Besides, if the argument founded on them were conceded, it would prove half communion as truly by using the cup to the exclusion of the bread, as by using the bread to the exclusion of the cup; and would, in consequence, upset all the usages, and some of the opinions, which the Church of Rome has connected with the withholding of the cup from the laity.—Again, the Corinthians, to whom the words in question were primarily addressed, communicated in both kinds,—'What!' says the apostle, 'have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?' Not some of them appear to have communicated in both kinds, but all.—Further, an exact parallel to

the words occurs just two verses after, and it there stands, 'He that eateth and drinketh,' και πινων. Indeed, in encompass of eight verses, within which the words in question lie, the phrase 'eateth and drinketh' occurs five times, and is implied as many times more,—proving, along with the entire scope of the passage, that, to observe the eucharist at all, was to observe it in the way of communion in both kinds.—Finally, the verse to which the Romanists appeal is the only one on the subject in which the disjunctive 'or' is found; and even it, in several manuscripts of the New Testament of considerable authority, is read with the copulative 'and.'

A very brief summary of arguments against half communion will serve to expose it. The Church of Rome practised communion in both kinds till the 15th century; and yet, in the teeth of a total alteration of her practice, she affects and boasts to be 'semper eadem.' Half communion was first decreed by the council of Constance; and, before that period, is proved by liturgies, catechisms, canons, papal bulls, and all history, to have been unpractised and unknown.—Christ instituted and gave the cup exactly as he did the bread,—'in like wise,' or 'after the same manner,' ὡσαυτως; (1 Cor. 11:25; Luke 22:20;) and, in consequence, placed them on equal footing, or made the use of them of co-extensive obligation. Nor did he only give the cup, but commanded it to be used in the same manner as the bread, saying, in reference to the one, as he said in reference to the other, 'This do in remembrance of me,' 1 Cor. 11:24, 25.—The cup, besides, possesses a distinctive character or object in the ordinance, and must be used in order to the due significancy of the eucharist being realized. Our Lord, in reference to the bread, says, 'This is my body broken for you;' but, in reference to the cup, says, 'This is the new covenant in my blood;' and while he leaves the use of the former to be connected simply or specially with faith in his atonement, he directs the use of the latter to be associated with the hope of heaven,

—saying, 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom,' Matt. 26:29. The use of the bread, therefore, fixes the attention particularly on the atonement; and the use of the cup fixes it, in addition, on the ratifying or establishing by our Lord's death of the everlasting and well-ordered covenant of mercy, and on the glorious and celestial results which follow in the experience of his people.—Again, the practice of the apostolic churches, in communicating in both kinds, is mentioned in scripture in an authoritative manner, or with assumption of its correctness. 'The cup of blessing which we bless,' says Paul, 'is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,' 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:28.—Finally, communion in both kinds is directly commanded. 'As often,' says the Lord by his apostle, 'as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, show ye the Lord's death till he come,' 1 Cor. 11:26. The act here stated is 'eating the bread and drinking the cup,' and the duty enjoined is 'showing the Lord's death;' but as the duty consists simply in performing the act in a right spirit or with a proper motive, it necessarily includes the act, and, therefore, renders 'the drinking of the cup' as really imperative as 'the eating of the bread.'—ED.]

[NOTE 2 A. Transubstantiation.—The Romanists pretend to understand the words, 'This is my body,' literally; yet they read them, or construct upon them the doctrine of transubstantiation, as if they stood, 'This is my body, and blood, AND SOUL, AND DIVINITY!' If this be a fair example of literal interpretation, they may, even from texts, about the meaning of which there is no dispute, easily prove any dogma of their creed, or almost any conceivable point which they may choose to adopt. The saying of the apostle Peter, for example, 'I also am an elder,' might, in a strictly parallel way, be read, 'I also am

an elder, and a prelate, or the bishop of Rome, AND THE HEAD OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH ON EARTH, AND THE INFALLIBLE VICEGERENT OF CHRIST!' But who would call this literal interpretation? Yet it is exactly such literal interpretation as is put upon the words, 'This is my body,' in order to bring out of them the doctrine of transubstantiation.—The idiom of scripture, however, does not allow the words to be understood literally in reference to the mere body of Christ. 'The kine are seven years,' 'the candlesticks are the churches,' 'the rock was Christ,' 'the field is the world,'—are phrases in accordance with current scripture language, and, along with a multitude of their class, prove the substantive verb to be used in the sense of 'signify,' 'symbolize,' or 'represent.'—Besides, when the verb ειμι bears its radical or substantive signification, it means existence in the abstract, and is not employed to denote existence in the sense of having become. Had our Lord's words comported with the idea that the bread had been transubstantiated into his body, they would, I presume, have been, not τουτο εστι το σωμα μου but τουτο γινεται or τουτο γεγενηται το σωμα μου. The Syriac language—that most probably in which our Lord addressed the disciples when instituting the supper—did not, I believe, contain a verb corresponding to our word 'signify,' or 'represent,' and like the Hebrew and the Hebraistic Greek, always employed the substantive verb when the idea expressed by that word was intended. But even our own language—rich though it be in verbs to denote every phasis of the idea of representing—very often employs 'is' in the sense of 'represents.' How often do we say, pointing to a book, a picture, or an artificial mark on a map, 'This is Homer'—'this is Newton'—'this is London!'—Again, what shall be said respecting our Lord's words when giving the cup,—'This cup is the new covenant in my blood?' 1 Cor. 11:25: Luke 22:20. If, in the language he employed when instituting the eucharist, the part which referred to the bread is to be literally understood, the part which referred to the wine must—not

only in common consistency, but in order to sustain the Romish belief in the transubstantiation of both elements—also be literally understood. Just, then, as the words in the one case are construed to mean that the bread in the eucharist is transubstantiated into Christ's body, so must the words in the other case be construed to mean that the cup is transubstantiated into the new covenant! Every man who knows the meaning of words revolts from this consequence, yet sees it to be fair; and he will, therefore, conclude that, in the very nature of the case, the language used in instituting the eucharist was figurative.—Finally, The context of the words of institution expressly assumes that no change, no transubstantiation, took place on the bread and wine. Our Lord, after, as the Romanists say, he had consecrated the wine, or after he had 'blessed' or 'given thanks,' distinctly called the contents of the cup, 'this fruit of the vine;' (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18;) and the apostle Paul, speaking also of the bread after consecration, or after 'blessing.' or 'giving thanks,' and even speaking of it when in the process of being eaten, distinctly calls it 'this bread,' 1 Cor. 11:27; 10:16, 17. See also Acts 2:42; 20:7.

Dr. Ridgeley confutes the doctrine of transubstantiation by pointing out some of the absurdities or impossibilities which it involves. In addition to those he mentions—that it represents a creature as making his Creator, the human nature of Christ as omnipresent, the bread and wine to retain all their native properties while they are totally changed in substance, and the bodies of Christ to be as numerous, and in as many places entire and complete, as there are consecrated wafers,—I may observe that it assumes the five senses to be concurrently deceived, the capacity of the mouth or stomach of a communicant to be literally immense, the same thing to be in the same sense only one and yet thousands, the body of Christ to be at once of its proper size, of the size of a mere wafer, and of the size or

capacity of ubiquity. But an absurdity quite as great, though not, at first sight, so obvious as any, is to say that the most wondrous of all miracles, the transubstantiation of bread into the Saviour, takes place without anything occurring to overawe or even attract the senses, and that the Lord of glory is literally present with his people on earth in the same incarnate and glorified state in which the disciples saw him ascending up into heaven, amid such an utter absence of any mark, or token, or manifestation of his presence, that witnesses have no other intimation of the fact than the sound of a little bell rung by an officiate of the place! Miracles recorded in the Bible were all manifest, sensible, glorious, and deeply affecting changes; and even when of small import compared with what is alleged in transubstantiation, they so displayed the Saviour's glory as not only to arrest in the strongest manner the attention of his disciples, but to command their faith, John 2:11.

Christ's body. Dr. Ridgeley remarks in the way of further refutation, "is nowhere else but in heaven." 'Whom the heaven,' says the apostle Peter, 'must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,' Acts 3:21. Nor is Christ's human nature any more connected, as the doctrine of transubstantiation represents it. with the state of being offered up in sacrifice. 'But this man,' says Paul, 'after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool,' Heb. 10:12. 13. His manhood, besides, is of a nature or substance, not which originates in a supernatural change upon bread or wine, but which was conceived and born of the body of a woman; his human soul is not such as may be 'broken' and 'eaten,' but is cogitative and inedible; and his person as mediator is in a state of exaltation, and remains enthroned in glory, at the right hand of the divine Majesty,—Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:27, 28, and many other texts.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is incompatible with all the views which the scripture gives of the nature of the eucharist. That ordinance is celebrative, not of a present sacrifice, but of one which was completed in the offering up once for all of the body of Jesus Christ: it is an ordinance of strictly a commemorative character. 'This do,' said the Redeemer, when commanding that the bread be eaten, and again when commanding that the cup be drunk,—'This do in remembrance of me.' The ordinance, therefore, is not an exhibition of Jesus as present, but a memorial of him as having died, and risen, and 'passed into the heavens.'—Again, the eucharist is a social ordinance. It is not such as may be observed and entire in one person partaking of it, or in each person of a number partaking of it singly or apart from the rest; but such as requires joint participation or fellowship on the part of a church or congregation. 'Wherefore, my brethren,' says the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, 'when ye come together to eat' the Lord's supper, 'tarry one for another,' 1 Cor. 11:33. Nor does the ordinance admit of an entire bread—be it called 'loaf,' or 'wafer,' or whatever else—being received by each individual; but it requires that one bread or one loaf be participated by a society, or divided amongst them, in token of their fellowship with one another, and of their common union to the Saviour. 'The loaf which we break,' τον αρτον ὀν κλωμεν, says Paul, 'is it not the communion,' the joint participation, κοινωνια, 'of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one loaf, one body, εἰς αρτος, ἐν σωμα; for we are all partakers of the one loaf,' εκ του ἐνος αρτου, 1 Cor. 10:16, 17.—Further, the eucharist, as to the manner in which the bread is used, or as to the form, breaking, and distribution of the bread, resembles a social repast. One phrase, 'the breaking of bread,' is employed in scripture in reference both to it and to a social meal; and 'he brake the bread'—the loaf or the cake, τον αρτον,—is the scriptural description of the treatment both of the bread in an ordinary repast, and of the bread in the eucharist. Comp. Matt. 7:6; 12:4; 14:17;

26:26; Mark 14:22; 1 Cor. 10:16; Acts 2:42, 46; Luke 24:35. Now the bread used among the Jews in their common meals or that which the scriptures designate αρτος, 'bread,' or 'a loaf,' was a flat cake, such as in English would be termed a biscuit. Hence the force, and even the mere meaning of the phrase, 'the breaking of bread,'—'he brake the bread, and gave it to them.' The αρτος, or bread, however, cannot thus be understood in consistency either with the idea of transubstantiation, or with that of a bread or αρτος being given entire, as the Romish wafer needs to be, to one individual.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is opposed also to the leading doctrines of the gospel respecting the ground of a believer's hope, and the spirit in which he acts and worships. He is justified through the blood of Christ, not as supernaturally transubstantiated out of bread, nor as received into his mouth and stomach, but as shed on the cross, or poured out once for all at the beginning of the Christian dispensation,—(Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:14,) not as reproduced under the appearance of a solid wafer, but as visibly shed, and actually offered in sacrifice by the Saviour himself, the high-priest of his profession, Heb. 9:22. He is saved, not by an act of his own in corporeally receiving the body and blood of Christ, but by grace, making him a new creature, and enabling him in a spiritual manner to contemplate Christ in God's word and ordinances, Eph. 2:8–10, and many other texts. He lives, and worships, and approaches God in ordinances not by tasting, touching, seeing, or otherwise exercising outward sense, but by faith as opposed to sense,—by beholding the Saviour, or enjoying union with him, not in any physical manner, but with his intellect or soul, Isa. 55:2; John 1:29; 20:29. All his religious services, even when external symbols are employed, are strictly spiritual. He worships Him who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. He rejoices in Christ Jesus, serves God in the spirit, and has no confidence In the flesh. The kingdom of God, which is within him, is not meat and

drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, John 4:4; 6:63; Col. 2:20–23; Matt. 15:11, 17; Mark 7:18, 19.

Finally, The doctrine of transubstantiation is rendered utterly inadmissible by all those texts on the subject of the eucharist which, referring to the wine, call it metonymically, this cup, or referring to the bread and the wine after what the Romanists term 'consecration,' or after blessing, or giving thanks, call them 'this bread,' 'this fruit of the vine.' See Matt. 26:27, 29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18, 20; 24:35; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:25, 27.—ED.]

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

> QUESTION CLXXI. How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to prepare themselves before they come unto it?
>
> ANSWER. They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves, of their being in Christ, of their sins, and wants, of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance, love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong, of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

THE Lord's supper being a sacred and solemn ordinance, it ought not to be engaged in without due preparation in those who partake of it. The duties mentioned in this Answer, which are preparatory for it, are self-examination, the renewing of the exercise of those graces which are necessary to our partaking of it aright, serious meditation

on the work in which we are about to be engaged, and fervent prayer for the presence and blessing of God in it.

Self-Examination

As to the duty of self-examination, wo must, in order to perform it, retire from the hurry and encumbrances of the world, that our minds may be disengaged from them, and not filled with distracting thoughts, which will be an hinderance to us in our inquiries into the state of our souls. We must also resolve to deal impartially with ourselves, and consider what really makes against us, as matter of sorrow, shame, and humiliation, as well as those things which are encouraging and occasions of thanksgiving to God. We must also endeavour to be acquainted with the word of God, to which our actions and behaviour are to be applied, and by which we are to determine the goodness and badness of our state, in general, or the frame of spirit in which we are, in particular. Now, there are several things, concerning which we are to examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's supper.

1. We are to examine whether we are in Christ or not; since persons must be first in him before they can have spiritual communion with him. There are some things which, if we find them in ourselves, would give us ground to determine that we are not in Christ. In particular, that man is not in Christ who is an utter stranger to his person, natures, offices, and the design of his coming into the world, together with the spiritual benefits purchased by his death. Neither is he in Christ who never saw his need of him, or that there is no hope of salvation without him. Again, he is not in Christ who obstinately refuses to submit to his government, lives in a wilful contempt of his laws, resolutely persists in the commission of known sins, or in the total neglect of known duties. Again, he is not in Christ who is

ashamed of his doctrine, his gospel, his cross, which a true believer counts his glory; as the apostle says, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ.' He also must be reckoned out of Christ who is stupid and presumptuous, and who, though he may hope to be saved by him, yet desires not to have communion with him, but expects to be made partaker of his benefits without faith; or whose faith, if he pretends to have any, is only an assent to some truths, without being accompanied with repentance and other graces which are inseparably connected with that faith which is saving.

On the other hand, we may know that we are in Christ, if we can truly say that we have received a new nature from him, whence proceed renewed actions, which discover themselves in the whole course of our lives. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.' We must also inquire whether we endeavour constantly to adhere to his revealed will, not merely as the result of some sudden conviction, but as making it the main business of life to approve ourselves to him in well-doing; as our Saviour says, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.'g Again, converse with Christ in ordinances, is another evidence of our being in him. For, as a man is said to be known by the company he keeps, or delights to be in; so a true Christian is known, as the apostle says, by his 'having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' Further, we must inquire whether we have a great concern for his glory and interest in our own souls, and an earnest desire that his name may be known and magnified in the world; and whether this desire be accompanied with using our utmost endeavours in our various stations and capacities in order to the attainment of the end.

2. The next thing which we are to examine ourselves about, before we come to the Lord's supper, is what sense we have of sin, whether we

are truly humbled for it, and desirous to be delivered from it. It is not sufficient for us to take a general view of ourselves as sinners, in common with the rest of mankind, without being duly affected with it. We must consider the various aggravations of sin, with a particular application to ourselves; and how much we have exceeded many others in sin, either before or since we were called by the grace of God. By this means we may take occasion to say, as the apostle does concerning himself, that we are 'the chief of sinners;' and a sense of our guilt, when duly considered, will give us occasion to lie very low at the foot of God. We are also to take notice of our natural propensity and inclination to sin, and the various ways by which this has discovered itself in our actions. Accordingly, we are to inquire whether we have sinned knowingly, wilfully, presumptuously, and obstinately; or whether we have been surprised into sin, or ensnared by some sudden and unforeseen temptation, and have committed it without the full bent of our wills; whether we have striven against it, or have given way to it, and suffered ourselves to be prevailed upon without making resistance. We must also inquire whether we have continued in sin, or unfeignedly repented of it; whether sin sits light or heavy on our consciences; or if our consciences are burdened with it, whether we seek relief against it in that way which Christ has prescribed in the gospel. We must also inquire whether there are not some sins which more frequently and easily beset us; what they are, and whether we are daily watchful against them, and use our utmost endeavours to avoid them. We must also inquire whether we have not frequently relapsed into the same sin which we have resolved against at various times, and in particular, at the Lord's table, and thus have broken our engagements; and if so, whether we did not rely too much on our own strength, when we made resolutions against sin. We are likewise to inquire whether sin gets ground upon us, so that grace is weakened; or whether, though we commit it, we find its strength abated, and ourselves enabled, in some measure, to

mortify it, though we do not wholly abstain from it; as the apostle says, 'That which I do, I allow not; but what I hate, that do I.' We are also to inquire whether our sins have not involved a great neglect of Christ, his blood, his grace, his benefits, we not thinking of them, admiring or prizing them above all things, nor laying hold on them by faith, and so not making a right use of his dying love, which is signified in the Lord's supper.

3. We are to examine ourselves, before we come to the Lord's table, as to what particular wants we have to be supplied. Our Saviour is to be considered in this ordinance, not only as signified by the external elements, but as present with his people when met together in his name, with earnest expectation of enjoying communion with him. And as he is appointed to apply redemption to us, as well as purchase it for us, we must consider him as having his hands full of spiritual blessings, to impart to his necessitous people who come to him for them. Hence, they ought, before they go, to inquire not only, as has been already observed, what are their sins to be confessed and bewailed before him, but what it is, more especially, that they stand in need of from him. The question which Christ will ask them when they go there, is, What is thy petition, and what is thy request? What are those wants which thou desirest a supply of? Accordingly, we are beforehand to inquire whether, though we have some little hope that we have experienced the grace of God in truth, yet we do not want a full assurance of our interest in Christ, 'that we may know that we have eternal life,' together with the joy of faith accompanying its actings; and whether we do not want enlargement of heart, and raised affections in holy duties, which the psalmist seems to intend, when he says, 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name.'m Again, we are to inquire whether we do not want many experiences which we formerly had of the grace of God, and of his special presence in holy duties; or have not occasion to say with Job,

'Oh that it were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness!' Moreover, we are to inquire whether we do not want a greater degree of establishment in the great doctrines of the gospel, or to be kept steady in a time of temptation; and whether we do not want a greater degree of zeal for the honour of God, in a day in which many professors are lukewarm, as our Saviour observes concerning the church of Laodicea, that 'they were neither cold nor hot;'o or whether we do not want, together with this zeal, a compassion to the souls of others who make shipwreck of faith, not having a good conscience, which may induce us, as the apostle says, 'In meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;' and whether we are duly affected with the degeneracy of the age in which we live, and are not too negligent in bearing our testimony against the errors advanced in it or whether we understand the meaning of those various dispensations of providence which we are under, and what is our present duty in compliance with them. These things are of a more general nature, and to be made the subject of our inquiry, whenever we draw nigh to Christ in any ordinance in which we hope for a supply of our wants. But there are other things which we ought to have a more particular regard to in our inquiries, when we are to engage in the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

In order to our partaking of it aright, we are to inquire whether we do not want a clear and distinct apprehension of the covenant of grace, and its seals; how we are to act faith in a way of self-dedication; and how we ought to renew our covenant engagements with God, which we are more especially called to do in this ordinance. We are also to inquire whether we do not want a broken heart, suitably affected with the dying love of Jesus Christ, signified in the ordinance, that

we may 'look on him who was pierced, and mourn.' We are likewise to inquire whether we do not want to be led into the true way of improving Christ crucified, to answer all those accusations which are brought in against us, either by Satan or our own consciences; and how this is an expedient for taking away the guilt and power of sin. We are further to inquire whether we do not want to be made more like Christ, and conformed to his death, that, while we behold him represented as dying for us, we may 'reckon ourselves as dead to sin,' and to the world, and may reckon also that 'our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.'r We are also to inquire whether we do not want an abiding impression of the love of Christ, and a greater steadfastness in our resolution to adhere to him; that so, whatever grace we may be enabled to act, by strength derived from him, may be maintained and exercised, not only when we are, but also when we are not, immediately engaged in that ordinance. These things we are to examine ourselves concerning, that we may spread our wants before the Lord at his table.

To induce us to this work of self-examination, we may consider that our corrupt nature is very prone to think ourselves better than we really are; so that, how indigent and distressed soever we may be, we are ready to conclude, with the church of the Laodiceans, that 'we are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.' Moreover, if we are not truly sensible of our necessities, we shall not value Christ's fulness, or the rich provision he has made for his people, and is pleased to dispense in this ordinance; as it is said, 'The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'t We must consider also that a great part of our work in observing this ordinance consists in ejaculatory prayer, which we shall not be able to put up in a right manner if we are not sensible of our wants. One reason why we are so often at a loss in prayer, or go out of the presence of God empty, is

that our hearts are not enlarged in it. Now, they cannot be enlarged in prayer unless we are affected with a sense of our necessities. We have full encouragement, however, to examine ourselves concerning them, before we partake of the Lord's supper. Christ invites us to draw nigh to him in that ordinance, that he may take occasion to communicate the blessings of his redemption which are signified by it, that he may supply our wants, satisfy our desires, surmount our difficulties, and apply to us the great and precious promises of the covenant of grace. But these are to be sought for at his hands by faith and prayer; which supposes the performance of this duty of self-examination, with respect to the blessings which we stand in need of from him.

4. We are, before we partake of the Lord's supper, to examine ourselves concerning the truth and measure of our knowledge in divine things; inasmuch as without the knowledge of these the heart cannot be good, nor any spiritual duty engaged in a right manner. A perfect comprehensive knowledge of divine truths, indeed, is not to be expected, by reason of the weakness of our capacities, and the imperfection of the present state; in which, as the apostle says, 'we see' but 'through a glass darkly;' or, as it is said elsewhere, 'We are but of yesterday, and know,' comparatively, 'nothing.'x There is, however, a degree of knowledge which is not only attainable, but necessary to our right engaging in this ordinance. This does not consist merely in our knowing that there is a God, or that he is to be worshipped, or that there was such a person as our Saviour, who lived in the world, was crucified, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. For a person may have a general notion of all these things, and yet be unacquainted with the end and design of Christ's death, and the blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace which he procured by his death, or with the claim which a person may lay by faith to

them. But without being acquainted with these things, there is not a sufficient knowledge, such as the apostle calls 'a discerning the Lord's body,' which we ought to have in this ordinance. The knowledge of divine truths which ought to be pressed after, and as to our attainments in which we are to examine ourselves, respects the person of Christ, as God-man, Mediator, and the offices which he executes as such. More particularly, it respects the manner and end of his executing his priestly office, in which he offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, which we are more especially to commemorate in this ordinance. We must also have an affecting sense or knowledge of the guilt of sin; and, as a relief against it, must be acquainted with the doctrine of the free grace of God, displayed in the gospel, and founded in the blood of Jesus, whereby sin is pardoned. We are also to be fully convinced of the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, whereby alone sin can be subdued, and of the method he takes to make the redemption purchased by Christ effectual to answer that end. Again, we are to endeavour, in some measure, to know God as our Father, and covenant-God in Christ, who bestows on his people the rich and splendid entertainment of his house, and satisfies them with the abundance of his goodness, pursuant to what Christ has purchased. We must also know what it is to deal with him as those who see themselves obliged to devote themselves to him as their God; and what large expectations they may have from him whom he has avouched to be his peculiar people; and how these expectations are a foundation of that humble 'boldness' with which they are encouraged to 'come unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'z Moreover, we are to inquire, not only whether we have conceptions of the excellency, glory, and suitableness of those great things which are revealed in the gospel, to answer our particular exigencies, and render us happy in the enjoyment of God, but whether the knowledge of them makes a due impression on our hearts, is of a transforming nature, and has

a tendency to regulate the conduct of our lives, and put us on the application of these great things to ourselves.

As to the degree of our knowledge, we must inquire whether it be only a simple apprehension that the doctrines of the gospel are true, or at most, contains some general ideas of their being excellent and worthy of the highest esteem. We must also inquire whether we can prove them to be true, and render a reason of our faith. Without this, our knowledge may, indeed, be rightly placed as to its object; but it cannot be said to be deeply rooted, and therefore is exposed to greater danger of being foiled, weakened, or overthrown by temptation. We must also inquire whether we grow in knowledge in proportion to those opportunities or means of grace which we are favoured with. This the apostle calls 'growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

5. We are to examine ourselves concerning the truth and degree of our faith, and other graces which are inseparably connected with it. As for faith, we are to inquire whether it be a living faith, or what the apostle calls a 'dead faith,' as being 'alone,' and destitute of those good works which ought to proceed from it; whether it contains only an assent to the truth of divine revelation; or whether it puts us upon closing with Christ, embracing him in all his offices, and trusting in him for all those benefits which he has purchased by his blood. We must also inquire what fruits or effects it produces, and what other graces accompany or flow from it; whether it inclines us to set the highest value on Christ, as being, in our esteem, altogether lovely, and gives us low thoughts of ourselves, as having nothing but what we depend on him for, or derive from him; whether it be attended with some degree of holiness in heart and life, as the apostle speaks of 'the heart being purified by faith;'c whether it be such a faith as 'overcomes the world,' and prevents our being easily turned aside

from God, by the snares which we meet with; whether we are inclined by it to confess ourselves to be 'strangers and pilgrims on tho earth,'e and to 'desire a better country.' There are many other fruits and effects of faith, which the apostle mentions in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, by which we may examine ourselves concerning the truth and sincerity of this grace. There are also several graces mentioned in this Answer which are connected with faith, concerning which we must inquire whether they are found in us,—particularly repentance. This must of necessity be exercised in this ordinance as well as faith; inasmuch as by the one, we behold Christ's glory, and by the other, we take a view of sin's deformity. And it is such a repentance as inclines us not only to hate sin, but to forsake and turn from it, as seeing the detestable and odious nature of it, in what Christ endured to make satisfaction for it. But as faith and repentance were particularly considered under a former Answer, together with the nature, properties, and effects of them, we shall pass them over, and consider the graces of love to God, desire after Christ, and our using endeavours to approve ourselves his servants and subjects, by constant acts of obedience to him. These things are to be the subject of our inquiry, before we engage in this ordinance.

It is very suitable to the occasion, to inquire whether we love Christ or not; inasmuch as we are to behold and be affected with the most amazing instance of love which he has expressed to us. We ought therefore to inquire whether our love to him be superlative, far exceeding that which we bear to all creatures, how valuable soever they may be to us, how nearly soever we may be related to them, or whatever engagements we may be laid under to esteem and value them. We may also try the sincerity of our love to God, by inquiring whether it puts us on performing the most difficult duties for his sake, with the greatest cheerfulness; and whether we are encouraged by it to bear the most afflictive evils with patience, because it is his

pleasure that we should be exercised with them. We ought also to inquire whether we love him with all our heart, or whether our love is divided betwixt him and the creature, so that our affections are often drawn aside from him; whether our love to him puts us upon improving our time, strength, and all, our other talents to his glory; whether we have no interest separate from his, which we cannot but prefer to our chief joy; whether his glory be the very end of our living, as the apostle says, 'For me to live is Christ;'i whether we are earnestly desirous to bring others to him, not only by recommending his glory to them in words, but by expressing the esteem and value we have for him, in the whole course of our conversation; whether we are inclined by our love to him to hate every thing which he hates, as the psalmist says, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;' and whether we make those things the object of our choice which he delights in. Moreover, we are to inquire whether we have had any communion with him in ordinances, and particularly in this ordinance, at other times. And when he is pleased to withhold this privilege from us in any degree, in order that we may see that all our comforts flow from him, or that he may humble us for those sins which provoke him to depart from us, we are to inquire whether we are earnestly desirous of his return, and cannot be satisfied with any thing short of him.

As for our desires after Christ, which we are farther to examine ourselves about, we must inquire whether that which moves or inclines us to desire him, be the view we have of the glory of his Person, and the delight which arises from our contemplating his divine excellencies; or whether we desire him only for the sake of his benefits, or only that he might deliver us from the wrath to come; whether we desire Christ only when his service is attended with the esteem of men, or as a means to gain some worldly advantage from them; or whether we desire to adhere to him, when we are called to suffer reproach or even the loss of all things for his sake,—which will

be a convincing evidence of the sincerity of our desires after him, and, consequently, of our love to him. We are farther to inquire whether our love to Christ, and desire after him, discovers, itself by renewed acts of obedience to him; particularly, whether our obedience be universal or partial, constant or wavering, performed with delight and pleasure, or with some reluctance; and whether it puts us upon universal holiness, we being induced to practise it from the influence of gospel-motives. Thus concerning our examining ourselves about our faith, repentance, love to Christ, desire after him, and our endeavour to yield obedience to him in all things.

The next thing we are to examine ourselves concerning, is whether we have such a love to the brethren, and charity to all men, as disposes us to exercise forgiveness to those who have done us any injuries. The Lord's supper being an ordinance of mutual fellowship, we are obliged to behave ourselves toward one another as members of the same body, subjects of the same Lord, engaged in the same religious exercise; and, consequently, are obliged so to love one another that it may appear that we are Christ's disciples. This love consists in our desiring and endeavouring to promote the spiritual interest of one another, in order that Christ may be glorified; and it includes that charity which casts a vail over others' failures and defects, and our forgiving those injuries which they have at any time done to us. This frame of spirit is certainly becoming the nature of the ordinance; in which we hope to be made partakers of the fruits and effects of Christ's love, and to obtain forgiveness from him of all the injuries we have done against him. It is therefore very necessary for us to inquire, concerning our love to the brethren, whether it be such as is a distinguishing character of those who are Christ's friends and followers, or such, according to the apostle's expression, as will afford an evidence to us that we have 'passed from death unto life.'m In order to our discovering this, let us examine ourselves whether we

love the brethren because we behold the image of God in them, which is, in effect, to love and 'glorify God in them;' and whether our love to men leads us to desire and endeavour to be a common good to all, according to the utmost of our ability. Thus it is said of Mordecai, that 'he was accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.'o Again, we are to inquire whether our love be more especially to the souls of men, as well as their outward concerns. This consists in our using all suitable endeavours to bring them under conviction of sin, by faithful and well-timed reproofs; for the contrary to this, or our refusing to rebuke our neighbour or brother, and so 'suffering sin upon him,' is reckoned no other than a 'hating' of him. We are also to express our love to the souls of men, by endeavouring to persuade them to believe in Christ, if they are in an unconverted state, or to walk as becomes his gospel, if they have been made partakers of its grace. Thus the apostle expresses his love to those to whom he writes, when he says, 'I travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you;'q and elsewhere, he signifies to another of the churches, how 'affectionately desirous he was of them;' so that he was 'willing, not only to impart the gospel of God, but his own soul; because they were dear unto him.' Again, we must inquire whether our love puts us upon choosing those to be our associates who truly fear the Lord, whom we count as the psalmist expresses it, 'the excellent, in whom is all our delight;'s and, on the other hand, whether we avoid the society of, or intimacy with, those who are Christ's open enemies. Thus the prophet reproves good Jehoshaphat for associating with improper persons, when he says, 'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?' Again, we ought to inquire whether our love to men is then expressed when it is most needed; as it is said, 'A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.'u We are to inquire also whether we are inclined to all the acts of that charity which covers a multitude of faults; as the apostle

describes it, that it 'suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.

Again, we are to inquire whether our love to men be expressed in forgiving injuries. This is a frame of spirit absolutely necessary for our engaging in any ordinance. Accordingly, our Saviour says, 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee,' that is, if there be a misunderstanding between you, whoever be the aggressor, or gave the first occasion for it, 'leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother,' that is, do whatever is in thy power in order to effect a reconcilement, and 'then come and offer thy gift.' Such an exercise of a forgiving spirit is especially necessary when we engage in this ordinance; in which we hope to obtain forgiveness of the many offences which we have committed against God. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' It is no difficult matter for us to know whether we are disposed to forgive those who have injured us. Hence, the principal thing we are to examine ourselves about, is, whether we exercise forgiveness in a right frame of spirit, considering how prone we are to do things ourselves which may render it necessary for us to be forgiven, both by God and man; and whether, as the consequence of forgiving others, though we were formerly inclined to overlook those graces which are discernible in them, we now can love them as brethren, and glorify God for what they have experienced, and be earnestly solicitous for their salvation as well as our own. Thus concerning the first duty mentioned in this

Answer, namely, our examining ourselves before we engage in this ordinance.

Various Duties of Preparation for the Lord's Supper

We now proceed to consider some other duties mentioned in this Answer. One of these is the renewing of the exercise of those graces which are necessary to our right engaging in it, so that the sincerity and truth of them may be discerned. As faith, repentance, and several other graces ought to be exercised in this ordinance, it is necessary for us to give a specimen of them before we engage in it. As the artificer tries the instrument he is to make use of in some curious work before he uses it, so the truth and sincerity of our faith are to be tried before it be exercised in this ordinance.

Another duty preparatory to the Lord's supper, mentioned in this Answer, is serious meditation. We are to perform this duty that we may not engage in the ordinance without considering the greatness of the Majesty with whom we have to do, together with our own vileness and unworthiness to approach his presence. We must also consider his power, wisdom, and goodness, to encourage us to hope for those supplies of grace from him which we stand in need of; and we are to have an awful sense of his omnipresence and omniscience, as he is an heart-searching God, that we may be excited to an holy reverence, and guarded against the wandering of our thoughts and affections from him, or any unbecoming behaviour in his presence. More particularly, we are to consider beforehand, the end and design of Christ's instituting this ordinance,—namely, that his dying love to sinners might be signified and showed forth, as an encouragement to our faith, and an inducement to thanksgiving and praise.

It is farther observed that we are to endeavour to prepare for this ordinance by fervent prayer, being sensible that, when we have done

our best, we shall be too much unprepared for it, unless we have the special assistance of God when engaging in it. To this case may be applied the words of Hezekiah, 'The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers; though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.' We are to be earnest with God that he would give us a believing view of Christ crucified, and especially of our interest in him, that we may be able to say as the apostle does, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me;'b and that he would apply to us those blessings which he has purchased by his death, which we desire to wait upon him for when engaging in this ordinance, that our drawing nigh to him in it may redound to his glory and our spiritual advantage.

THE PARTAKERS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

QUESTION CLXXII. May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, and of his due preparation, come to the Lord's supper?

ANSWER. One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; and in God's account, hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to he found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity, in which case (because promises are made and this sacrament is appointed for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians) he is to bewail his unbelief; and labour to have his doubts resolved, and so doing, he may, and ought to come to the Lord's supper that he may be farther strengthened.

QUESTION CLXXIII. May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, be kept from it?

ANSWER. Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament by the power which Christ bath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.

IN these Answers we have an account of those who ought to partake of the Lord's supper, and of those who must be kept from it. The former Answer respects, more especially, doubting Christians, who desire to receive satisfaction, whether they ought to engage in the ordinance or not; the latter respects persons who are ready to presume that they are qualified for it, and ought to partake of it, though they are such as are to be excluded from it.

The Case of Doubting Professors

As to the case of one who doubteth of his being in Christ, and duly prepared for the Lord's supper, there are several things which may afford matter of encouragement to him.

1. Though his being duly prepared for the Lord's supper is a matter of doubt to him. he being destitute of assurance of his being in Christ; yet he may be mistaken in the judgment which he passes concerning himself. Assurance, as was formerly observed, is not of the essence of saving faith; for a person may rely on Christ, or give himself up to him, by a direct act of faith, who cannot, at the same time, take the comfort that would otherwise arise from thence, that Christ has loved him and given himself for him. Many have reason to complain of the weakness of their faith, and the great resistance and disturbance which they meet with from the corruption of nature.

Others, too, who at present have assurance of their interest in Christ, may afterwards, through divine desertion, lose the comfortable sense of it. Hence, we must not conclude that every doubting believer is destitute of faith. Those are to be tenderly dealt with, and not discouraged from attending on the Lord's supper, whom others who converse with them cannot but think to have a right to it, and to be habitually prepared for it; though they themselves very much question whether they are actually meet for it, being apprehensive that they cannot exercise those graces which are necessary to their partaking of the ordinance in a right manner.

Let it be considered, then, that there are some things, which, if duly considered by a weak, doubting Christian, would afford him ground of hope; though, it may be, he cannot sufficiently improve them to his own comfort. Thus, if he be truly affected with his want of assurance, and, in consequence, is filled with uneasiness in his own mind, laments his condition, and can take no comfort in any outward enjoyments, while destitute of it; if he is importunate with God in prayer, that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and grant him the exercise as well as the joy of faith; if he frequently examines himself with impartiality, and with an earnest desire to be satisfied as to his state, yet still walks in darkness, and his doubts and fears prevail against him; he has some ground to conclude that he is better than he apprehends himself to be, provided he is truly humbled for those sins which may be reckoned the procuring cause of his doubts and fears, and determines to be still waiting till God shall be pleased to discover to him his interest in forgiving grace, and thereby resolve his doubts and expel his fears, which render him so very uneasy. Moreover, a person has some ground of hope, if he can say that he unfeignedly desires Christ and grace above all things, and can find satisfaction in nothing short of him; for in this case, it may be said that Christ is precious to him, as he is to those who believe.

We may add, that he has some ground of hope, if he desires to forsake all sin, as being offensive and contrary to him, so that when he commits it, he can truly say with the apostle, 'That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate that do I;' and hence concludes himself 'wretched,' and earnestly desires to be 'delivered from the body of this death.'

Again, there are some promises which a weak doubting Christian may lay hold on for his encouragement. If the guilt of sin lies as a heavy burden upon him, and is the occasion of his doubts about his being in Christ; there are promises of forgiveness. If he complains of the power of sin, and its prevalency over him; there is a promise which is suited to his case: 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.'f If Satan's temptations are very grievous to him, and such as he can hardly resist; there are promises suited to his case, that 'God will not suffer' his people 'to be tempted above that they are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape;' and, 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'h If he wants enlargement and raised affections in prayer or other religious duties, so that he is very greatly discouraged, these promises may afford him some relief: 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications;' and 'Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine car to hear.'k If our doubts arise from frequent backslidings, and relapses into sin, we may apply these promises: 'He restoreth my soul,' &c.; and 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from them.'m We may also, in this case, apply to him Isa. 57:17, 18, where it is supposed that God was wroth, and hid himself from his people for their iniquity; and where, though they are described as 'going on frowardly in the way of their heart,' yet God says, 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him

also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.' We may likewise apply Hos. 11:7–9, where, though God's people are described as bent to backslide from him, yet he determines not to destroy them, but says, in a very moving way, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel, &c. Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.' Again, if we want communion with God, or his presence with us in his ordinances, and are hence led to conclude that we are not in Christ; let us consider these texts: 'I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain;' and, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.'o If we are under frequent convictions which soon wear off, and are led to fear, from their want of permanency, that we never experienced a thorough work of conversion; let us consider the following texts: 'Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord?' 'Who hath despised the day of small things?'q 'As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all.' If we are in a withering and declining condition, and want reviving; or, if we complain of barrenness under the means of grace, so that we attend upon them, as we apprehend, to very little purpose; there are some promises suited to our case, as Hos. 14:7, 8; Isa. 48:17. If our doubts arise from the hardness of our hearts, so that we cannot mourn for sin as we ought to do, or would do, let us consider what God has promised in Ezek. 7:16; Deut. 30:6; Acts 5:31. If we are under the visible tokens of God's displeasure, so that we are ready to conclude that he distributes terrors to us in his anger; and if, in consequence, we walk in darkness, and are far from peace; there

are many promises suited to our case, as Jer. 3:5; Psal. 103:8–10; Isa. 12:1; Joel 2:13; Isa. 50:10; Psal. 79:15; and 42:11.

2. We have a farther account how those who are, at present, discouraged from coming to the Lord's table ought to manage themselves. It is observed that they ought to bewail their unbelief, to labour to have their doubts resolved; and that, instead of being discouraged, they should come to the Lord's supper to be farther strengthened. This advice is not given to stupid sinners, or such as are unconcerned about their state, or never had the least ground to conclude that they have had communion with God in any ordinance, —especially if their distress of conscience arises rather from a slavish fear of the wrath of God, than from a filial fear of him, or if they are more concerned about the dreadful consequences of sin, than about the intrinsic evil of it; I say, this advice is not given to such. But it is given to those, who, as formerly described, lament after the Lord; earnestly seek him, though they cannot, at present, find him; and have fervent desires for his presence, though no sensible enjoyment of it; and appear to have some small degrees of grace, though it be very weak. In this case a few words of advice ought to be given to them. In particular, they should take heed of giving way to any hard thoughts of God; but should, on the other hand, lay the whole blame of their state on themselves. Thus God says by the prophet, 'Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?' They should also give glory to, depend on, and seek relief from the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who glorifies himself by sealing believers till the day of redemption, and bestows those comforts on them which they stand in need of. They must likewise endeavour, to their utmost, to act grace, and so go forward in the ways of God, though they do not go on comfortably; and must not say, 'Why should I wait on the Lord any longer?' Are they sometimes afraid that they shall not arrive

safely at the end of their race? They should nevertheless resolve not to give up or to run no longer in it. And because their way is attended with darkness, or hedged up with thorns, they should not determine, for that reason, to go backward, as though they had never set their faces heavenward. Again, they ought to lie at God's foot, acknowledging their unworthiness of that peace which they desire but are destitute of; and should plead for his special presence, which would give an happy turn to the frame of their spirits, as that which they prefer to all the enjoyments of life; as the psalmist says, 'There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'t Further, it would be advisable for them to contract an intimacy and frequently converse with experienced Christians, who know the depths of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the heart of man, and the methods of divine grace in restoring comforts to those who are, at present, destitute of them, agreeably to what they themselves have experienced in a similar case. Finally, they ought, for the strengthening of their faith, and the establishing of their comforts, to wait on God in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, hoping for Christ's presence in it. Many have found, in observing it, that they have been enlivened, quickened, and comforted; while others, through the neglect of it, have had their doubts and fears increased.

The Case of Ignorant and Immoral Professors

We are now led to consider what is contained in the latter of the Answers we are explaining. This relates to those who desire to come to the Lord's supper, but are to be kept from it. Here it is taken for granted that all are not to be admitted to this ordinance; though, it may be, they make a general profession of the Christian faith, and are not willing that any should question their right to it. These are described in this Answer as being ignorant of the great doctrines of

the gospel, and consequently unacquainted with Christ, whom they never truly applied themselves to, nor received by faith. Hence, they cannot improve this ordinance aright, or have communion with Christ in it.—Again, those are to be excluded from the Lord's supper, who are scandalous or immoral in their practice, whatever pretensions they make to the character of Christians. These are described by the apostle as persons who 'profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.' Such ought not to have communion with those whom the apostle describes as 'called to be saints.'y Nor can they partake of this ordinance aright; for they are not apprized of the end and design of it, and they are not able, as the apostle expresses it, to 'discern the Lord's body.' If they are strangers to themselves, how can they apply the benefits of Christ's redemption to their own case? If they neglect the preparatory duty of self-examination, so that they do not know their own wants, how can they go to Christ in this ordinance for a supply of them? If they do not desire the spiritual blessings of the covenant of grace, what right can they have to make use of its seals? If they are openly and visibly of another family, under the dominion of the powers of darkness, what right have they to the privileges which Christ has purchased for those who are members of his family and spiritually united to him?

To what has been said concerning those who are to be excluded from this ordinance, it is objected that it appears that both good and bad have a right to it, from what our Saviour says in the parable of the wheat and the tares, both of which are said to 'grow together until the harvest,' when the 'reapers' will be sent to 'gather first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, and the wheat into the barn.' Hence, say the objectors, hypocrites and sincere Christians are to continue together in the same church, and consequently to partake of the same ordinances. But the interpretation assumed in the

objection is not the sense of the parable. Our Saviour explains it otherwise, when he says, 'The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.'b We may hence infer that good and bad men are, through the forbearance of God, suffered to live together in the world; but the passage gives no countenance to the supposition that the wicked ought to be joined with the godly as members of the same church. Not that hypocrites may, and often do, intrude themselves into the churches of Christ; yet as their doing so is not known to the churches, they are not to blame for it, the heart of man being known to God alone. The judgment which we are to pass concerning those who are admitted into church-fellowship, or to the Lord's supper in particular, is to be founded on their credible profession; and though, in making that profession, it is possible for them to deceive others, yet the guilt and ill consequence of their doing so will affect only themselves.

It is farther objected, that Judas was at the Lord's supper when it was instituted by our Saviour, though he knew that he was an hypocrite and a traitor, and that he would speedily execute what he had designed against his life. It is hence inferred that all ought to be admitted to this ordinance. The reason generally assigned for believing that Judas was present at the institution of the ordinance is, that it is said, 'When the hour was come, he sat down, and his twelve apostles with him.' We likewise read afterwards that 'he took bread and brake it, &c. and also the cup after supper,'d &c.; and then it is said, 'Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.' This is supposed, by the objectors, to have been spoken by Christ when they were eating the Lord's supper; and they hence conclude that Judas was there. We reply, however, that it seems much more probable that he was not present when the Lord's supper was administered, though he joined with Christ and the other

apostles in eating the passover. The passover and the Lord's supper were celebrated, the one immediately after the other, at the same table, or sitting; so that the hand of Judas might be with Christ on the table, in the former, though not in the latter. Hence, though these words, 'the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table,' are inserted after the account of both these ordinances being concluded; yet we have ground to suppose that they were spoken while they were eating the passover, when Judas was present. Moreover, it appears yet more probable that he was not present at the Lord's supper, from the account which John gives of the matter. According to that account, our Saviour tells the disciples that 'one of them should betray him;' and he theng discovers that he meant Judas, by giving him the sop; and it is said, that 'having received the sop, he went immediately out.' Now it is certain there was no sop in the Lord's supper, as there was in the passover, inasmuch as there was no flesh used in it. Hence, Judas went out when they were eating the passover, before they began to partake of the Lord's supper; being, as we may reasonably suppose, in a rage that his hypocrisy should be detected, and that he should be marked out as a traitor, who was previously reckoned as good a man as any of them. We have not sufficient ground, therefore, to conclude, from the case of Judas, that wicked men ought to be admitted to partake of the Lord's supper.

It is farther objected, that for Christians to exclude any from the Lord's supper, would argue a great deal of pride, or vain-glorious boasting, and would be, as it were, to say to those who are excluded, Stand off, for we are holier than you. But a believer may, with thankfulness, acknowledge the distinguishing grace of God vouchsafed to him and not to others, and also bless him that he has given him a right to the privileges of his house which all are not admitted to partake of; without being guilty of any boasting. He may

say with the apostle, 'By the grace of God, I am what 1 am;' and yet deal faithfully with those who are destitute of this grace. He may bless God for the right which he hopes he has to the ordinance of the Lord's supper; and yet not think it his duty to admit those to it who have no right. Again, it is one thing not to admit persons who are unqualified to this ordinance, and another thing to despise them on this account. Our business is, not to reproach them, but to treat them with meekness; if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that so they may appear to have a right to it.

It is farther objected, that if wicked men are to be excluded from one ordinance which Christ has instituted in his church, they may, for the same reason, be excluded from all, and so may as well be debarred the privilege of hearing the word, and joining with the church in public prayer. We reply, that there is not the same reason for excluding wicked men from hearing the word, or joining in prayer with the church. as there is for refusing to admit them to partake of the Lord's supper. Prayer and preaching the word, are God's appointed means for working the grace of faith, instructing the ignorant, awakening the stupid and secure sinner, and putting him on complying with that method of salvation which God has prescribed in the gospel, and embracing Christ as offered in it. On the other hand, the Lord's supper is an ordinance which supposes the soul to have previously received Christ by faith. The communicant is to feed upon Christ, and to take comfort from what he has done and suffered for him, as conducive to the farther mortification of indwelling sin; and this supposes that he has previously had some experience of the grace of God in truth. Thus concerning the exclusion from the Lord's supper of ignorant or immoral persons, on account of their not being qualified.

Here we may farther observe, that they who bring these and similar objections, with a design to open the door of the church so wide that all may be received into it, and partake of those ordinances by which it is more particularly distinguished from the world, are very ready, in defence of their own cause, to charge others with being too severe in their censures, and refusing to admit any into church communion who cannot tell the very time in which they were converted, and the means by which this work was begun and carried on. They allege, too, that candidates for admission are obliged to profess their faith in so public a manner, that many are denied the privilege of partaking of this ordinance, for a mere circumstance; and they say that this severe course is an extreme as much to be avoided, as the receiving of unqualified persons to the Lord's supper. But as this charge is rather the result of surmise than founded on sufficient evidence, it deserves to have less notice taken of it. Yet I would say in answer to it, that I never observed it to be the practice of any church of Christ to exclude persons from its communion because they knew not the time or means of their conversion. The conversion of persons may sometimes be occasioned by their having been favoured with the blessing of a religious education and restraining grace from their childhood, so that they have not run those lengths in sin which others have done; and, hence the change which is wrought in conversion, especially as to the time and manner of it, is less discernible. Sometimes the work is begun with a less degree of the terrors of conscience, under a sense of the guilt of sin, and the condemning sentence of the law, than others have experienced. Persons in whom it has thus commenced have been drawn with the cords of love; and the grace of God has descended upon them insensibly, like the dew upon the grass; so that all that can be perceived by them, or that is to be required of them as a necessary qualification for their being admitted to the ordinances and privileges which belong to believers, is their discovering those fruits

of faith which are discernible in the conversation of such as have experienced the grace of God in truth.—As to the other part of the charge, which pretends that some churches insist on such terms of communion as are merely circumstantial, so as to refuse to receive any who cannot comply with them; it is to be answered by those who appear to be liable to it. All that I shall add under this Head, is, that as a visible profession of faith in Christ is to be made, as necessary to constitute a visible church, and the conversation of those who make it ought to be apparently agreeable to it; and as none are obliged to make known to the church anything which involves the least appearance of dishonour or reflection on their character in the world, but are required only to testify and give a proof of their steady adherence to Christ, and their desire to embrace him in all his offices, as well as worship him in all his ordinances; the requiring of a profession of faith from them cannot justly be reckoned an unnecessary circumstance, or making that a term of communion which Christ has not made, and so excluding those who have a right to the Lord's supper.

The Use of the Lord's Supper as a Civil Test

We have now considered the terms of communion, and the qualifications for it, as well as the spiritual privileges which are to be expected by those who have a right to it. Here, I cannot but observe how these are abused, and practically disowned, by those who engage in this ordinance merely as a qualification for a civil employment. A person may certainly be a good member of a commonwealth and very fit to be intrusted with the administration of its civil affairs, who has little or nothing to say concerning his experience of the grace of God. To assert that a right to a civil employment is founded on the same qualifications which give a person a right to partake of the Lord's supper, would be to advance, not only what is indefensible,

but what would be almost universally denied, unless it could be proved that all might partake of the ordinance, the contrary to which we have endeavoured to maintain. Moreover, when Christ instituted this ordinance, his people were in no expectation of bearing any part in the civil government; so that its being used as a test of qualification for such a situation, was most remote from its first intent and design. We often find, too, that the use of it as a civil test is a temptation to men to profane it, and lays a burden on the consciences of those who know themselves unprepared for it, who had little or nothing in view but the securing of their secular interest. It is hence to be feared that many of them eat and drink unworthily, and, instead of receiving advantage by it, bring their consciences under such entanglements as they cannot easily extricate themselves from. Thus concerning those who are to be admitted to be partakers of the Lord's supper, though doubting of their meetness for it; and concerning others being excluded, who have no right to it.

The last thing observed in this Answer, is that they who are not, at present, deemed fit for this ordinance, may afterwards be admitted to it, when they have received instruction, and manifested a thorough reformation. If, by their diligent attendance on other ordinances or means of grace, accompanied with the divine blessing, that which at present disqualifies them is removed, they may humbly and thankfully wait on God in this ordinance and hope for his presence and blessing; and then the church will have reason as well as themselves, to bless God for that grace which they have experienced, whereby they may come to the ordinance for the better and not for the worse.

DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

QUESTION CLXXIV. What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in the time of the administration of it?

ANSWER. It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, that during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces, in judging themselves and sorrowing for sin, in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fulness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace, in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

QUESTION CLXXV. What is the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper?

ANSWER. The duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is, seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfil their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance; but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at the sacrament; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own

consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time; but if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterward with more care and diligence.

THESE two Answers respect our behaviour in and after our engaging in this ordinance.

Duties while observing the Lord's Supper

We are to consider with what frame of spirit we are to engage in the ordinance, how our meditations are to be employed, and what graces are to be exercised. Here is something observed which is common to it with all other ordinances, namely, that we are to wait on God with all holy reverence arising from a becoming sense of his divine perfections, and the infinite distance we stand at from him; and we are to impress on our souls an awful sense of his omniscience and omnipresence. For he knows better than we do ourselves, with what frame of spirit we draw nigh to him; and highly resents every thing which is contrary to his holiness, or unbecoming the character of those who are worshipping at his footstool. But there are other things peculiar to this ordinance, which are necessary in order to our engaging in it in a right manner.

1. We are diligently to observe the sacramental elements and actions, which contain the external part of the duty required of us. The bread and wine, together with the actions to be performed in our receiving them by Christ's appointment, are, as was formerly observed, significant and instructive signs of his death, and of the benefits which he has procured for us by it; and these are to be attended to, and brought to our remembrance in this ordinance. Moreover, we are to consider that, while the blessings of the covenant of grace are signified by the sacramental elements and actions, as instituted, not as natural signs, the gospel in which we have an account of what

Christ did and suffered for us, is a large and sufficient explanation for the direction of our faith, when conversant about them.

2. We are affectionately to meditate on the sufferings and death of Christ, which are signified in the ordinance. Meditation is a great part of the work we are to be engaged in; and the death of Christ is the principal subject of it. Accordingly, we are to consider his condescending love in giving his life a ransom for us: and, in order to our being affected with this, and excited to admiration and thankfulness for it, we must contemplate the divine excellency and glory of his Person, which adds an infinite value to every part of his obedience and sufferings. We must consider also the kind of death he died; which is called his being 'wounded,' 'bruised,' 'cut off,'l and is represented as having had the external mark of the curse of God annexed to it, so that he is said to have been made a curse for us. We are to consider also the character of the persons for whom he laid down his life; who are described as being 'without strength' or ability to do what is good, and 'ungodly,' and so open enemies to him;n so that there was nothing in us which could induce him to suffer and die for us. We are to consider also that he died in our room and stead, 'bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows,' and being 'delivered for our offences.'p We are to consider likewise the great ends designed; that God is glorified, and his holiness and justice in demanding and receiving a full satisfaction for sin, illustrated in the highest degree; so that he declares himself 'well-pleased' in what Christ has done and suffered, and 'well-pleased' likewise, as the prophet expresses it, 'for his righteousness' sake.'r We are to consider also the great advantage which we hope to receive; that 'being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' This is the highest inducement to us, to give ourselves entirely up to him.

3. We are, in this ordinance, to stir ourselves up to a vigorous exercise of those graces which the nature of the ordinance requires. Accordingly, we are to judge ourselves; as the apostle says, 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' This we ought to do, by accusing, condemning, and passing sentence against ourselves, for those sins which we have committed against Christ, whereby we were plunged into the utmost depths of misery, in which we should for ever have continued, had he not redeemed us by his blood. We are also to acknowledge our desert of God's wrath and curse; so that 'if he should mark iniquities, we could not stand.'u Our sense of sin ought to be particular, including a view of those transgressions which are known to none but God and ourselves; and we ought to make a particular application of the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of them. To act thus is certainly very suitable to the nature of the ordinance, Christ being there set forth as a sacrifice for sin. And we are led, at the same time, to be duly affected with our malady, and the great remedy God has provided; and in consequence are incited to increased praise and thankfulness to him who loved us, and gave himself for us. Again, we are to exercise a godly sorrow for sin, which is the ground of all that distress and misery to which we are liable. We are first to bewail our corruption of nature, whence all actual sins proceed; and we are next to bewail our sins of omission, as well as commission,—our neglect to perform duties which are incumbent on us, as well as those sins which have been committed by as with the greatest presumption, deliberation, wilfulness, and obstinacy, and which contain the highest ingratitude and contempt of the blood of Christ, and the method of salvation by him. Our sorrow for sin ought also to produce the good effects of praying and striving against it, and of endeavouring to return to God from whom we have backslidden. The apostle calls it 'sorrowing after a godly sort;' and speaks of it as attended with 'carefulness,' that we may avoid it for the future,—'clearing of ourselves,' that we may either be

encouraged to hope that we have not committed the sins which we are ready to charge ourselves with, or that the guilt of them is taken away by the atonement which Christ has made for us. It ought also to produce an holy 'indignation,' and a kind of 'revenge' against sin, as that which has been so prejudicial to us; likewise a 'fear' of offending a 'zeal' for the glory of God, whom we have dishonoured, and 'a vehement desire' of those blessings which we have forfeited. It ought to proceed from an inward loathing and abhorrence of sin; and the degree of it ought to bear some proportion to the respective aggravations of sin, and the dishonour we have brought to God by it; for if we thus view sin, we shall be effectually inclined to abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. To feel in this way is very agreeable to the nature of the ordinance we are engaged in, since nothing tends more to enhance the vile and heinous nature of sin, than the consideration of its having crucified the Lord of glory. The fact, too, of Christ having died on account of sin, is to be the immediate subject of our meditation in observing the ordinance. We read that Christ, in his last sufferings, was 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' Now, this extreme sorrow could not proceed from the afflictive view which he had of the pains and indignities he was to suffer in his crucifixion; for to suppose that it did, would argue him to have had a less degree of holy courage and resolution than some of the martyrs have expressed when they have endured extreme torments and most ignominious reproaches for his sake. Hence, his sorrow proceeded from the afflictive sense winch he had of the guilt of our sins which he bore. Now, if he not only suffered, but his soul was exceedingly sorrowful for our sins, we ought to be excited to the exercise of godly sorrow for sin, in this ordinance, in which Christ's suffering for it is brought to our remembrance.

3. We are to hunger and thirst after Christ; and so to have an ardent desire of enjoying communion with him. Thus the church says, 'With

my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit will I seek thee early;' and the psalmist compares a believer cherishing this desire to the hunted 'hart,' ready to die for thirst, which 'pants after the water-brooks.'z This desire arises from a deep sense of our need of Christ, and of farther supplies of grace from him; and is attended with a firm resolution that nothing short of him shall satisfy us, as not being adapted to supply our wants. Such a frame of spirit is agreeable to the ordinance we are engaged in; since Christ is there represented as having purchased and being ready to apply to his people, those blessings which are of a satisfying and comforting nature.

4. We are to feed on Christ by faith, and so receive of his fulness; as he is frequently represented in scripture, under the metaphor of 'food.' Thus he styles himself, 'the bread of life;' the blessings he bestows are called, 'the meat which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life;'b and the gospel dispensation is set forth under the metaphor of 'a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.' Under the same metaphor, our Saviour represents that dispensation in the parable,d in which he commands his servants to invite those who were bidden to the marriage feast, by telling them, as an encouragement to their faith, what things he had prepared for their entertainment. Thus, when drawing nigh to Christ in this ordinance, we are to consider that fulness of grace which is in him, of merit for our justification, of strength to enable us to mortify sin and resist temptations, of wisdom to direct us in all emergencies and difficulties, of peace and comfort to revive and encourage us under all our doubts and fears, and to give us suitable relief when we are ready to faint under the burdens we complain of. All these blessings are to be apprehended and applied by faith; otherwise we cannot conclude that they belong to us. Nor can anything be more adapted

to this ordinance than this apprehending and applying of these blessings; for Christ is there represented as having all those blessings to bestow which he has purchased by his blood, and there also they are signified or showed forth.

5. We are, in this ordinance, to trust in the merits of Christ, or to exercise an entire confidence in him; who, by his death, has purchased for us all spiritual and saving blessings. This ought to be attended with an humble sense of our own unworthiness, as being 'less than the least of all God's mercies,' and as deserving nothing but his fierce wrath for our iniquities. And, as Christ has paid a full and satisfactory price of redemption for us, and so procured the blessings which we had forfeited, and which have a tendency to make us completely happy, we ought to lay the whole stress of our salvation on him, being sensible that 'he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.'

6. We are to rejoice in Christ's love; which is infinitely greater than what can be in the heart of one creature towards another. This love of Christ has several properties. It consists, not merely in his desiring our good or wishing that we were happy, but in making us so; nor does it consist only in his sympathizing with us in our miseries, but also in his delivering us from them, and discovering himself as our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.—Again, as Christ's love to his people did not take its motive at first from any beauty or excellency which he found in them, who were deformed, polluted, and worthy to be abhorred by him, but afterwards were adorned and 'made comely through his comeliness put upon them;' so, when they forfeit his love by their frequent backslidings, and deserve to be cast off by him, it is nevertheless unchangeably fixed upon them, inasmuch as 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.'h—Further, Christ's love is

infinitely condescending. Its condescension arises not only from the infinite distance which there is between him and his people, but from his remembering them in their low estate, having compassion on them whom no eye pitied, and saving them when they were in the utmost depths of despair and misery, 'saying to them when they were in their blood, Live.'—Again, his love is not like the love of strangers, which contents itself with some general endeavours to do good to persons whom they designed not to contract an intimacy with; but it is attended with the highest acts of friendship and communion, imparting his secrets to them, as he promises 'to love them, and manifest himself to them,'k and tells his disciples, 'Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.'—Moreover, it is such a love as forgives all former injuries, and upbraids not his people for what they have done against him, either before or since they believed in him. Thus God is said to 'pardon the iniquity and pass by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage;' to 'cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;'m and to 'blot out their transgressions for his own sake, and not to remember their sins.'—Again, it is such a love as affords us all seasonable and necessary help in times of our greatest straits and difficulties,o and makes provision for our future necessities. Thus he told his disciples, 'I go to prepare a place for you,' that they might be assured of being happy in another world; and accordingly he said, in his mediatorial prayer, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.'q—Further, it is such a love as puts him upon reckoning all injuries done against his people as though they were done against himself, and the kindnesses expressed to them as though they were expressed to him. Thus it is said, 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye;' and, 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me.'s And when he takes notice of those expressions of

kindness which his people had shown to one another, he says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'—Finally, it is such a love as inclines him to interpose between his people and all danger; and so he prevents their being overcome by their enemies. Indeed, he not only hazarded, but, as 'a good shepherd, gave his life for his sheep.'u This, then, is that love which is to be the subject of our meditation in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. Accordingly, we are first to endeavour to make out our interest in it by faith, which will be evinced by those acts of love to him that flow from it; and then we may rejoice in it as a constant spring of peace and blessedness.

7. The next grace to be exercised in this ordinance, is thankfulness. We are to adore and praise God that he has been pleased to extend compassion to us in bestowing those blessings which are the result of his discriminating grace. The instances of this grace are various: he delivers us from the ruin which sin would have inevitably brought upon us; bestows upon us the blessings of goodness, and restrains the breaking forth of our corruptions, which would otherwise have inclined us to commit the vilest abominations; more especially, he renews our nature, changes our hearts, creates us unto good works, and then quickens and excites that grace in us which his own hand has wrought, comforts us when our spirits are overwhelmed with sorrow, enables us to go on in his way rejoicing, and so carries on the work which he has begun in us, till it be completed in glory. There is nothing which we have, either in hand or in hope, but what will afford matter for the exercise of thankfulness. In particular, our hearts ought to be excited to it from the consideration of the benefits which are signified in the ordinance of the Lord's supper; especially if we are enabled to receive them by faith.

8. We are, at the Lord's supper, to renew our covenant with God. That this may be rightly understood, we must consider what it is for a believer to enter into covenant with God, which he is supposed to have done before. This does not consist in our promising that we will do those things which are out of our power, or that we will exercise those graces which none but God, who works in his people both to will and to do, can enable us to put forth; but it consists in our making a surrender of ourselves to Christ, and depending on him for the supply of all our spiritual wants, humbly hoping and trusting that he will enable us to adhere steadfastly to him, working in us all that grace which he requires of us; and if he is pleased to grant us this blessing, we shall be enabled to perform all the duties which are incumbent on us, how difficult soever they may be. This is an unexceptionable way of entering into covenant with God, as it contains an acknowledgment of our own inability without him to do that which is good, and a desire to give the glory of all to him; on whom we steadfastly rely, that we may obtain mercy from him to be faithful. Moreover, to renew our covenant, is to declare that, through his grace, we are inclined steadfastly to adhere to our solemn dedication to him, not in the least repenting of what we did in it; and that we have as much reason to depend on his assistance now as we had at first, since grace is carried on as well as begun by him alone. Accordingly, while we express our earnest desire to be steadfast in his covenant, we depend on his promise that he will never fail us, nor forsake us. And we especially avail ourselves of observing the Lord's supper to renew our dedication to him, as our doing so is very agreeable to the nature of this ordinance; in which we have the external symbols of his love to us, which lays us under the highest obligation to be dedicated to him.

9. We are in this ordinance to show our readiness to exercise a Christian love to all saints. This consists more especially in our

earnest desire that all grace and peace may abound in them, as in our own souls; that so they and wo may have occasion to glorify God together, and show concern for one another's spiritual welfare. We are to bless God for the grace they are enabled to exercise, though, it may be, we cannot exercise it in the same degree ourselves. As for others, we are to sympathize with them in their weaknesses, grieve for their falls and miscarriages, and be very ready to make abatements for such of their frailties and infirmities as we ourselves are sometimes liable to, especially if they are not inconsistent with grace, and we are to cast a mantle of love over these, not knowing but we may be exposed to and fall by the same temptations which have overcome them. This love to all Christians is to be expressed, more especially in the ordinance of the Lord's supper; inasmuch as we are to consider all saints as members of Christ's mystical body, children of the same God and Father, partakers of the same grace with us, fellow-travellers to the same heavenly country, where we hope to meet them at last, though now they are liable to the same difficulties with ourselves, and exposed to those assaults and temptations which we often meet with from our spiritual enemies. Moreover, though our love is to be more immediately and directly extended to the society who join in communion with us; yet it is not to be confined within such narrow limits, but includes the highest esteem for all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, though their place of abode be remote, and they are not known to us in the flesh.

Duties After Observing the Lord's Supper

We are now to consider the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This consists in inquiring how they behaved themselves in it; and whether they have any ground to conclude that they were favoured with the special

presence of God in it, so that it has been made a means of grace to them.

As to the frame of our spirits, while engaging in this solemn duty, we shall sometimes find that it has been such as affords matter for deep humiliation and self-abasement in the sight of God, when we reflect upon it. In particular, we have reason to blame our conduct in this ordinance, when our minds and affections have been conversant about those things which are altogether unsuitable to the work we have been engaged in; and when, instead of conversing with Christ in the ordinance, we have had our thoughts and meditations taken up chiefly with worldly matters. Or even if they have been conversant about religious affairs, we may, in some measure, see reason to blame ourselves, if these have been altogether foreign to the great end and design of the ordinance we have been engaged in. There are many portions of scripture, or topics in divinity founded upon it, which we may employ our thoughts about at other times, with great advantage, but which may not be altogether adapted to our receiving spiritual advantage from Christ crucified, or to our making a right improvement of him, as the nature of this ordinance requires. Again, they behave themselves unbecomingly in this ordinance, who meditate on the thing signified in it, namely, the dying love of Jesus Christ, as though they were unconcerned spectators; having only an historical faith, and contenting themselves with the knowledge of what merely relates to the life and death of Christ, without considering the end and design of them, namely, that he might make atonement for sin, or considering their particular concern in that atonement, so as to improve it as an expedient for taking away the guilt and power of sin in their own souls. Further, we may reflect on our behaviour in this ordinance, when we have given way to deadness and stupidity, without using those endeavours which are necessary for the exciting of our affections; when a subject so

affecting as Christ's pouring out his soul unto death, being wounded for our transgressions, despised and rejected of men, bleeding and dying on the cross, and in the midst of his sufferings crying out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' has not had an efficacy to raise our affections, any more than if it were a common subject. Moreover, we have reason to blame our behaviour in this ordinance, when we have attended on it with a resolution to continue in any known sin, without being earnest with God to mortify it, or desiring strength and grace from Christ, and improving his death, in order to the accomplishment of that end. Thus we have sometimes reason to reflect, with grief and sorrow of heart, on our behaviour at the Lord's supper, as what has been disagreeable to the nature of the ordinance.

But, on the other hand, we may sometimes, in taking a view of our behaviour at the Lord's supper, find matter of encouragement; when, abating for human frailties, and the imperfection of grace, which inseparably attend the present state, we can say, to the glory of God, that we have, in some measure, behaved ourselves as we ought to do. In particular, if our hearts have been duly affected with the love of Christ, and we have had the exercise of corresponding graces; and if we can say that we have had some communion with him, and have not been altogether destitute of his quickening and comforting presence, and the witness of his Spirit with ours that we are the children of God; then we may conclude that we have engaged in this ordinance in a right manner;—and if we have found that it has been thus with us, we are to bless God for it; considering that he alone can excite grace in us, who wrought it at first. Such acts of grace, too, will be a good evidence of its truth and sincerity, and will tend to establish our comfort, and to enable us to walk more closely and thankfully with God. Moreover, if we have had experience of the presence of God in the ordinance, and have been brought into a good frame, we ought to beg the continuance of these. The best frame of

spirit will be no longer abiding than it pleases God to keep up the lively exorcise of faith and other graces; and this, being so valuable a blessing, is to be sought for by fervent prayer and supplication, that our good frames may not be like the morning cloud, or early dew, that soon passes away. Our seeking a continuance of these will discover that we set a value upon them, and glorify God as the author of them; and it is the best expedient for our walking with God at other times, as well as when engaged in holy ordinances.

Again, it is observed that they who have been quickened and comforted, when partaking of the Lord's supper, ought to watch against relapses into those sins which formerly they were overtaken with, but now see reason to abhor. This we ought to do, because, though we are sometimes brought into a good frame, we still have deceitful hearts, which, before we are aware, may betray us into the commission of such sins as have occasioned great distress to us in times past; and, we are subject also to the endeavours of Satan to ensnare us by his wiles, so that when we think ourselves in the greatest safety, we may be exposed to the greatest dangers. When we have been least apprehensive of our return to our former sins, and, it may be, have been too secure in our own opinion, while confiding too much to our own strength, we have lost our good frames, and our troubles have been renewed. It is hence our duty to watch against the secret workings of corrupt nature, and the first motions of sin in our hearts; while we earnestly implore help from God that we may be kept from our own iniquities,—namely, those sins which we have formerly committed, or which more easily beset us.

The next duty incumbent on us, after we have received the Lord's supper, is, to fulfil our vows. This will be better understood, if compared with what was formerly observed concerning sacramental vows or covenants. These ought not to include a making of promises,

especially in our own strength, that we will be found in the exercise of those graces which are the special gift and effect of God's almighty power. Hence, I always when mentioning the making of religious vows, consider them principally as containing an express declaration, that we are under an indispensable obligation to perform those duties, and put forth those acts of grace, which are incumbent on us, as those who desire to approve ourselves Christ's faithful servants, and whom he has taken into a covenant relation with himself. We also, in making a vow, declare that, without help from God, we can do nothing. This help we implore from him at the time when we devote or give ourselves up to him. Hence, we devote ourselves to him, hoping and trusting that he will bestow upon us that grace which is out of our own power; and we determine that, if he will be pleased to do this, he shall have all the glory that accrues. This explanation of vowing is most agreeable to the sense of the Latin word whence the word 'vow' is derived; and, I think, it is much rather to be acquiesced in than the general description which some give of it. These exhort persons who are engaged in this ordinance, to confess those sins which they have committed since they were last at the Lord's table, so far as they occur to their memories; and, as a means of their obtaining forgiveness, to make a solemn vow or promise that they will abstain from them for the future, and walk more agreeably to the engagements which they are laid under. Persons who act on this view, make their vow or solemn promise without an humble sense of the treachery of their own hearts, or their need of strength from God to perform any thing that is good; and afterwards they are as little inclined to fulfil their own promises as they were before forward to make them, with too much reliance on their own strength; and they, in consequence, bring themselves into the greatest perplexities, and go on, as it were, in a round of making solemn vows and resolutions, and then breaking them, and afterwards renewing them. On the other hand, to confess that what

others promise in their own strength, we see ourselves obliged to do, and, at the same time, to depend on Christ for strength to enable us to perform it, and give ourselves up to him, as his covenant people, in hope of receiving that strength, is the safest way of vowing; for it redounds most to the honour of God, and includes every thing which may put us upon using our utmost endeavours to perform the duties which are incumbent on us, and, at the same time, expresses our unfeigned desire to glorify God as the God and Author of that grace which is necessary to our performing these duties. In this sense I would understand what we are exhorted to do in the Answers we are explaining, when it is said that, while we are receiving the Lord's supper, we ought to renew our covenant with God, and that after we have received it, we are to fulfil our vows. The former of these duties includes such a dedication to God as has just been considered; the latter, namely, the fulfilling of our vows, implies a doing of every thing which is in our power, in order to our fulfilling them, and, at the same time, a waiting on God to give success to our endeavours, and to work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, without which we can do nothing. [See Note 2 B, page 549.]

After we have waited on the Lord in this ordinance, we are to encourage ourselves to a frequent attendance on it; especially if we have ground to conclude that we have had any sensible communications of his grace vouchsafed to us while observing it. As the imparting of a sense of his comforting presence is an honour which God puts on his own institutions, it is certainly an encouragement to us to persevere in waiting on him in them. Thus the psalmist says, 'Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' Our having experienced God's comforting and quickening presence in our attending on the Lord's supper, will effectually remove all those doubts and scruples which discourage us from engaging in it, fearing

that we shall not behave ourselves in a right manner in it, that we are not sufficiently prepared for it, and that we shall be disowned by Christ when we engage in it. But, suppose we have not enjoyed this comforting and quickening presence of God which the best believers do not, at all times, experience in a like degree; then we ought, after we have received the Lord's supper, to endeavour to find out the particular cause of God's withdrawing it from us, and what is that root of bitterness which springs up and troubles us. It may be he withholds this privilege from us in a way of sovereignty, that we may learn that our comforts are not at our own disposal, or that they are not the necessary result of our attendance on ordinances, but arise from the divine blessing accompanying them. Or it may be, he withholds this blessing from us for the trial of our graces; and that we may see how needful it is for us to wait for those spiritual comforts which, at present, he withholds from us. Thus the prophet says, 'Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.'z As, however, we may, for the most part, apprehend some particular reason, connected with sins of omission or commission before or during our observance of the ordinance, why God denies us his quickening and comforting presence, we must inquire whether there was not some defect as to preparatory duties; in particular, whether we duly examined ourselves before we came to the Lord's table, concerning our knowledge of Christ and the benefits of his redemption, and especially concerning our being enabled to improve them by faith; and whether we examined ourselves concerning the sense we have of the guilt of sin, and the need we stand in of Christ's righteousness to take it away, and accordingly resolved to wait on him in this ordinance with earnest desires of obtaining this privilege. We must also inquire whether our behaviour, when we were engaged in observing the Lord's supper, was not, in some measure,

unbecoming the spirituality and importance of the ordinance; whether we have not spared or indulged some secret corruption, which broke forth while we were engaged in it; whether we have not given way to some temptation, which then beset us; whether we have not depended on our own righteousness, for taking away the guilt of sin, and procuring for us acceptance in the sight of God. We must inquire especially whether we did not engage in the ordinance in our own strength, and by our self-confidence provoke him to withdraw from us. If we did this, we must practise deep humiliation in his sight, repentance and reformation, in order to our being guarded against the inconvenience which we at present labour under; and then we may hope that we shall be enabled to wait on him in this ordinance, in such a way that we may have those comfortable experiences of grace from him, which will be an evidence that we have waited on him for the better and not for the worse.

[NOTE 2 B. Covenanting and Vowing.—Such utterly mistaken views of the Lord's supper, of Christian character, and even of the way of salvation, have, in the experience of multitudes, been suggested or confirmed by exhortations to communicants to renew their covenant with God, and make or fulfil vows to him, that inquiry becomes imperative whether the idea, on the one hand, of observing the Lord's supper, and the idea, on the other, of covenanting and vowing, are legitimately connected. Dr. Ridgeley explains the words of the Catechism, 'renewing their covenant with God,' and the correlative words often used in popular addresses, 'making or fulfilling vows, in a sense to which—apart from association with communicating in the Lord's supper—there cannot be any objection. He, in fact, denudes both phrases of their distinctive meaning; and, without formally omitting them, or even appearing to think them improper, divests them of all the of fensive ideas which they are usually employed to express. Making a vow, according to his explanation, is simply to

declare to ourselves, or to recognise, our duty to be the Lord's, to feel our utter weakness, and to look to the God of all grace for strength and guidance to enable and direct us to walk worthy of our high calling; while, to 'renew our covenant,' is to believe the promises of the well-ordered and everlasting covenant which God has established, and to give ourselves up to him as his covenant people—or as those to whom his covenant has been made known—in hope of receiving from him grace to fight a good fight, and keep the faith, and lay hold of eternal life. But to act in this way is just the distinctive conduct of a believer in Jesus, incumbent on him at every season, especially appropriate in every religious or devotional exercise in which he engages, and daily, or even hourly, requisite in order to his spiritual health and comfort; and why should it either be associated distinctively, much less exclusively, with the observance of the ordinance of the supper, or be designated by a phrase so inexpressive of its nature, and, at the same time, so very liable to misconstruction, as 'making vows' and 'renewing a covenant?'

Vowing, in the strict or literal sense, or as practised under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, is not, I suppose, contended for by any persons as a duty enjoined by the law of Christ. Even a cursory examination of the texts which mention it—especially those which occur in the Sinaitic law, (see inter alia, Lev. 20:18; 23:38; Numb. 29:39; 15:3.)—will hardly fail to convince any man that, under the Mosaic dispensation, it was connected with the ceremonies and duties of the typical system, and that, in its own nature and objects, it belonged to a state of things precurrent and introductory to the completed revelation and the spiritual worship of the Christian dispensation. What is now contended for, under the designation of 'making vows,' is not any act which may, like the vowing mentioned in scripture, be connected with typical sacrifices and offerings, but something which is made to comport with the elementary and

pervading duty of believing on Christ, as having once for all made an atonement by which we are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. But is it right, is it useful, is it safe, to retain the phrase when what is designated differs widely from the vowing practised under the introductory dispensations? If making and performing vows of old occupied, as to its nature, essentially the same ground as presenting a trespass offering, or paying tithes, or performing ablution, or any other act connected with a prefigurative and temporary economy; is there not danger, when men are exhorted now to make and perform vows in a literal sense, that they may suppose the resources of their duty, and consequently the resources of their entire well-being, to be in as close a sense their own, or at least as easily available, as the Israelite did his flocks, the fruits of his field, or the water of the running stream? Are not ideas of self-reliance, indeed, actually engendered and nursed by appeals to professing Christians to make and perform vows,—vows of their own, framed by themselves, and extraneous to the direct obligations of the law of Christ? The truth, I suspect is, that the Romish doctrine, or the doctrine of the scholastic theology, respecting the connexion of vowing with the false and rejected sacraments of matrimony, penance, and holy orders, and with the supererogatory works of celibacy, viduity, poverty, and seclusion from active life, was inadvertently retained, though in a modified form, by the Reformers from popery, and still exerts a strong but undetected influence on the minds of evangelical men attached to the spirit of modern antiquity, in connexion with the retained "sacraments," the admitted ordinances of Christ, the institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper. But, if my conjecture be erroneous, at least, let the advocates of Christian vowing point to the text of the New Testament in which the practice, as they explain it, is sanctioned, either in a general way, or especially as part of the reception of baptism, or of the showing of the death of Christ.

As to covenanting,—the primary idea, in scripture, of making a covenant, appears to be God's making promises to man ratified by sacrifice; the secondary idea, man's making promises to man, whether ratified by sacrifice or not; and the collateral or figurative idea, any act or institution or document in which a covenant is exhibited, or with which it is connected. But a fourth idea of a covenant, or that which represents it as a thing made by man with God, seems to be entirely extra-scriptural. Take the word covenant in any one scriptural sense which it will bear, or display it in the light of any one text of the divine word in which it occurs, it cannot, so far as I am aware, be made to designate any state of things whatever between man and God, which originates with man. Such a sense of the word is of comparatively very recent date, and must surely soon give way to a wise and reverential use of scripture terms—particularly of highly expressive ones—in senses which scripture warrants.

Even, moreover, if language about making vows and renewing a covenant, in observing the Lord's supper, could be vindicated, what is gained, what wise or really useful end is accomplished, plished, by using it? The divinely simple, divinely sublime commands, 'This do in remembrance of me,' 'Show ye the Lord's death till he come,' express, with incomparably more clearness, the distinctive duties included in communicating in that ordinance, than the most elaborate and complex appeals into which the profoundest distinctions of scholastic divinity and morality could be woven. To remember the Saviour and to show his death—to meditate on his love, exercise reliance on the merits of his sacrifice, and expatiate, in faith, and hope, and adoring wonder, on the glorious results of his mediatorial work—are clearly the grand duties involved in partaking the emblems of his broken body and shed blood.—ED.]

THE CORRESPONDENCE AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

QUESTION CLXXVI. Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree?

ANSWER. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree, in that the author of both is God, the spiritual part of both is Christ and his benefits; both are seals of the same covenant, are to be dispensed by ministers of the gospel, and by none other, and to be continued in the church of Christ until his second coming.

QUESTION CLXXVII. Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ?

ANSWER. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once with water; to be a sign and seal of our regeneration, and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants, whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

THESE two Answers contain little more than a recapitulation of some things which have been occasionally mentioned, in explaining the nature of these ordinances; and therefore we shall very briefly insist on them.

Correspondence between Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We shall first consider those things in which the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree.

1. It is observed that God is the Author of both. That he is so may be inferred from what has been said concerning their being holy ordinances, or means of grace; in which we are to expect his presence and blessing, to make them effectual to salvation. Now we cannot expect this without engaging in them by his own warrant; and this he has been pleased to give us, as appears from his word, and the experience of many believers. Not a few of his people have found sensible advantage from observing these ordinances; so that the effects of his power and grace which have been produced in their hearts when engaged in them, afford a convincing evidence that God is their Author. This, as concerns baptism, respects more especially the baptism of those who are adult; for when infants are baptized, though God can and sometimes does, as is more than probable, own this ordinance by regenerating them at the time of their receiving it, yet his doing so cannot be known by us, unless it be inferred from the extraordinary communications of grace which those may experience who are enabled by faith to give up their children to God in that ordinance.

2. Baptism and the Lord's supper farther agree, in Christ and his benefits being signified by both of them. For both are ordinances for our faith, as they are signs and seals of the covenant of grace, in which Christ and the benefits of his redemption are set forth. Thus the apostle says, with respect to baptism, 'So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death, buried with him by baptism into death.' Accordingly, we have communion with Christ as crucified, dying, and buried, and as afterwards rising from

the dead, and so bringing the work of redemption to perfection. These things are signified in baptism; and thus our faith is to make use of the sign. And the apostle says the same thing with respect to the Lord's supper: 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.'

3. Baptism and the Lord's supper are farther observed to agree, in their being to be dispensed by none but the ministers of the gospel. Under the Old Testament-dispensation, all the parts of the temple-service being significant signs of Christ and the benefits of the covenant of grace, were to be administered by none but those who were qualified, called, and lawfully set apart to the work; as the apostle says, 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.' And we may conclude that the moral reason of the thing extends itself to, the administration of the seals of the covenant, under the gospel-dispensation. It is certain that some must be appointed or set apart to the work of dispensing the ordinance, otherwise it would belong to every body, and there would be no determinate administrators of these ordinances, who might be said to have a special call to this work from God and man. The point may be inferred also from those scriptures which speak of 'pastors after God's own heart,' who are to 'feed' his people 'with knowledge and understanding,' as being his special 'gift;'d and from what the apostle says concerning gospel-ministers, whether extraordinary or ordinary, that they were Christ's 'gift' when he 'ascended up on high.'

4. It is farther observed, that these two ordinances agree, in their being both to be continued in the church until Christ's second coming. Though we look and hope for more of the presence of God in them, and a greater effusion of his Spirit to make them more effectual, and render the church more bright and glorious, as being favoured with greater degrees of the communications of divine grace;

yet we have no ground to expect new ordinances, or a new dispensation to succeed this which we are under, till Christ's second and most glorious coming. Hence, the present dispensation is called, 'the last time.' Hence also the apostle says that 'the ends of the world are come upon us;'g by which we are to understand, that the dispensation of the gospel which we are under, is the last we are to expect till Christ's second coming. That the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper are to continue till Christ's second coming, appears also from the promise which Christ has given of his presence with his ministers and churches, when faithfully engaging in them. He says, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' The fact, too, that his 'death' is to be 'showed forth till he come,'i proves that the Lord's supper is to be continued in the church till then. This I the rather observe that it is contrary to what some maintain, who, while they hope for a greater effusion of the Spirit, and a more glorious state of the church in the latter day, are ready to extend their thoughts too far, and conclude that the dispensation which they hope for will be new, and that the ordinances which the church is at present favoured with shall cease, particularly baptism and the Lord's supper. This opinion we can by no means approve.

The Difference between Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We are now to consider wherein the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ.

1. It is observed that they differ in this, that baptism is to be administered but once, while the Lord's supper is to be administered often. This appears from two different circumstances contained in them. As for baptism, it signifies, our first ingrafting into or putting on Christ; and when denominated from the thing signified by it, it is called 'the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy

Ghost,' which is hoped for in this ordinance. Accordingly, it is considered as our first solemn dedication to Christ; and, as this is signified by it. it is called an initiating ordinance, in which we are bound, to be the Load's. Now, the bond which then obliges us to be his holds good as long as we live, and therefore needs not to be signified, sealed, or confirmed by our being baptized a second time. But, on the other hand, the Lord's supper signifies our feeding or living upon Christ, and receiving daily supplies of grace from him, as our necessities require. Hence, this ordinance differs from baptism as it is often to be engaged in.

2. They differ in this, that the former, as was formerly proved, is to be applied, not only to the adult, if they have not been baptized before, but to the infants of believing parents, while the Lord's supper is not. In baptism, the person dedicated may be considered as passive, and as devoted to God by the faith of another, who has a right so to devote him. But none are to partake of the Lord's supper but those who have such a degree of knowledge that they are able to discern the Lord's body, and capable of performing that duty which the apostle recommends as necessary to the performing of it, when he says, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.'

I am sensible that some of the ancient church, and particularly Cyprian, in the third century, pleaded for and practised the administration of the Lord's supper to infants, having been led into this mistake by supposing what does not sufficiently appear, namely, that infants among the Jews eat the passover, because whole families are said to have eaten it. But the passover does not appear to have been given to infants; for whom another sort of food was designed. Nor could they have reaped any advantage by it, not being capable of discerning the thing signified, or feeding on Christ, the true paschal

Lamb; which could be done no otherwise than by faith. Others were led into the mistake of administering the Lord's supper to infants, from the wrong sense they gave of the scripture in which Christ says, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' They thought that our Saviour meant here the bread and wine in the Lord's supper; that therefore this ordinance was absolutely necessary to salvation; and that it ought, in consequence, to be extended to infants, as a means of their obtaining it. But it is certain this cannot be the meaning of our Lord's words; since the Lord's supper was not instituted, or known in the church, when our Saviour spake them. He intends nothing else by them but the fiducial application of his death, as an expedient for our obtaining eternal life.

THE KINDS AND PARTS OF PRAYER

QUESTION CLXXVIII. What is Prayer?

ANSWER. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

HAVING considered the things which are to be believed and done, what remains is, to inquire concerning those things which are to be prayed for, and how the great duty of prayer is to be performed. It is necessary that we should insist on this subject. For, while we are obliged to yield obedience to the revealed will of God, we can, by reason of our depravity and weakness, do nothing which is good without his assistance. Now, that assistance is not to be expected, unless it be humbly desired of him; and the desiring of it is what we generally call prayer. As this duty is performed by creatures who are not only indigent but unworthy, we are to acknowledge that we are

so; and accordingly we are, in prayer, to confess sin as the principal ground and reason of our unworthiness. And inasmuch as God has been pleased to encourage us to hope that we shall not seek his face in vain, and, in many instances, is pleased to grant returns of prayer; we are under obligation to draw nigh to him with thanksgiving. These things are particularly contained in the Answer we are explaining. The method in which we shall endeavour to discuss them is to consider, first, what prayer supposes; secondly, what are the various kinds of prayer; and thirdly, what are its various parts.

What Prayer Supposes

1. Prayer supposes that we are dependent and indigent creatures, have many wants to be supplied, sins to be forgiven, miseries under which we need pity and relief, and weaknesses under which we want to be strengthened and assisted in order to the performance of the duties which are incumbent on us. It may hence be inferred that, though our Lord Jesus Christ is often represented as praying to God, prayer was an action performed by him in his human nature; in which alone he could be said to be indigent, who, in his divine nature, is all-sufficient.

2. Prayer supposes that God, who is the object of it, is regarded by us not only as able, but as willing to help; and that he has encouraged us to draw nigh to him for relief. Hence, it is a duty which more especially belongs to those who are favoured with the hope of the gospel.

The Various Kinds of Prayer

We shall now show how prayer is to be considered as to its various kinds. We are represented as drawing nigh to God, with an humble sense of our secret sins and wants, which none but God and our own

consciences are privy to. This kind of prayer our Saviour intends when he says, 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' We have an instance of it in himself; for it is said, 'When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.'o Peter also 'went upon the housetop to pray;' where, being retired from the world, he had a greater liberty to pour forth his soul unto God.

Moreover, we are to join with others in performing this duty; and then we confess those sins and implore a supply of those wants which are common to all who are engaged. This our Saviour encourages us to do when he says, 'If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' This is a branch of social worship, and is to be performed by every family apart. Of this we have an example in Cornelius, concerning whom it is said, that he was 'a devout man, and feared God with all his house, and prayed to him always;' and that he did this at certain times, 'in his house.'r Moreover, this duty is to be performed publicly in the church, or any worshipping assembly met together for that purpose. Of this we have an instance in the apostle Paul, who, when he had called for the elders of the church at Ephesus, designing to take his leave of them, after an affectionate discourse, and suitable advice given to them, 'kneeled down and prayed with them all.'

Again, prayer may be considered as that for which a stated time is set apart by us, either alone, or with others; or, that which is occasional, short, and ejaculatory, consisting in a secret lifting up of our hearts to God, and which may be performed when we are engaged in other business of a different nature, without being a let or hinderance to it.

Thus it is said, that Nehemiah prayed when he was going to 'deliver the cup into the king's hand,' between the king's asking him a question, and his returning him an answer to it. This seems to be the meaning of what is said in Nehem. 2:4, 5, 'Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king,' &c. Ejaculatory prayers are such as we put up to God, either while engaged in worldly business, for direction, assistance, or success in it, or when attending on the word read or preached, or any other holy duties, for his presence in them.

The Various Parts of Prayer

The next thing to be considered, is, the various parts of prayer. These are three,—confession of sin, petition for a supply of our wants, and thanksgiving for mercies received. Confession of sin supposes that we are guilty, and deserve punishment from God; petition supposes that we are miserable and helpless; and thanksgiving implies a disposition to own God as the author of all the good we enjoy or hope for, and includes a due sense of those undeserved favours we have received from him.

From this general account of the parts of prayer, we may infer that the two former, namely, confession of sin, and petition for relief, under the various miseries and distresses to which we are liable, are applicable to those only who are in a sinful and imperfect state, as believers are in this world. As for glorified saints in heaven, they have no sins to be confessed, nor any miseries under which they need help and pity. That part of prayer, indeed, which consists of thanksgiving for mercies already received, is agreeable to a perfect state, and is represented as the constant work of glorified saints. Thus the psalmist says, 'The heavens,' that is, the inhabitants of them, 'shall praise thy wonders, O Lord, thy faithfulness also in the congregation

of the saints.' Again, sinners who have lost their day of grace, against whom the door of hope and mercy is shut, who are enduring the punishment of sin in hell, are not properly the subjects of prayer. Concerning them it may be said, not only that they cannot pray, being destitute of those graces which are necessary to the performance of it, but that they have no interest in a Mediator, or in the promises of the covenant of grace, which are a warrant and encouragement for performing it. Further, in this world, where we enjoy the means of grace, none are the subjects of prayer but man. The Psalmist, indeed, speaks of God's 'giving to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry;'u and elsewhere it is said, 'He provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry unto God.' But the meaning of these texts is, not that brute creatures formally address themselves to God for a supply of their wants, having no idea of a Divine Being; but that, when they complain for want of food, the providence of God supplies them, though they know not the hand whence it comes. Moreover, though it is the duty of all men in the world to pray; yet none can pray by faith, and, consequently, in an acceptable manner, but believers; concerning whom the apostle says, 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'y

As for the first part of prayer, namely, petition, or supplication, it will be particularly considered under several following Answers, especially those that contain an explanation of the Lord's prayer; which is a directory for what we are to ask of God. Hence, we shall, at present, consider only the other two parts of prayer, namely, confession of sin, and thanksgiving for mercies.

I. We shall speak first concerning confession of sin.

1. This duty is indispensably incumbent on all men. It is incumbent, not only on those who are in a state of unregeneracy, and consequently under the dominion of sin, but on believers themselves, who are in a justified state. This will appear, if we consider that not to confess sin, is, in effect, to justify ourselves in the commission of it, and as it were, to deny that which is well-known to the heart-searching God, as well as to our own consciences. It includes also a charging God with injustice, when he inflicts on us the punishment which is due to sin; and so opposes what is said by Ezra, 'Thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.' Moreover, none was ever truly humbled in the sight of God, or obtained mercy and forgiveness of sin, but he was first brought to confess it with suitable affection, and brokenness of heart; which are ingredients in true repentance. Thus it is said, 'He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.'a It is also said, 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' This duty of confessing sin is so evident, that, one would think, no one who duly considers what he is, or how contrary his actions are to the revealed will of God, should have the front to deny its obligation. Yet it is well-known that many seem designedly to wave all confession of sin in prayer; and that others argue against it, more especially, as to the case of believers.

It is objected that believers ought not to confess sin, because to do so is inconsistent with a justified state; it is in effect, to plead guilty, though God has taken away the guilt of sin, by forgiving it for the sake of the atonement which Christ has made; it is a laying open of the wound which God hath healed and closed up, or a bringing to remembrance that which he hath said, 'he will remember no more;' and it is contrary to the grace of God, who hath said, none shall 'lay

any thing to the charge' of his 'elect,' since 'it is God that justifieth.'d We reply, that we must distinguish between a believer's desert of punishment or condemnation, and his being actually punished by God, as a sin-revenging Judge, according as his iniquities deserve. That a believer shall not eventually fall under condemnation, is true; because his sins are forgiven, and 'there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' Still, though he is in a justified state, and, in consequence, shall be undoubtedly saved; yet, according to the tenor of his own actions, he, being a sinner, contracts guilt in the sight of God. And a desert of punishment is inseparably connected with every sin; though a person who commits it may be in a justified state. It is one thing to be liable to condemnation, and another thing to deserve to be condemned. The former is, indeed, inconsistent with a justified State; but the latter is not. And it is in this sense that we are to understand the psalmist's words, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?'f Accordingly, the best believer on earth, though he have a full assurance of his being forgiven by God, yet inasmuch as he is a sinner, is obliged to confess that he deserves to be cast off by him, and that, if God should deal with him according to what he finds in him, without looking upon him as he is in Christ, his head and surety, he would be undone and lost for ever. Again, believers are daily sinning, and therefore contracting fresh guilt; as it is said, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' Indeed, their sin is often so great, that they grieve the Holy Spirit, wound their own consciences, and act very disagreeably to their character as believers. Their sins, therefore, ought to be confessed with shame and self-abhorrence; as the prophet says, 'That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame; when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.'h Moreover, it is certain that believers, when they have had a discovery that their sin was pardoned, have at the same time

confessed it with great humility. Thus, immediately after Nathan had reproved David for his sin, and told him, upon his repentance, that 'the Lord had put it away,' he made a penitent confession of it before God, and said, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.'k

2. We shall now consider with what frame of spirit sin is to be confessed. First, we are to confess sin with a due sense of its infinite evil, as it reflects dishonour on the divine perfections, and particularly as it is opposite to the holiness and purity of God, and a contempt cast on his law, which expressly forbids it, and a disregarding of the threatenings denounced by that law against those who violate it, and renders us liable to his wrath, as a sin-revenging Judge, pursuant to its intrinsic demerit. It is therefore justly styled 'an evil thing and bitter;'—it is the only thing which can be called a moral evil; and it is certainly bitter in its consequences.—Again, we are to confess sin with humility, shame, confusion of face, and self-abhorrence; and that more especially, by reason of the vile ingratitude there is in it, as committed by those who are under the greatest engagements to the contrary duties.—Further, sin is to be confessed with hope of obtaining forgiveness through the blood of Christ, as laying hold on the promises of mercy which are made to those who confess and forsake it;' and with an earnest desire to be delivered from its prevailing power, by strength derived from Christ.

3. We shall now consider what sins we are to confess before God. These are, either the sin of our nature, or those actual transgressions which proceed from it.

We are to confess the sin of our nature. As fallen creatures, we are destitute of the image of God; and, having contracted corrupt habits, by repeated acts of rebellion against him, all the powers and faculties

of our souls are vitiated; and we are not only indisposed and disinclined to what is good, but naturally bent to backslide from God, and to commit the greatest abominations, if destitute of his preventing, restraining, or renewing grace. Thus the apostle says, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' Sin is to be considered as what has universally defiled and depraved our nature; and therefore we ought to cry out with the leper, 'Unclean, unclean;'n or, in the words of the prophet, 'From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.' We are to consider it as insinuating itself into our best duties; as like the fly which corrupts the precious ointment; and as of such a nature that, when we have been enabled to gain some advantage against it, it will afterwards recover strength, notwithstanding all our endeavours to the contrary. It is like an incurable disease in the body, which, though we endeavour to keep it under for a while, yet will prevail again, till the frame of nature is demolished, and thereby all diseases cured at once. When, however, we confess and are humbled for this propensity which is in our nature to sin, we are to pray and hope that the prevailing power of it may be so far weakened that, by the principle of grace, implanted in regeneration, and excited by the Spirit in promoting the work of sanctification, though it dwells in us, it may not entirely have dominion over us, or we be denominated the servants of sin.

We are to confess also the many actual sins which we daily commit, with all their respective aggravations; sins of omission and commission, both of which are mentioned in the apostle's confession, 'The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.' Our sinful neglects of duty are numberless. We are to confess our not having redeemed our time, but spent it in those trifles and vain amusements which profit not; particularly if we have misimproved the very flower and best part of our time and

strength, and not remembered our Creator in the days of our youth. This Job reckons the principal ground and reason of the evils which befell him in his advanced age, when he says, 'Thou writest bitter things against me; and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'q We are humbly to confess also our not having improved, and, in consequence, lost many opportunities for extraordinary service, either to do or to get good. Thus the prophet says, 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.' We are also to confess our neglecting to comply with the calls and invitations of the gospel. On account of this neglect, we are said to 'receive the grace of God in vain;'s or 'not to know the time of our visitation.' On account of it likewise, when God has 'called, we have refused;' when he has 'stretched out his hand, no man regarded, but we have set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof.'u We are also to confess our neglect of public and secret duties, or our worshipping God in a careless indifferent manner. Thus the prophet represents the people as saying, 'Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye have brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; should I accept this at your hands?' We are also to confess our neglect of relative duties, in not instructing those under our care, nor reproving them for sin committed, nor sympathizing with the afflicted, nor warning those who are going out of God's way. By these means a multitude of sins might have been prevented; and, through our neglecting to use them, many persons have been ruined.

Sins of commission, which are also to be confessed, are such as were committed either before or after our conversion to God. The former involve a disowning of his authority, or of his right to obedience; the latter, an ungrateful disregard to or forgetfulness of the greatest

benefits received from him. We are also to confess those sins which are contrary to the moral law, or the very light of nature; which we are often guilty of. And, that we may be furnished with matter and give scope to our thoughts and affections in confessing them, it may be of use for us to consider the sins forbidden under each of the ten commandments, which have been before particularly insisted on. We ought also to confess the various aggravations of sin. To assist us in doing this, those things which are stated in a former Answer, respecting the aggravations of sin, may be of some use to us; especially if we make a particular application of them to our own case, and observe how far we have reason to fall under a sense of guilt, or charge ourselves with such crimes as those which are there mentioned. Moreover, we are to confess the sins we have committed against the engagements or grace of the gospel; the low thoughts we have sometimes had of the person of Christ, his love to us, or the benefits we have been made partakers of from him, while we have been ready to say, as the daughters of Jerusalem are represented as doing, 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved?'z how much we have hardened our hearts against him, refusing to submit to his yoke or bear his cross; how often we have been ashamed of his cause and interest, especially when called to suffer reproach for it. Have we not sometimes questioned the truth of his promises, refused to submit to his righteousness, and to depend upon it alone for justification; while we have had too high thoughts of ourselves, glorying and valuing ourselves upon the performance of some moral duties which we have put in the room of Christ? We ought likewise to confess how much we have opposed him in all his offices. We have not depended on him as a prophet, to lead us in the way of truth and peace, but have leaned to our own understanding, and therefore have been left to pervert, disbelieve, or, at least, entertain some doubts about, the great doctrines of the gospel; or, if our minds have been rightly informed as to these doctrines, we have not made a practical

improvement of them for our spiritual advantage. Have we not opposed him as a priest, neglecting to set a due value on the atonement he has made for sin, and not improving his intercession for us, who is entered into the holy place made without hands, to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace? Have we not also refused to submit to him as King of saints, or to seek protection from him against the assaults of our spiritual enemies? These things are to be confessed by us in prayer; and we are to confess them with such a sense of our own guilt, that we acknowledge ourselves to be, as the apostle says concerning himself, 'the chief of sinners.'

I am sensible many will be ready to conclude, that much of what has been said concerning sins to be confessed is applicable to none but those who are in a state of unregeneracy; that among these, few can say that they are the chief of sinners, unless they have been notoriously vile and scandalous in the eye of the world; and that the apostle Paul, when he says this respecting himself, has a peculiar reference to what he was before his conversion. We reply, that it is impossible we should know so much of the sins of others, together with their respective aggravations, as we may of those which have been committed by ourselves. And if we have not been left to commit those gross and scandalous sins which we have beheld in others with abhorrence, our not having committed them is owing, not to ourselves, but to the grace of God, by which we are what we are. For, had we been destitute of that grace, we should have been as bad as the worst of men; and if our hearts have been renewed and changed by it, so that we are kept from committing those sins which are inconsistent with a state of grace; yet there are very heinous aggravations attending such as we have reason to charge ourselves with; whereby we have acted contrary to the experience we have had of the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, and have been guilty of very great ingratitude against him who has laid us under the highest

obligations. Thus concerning confession of sin, when drawing nigh to God in the duty of prayer.

II. We are now to consider another part of prayer, namely, that we are therein thankfully to acknowledge the mercies of God. Thus the psalmist says, 'Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name.' And elsewhere, 'I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord;'c that is, I will join prayer and praise together. Nothing is more obvious than that favours received ought to be acknowledged; otherwise we are guilty of that ingratitude which is one of the vilest crimes. Not to acknowledge what we receive from God, is, in effect, to deny our obligation to him; and to do this will provoke him to withhold from us those other mercies which we stand in need of.

This duty ought to be performed at all times, and on all occasions. Thus the apostle says, 'In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' That thanksgiving is due in all circumstances, is evident from the fact that there is no condition of life but what has in it some mixture of mercy. The mercies we receive from God, are either outward or spiritual, common or special. The former he gives to all without distinction; as it is said, 'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;'e and, 'He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil,' and 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'g The latter sort of mercies he bestows on the heirs of salvation, in a covenant way, as the purchase of the blood of Christ, and a pledge of farther blessings which he has reserved in store for them. There are mercies which we have in hand or in possession, and others which we have in hope or in reversion. Thus the apostle speaks of the 'hope' which is 'laid up for' the saints

'in heaven,' which he thanks God for in his prayer for the church. Again, the mercies of God may be considered as either personal or relative. The former we are more immediately the subjects of; the latter affect us so far as we stand related to others, for whose welfare we are greatly concerned, and whose happiness makes a very considerable addition to our own.

1. We are to express our thankfulness to God for personal mercies. Accordingly, we are to bless him for the advantages of nature, which are the effects of divine goodness. Thus the psalmist says, 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Though the human nature falls very short of what it was at first, when the image of God was perfectly stamped on all the powers and faculties of the soul; and though it is not what it shall be when brought to a state of perfection in heaven; yet there are many natural endowments which we have received from God, as a means for our glorifying him, and answering the end of our being in the whole conduct of our lives.

We have, in every age of life, received the blessings of providence. We have great reason to be thankful, if, in our childhood and youth we had the invaluable blessing of a religious education, and were kept or delivered from the pernicious influence of bad examples, whence that age of life often receives such a tincture as tends to vitiate the soul, and to open the way for all manner of sin, which will afterwards insinuate itself into all its powers and faculties, and prevail, like an infectious distemper, over them. What reason have we to bless God if we have been favoured with restraining or preventing grace, whereby we have been kept from youthful lusts which are destructive to multitudes, and lay a foundation for their future ruin; and especially if it has pleased God to bring us under early convictions of sin, so that we have experienced in our youth the hopeful beginnings of a work of grace, which is an effect of more than

common providence! We ought to take notice, with great thankfulness, of the methods of divine grace, if we have been early led into the knowledge of the first principles of the oracles of God; especially if they have made such an impression on our hearts that we can say, with good Obadiah, 'I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.' Again, we are to express our thankfulness for the mercies which we have received in our advanced age, when arrived at a state of manhood. Accordingly, we are to bless God for directing and ordering our settlement in the world, in those things more especially which relate to our secular callings and employments; and for the advantages of suitable society in those families in which our lot has been cast, as well as the many instances of divine goodness in our own. We ought also to bless him for giving success to our industry and endeavours used to promote our comfort and happiness in the world, together with that degree of usefulness which it has pleased God to favour us with in these. We ought also to bless him for carrying us through many difficulties which lay in our way; some of which we have been almost ready to think insurmountable. We ought likewise to bless him for bringing us under the means of grace; particularly if we were not favoured with a religious education in our childhood; and more especially, if these means have been made effectual to answer the highest and most valuable ends. Again, there are other mercies which some have reason to bless God for who have arrived at old age; which is the last stage of life, wherein the frame of nature is declining and hastening apace to a dissolution. These, I say, have reason to be thankful, if they have not, as it were, outlived themselves, wholly lost their memory and judgment, by which means they would have been brought back, as it were, to the state of childhood, as some have been. They have reason for thankfulness also, if old age be not pressed down beyond measure with pain and bodily diseases, or with a multitude of cares and troubles about outward circumstances in the world. For such troubles would tend to

imbitter the small remains of life, which has not much strength of nature to bear up under great trials, and does not admit of those methods being made use of, whereby others, without much difficulty, are able to extricate themselves out of them. But they, of all others, have most reason to bless God, who can look back on a long series of usefulness, in proportion to the number of years they have lived; so that that promise is fulfilled to them, 'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.' This is more than a common mercy, and therefore requires a greater degree of thankfulness. For then it may be said of them, 'The hoary head is a crown of glory,' being 'found in the way of righteousness;'m and grace keeps equal pace with age, and they have nothing to do but to wait for a release from a careful, vain, uneasy life to heaven. Thus concerning the occasions we have for thankfulness in every age of life.

We are now to consider the reason that we have to be thankful in the various circumstances or conditions of life. In particular, we are to be thankful when we have a great measure of outward prosperity. This is more than many enjoy, and calls for a proportionable degree of thankfulness; especially if it be sanctified and sweetened with a sense of God's special love, so that it is a pledge and earnest of better things reserved for us hereafter,—when we have the good things of this life for our conveniency, that our passage through the world may be more easy and comfortable to us, and yet we have ground to hope that these are not our portion, or that we are not like those whom the psalmist speaks of, and calls 'the men of the world,' 'who have their portion in this life,' or, like the rich man in the parable, to whom it was said, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.'o We have reason to bless God when outward prosperity is a means of our glorifying him, and being more serviceable to promote his interest, and not a snare or occasion of sin; when it is

not like 'the prosperity of fools,' which has a tendency to 'destroy them;' when what is said concerning that murmuring generation of men, whom the psalmist speaks of, who 'lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert,' so that though 'he gave them their request, he sent leanness into their soul,' is not applicable to us;q when we enjoy the outward blessings of providence, and, at the same time, live above them, so that our hearts are not too much set upon them, but we are willing to part with them, when God is about to deprive us of them or take us from them; and when outward enjoyments are helps, and not hinderances, to us in our way to heaven These are inducements to the greatest thankfulness, and ought to be acknowledged to the glory of God. Again, we have reason to be thankful, though it pleases God to follow us with many afflictions and adverse providences in the world. These are not, indeed, to be reckoned blessings in themselves. Yet they are not inconsistent with a thankful frame of spirit; especially when we take occasion from them to be affected with the vanity, emptiness, and uncertainty of all outward comforts, which perish in the using; or when they have a tendency to humble us and make us submissive to the divine will, so that we are led to have a deep sense of sin, the procuring cause of them. Thus Ephraim speaks of his being 'chastised' by God, and, at the same time, 'ashamed' and 'confounded,' as 'bearing the reproach' of former sins committed by him. We have also reason to be thankful under afflictions when those sins which formerly prevailed, are hereby prevented, and we are enabled to mortify them. Thus the psalmist says, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.'s We should likewise be thankful for afflictions when God is pleased to cause his grace to abound as outward troubles abound; and when the want of outward mercies makes us to see the worth of them, and puts us upon improving every instance of the divine goodness as a great inducement to thankfulness. Moreover, we have reason to be

thankful under afflictions, when we have a comfortable hope that they are evidences of our being God's children, interested in his special love;u so that we have ground to conclude that he is hereby training us up and making us more meet for the heavenly inheritance, and we can say with the apostle, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

2. We are to express our thankfulness for those mercies which we call relative, or for the blessings which others enjoy in whose welfare we are more immediately concerned. As it is the duty of every one to desire the good of all men; so we ought to bless God for the mercies bestowed on others as well as on ourselves. The relation we stand in to others, is, in one respect, general or extensive, and includes all mankind. Accordingly, we are to be thankful for the mercies which our fellow-creatures receive from the hand of God, inasmuch as, by the bestowal of them, the divine perfections are magnified. The ends of Christ's death, and the dispensation of the gospel, are attained in the case of those who receive the blessings which accompany salvation; and whatever mercies God bestows on others, we bless him for them, taking encouragement to hope that he will bestow the same blessings upon us, when we stand in need of them. As for those who are related to us in the bonds of nature, or as members of the family to which we belong, for whose welfare we are more immediately concerned, we may, in some measure, reckon the mercies they enjoy our own. We hence should be induced to bless God and be thankful for them, as well as for those which we receive in our own persons. There is also another relation, which is more large and extensive, namely, that which we stand in to all the members of Christ's mystical body, whom the apostle calls 'the household of faith,' and whom, as such, he supposes to be entitled to our more special regard. Accordingly, we are to express our

thankfulness to God, in prayer, for all the mercies they receive, especially those which are of a spiritual nature. For in the bestowal of these, Christ is glorified, and his interest advanced; which ought to be dearer to us than any thing which relates to our own private or personal interest, as the psalmist speaks of his preferring Jerusalem's welfare above his 'chief joy.'z We are likewise to be thankful for the bestowal of spiritual blessings on believers, because we hope that we shall be made partakers of the same blessings, whereby others will have occasion to bless God on our behalf. Thus concerning the inducements we have to thankfulness for blessings received, either by ourselves or others.

I shall conclude this Head by considering that thankfulness, which ought to be a great ingredient in prayer, is always to be accompanied with the exercise of those graces whereby we are disposed to adore and magnify the divine perfections which are displayed in the distribution of those favours which we bless God for; together with an humble sense of our own unworthiness of the least of those mercies which we enjoy, and an earnest desire that we may be enabled, not only to make a confession of our unworthiness in words, but to express our thankfulness to him by such a frame of spirit as is agreeable to our feeling ourselves unworthy.

There are two things more, contained in the Answer we have been explaining, without the due consideration of which, the duty of prayer would be very imperfectly handled, namely, its being an offering up of our desires to God, in the name of Christ, and by the help of the Spirit. But as these subjects are particularly insisted on in some following Answers, I purposely waive the consideration of them at present.

TO WHOM AND IN WHOSE NAME PRAYER IS MADE

QUESTION CLXXIX. Are we to pray unto God only?

ANSWER. God only being able to search the hearts, hear the requests, pardon the sins, and fulfil the desires of all, and only to be believed in, and worshipped with religious worship; prayer, which is a special part thereof, is to be made by all to him alone, and to none other.

QUESTION CLXXX. What is it to pray in the name of Christ?

ANSWER. To pray in the name of Christ is, in obedience to his command, and in confidence on his promises, to ask mercy for his sake, not by bare mentioning of his name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and his mediation.

QUESTION CLXXXI. Why are we to pray in the name of Christ?

ANSWER. The sinfulness of man, and his distance from God by reason thereof, being so great as that we can have no access into his presence without a Mediator; and there being none in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for that glorious work, but Christ alone; we are to pray in no other name but his only.

IN these Answers we have a farther explanation of what is briefly laid down in the last; more especially, as to the object of prayer, and the method prescribed in the gospel, relating to our drawing nigh to God, through a Mediator, which is called praying in the name of Christ; together with the reason of this.

Prayer is to be made to God only

It is observed that prayer is to be made to God only, and to none other. This appears from various considerations.

1. Prayer is to be made to God only, because it is an act of religious worship, which is due to none but God. Thus our Saviour says, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' That God only is to be worshipped can be denied by none who are, in any measure, acquainted with either natural or revealed religion. For in worship, we are obliged to extol, adore, and admire those divine perfections which are displayed in the works of nature or grace, and to seek from God that help and those supplies of grace which we stand in need of to make us completely blessed; which supposes him to be infinitely perfect, and all-sufficient. Now, to ascribe this divine glory to a creature, either directly, or by consequence, is, in effect, to say that he is equal with God, and to rob God of that glory which is due to him alone; and to seek that from the creature which none but God can give, or to ascribe any of the perfections of the divine nature to it, is the highest affront that can be offered to the divine Majesty. Now, as prayer without adoration and invocation, is destitute of those ingredients which render it an act of religious worship; so to address ourselves in prayer to any one but God, is an instance of such profaneness and idolatry as is not to be mentioned without the greatest detestation.

2. Prayer is to be made to God only, because he only is able to search the heart; which is a glory peculiar to himself, in which he is distinguished from all creatures. It is the heart which is principally to be regarded in prayer. If this be not right with God, no glory which we can ascribe to him will be reckoned any better than 'flattering him with our mouth,' and 'lying to him with our tongues.'c Hence, the

inward frame of our spirit, and the principle or spring whence all religious duties proceed, being known only to God, prayer is to be directed only to him.

3. He alone can hear our requests, pardon our sins, and fulfil our desires. Prayer, when addressed to God, is not like that in which we desire favours from men. These favours are of a lower nature, whereby some particular wants are supplied, in those respects in which one creature may be of advantage to another. But when we pray to God, we seek blessings which are the effects of infinite power and goodness, such as may make us completely happy, both in this and in a better world. Moreover, we are to implore forgiveness of sin from God in prayer. Now, this is a blessing which none can bestow but God. For as his law is the rule by which the goodness or badness of actions is determined; and as the threatening which he has annexed to it, is that which renders us liable to the punishment which sin deserves; so it is he alone who can remit the debt of punishment to which we were liable, and give us a right and title to forfeited blessings. Hence, as this forgiveness is the principal thing which we are to seek for in prayer, none but God is the object of prayer.

4. God alone is to be believed in. Accordingly, prayer, if it be acceptable to him, must be performed by faith. Thus the apostle says, 'How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?' There must be a firm persuasion that he can grant us the blessings we ask for; faith addresses itself to him as God all sufficient, and is persuaded that he will fulfil all his promises, as a God of infinite faithfulness; and accordingly we are to give ourselves up entirely to him as our proprietor and bountiful benefactor, the only fountain of blessedness, and object of religious worship. This is to be done by

faith in prayer; and, consequently, prayer is to be directed to God only.

Prayer is to be made in the Name of Christ

We are now to consider what it is to pray in the name of Christ. This does not consist merely in mentioning his name; which many do when they ask for favours for his sake, without a due regard to the method God has ordained. For, according to that method we are to draw nigh to him by Christ our great Mediator, who is to be glorified as the person by whom we are to have access to God the Father, as the fountain of all the blessings which are communicated to us in this method of divine grace. To come to God in Christ's name, includes the whole work of faith, as to what it has to plead with, or what it has to hope for from him, through a Mediator, in that way which he has prescribed to us in the gospel. It more especially consists in our making a right use of what Christ has done and suffered for us, as the foundation of our hope, that God will be pleased to grant us what he has purchased thereby; which contains the sum of all that we can desire, when drawing nigh to him in prayer.

Here let it be considered, that the thoughts of having to do with an absolute God cannot but fill us with the utmost distress and confusion, when we consider ourselves as guilty sinners, and God, out of Christ, as a sin-revenging Judge, a consuming fire. Thinking thus of God, we may well say, as our first parent did immediately after his fall, 'I heard thy voice, and I was afraid.'g Again, God is obliged in honour, as a God of infinite holiness, to separate and banish sinners from his comfortable presence, they being liable to the curse and condemning sentence of the law; by reason of which his terror makes them afraid, and his dread falls upon them. They have, however, in the gospel, not only an invitation to come, but a

discovery of that great Mediator whom God has ordained to conduct his people into his presence, and who has procured liberty of access to him, or as the apostle expresses it, 'boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood, by a now and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh.' God has, for this end, erected a throne of grace, and encouraged us to come to it, and given many great and precious promises, whereby we may hope for acceptance in his sight. Now, these promises being all established in Christ, and the blessings contained in them having been procured by his blood, and we having liberty, in coming, to plead what he has done and suffered, as what was designed to be the foundation of our hope of obtaining mercy, we are said to come and make, our supplications to God in the name of Christ.

Why Prayer is to be made in the Name of Christ

We are now to consider the reason why we are to pray in the name of Christ. This is stated in one of the Answers we are explaining. There it is observed that man, by sin, is set at such a distance from God, that he cannot, by any means, come into his presence. God cannot look upon him with any delight or complacency, inasmuch as his guilt renders him the object of his abhorrence; and he cannot do any thing which has a tendency to reconcile God to him, and therefore is speechless, and can ask for no blessing at his hand. It is farther observed that there is none in heaven or earth, that is, no mere creature, who is fit for that glorious work of mediation. None has a sufficiency of merit to present to God, whereby he may be said to make atonement for sin; or as Job expresses it, there is 'no days-man that might lay his hand on both parties,' that is, no one who is able to deal with God in paying a ransom which he may in honour accept, or with man, by encouraging him to hope that he shall obtain the blessings which he stands in need of, and by bringing him into such a

frame that he might draw nigh to God in a right manner. This work is owing only to our Lord Jesus Christ; and he does it as our great Mediator, who alone is fit to manage it. Hence, we are to pray to God, only in his name who is, by divine appointment, an advocate with the Father, pleading our cause before his throne, and so giving us ground of encouragement that our persons shall be accepted and our prayers answered on his account, who is the only Mediator of redemption and intercession, in whom God is well-pleased, and gives a believer ground to conclude that he shall not seek his face in vain.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP IN PRAYER

QUESTION CLXXXII. How doth the Spirit help us to pray?

ANSWER. We not knowing what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made, and by working and quickening in our hearts (although not in all persons, nor at all times in the same measure) those apprehensions, affections, and graces, which are requisite for the right performance of that duty.

THERE is no duty which we can perform in a right manner, without help obtained from God. This is particularly true concerning the duty of prayer. Accordingly, we are led to speak of the help which the Spirit of God is pleased to afford believers, in order to their engaging aright in this duty.

Prayer cannot he made without the Spirit's Help

Here it is supposed that we know not what to pray for as we ought, or how to bring our souls into a prepared frame for this duty, without

the Spirit's assistance.

1. We are often at a loss with respect to the matter of prayer. Our being so may be said to proceed from our want of acquaintance with ourselves, and our not being duly sensible of our wants, weaknesses, or secret faults. Sometimes we cannot determine whether we are in a state of grace or not; or, if we are, whether it is increasing or declining. Or, if we have ground to complain by reason of the hidings of God's face, and our want of communion with him, we are often hard put to it to find out what the secret sin is which is the occasion of it; nor are we sufficiently apprized of the wiles of Satan, or the danger we are in of being ensnared or overcome by them. Moreover, we are often not able to know how to direct our prayers to God aright, as we know not what is most conducive to his glory, or what it is that he requires of us either in obedience to his commanding will, or in submission to his providential will. Hence it arises that many good men, in scripture, asked for some things which were in themselves unlawful, through the weakness of their faith, and the prevalency of their corruption. Thus some desired that God would call them out of this world by death, being impatient under the many troubles they met with. Elijah, for example, 'requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.' Job says, 'O that I might have my request! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off.'l Jonah says, 'O Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.' Moses, though he had the character of the meekest man upon earth, and doubtless excelled all others in his day in those graces which he had received from God, as well as in the great honours conferred on him, yet put up a most unbecoming prayer, both as to the matter and the manner of it; for he said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted

thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing-father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.'n In another instance, he asks for a thing which he knew beforehand God would not grant him, when he says, 'I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, 'that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' On this occasion, God says, 'Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.' Many instances of a similar nature are mentioned in scripture. Indeed, nothing is more obvious from daily experience, than what the apostle James observes, that persons 'ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss;'p or what the apostle Paul says, 'We know not what we should pray for, as we ought.'

2. We are at other times straitened in our affections, and so know not how to ask any thing with a suitable frame of spirit. It is certain we cannot, when we please, excite our affections, or especially put forth those graces which are to be exercised in prayer. Our hearts are sometimes dead, cold, and inclined to wander from God in this duty; and, at other times, we pray with a kind of indifference, as though it were of no great importance whether our prayer were answered or not. How seldom do we express that importunity in this duty which Jacob did, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me!' As for those graces which are to be exercised in prayer, we often want that reverence and those high and awful thoughts of the divine Majesty which we ought to have, who draw nigh to a God of infinite

perfection; nor, on the other hand, do we express those low and humble thoughts of ourselves which our own meanness, the imperfection of our best performances, and the infinite distance which we stand at from God, ought to suggest. We may add, that we are often destitute of that love to Christ, and that trust in him, which are necessary to the right performance of this duty, and also of that hope of being heard which is a very great encouragement to it.

In what the Spirit's Help in Prayer consists

We are now to inquire wherein the Spirit is said to help our infirmities. His help may be considered as adapted to the twofold necessity which we are often under, respecting the matter of prayer, or the frame of spirit with which the duty is to be performed.

1. The Spirit helps our infirmities, with respect to the matter of prayer. It is not in the least derogatory to his divine glory, that he is pleased to condescend thus to converse with man. Nor is it contrary to the nature of things; for the Spirit, being a divine person, searches the heart, and can, with as much facility as any one can convey his ideas to another by words, impress those ideas on the souls of his people, by which they may be led into the knowledge of the things which they ought to ask in prayer. If it were impossible for God to do this, his providence could not be conversant about intelligent creatures, any otherwise than in an objective way, and so it would not differ from that which may be attributed to finite spirits. Besides, it would have been impossible for God to have imparted his will by extraordinary revelation,—without which, it could not have been known; if he may not, though in an ordinary way, communicate to the souls of his people those ideas by which they may be furnished with matter for prayer. I am not pleading for extraordinary revelation, that being a blessing which God does not now give to his

people. I only argue from the greater to the less,—that it is not impossible or absurd, from the nature of the thing, or contrary to the divine perfections, for God to impress the thoughts of men in an ordinary way; since he formerly did this in an extraordinary way, as will be allowed by all who are not disposed to deny and set aside revealed religion. Moreover, there was such a thing in the apostle's days as being led by the Spirit, which was distinguished from his miraculous and extraordinary influences, as a Spirit of inspiration; otherwise, it is certain, the apostle would not, as he does, have assigned a being led by the Spirit as a character of the children of God. And when our Saviour promises his people 'the Spirit to guide them into all truth,'t I cannot think that the guidance promised respected only the apostles, or their being led into the truths which they were to impart to the church by divine inspiration; but it seems to be a privilege which belongs to all believers. We conclude, therefore, that it is no absurdity to suppose that the Holy Spirit may assist his people, as to what concerns the matter of their prayers, or suggest to them those becoming thoughts which they have in prayer, when drawing nigh to God in a right manner.

Some have inquired whether we may conclude that the Spirit of God furnishes his people with words in prayer, distinct from his impressing ideas on their minds. This I would be very cautious in determining, lest I should not put a just difference between the assistance of the Spirit which believers hope for, and that which the prophets of old received by inspiration. I dare not say that the Spirit's work consists in furnishing believers with proper expressions, with which their ideas are clothed, when they engage in this duty: I would rather say that it consists in furnishing them with those suitable arguments and apprehensions of divine things which are more immediately subservient to prayer. Accordingly the apostle, speaking of the Spirit's assisting believers, when they know not what to pray

for as they ought, says, that the Spirit assists them 'with groanings that cannot be uttered;' that is, he impresses on their souls those divine breathings after things spiritual and heavenly which they sometimes, notwithstanding, want words to express; though, at the same time, the frame of their spirits may be under a divine influence, which God is said to know the meaning of, when he graciously hears and answers their prayers, how imperfect soever these may be as to the mode of expression.

2. The Spirit helps our infirmities by giving us a suitable frame of spirit, and exciting those graces which are to be exercised in this duty of prayer. This the psalmist calls, 'preparing their hearts.' God does this, and then 'causes his ear to hear.' In order to our understanding aright this desirable blessing, let it be considered that we cannot, without the Spirit's assistance, bring our hearts into a right frame for prayer. Our inability to do so is the reason why we engage in this duty in such a manner as gives great uneasiness to us when we reflect upon it. Hence, when we pretend to draw nigh to God, we can hardly say that we worship him as God, but we become vain in our imaginations; and the corruption of our nature discovers itself more at this time than it does on other occasions; and Satan uses his utmost endeavours to distract and disturb our thoughts, and take off the edge of our affections, so that we seem not really to desire those things which with our lips we ask at the hand of God. As for an unregenerate man, he has not a principle of grace, and therefore cannot pray in faith, or with the exercise of other graces, which he is destitute of. Even the believer is renewed but in part; and therefore, if the Spirit is not pleased to excite the principle of grace which he has implanted, he is very much indisposed for this duty, which cannot be performed aright without the Spirit's assistance. We are, nevertheless, to use our utmost endeavours, in order to prayer, hoping for a blessing from God to make them successful. We are to

meditate on the divine perfections, and the evil of sin, which is contrary to them, and by which we are rendered guilty, defiled, and unworthy to come into the presence of God. Yet we are to consider ourselves as invited to come to him in the gospel, and as encouraged by his promise and grace to cast ourselves before his footstool, in hope of obtaining mercy from him. We are also to examine ourselves, that we may know what sins are to be confessed by us, what those necessities are which will afford matter for petition or supplication in prayer, and what mercies we have received, which are to be thankfully acknowledged. We are also to consider the many encouragements which we have to draw nigh to God in this duty, from his being ready to pardon our iniquities, heal our backslidings, help our infirmities, and grant us undeserved favours. We must also impress on our souls a due sense of the spirituality of the duty we are to engage in, and of our having to do with the heart-searching God, who will be worshipped with reverence and holy fear. We are therefore to endeavour to excite all the powers and faculties of our souls, to engage in this duty in such a way that we may glorify his name, and hope to receive a gracious answer.

But when we have used our utmost endeavours to bring ourselves into a praying frame, we must depend on the Holy Spirit to give success to them, that we may be enabled to exercise those graces which are more especially his gift and work. We must give glory to him as the author of regeneration; since no grace can be exercised in this duty but what proceeds from a right principle, or a nature renewed, and internally sanctified, and disposed for the performance of it; which is his work, as 'the Spirit of grace and of supplications.'— Again, as we are, if we hope to be accepted by him, to draw nigh to God in this duty as a reconciled God and Father; so we are to consider that our being enabled to do this is the peculiar work of the Spirit, whereby we 'cry, Abba, Father.'y This will not only dispose us

to perform the duty in a right manner, so as to enable us to pray in faith; but it will afford us ground of hope that our prayers will be heard and answered.—Further, as we often are straitened in our spirits, and so are greatly hindered in prayer, we must consider it as a peculiar blessing and gift of the Holy Ghost to have our hearts enlarged. This the psalmist intends when he says, 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name;' and it is a peculiar branch of that liberty which God is pleased to bestow on his people, under the gospel dispensation. Thus the apostle says, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'a By this means our affections will be raised, and we shall be enabled to pour out our souls before God.

Raised Affections in Prayer

We may here take occasion to inquire concerning the difference which there is between raised affections in prayer, which unregenerate persons sometimes have from external motives, and those which the Spirit excites in us as a peculiar blessing, whereby he assists us in the discharge of this duty. There are several things in which they differ. The former often proceed from a slavish fear and dread of the wrath of God; the latter from a love to him, and desire after him, which arises from the view we have of his glory, as our covenant God, in and through a Mediator. Again, raised affections in unregenerate persons, are seldom found except when they are under some pressing affliction. In this case, as the prophet says, 'they will seek God early;' but when the affliction is removed, the affections grow stupid, cold, and indifferent, as they were before. On the other hand, a believer will find his heart drawn forth after God and divine things, when he is not sensible of any extraordinary affliction which excites his passions; or he finds that, as afflictions tend to excite some graces in the exercise of which his affections are moved, so when it pleases God to deliver him from them, his affections are still

raised while other graces are exercised agreeably to them. Further, raised affections, in unregenerate men, for the most part, carry them forth in the pursuit of those temporal blessings which they stand in need of. Thus when Esau sought the blessing carefully with tears, it was the outward prosperity contained in it which he had principally in view. He disdained that his brother Jacob should be preferred before him, or, as it is said, 'made his lord, and his brethren given him for servants;'c but he had no regard to the spiritual or saving blessings which were contained in the birthright. A believer, on the contrary, is most concerned for and affected with those blessings which more immediately accompany salvation, or which include the special love of God, or communion with him, which he prefers to all other things. Thus the psalmist says, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.' We may add, that whatever raised affections unregenerate persons may have, they want a broken heart, an humble sense of sin, and an earnest desire that it may be subdued and mortified. They are destitute of self-denial, and other graces of a similar nature, which, in some degree, are found in a believer, when assisted by the Spirit, in performing the duty of prayer in a right manner.

Practical Inferences from the Spirit's Help in Prayer

From what has been said concerning the Spirit's assistance in prayer, several inferences may be drawn. First, there is a great difference between the gift and the grace of prayer. The former may be attained by the improvement of our natural abilities, and is often of use to others who join with us; while the latter is a peculiar blessing from the Spirit of God, and an evidence of the truth of grace. Again, they who deny that the Spirit has any hand in the work of grace, and consequently disown his assistance in prayer, cannot be said to give him that glory which is due to him, and therefore must be supposed

to be destitute of his assistance, and very deficient as to this duty. Again, let us not presume on the Spirit's assistance in prayer, while we continue in a course of grieving him, and quenching his holy motions. Further, let us desire raised affections, as a great blessing from God, and yet not be discouraged from engaging in prayer though we want them; since this grace, as well as all others, is dispensed in a way of sovereignty. And if he is pleased, for wise ends, to withhold his assistance; yet we must not say, why should I wait on the Lord any longer? Finally, if we would pray in the Spirit, or experience his help to perform this duty in a right manner, let us endeavour to walk in the Spirit, and to maintain at all times a spiritual, holy, self-denying frame.

FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT PRAYER IS TO BE MADE

QUESTION CLXXXIII. For whom are we to pray?

ANSWER. We are to pray for the whole church of Christ upon earth, for magistrates and ministers, for themselves, our brethren, yea, our enemies, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter, but not for the dead, nor for those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death.

QUESTION CLXXXIV. For what things are we to pray?

ANSWER. We are to pray for all things tending to the glory of God, the welfare of the church, our own or others' good, but not for any thing that is unlawful.

THE former of these Answers notices the persons for whom we are to pray; and, on the other hand, the persons who are not to be prayed

for.

For whom Prayer is to be made

1. We are to pray for the whole church of Christ on earth. By this church we are to understand all those who profess the faith of the gospel, especially those whose practice is agreeable to their profession; and, in particular, all those religious societies who consent to walk in those ordinances whereby they testify their subjection to Christ as King of saints. The particular members of which these societies consist, are, for the most part, unknown to us; so that we cannot pray for them by name, or as being acquainted with the condition and circumstances in which they are; yet they are not to be wholly disregarded, or excluded from the benefit of our prayers. Thus the apostle speaks of 'the great conflict he had,' not only 'for them at Laodicea, but for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh.'

Prayer for all Christians is a peculiar branch of the communion of saints; and it is accompanied with earnest desires that God may be glorified in them and by them, as well as in and by ourselves. In particular, we are to pray that they may be united together in love to God and to one another; and that their union may be attended with all those other graces and comforts which are an evidence of their interest in Christ. We are to pray that they may have the special presence of God with them in all his ordinances; which will be a visible testimony of his regard to them, and an honour put on his own institutions, as well as an accomplishment of what he promised to his apostles just before he ascended into heaven, that he would 'he with them always, even unto the end of the world.'g We are to pray that they may be supported under the burdens, difficulties, and persecutions which they meet with, either from the powers of

darkness, or from wicked men, for Christ's sake; that so the promise may be made good to them, that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.' We are to pray that many may be added to particular churches out of the world, such as shall be saved;i which will be an evidence of the success of the gospel. And when we pray that God would magnify his grace in bringing sinners home to himself, we are to pray for the accomplishment of those promises which respect the conversion of the Jews. Thus the apostle says, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.' We are to pray also that there may be a greater spread of the gospel throughout the most remote and dark parts of the earth, among whom Christ is at present unknown. This diffusion of the gospel the apostle calls 'The fulness of the Gentiles coming in;'l and it is agreeable to the prediction in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, which seems not as yet to have had its full accomplishment. Again, we are to pray that the life of faith and holiness may be daily promoted in all the faithful members of the church of Christ, that they may be enabled more and more to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and be abundantly satisfied and delighted with the fruits and effects of his redeeming love. We are to pray that God would accept those sacrifices of prayer and praise which are daily offered to him by faith in the blood of Christ, in every worshipping assembly, and which will redound to the advantage of all the servants of Christ, of whom they think themselves obliged to make mention, as well as to the glory of God, which is owned and advanced by them. We are to pray that the children of believers, who are devoted to God, may be under his special care and protection, that they may follow the footsteps of the flock, and fill up the places of those who are called off the stage of this world; that so there may be a constant supply of those who shall bear a testimony to Christ and his gospel in the rising generation. Finally, we are to pray that the members of every particular church of Christ may so acquit themselves that they may honour him in the

eyes of the world; that they may be supported and carried safely through this waste howling wilderness, till they arrive at that better country for which they are bound; and that they may not be foiled or overcome while they are in their militant state, till they shall be joined with the church triumphant in heaven.

2. We are to pray for magistrates. Not only is this duty included in the general exhortation given us to 'pray for all men;' but it is particularly mentioned by the apostle, and is intimated to be 'good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour.' Besides, magistracy is God's ordinance;n and whatever ordinance is stamped with the divine authority, though it may principally respect civil affairs, we are to pray that God would bless and prosper it, that it may answer the valuable ends for which it was appointed.

Now, there are several things which we are to pray for in behalf of magistrates. We are to pray that they may approve themselves rulers after God's own heart, to 'fulfil all his will,' as was said of David; that their counsels and conduct may be ordered for his glory, and the good of his church; that they may be 'a terror,' not to 'good works,' that is, to persons who perform them, but 'to the evil,' and so 'may not bear the sword in vain.'p We are to pray that they may be a public blessing to all their subjects, and so that promise be fulfilled, 'Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers;' and, as an instance of this, that under them 'we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.'r As to their subjects, we are to pray that they may not, on the one hand, abuse and trample on their authority, and take occasion to offend with impunity; nor, on the other hand, have cause to dread that authority as grievous, in instances of injustice and oppression.

3. We are to pray for ministers. This is a necessary duty, inasmuch as their work is exceedingly great and difficult; so that the apostle might well say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' Indeed, besides the difficulties which attend the work itself, there are others which they meet with, from the unstable temper of professed friends, who sometimes, as the apostle says, 'become their enemies for telling them the truth;'t or from the restless malice and violent opposition of open enemies, which evidently takes its rise from the inveterate hatred which they bear to Christ and his gospel. Moreover, as they have difficulties in the discharge of the work they are called to, so they must give an account to God for their faithfulness in it; and it is of the highest importance that they do this 'with joy, and not with grief.' So the apostle remarks; and immediately he entreats the church's prayers, as what was necessary in order to his giving such an account.

Now, there are several things which ought to be the subject of our prayers, with respect to ministers. We are to pray that God would send forth a supply or succession of them, to answer the church's necessities; inasmuch as 'the harvest is plenteous,' as our Saviour observes, 'but the labourers are few.' We are to pray that they may answer the character which the apostle gives of a faithful minister: and accordingly may 'study to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'y We are to pray that they may be directed and enabled to impart those truths which are substantial, edifying, and suitable to the circumstances and condition of their hearers. We are to pray that they may be spirited with zeal and with love to souls, in the whole course of their ministry; that the glory of God, and the advancement of his truth may lie nearest their hearts; and that a tender concern and compassion for the souls of men may incline them to use their utmost endeavours, as the apostle says, to 'save them with fear,

pulling them out of the fire.' We are to pray that their endeavours may be attended with success; which, in some measure, may give them a comfortable hope that they are called, accepted, and approved of by God; and which, from the nature of the thing, will tend to our own advantage, who make the bestowal of it the subject of our earnest prayers on their behalf. Indeed, the neglect of this duty may, in some measure, be assigned as one reason why the word is often preached with very little success. Hence the duty ought to be performed, not merely as an act of favour, but as a duty which redounds to our own advantage.

4. We are to pray, not only for ourselves and our brethren, but also for our enemies. That we are to pray for ourselves, none ever denied, how much soever many live in the neglect of this duty. As for our obligation to pray for our brethren, it is founded in the law of nature; which obliges us to love them as ourselves, and, consequently, to desire their welfare, together with our own. It may be inquired, however, what we are to understand by our brethren, whom we are to express this great concern for, in our supplications to God? For understanding this, let it be considered that, besides being applied to those who are brethren in the most known acceptation of the word, as Jacob's sons tell Joseph, 'We be twelve brethren, sons of one father;' the word 'brother' is sometimes taken, in scripture, for any near kinsman. Thus Abraham and Lot are called brethren,b though they were not sons of the same father; for Lot was Abraham's brother's son. This is a very common acceptation of the word in scripture. Again, it is sometimes taken in a more large sense, for those who are members of the same church. Thus the apostle calls those who belonged to the church at Colosse, 'the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.'d Sometimes, also, they who are of the same nation are called brethren. Thus it is said, 'When Moses was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of

Israel.' It is likewise sometimes taken for those who make a profession of the same religion with ourselves; and also for those who are kind and friendly to us. Thus it is said, 'A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.'f Indeed, the word is sometimes taken in the largest sense that can be, as comprising all mankind, who have the same nature with ourselves. These are the objects of love; and therefore our prayers are, especially in proportion to the nearness of the relation they stand in to us, to be directed to God on behalf of all. Some, indeed, are allied to us by stronger bonds than others; but none, who are entitled to our love, pity, and compassion, are to be wholly excluded from our prayers.

This will farther appear, if we consider that we are to pray also for our enemies. The law of nature obliges us to do good for evil; and consequently, as our Saviour says, we are to 'pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us.' We are not, indeed, to pray that they may obtain their wicked and unjust designs against us, or that they may have power and opportunity to hurt us; for to do so would be contrary to the principle of self-preservation, which is impressed on our nature. But we are to pray that, however they act toward us, they may be made Christ's friends, their hearts changed, and they enabled to serve his interest; that they, together with ourselves, may be partakers of everlasting salvation. Hence, it is a vile thing, and altogether inconsistent with the spirit of a Christian, to desire the ruin, much more the damnation of any one, as many wickedly and profanely do. Again, we are to pray that their corruptions may be subdued, their tempers softened, and their hearts changed; so that they may be sensible of their unjust resentments against us, and lay them aside. And if they are under any distress or misery, we are not to insult them, or take pleasure in beholding it; but we are to pity them, and to pray for their deliverance, as much as though they were not enemies to us.

5. We are to pray, not only for all sorts of men now living, according to what is stated in the preceding Head, but for those who shall live hereafter. To pray thus includes an earnest desire that the interest of Christ may be propagated from generation to generation; and that his kingdom and glory may be advanced in the world till his second coming. Thus the psalmist says, 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.' And our Saviour says, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.'k

For whom Prayer is not to be made

We are now to consider those who are excluded from our prayers. These are either such as are dead, or those who have sinned the sin unto death.

1. We are not to pray for the dead. This is asserted in opposition to an opinion which was maintained and practised by some in the early ages in the church, and which paved the way for those abuses and corruptions which are, at this day, practised by the church of Rome, who first prayed for the dead, and afterwards proceeded to pray to them. The first step leading to this error, seems to have been great excesses, on the part of some in the early ages of the church, in the encomiums they made, in their public anniversary orations, on the memory of the martyrs and confessors who had suffered in the cause of Christianity. This step was originally taken with a good design, namely, to excite those who survived to imitate the martyrs in their virtues, and to express their love to the cause for which they suffered. But afterwards they went beyond the bounds of decency in magnifying and extolling them; and then proceeded yet farther, in

praying for them. This practice of praying for the dead is often excused, by some modern writers, from the respect they bear to those who first observed it; though it can hardly be vindicated from the charge of will-worship, since no countenance is given to it in scripture. What is generally alleged in behalf of the early Christians who prayed for the dead, is, that they supposed the souls of believers did not immediately enter heaven, but were sequestered or disposed of in some place inferior to it, sometimes called by them 'paradise' or 'Abraham's bosom,' where they are to continue till their souls are reunited to their bodies. Whether this place were above or below the earth, all were not agreed. Their mistake arose from their misunderstanding those scriptures which describe heaven under the metaphorical characters of 'paradise' or 'Abraham's bosom.' Here they supposed that departed believers are, indeed, delivered from the afflictions and miseries of this present life; yet not possessed of perfect blessedness in God's immediate presence. They hence concluded that there was some room for prayer, that the degree of happiness which they were possessed of might be continued, or rather that it might, in the end, be perfected, when they are raised from the dead, and admitted to partake of the heavenly blessedness. Others thought that, at death, the sentence was not peremptorily passed either on the righteous or on the wicked, so that there was room left for them to pray for the increase of the happiness of the one, or for the mitigation of the torment of the other. Hence, in different respects, they prayed for all, both good and bad; especially for those who were within the pale or enclosure of the church; and above all, for such as had been useful to it, and highly esteemed by it. The principal thing which is said in vindication of their practice—for what we have just mentioned as the ground and reason of it will by no means justify it—is, that, though the souls of believers are in heaven, yet their happiness will not be, in all respects, complete, till the day of judgment. Accordingly, in their prayers, they chiefly had

regard to the consummation of the blessedness of departed believers at Christ's second coming, together with the continuance of it till then; without supposing that they received any other advantage by their prayers. But as the blessing they thus supplicated for them was not a matter of uncertainty, they observed that many things are to be prayed for which shall certainly come to pass, whether we pray for them or not,—such as the gathering in of the whole number of the elect, and the coming of Christ's kingdom of glory. They hence suppose that the advantage of praying for the dead redounds principally to those who offer the prayers; as, by doing so, they express their faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, the future blessedness of the saints, and the communion which there is between the church militant and the church triumphant. This is the fairest colour which can be put upon the ancient practice of the church, and the numerous statements in the writings of the fathers, concerning prayers for the dead.

Such was the practice of the church before we read of the fictitious place which the Papists call purgatory. In this place the Papists fancy that separate souls endure some degrees of torment, and are relieved by the prayers of their surviving friends. This opinion was not known to the church before the seventh century; and, as was observed under a former Answer, is without any foundation from scripture. Now, as it was formerly defended, and is still practised by the Papists, the contrary doctrine is asserted in this Answer, namely, that we are not to pray for the dead. In proof of this doctrine, we shall offer a few remarks.

The state of every man is unalterably fixed at death; so that nothing remains which can be called an addition to the happiness of the righteous, or the misery of the wicked, but what is the result of the reunion of soul and body at the resurrection. Hence, to pray that the

saints may have greater degrees of glory conferred upon them, or sinners a release from their state of misery, is altogether groundless and unlawful. That the state of man is fixed at death is sufficiently evident from scripture. Thus our Saviour, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, speaks of the one as immediately 'carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom,'—by which, notwithstanding what some ancient writers assert to the contrary, we are to understand heaven; and he speaks of the other as sent to a place of torments, without any hope or probability of the least mitigation,—whereby hell, not purgatory, is intended. And the apostle says, 'It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.'p Here he means that all men must leave the world; and that, when they are parted from it, their state is determined by Christ, though not done in so public and visible a manner as will be done in the general judgment. Now, if the state of men be unalterably fixed at death, it may be justly inferred that there is no room for any one to put up prayers to God on their behalf. Prayer must have some promise on which it relies; otherwise it cannot be addressed to God by faith, or, as the apostle expresses it, 'nothing wavering.' If, then, we have no ground to conclude that our prayers shall be heard and answered, or if we have any doubt in our spirits whether the thing prayed for be agreeable to the will of God, our prayers cannot be put up in faith, and therefore are not lawful.

The Papists, in defence of the contrary doctrine, are very much at a loss for scriptures to support it. Yet there is a passage in the apocryphal writings, in which Judas Maccabeus and his company are represented as praying and offering a sin-offering, and thereby making reconciliation for some who had been slain in battle. Some persons reply to the argument founded on this passage, that the prayers for the dead here spoken of, are of a different nature from those which the Papists make use of in behalf of those whom they

pretend to be in purgatory, or that Judas and his company prayed for nothing but what some of the Christian fathers did, namely, that the departed might be raised from the dead; and that thus they simply expressed their faith in the doctrine of the resurrection. But, I think, a better reply is, that the argument is not taken from any inspired writing; and that no more credit is to be given to the book of Maccabees than to any other human composition, in which some things are true and others false. As for this book in particular, the author himself plainly intimates that he did not receive it by divine inspiration; for he says, 'If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.' This is very honestly said, but is not like the language of an inspired writer. Hence, nothing which is said in the book is a sufficient proof of any important article of faith or practice, such as that which we are now considering.

It is farther objected that the apostle Paul puts up a short and affectionate prayer for Onesiphorus, 'The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day;' while, as is concluded by some, Onesiphorus was dead at the time when the apostle wrote this epistle. There are two petitions put up, one in this verse for him, and another in verse 16, for 'his house;' and in chap. 4:19, when Paul, according to his custom, salutes some of his friends, he makes mention of 'the household of Onesiphorus,' but not of himself. This turn Grotius himself gives of this scripture; and the Papists greedily embrace it, as it gives countenance to their practice of praying for the dead. This argument, however, is built on but a weak foundation. For though Paul, in the close of the epistle, salutes Onesiphorus' household, and not himself, it does not follow that he was dead; he might be absent from his family, as he often was when engaged in public service, being sent by the church as their messenger, to inquire concerning the progress and success of the gospel in other

parts, or to carry relief to those who were suffering in Christ's cause. The apostle perhaps might be informed that he was then on his way to Rome, where he was himself a prisoner when he wrote the epistle; and if so, it would not have been proper to send salutations to him whom he expected shortly to see, while, at the same time, he testified the great love he bore to him and all his family, as being a man of uncommon zeal for the interest of Christ and religion.

2. They are not to be prayed for who have sinned the sin unto death. This sin we read of, in scripture, as what excludes persons from forgiveness. Such things are said concerning it as should make us fear and tremble, not only lest we should be left to commit it, but give way to those sins which border upon it. There is, however, enough expressed to encourage us to hope that we have not committed it; and this is the principal thing to be insisted on, when we treat on this sin in our public discourses, or when any are tempted to fear lest they are guilty of it.

Here let it be observed, that though it is called 'the sin unto death,' we are not to suppose that it is one particular act of sin, but rather a course or complication of sins, in which there are many ingredients of the most heinous nature. It cannot be committed by any but those who have been favoured with a gospel light; for it always includes a rejection of the gospel, which supposes revelation or preaching. Nor is it merely a rejecting of the gospel, though attended with sufficient objective evidence, in thoso who have not had an inward conviction of the truth of it, or whose opposition to it proceeds principally from ignorance; for the apostle says concerning himself, that 'though he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, yet he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly, in unbelief.' But it is a rejecting of the gospel which we once professed to embrace, and therefore has the nature of apostacy. Thus the scribes and Pharisees, when they

attended on John's ministry, professed their willingness to adhere to Christ; and afterwards, when he first appeared publicly in the world, they were convinced in their consciences, by the miracles which he wrought, that he was the Messiah; though afterwards they were offended in him, and ashamed to own him, because of the humble state and condition in which he appeared in the world; and on this account, they in particular were charged with the sin in question. Again, it includes a rejecting of Christ and the known truth, out of envy, attended with reviling, persecuting, and using the utmost endeavours to extirpate and banish it out of the world, and beget in the minds of men the greatest detestation of it. Thus the Jews are said to have 'delivered Christ out of envy;' and with the same spirit, they persecuted the gospel. Such as are guilty of this sin, have no conviction in their consciences of any crime committed in regard to it, but stop their ears against all reproof, and set themselves, with the greatest hatred and malice, against those who, with faithfulness, admonish them. They also go out of the way of God's ordinances, and wilfully exclude themselves from the means of grace. These they treat with the utmost contempt; and they use all the endeavours in their power that others may be deprived of them. This condition they not only live, but die in; so that their apostacy is, not only total, but final.

I cannot but observe, however, that some are of opinion that this sin cannot be now committed, because we have not the dispensation of miracles, whereby the Christian religion was incontestably proved, in the time of our Saviour and the apostles. They who hold this opinion think that the Pharisees spoken of in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, were mainly charged with saying that Christ 'cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils;' whereby they intimated that those miracles which they had formerly been convinced of the truth of, as wrought by the finger of God, were wrought by the devil. This view of their case supposes that they were eye-witnesses to the

working of miracles, which we cannot be; and it is hence inferred that the sin of which they were guilty cannot now be committed, inasmuch as the dispensation of miracles has ceased. But this reasoning will not appear so strong and conclusive, if we consider that, though the gospel is not now confirmed to us by miracles, yet we have no less ground to believe that the Christian religion was confirmed by means of them, than if we had been present when they were wrought. If, however, it should be alleged that a resisting of the evidence of miracles cannot, in every circumstance, be contained in the sin against the Holy Ghost, in our day; there are other things included in the description we gave of the sin unto death, as things in which it principally consists, which bear a very great resemblance to the sin of which the Pharisees were guilty. If persons, for example, formerly believed Christ to be the Messiah, and were persuaded that his being so was incontestably proved by the miracles which he wrought, and accordingly, were inclined to adhere to him, and embrace the gospel, in which his person and glory are set forth, and yet have afterwards apostatized from their profession; if their apostacy has been attended with envy and malice against Christ; if they have treated, with contempt and blasphemy, the evidence by which they once acknowledged the Christian religion to have been undeniably supported; if from carnal policy, and the love of this world, they have totally rejected that faith which they once professed; and if their apostate condition is attended with judicial hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and strong delusions, together with a rooted hatred of all religion, and a malicious persecution of those who embrace it; we cannot but conclude their sin to bear a very great resemblance to that which in scripture is called the unpardonable sin. Theirs is a most deplorable case; and it should be so far improved by us that we should use the utmost caution that we may not give way to those sins which bear the least resemblance to it. Doubting Christians, however, are to take heed that they do not

apply the account which we have given of this sin to themselves, so as to be led to despair; for to produce such a result is not the design of any description of it which we have in scripture. Now, that they may be fortified against applying the account of it to themselves, we shall offer one or two observations. It is one thing peremptorily to determine that it is impossible for any one to commit this sin in our day, since the dispensation of miracles has ceased, for to say this, is, in effect, to suppose that we can have no evidence for the truth of the Christian religion but what is founded on ocular demonstration, such as they had who saw Christ's miracles; and it is another thing to determine concerning particular persons, that they are guilty of this sin. It is certain that the matter might be determined with special application to particular persons in the time of our Saviour and the apostles. For then there was, among other extraordinary gifts, that of discerning of spirits; and consequently it might be known whether they who apostatized from the laith of the gospel had formerly received a full conviction of its truth, and it might also be known, by extraordinary revelation, that God would never give them repentance, so that their apostacy would be final. It is more than probable that this view of the case was supposed by the apostle, when he speaks of some who had committed this sin, who were not to be prayed for. But these things cannot be known by us. Hence, I would not advise any one to forbear to pray for the worst of sinners, who seem most to resemble those that are charged with this sin, the matter not being certainly known by us. What, however, is principally to be considered for the encouragement of those who are afraid that they have committed this sin, is that persons may certainly know that they have not committed it, though they are in an unregenerate state. If they have not had opportunity or necessary means to attain the knowledge of the truth, and so remain ignorant of it; or if they have had sufficient means to know it, and have not improved them as they ought, yet they have not committed this sin, if

they desire and resolve to wait on God in his ordinances, in order to their receiving good. Again, they who are under conviction of sin, disapprove of it, and have some degree of sorrow and shame for it, may certainly conclude that they have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Further, if persons have reason to think that their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that they have greatly backslidden from God; yet they ought not to conclude that they have committed this sin, if they are afraid lest they should be given up to a perpetual backsliding, or dread nothing more than a total and a final apostacy, and in consequence, are induced to pray against it, and to desire a broken heart, and that faith which at present they do not experience. In this case, though their state is dangerous, they ought not to determine concerning themselves that they have committed the sin unto death. [See Note 2 C, page 576.]

We ought to make several uses of this awful doctrine, and of the hope which there is that we have not committed the sin unto death. First, we should take heed that we do not give way to wilful impenitency, and a contempt of the means of grace, lest we should provoke God to give us up to judicial hardness of heart, so as to make sad advances towards the commission of it. Let us take heed that we do not sin against the light and conviction of our consciences, and wilfully neglect and oppose the means of grace; for whether any one's acting thus be the sin unto death or not, it is certainly a crime of the most heinous and dangerous tendency. Again, let doubting Christians take heed that they do not give way to Satan's suggestions, tempting them to conclude that they have committed this sin. Though they are sometimes afraid that they have committed it, they might determine that they have not, did they duly weigh what has been just observed concerning this matter. Finally, let us bless God that yet there is a door of hope; and let us resolve by his grace, that we will always wait on him in the ordinances which he has appointed, till he shall be

pleased to give us ground to conclude better things concerning ourselves, even things which accompany salvation.

For What Prayer is to be Made.

We are now led to consider what we are to pray for.

1. We are to pray for those things which concern the glory of God. That we may know what these are, we are to inquire whether, if God should give us what we ask for, it would have a tendency to set forth any of his divine perfections, and so render him amiable and adorable in the eyes of his creatures, so that, in answering our prayers, he would act becoming himself. We are also to take an estimate of the adaptation of anything to promote his glory, from the intimation he has given us of it in his word. There we may observe, not only whether he has given us leave, but whether he has given us commands, and encourages us, to ask for it; more especially, whether he has promised to give it to us, and whether our receiving the blessing we ask for, has a tendency to fit us for his service.

2. We are to pray for those things which concern our own good, or the good of others. These are particularly insisted on in the Lord's prayer, which is explained in the following Answers. It is hence sufficient for us, at present, to consider the good we are to pray for in general. Now, we are to pray for temporal blessings; which are the effects of divine bounty, and concerning which our Saviour says, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.' We are also to pray for spiritual blessings, such as forgiveness of sin, strength against sin, the sanctifying influences of the Spirit to produce in us holiness of heart and life, and deliverance from and victory over our spiritual enemies. We are also to pray for the consolations of the Holy Ghost, arising from assurance of the love of

God, whereby we may have peace and joy in believing; and for all those blessings which may make us happy in a better world.

3. We are to pray for those things which are lawful to be asked of God. The things we pray for must be such as it is possible for us to receive, and particularly such as God has determined to bestow, or given us ground to expect in the present world. We are not to pray for those blessings to be applied here, which he has reserved for the heavenly state; such as a perfect freedom from sin, from tribulation or temptation, or for our enjoying the immediate views of the glory of God. These things are to be desired in that time and order in which God is determined to bestow them. Hence, we are to wait for them till we come to heaven; and, at present, we are to desire only to be made partakers of those privileges which he gives to his children in their way thither.—Again, we are not to pray that God would inflict evils on others, to satisfy our private revenge for injuries done us. For revenge is in itself unlawful, and unbecoming a Christian frame of spirit, and contrary to the duty which was formerly considered of our praying for our very enemies, and seeking their good.—Further, we are not to ask for outward blessings, without setting bounds to our desires; nor are we to ask for them unseasonably, or for wrong ends. We are not to pray for them as though they were our chief good and happiness, or of equal importance with things which are more immediately conducive to our spiritual advantage. Hence, whatever measure of importunity we express in praying for them, is not to be inconsistent with an entire submission to the divine will, or with being satisfied that God knows what is best for us, or whether what we desire will, in the end, prove good or hurtful to us. Much less ought we to ask for outward blessings in order to the satisfying of unlawful desires, or, as the apostle James speaks, that we may 'consume them upon our lusts.'

[NOTE 2 C. Is any sin unpardonable?—The phrase, 'the unpardonable sin,' is a startling one; and seems fairly to imply that there are limits to the intrinsic worth or efficacious power of the Redeemer's sacrifice. However popular the phrase is, and however sanctioned by not a few curious disquisitions on the part of respectable theological writers, it is, as I think, unwarranted by any statement in the Bible, and opposed to its current phraseology. Three texts have been adduced as giving it countenance,—Heb. 10:26; Heb. 6:4–6; and Matt. 12:31, 32. But the first of these does little more than teach that there is but one sacrifice for sin; the second states that a preference of idolatry or Judaism to the gospel of Christ, puts away the only means of moral renovation; and the third, which is the strongest, describes a man as rejecting the Christian evidences, and assuming the position of a scornful unbeliever. All the passages, in other words, mention, not what cannot, but what shall not, be forgiven: they speak, not of an unpardonable sinner, but of one who refuses pardon.

'If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin,' Heb. 10:26. In a brief paper, published about a year ago, I stated my views of this text; and I may be excused for simply condensing here what I there said. 'The truth' which Paul speaks of is, not revealed truth in general, nor the influence of the gospel upon the heart, but the great doctrine which he had just unfolded and proved,—that Christ's sacrifice alone is availing, and possesses divine sufficiency for every purpose of redemption. To 'know this truth' cannot imply a better condition of soul than to 'escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Yet Peter describes persons who have so escaped (2 Pet. 2:20–22.)—whose knowledge of Christ has been practical to the extent of freeing them from vice—as merely washen swine, not as swine transmuted into sheep,—as dogs

of beastly inclination, not as dogs 'created anew' and 'converted' into lambs. 'To sin,' according to the primary meaning of the Greek word, is 'to go aside' or 'to miss the mark;' and 'to sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth,' or wilfully to go aside or miss the mark after having become acquainted with the great doctrine of the Christian atonement, must denote simply the knowing and pertinacious rejection of God's method of justifying the ungodly. Persons who practise this folly—whether they exchange Christianity for Judaism, or abandon it for sake of the showy rites of heathen or of Romish ibolatry, or barter it away for the lures and enjoyments of the present world—will look in vain among the ceremonies or pleasures of their choice for a means of expiating guilt. The one true atonement rejected and despised, 'there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins.' Whoever hears of the atoning death of the Son of God.—its surpassing worth, its divine completeness, its glorious adaptation to bring pardon and peace to the chief of sinners.—and after having surveyed its excellence, weakly or wilfully sets up his philosophy, or his alms-giving, or his devoteeism, or some self-infliction, as a better refuge than it from the divine anger, or a surer means of obtaining the divine favour,—that man misses the mark of eternal life; he goes aside from the narrow way to heaven; he shuts his eyes on the hope, the only hope, set before him in the gospel, and welcomes 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' Now, 'if he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall be he thought worthy,' who in so wicked a fashion prefers the devices of man to Heaven's sole and divinely costly plan of mercy, 'treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith atonement was made, a common thing?' Yet such a man's fate is altogether of his own making; it is the fate, not of an unpardonable sinner, but of a sinner who scorns pardon; it arises from neither the magnitude of his sins nor defect in the Christian

sacrifice, but altogether from his own egregious self-conceit, and his wilful blindness to the worth and grandeur of the Lord's atonement.

Without pausing to show how well these views of the passage in the tenth chapter of Hebrews agree with the scope of the apostle's reasoning, and with the general scheme of his doctrines, I shall now pass to a consideration of the text in the sixth chapter of the same book. 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.'

The persons whom Paul describes were 'once enlightened.' But 'if the light which was in them was darkness, how great was that darkness?' Balaam 'saw the visions of the Almighty, and knew the knowledge of the Most High;' and yet was a sordid, hardened infidel. They had 'tasted the heavenly gift.' To 'taste' is to perceive; and 'gift,' in this and some other texts, is not the thing bestowed, but the disposition of bestowing it. The persons described had perceived or witnessed the benevolence of Christianity; they had probably seen its benign character in the miraculous cures effected by our Lord or his apostles; or they may even have discerned the salubrious character of its precepts, and the joyous complexion of its doctrines. They had also been 'made partakers of the Holy Ghost.' All persons were made so on whom the apostles imposed hands; yet they communicated not necessarily with the Holy Spirit's person, but only with his gifts. 'Holy Ghost,' when put by a inetonyme for what the Holy Ghost produces means never communion with God, and seldom the enjoyment of regenerating or sanctifying influence, but generally the possession of supernatural endowments. Yet these, in the times of

the apostles, were, in some instances, possessed by the unrenewed and unbelieving. 'Many,' said Christ, 'will say to me at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.' Again, the persons whom Paul describes had 'tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.' The phrase, 'the world to come.' bears a very different meaning in the scriptures to what in does in modern religious usage. 'His name shall be called the Everlasting Father,' or 'the Father of the world to come,' Isa. 9:6; 'Unto angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak,' Heb. 2:3; in these and other passages, the phrase, which, if strictly rendered, is 'the future age,'—the age of Christianity as contrasted to the age of Judaism,—means the Christian dispensation. The word 'powers' ought to be 'miracles;' and it denotes not alone what was intrinsically supernatural, but what divinely, because miraculously, attested that the gospel is true. Now, the persons described saw 'the miracles of the Christian dispensation;' they witnessed them in connexion with 'the good affair,' or dispensation 'of God;' they tasted or perceived both the ministry of reconciliation, and the mightiest testimonies which Jehovah bore to its doctrines. Were they, therefore, convinced of sin, and partakers of saving religious knowledge? Alas! a people more honoured, in a sense, than they,—a people who tried God, and proved him, and saw his works of love and miracle, forty years in the wilderness,—'alway erred in their heart,' and ignominiously perished in impenitence. But it may be said that the persons of whom Paul speaks were such as might 'fall away,' or, more properly, 'fall back' and that they must have been Christians, in order to be capable of becoming apostates. Falling back is simply transition,—transition from character, condition, rank, or even mere profession. Men can renounce only what they possess: professors mere profession,—

Mohammedans mere Mohammedism. Now Paul tells from what the apostates fell back: they abandoned or forsook simply their 'enlightenment,' their communication with miraculous gifts, and their observation of the supernatural evidences of the Christian dispensation; they, in other words, expelled from their minds every favourable opinion of Christianity, and removed or kept their persons beyond the sphere of all the means, both ordinary and extraordinary, which were employed under the apostolic ministry for bringing sinners to acknowledge or believe the gospel.

If the remark which I have just made be duly considered, it will obviate all difficulty in what some persons regard as the most obscure clause in the text which I am considering: 'It is impossible to renew them again to repentance.' The meaning of the word 'repentance,' however, must previously be ascertained. John preached 'the baptism of repentance toward the remission of sins,' Mark 1:4. His disciples were the subjects of a repentance which merely pledged them by profession, and prepared them by the ordeal of religious instruction, to submit to the personal ministry of the Saviour. Few of them ever, and possibly none at the outset, possessed 'repentance unto life,' or 'repentance toward God.' Their repentance, and that of the persons described by Paul, were essentially the same. The latter sprang from perception of merely the external evidences of truth, and existed in union with unregeneracy; and it necessarily amounted to no more than a profession of attachment to Christianity, and a docile attendance on the ministry of the gospel. What the apostates had possessed, &c to either change of mind or outward reformation, was at best but 'the form of godliness.' Now, the resumption of this was quite incompatible with their apostate condition: 'it was impossible to renew them again to repentance.' Having abandoned the profession of error, and embraced the profession of the truth, they 'fell back' to their original state, not only

at the expense of relinquishing attendance on the Christian ministry, but in spite of the most convincing evidences which the new economy could furnish of the truth of Christianity. All the means of grace saving been renounced, there was no instrumentality, no system of morals, no course of effort, which could reclaim them from error. They would not use the instituted ordinances of the gospel, and they even rejected the evidence of miracles The impossibility of renewing them was, therefore, natural and necessary: yet it was not absolute, but only relative. It was an impossibility neither in regard to the magnitude of their sins, nor in regard to the intrinsic power of Christianity, nor in regard to the freeness and availableness of the divine mercy, but simply and altogether in regard to the relative position which infidels or despisers of revealed truth occupy, as such, to the gospel. The apostates were irreclaimable only while they could not be approached by evidence or by the influence of Christian ordinances; in other words, they were irreclaimable, 'seeing they crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' Their condition was akin to that of the original murderers of Christ. They contemned Christianity; they laboured to bring derision on the Saviour; they misconstrued or scorned the most splendid evidences of his heavenly mission and divine majesty; they ignominiously transfixed and exhibited to the view of enemies whatever in his cause they imagined to be weak or mortal; and thus, in enmity to God, and hatred of evangelical truth, and passion for the ascendency of error, they were whirled round in the very vortex which, during the scene of the crucifixion, sucked down all the sentiments and feelings of the murderers of Jesus. But were the apostates, therefore, beyond the reach of the divine mercy? or had they committed unpardonable sin? What hinders that there may have been a day of influence from on high and of awakening for them, as truly as there was a day of Pentecost for their prototypes? Suppose them only to have emerged from their seclusion, and to

have heard once more the preaching of an apostle, or to have heard anew the gospel's glad tidings, or to have witnessed afresh the stupendous evidences of the apostolic times that Christianity is true; and you will do no violence to any statement of Paul, you will follow out his own allusion to the crucifiers of the Saviour, you will think in unison with all the system of divine truth, and all the history of its highest achievements, if you imagine not a few of the apostates 'goaded to the heart' and 'receiving the word with all gladness and readiness of mind.'

I have perhaps said more on the text in the sixth chapter of Hebrews than was requisite. I view that text, however, as a key to those passages which speak of 'the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost,' and have been regarded as affording prime sanction to the notion of 'an unpardonable sin;' and I have made my remarks somewhat minute, in order that those passages might, in a degree, be explained by anticipation, and might now, without the aid of any criticism, rise clearly and in their full and simple meaning into view. I have shown that 'world to come' means Christian dispensation; that 'Holy Ghost' is put, by a metonyme, for miraculous gifts or for supernatural evidence of the truth of Christianity; and that inaccessibility to pardon or the means of moral renovation, is only relative, and arises from rejection and neglect of the means of grace. Now, if these explanations have been appreciated, they will be found to have removed the chief difficulties from what the evangelists record respecting the sin against the Holy Ghost:—

'Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this

world, neither in the world to come, Matt. 12:31, 32.' The statement in these verses, is, as I understand it, summarily this:—Any sin which merely defames Christ, but does not scorn the evidence of his mission, leaves the sinner accessible to the means of salvation; but the sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost—because it rejects the chief or highest evidence that the gospel is true—shuts out the sinner from every instrumental influence, every method of persuasion, every means of grace employed under either the Jewish economy or the Christian, for bringing the ungodly to repentance. The Pharisees, whom our Lord was addressing, were guilty of self-righteousness and of perverting the word of God, but still stood in the way to be convinced of sin, and made partakers of pardon. They had even derided our Lord's claims to be considered the Messiah, they had denied his true Deity, they had blasphemed his whole character; still they listened to his discourses and observed his works, and were, in consequence, every moment eligible 'to be convinced of all, and judged of all,' and to be brought to the acknowledgment and belief of the truth. Now, however, 'they blasphemed the Holy Ghost,' they ascribed to the power of Beelzebub what belonged to the power of God, they contemned the miracles which Jesus worked by the energy of the Divine Spirit; they thus poured scorn upon the brightest evidences which ever had been exhibited or ever would be witnessed of the truth of a revelation, they despised the strongest attestation to the Messiahship of Jesus, they denied the genuineness of the grand sign-manual which heaven had affixed to the record of the gospel; and, guilty of such iniquities, they necessarily rejected all the ordinary and extraordinary means of grace, and sat down in a position which afforded not one approved, one available, one efficacious instrumentality for conducting sinners into the way of life. But why should it be thought that their sin was unpardonable or their condition hopeless? A solemn declaration is made, indeed, that a blasphemer of the Holy Ghost should not be forgiven; but is not the

same declaration made often, very often, respecting all the workers of iniquity? 'God will by no means clear the guilty.' 'He that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life.' 'As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law;—these, and a hundred other passages, declare that all the unbelieving and the ungodly shall be unpardoned,—that the sin of unbelief, and many a sin besides, shuts out the perpetrator from the kingdom of God. But they all suppose the sinner to persist in his sin, and distinctly imply that he may 'turn from it and live;' day, they are recorded with the express design of calling attention to the free, full pardon exhibited in the gospel, and of inciting the guilty to flee to Christ that they may receive it. Now, did the Lord of glory once, though but once, lay aside his benevolence, and all the usual methods of appeal employed in the revelation of mercy? Did he once, though but once, desert the grand object of his mission and his ministry,—'the calling of sinners to repentance?' The thought is not to be endured! No; he told the Pharisees the aggravated character of their sin, only that they might be warned of the extremity of their danger; he depicted to them the appalling tendency of their iniquity, only that they might be incited to renounce and abhor it; he explained to them how their blaspheming of miracles shut them out from every means of grace, only that they might be persuaded to think rightly of his mighty works, and accept him as their Saviour;—he, hence, without a pause, without a break in his appeal, passed from a denunciation of their sin to an exhibition of the grand subject of moral renovation: 'Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by his fruit;' he did not break away from them, or treat them with silence and indignation, as if they had been criminals beyond the reach of mercy, but he proceeded to address their judgment and invoke their conscience, and thus treated them as persons who still might feel the influence and realize the salutary results of heavenly expostulation and

instruction. The grand truth which he had placed on the foreground of his ministry was still in his heart, and still maintained alliance with his ministrations and rebukes: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him'—WHOSOEVER believeth on him —'should not perish, but have eternal life.'

I have to notice still another text—but one referring to a totally different matter from those already considered,—'If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death,' 1 John 5:16, 17. This passage can, I think, be supposed to refer to any topic akin to the idea of some very peculiar and disastrous species of transgression, only by its being quite cut away from its context, and by the word ἁμαρτια throughout it being construed in a sense which, I suspect, it never bears. In the thirteenth verse of the chapter, the apostle states that he had written his epistle in order that those who believed might know that they had eternal life. He then proceeds to say respecting such persons—or true believers, possessors of eternal life—'This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.' Their abstract privilege, or exaltedly honoured condition of possessing eternal life, was connected with the internal confidence that every prayer of their heart, which should accord with the divine will, would be heard. 'And if we know that he hear us,' adds the apostle, 'whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' Not one blessing shall be refused—not one request shall be denied. All the petitions which shall certainly be answered, however, must not only be framed in the light of the divine word, but have reference to persons who are spiritually alive,—who possess eternal life. To enjoy

a confidence that our scriptural requests will all be granted, and to be personal possessors of eternal life, are correlative and co-extensive. We have assurance of spiritual blessings for ourselves and others, only if we and they believe on the Son of God, and be spiritually living men; and no assurance whatever of these blessings—the blessings which belong to God's people, and are enjoyed in a state of union to the Saviour—on the part of persons who are spiritually dead. Hence, continues the apostle, 'If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.' He is clearly speaking of asking blessings in that confidence of being heard which he had stated to be the privilege of believers,—blessings, too, which are peculiar to the condition, or enjoyable in the justified and regenerated state, of men who are spiritually alive. Faith in Christ and living unto God are correlative with the condition in which the blessings are received, or the confidence that when asked they will be bestowed. To determine, therefore, what persons may certainly enjoy the blessing, or on behalf of whom they may confidently be supplicated, we must look at the conduct of 'brethren,' or those who appear or profess to be believers, and ascertain as accurately as we can whether they be spiritually alive or spiritually dead. 'If any man see his brother sin sin not toward death,' ἁμαρτανοντα ἁμαρτιαν μη προς θανατον,—marked by such blemishes, defiled by such remaining corruptions, overtaken with such faults, or in general sinning in such circumstances, as do not evince him to be spiritually dead, as do not constitute motion towards death, προς θανατον—he shall treat that person as still a brother, as, notwithstanding his defects, a possessor of spiritual life, and shall pray for him as a brother, in confidence that the blessings of life, the peculiar boons of reviving and sanctifying grace, will be granted to his soul. I am not aware that the word ἁμαρτια is ever used to denote one act of transgression, one

distinctive species of sinning, or what, in English idiom, is distinctively called 'a sin;' and still less that the verb ἁμαρτανω, either by itself, or followed by its cognate noun, can be understood to mean, committing one act or species of transgression. Αμαρτια, as to its general use at least, means sin in the abstract,—in reference either to any description of sin whatever, or to sin in the aggregate, whether actual, original, or both. See James 1:15; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 3:4; and many other passages. "We are to suppose, then," as Dr. Ridgeley himself observes, "not that 'sin unto death' spoken of by the apostle is any one particular act of sin, but rather that it is a course or complication of sins;" and so are we to suppose also, respecting 'sin not unto death.' In proof that the term is understood in a general or abstract way, we need only to look at what the apostle immediately adds,—All unrighteousness is sin; and there is sin not towards death.' Commission of what the divine law forbids, or omission of what it commands, is, in all circumstances, and in the case of every sort of person whatever, sin; but, in one set of circumstances, with one set of aggravations, it is sin of such a nature us comports with persons being in a justified or spiritually living state; while, in another set of circumstances, and with another set of aggravations, it proves all who practise it to be spiritually dead. We are to distinguish, then, the apostle teaches, between such conduct and character as evince a professing 'brother' to be a self-deceiver and hypocrite,—and such as, though blameable and really sinful, comports with his being a sincere believer; and, according to the conclusion respecting him which we fairly draw, we are, or are not, to pray on his behalf, with confidence of being heard, for those blessings which are ever available to believers in Jesus, but are peculiar to them as possessors of eternal life. If a professing 'brother' sin 'toward death,' he may as other parts of the divine word teach, be prayed for as an unrenewed man, that he may be converted and brought to the saving knowledge of the truth; but he may not, as the apostle shows, be prayed for as a believer, as a

possessor of spiritual life, as one of that happy community who, 'whatsoever they ask of God, know that they have the petitions which they desire of him.' Due discrimination, in other words, is to be used in prayer. Just as we are not to pray for a believer, as though he were a stranger to the grace of God; so we are not to pray for an unbeliever, as though he were a renewed and sanctified man. Let the blessings of enlightening and renovating grace be supplicated on behalf of the spiritually dead: but let the blessings which follow the possession of eternal life, and comport with a state of believing on the Son of God, be supplicated on behalf of those only who have been born of God, and who do not commit sin in the manner or with the aggravations of the unrenewed in heart. See verse 18—that following the text in question—compared with 1 John 3:8, 9. What the apostle teaches in the verses in question, is thus in strict keeping with the scope of the context, and is a matter of great practical moment, but a matter which has no conceivable affinity whatever to the idea of an unpardonable sin.

I do not know whether I have succeeded in making my views of the texts discussed—especially of those in Hebrews and the gospels—clear and distinct. I shall be happy, however, if what I have said shall, while commending itself to the judgment, make a deeper impression than before upon the heart, of 'the love of God,' and 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' I regret that the idea of 'an unpardonable sin' should ever have prevailed, and deplore the low estimate which it is fitted to occasion of the glorious, the surpassing, the infinite worth of our Lord's atonement. A limited efficiency in redemption, is far, very far, from clouding the most gorgeous views possible of unlimited sufficiency. Whenever mercy is exhibited, it is seen to be infinite, divinely full and free; whenever the atonement is described, it is seen to be rich as the moral glory of the Redeemer's Deity, available for 'the chief of sinners,' able to save to the

uttermost; whenever 'the grace of God which bringeth salvation' is displayed, it is seen to be higher than height, deeper than depth, surmounting man's loftiest iniquities, and profounder far than his deepest miseries. 'Where sin was filling up, grace has exceeding overflowed; so that while sin reigns by death, grace reigns through righteousness, on to life without end, through the Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord of the redeemed.'—ED.]

HOW PRAYER IS TO BE MADE

QUESTION CLXXXV. How are we to pray?

ANSWER. We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God, and deep sense of our own unworthiness, necessities, and sins, with penitent, thankful, and enlarged hearts, with understanding, faith, sincerity, fervency, love, and perseverance, waiting upon him, with humble submission to his will.

The Frame of Mind in which Prayer is to be made

THIS Answer respects the manner of performing prayer, and the frame of spirit with which we are to draw nigh to God.

1. We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God. Without this, our behaviour would be highly resented by him, and reckoned no other than a thinking him altogether such an one as ourselves. Some of the divine perfections have a more immediate tendency to excite an holy reverence. Accordingly, we are to consider him as omnipresent and omniscient, to whom our secret thoughts

and the principle whence our actions proceed, are better known than they can be to ourselves. We are to conceive of him as a God of infinite holiness; so that he cannot but be highly displeased with that worship which is opposite to holiness, and which proceeds from a conscience defiled with sin, or is performed in an unholy manner. Thus the prophet says, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity;' that is, thou canst not behold it without the utmost detestation; and therefore, 'if we regard it in our hearts, he will not hear our prayers.' We are also to have a due sense of the spirituality of his nature, that we may worship him in a spiritual manner. Hence, we are not to entertain any carnal conceptions of him, or frame ideas of him like those we have of finite or corporeal beings; nor are we to think it sufficient that our external deportment is grave and has a show of reverence, when our hearts are not, at the same time, engaged in this duty, or disposed to give him the glory which is due to his name. We are also to draw nigh to him with a due sense of those perfections which tend to encourage us to perform this duty, with hope of finding acceptance in his sight. Accordingly, we are to conceive of him as a God of infinite goodness, mercy, and faithfulness, with whom is plenteous redemption, in and through a Mediator, which is suitable to our condition as indigent, miserable, and guilty sinners; and as a God of infinite power, who is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all we are able to ask or think.'e

2. We are to pray to God with an humble sense of our own unworthiness. This is the necessary result of high conceptions of his divine excellency and greatness; whereby we are led to consider ourselves as infinitely below him. Indeed, the best of creatures are induced by conceptions of his divine excellency to worship him with the greatest humility. Thus the seraphim are represented, in the vision which the prophet Isaiah had of them, as ministering to and

attending upon our Lord Jesus, when sitting on a throne in his temple; and as 'covering their faces and their feet with their wings,' denoting their unworthiness to behold his glory, or to be employed by him in his service. But when we take a view of his infinite holiness, and our own impurity, we should be induced to draw nigh to him with the greatest humility. As dependent creatures, we have nothing but what we derive from him; as frail dying creatures, we wither away, and are brought to nothing.g Job compares our state to that of a leaf, which is easily broken and driven to and fro, or to that of the dry stubble, which can make no resistance against the wind that pursues it. The psalmist, speaking of man in general, says, 'Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him; or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?' Elsewhere also it is said, 'What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him, and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him?'i These are humbling considerations. But we shall be led into a farther sense of our own unworthiness, when we consider ourselves as sinful creatures, worthy to be abhorred by God; so that he might justly reject us, and refuse to answer our prayers.

But as this humble frame of spirit is so necessary for the right performance of this duty, we shall notice some things which are particular inducements to it. First, the greatest glory we can bring to God can make no addition to his infinite perfections. Thus it is said, 'Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may he profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure,' that is, any advantage, to the Almighty, 'that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?' Elsewhere also it is said, 'If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thy hand?'l denoting that it is impossible for us, by any thing we can do or suffer for his sake, to make him more glorious than he would have been in himself had we never had a being. Now, if there is nothing by which we can lay any obligations on God, we have reason to address

ourselves to him with a sense of our own unworthiness.—Again, we are so far from meriting any good thing from the hand of God, that by our repeated transgressions, notwithstanding the daily mercies we receive from him, we give farther proofs of our great unworthiness. Indeed, if we are enabled to do any thing in obedience to his will, our ability is not from ourselves; yea, it is contrary to the dictates of corrupt nature, and must be ascribed to him as the author of it.—Again, if we could do the greatest service to God by espousing his cause, and promoting his interest in the world; it is no more than what we are bound to do; and, at the same time, we must consider that 'it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'—Further, the best believers recorded in scripture, have entertained a constant, humble sense of their own unworthiness. Abraham, when he stood before the Lord, making supplications in behalf of Sodom, expressed himself thus: 'Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' Jacob says, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant.' And they who have been most zealous and eminently useful in promoting Christ's interest in the world, have had an humble sense of their own unworthiness. Thus the apostle says concerning himself, 'I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle;'o and he immediately adds, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' And elsewhere he styles himself, 'less than the least of all saints.'q We have another instance of humility in prayer in the psalmist's words, 'I am a worm, and no man;' which, so far as they have any reference to his own case, may give us occasion to infer that the most advanced circumstances in which any are in the world, are not inconsistent with humility, when drawing nigh to God in prayer. But if we consider him as speaking in the person of Christ, as several expressions in the psalm argue him to do, and cannot well be taken in any other sense;s then we have, in the words referred to, the most

remarkable instance of the humble address which was used by Christ in his human nature, when drawing nigh to God in prayer. And this is certainly a great motive to induce us to engage in this duty with the utmost humility.

3. We are to draw nigh to God in prayer, with a sense of our necessities, and of the sins which we have committed against him. We are to consider ourselves as indigent creatures, who are stripped and deprived of that glory and those bright ornaments which were put on man in his state of innocency; destitute of the divine image, and of all those things which are necessary to our happiness; unless he is pleased to supply our wants, forgive our iniquities, and grant us communion with himself; which things we are to draw nigh to him in prayer for. We are also, in this duty, to have a sense of sin, that is, of the guilt which we contract by it, and the punishment we have exposed ourselves to, that we may see our need of drawing nigh to God in Christ's righteousness; and also of the stain and pollution of it, that we may be induced to fall down before the footstool of the throne of grace, with the greatest degree of self-abhorrence. We are also to consider how we are enslaved to sin, and how prone we are at all times to 'serve divers lusts and pleasures,' and to 'walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.'u Moreover, we are to consider sin as deeply rooted in our hearts, debasing our affections, and captivating our wills. If we are in an unconverted state, we are to look upon it as growing and increasing in us, rendering us more and more indisposed for what is good, and setting us at a farther distance from God and holiness. If, on the other hand, we have ground to hope that we are made partakers of converting grace, we are to consider that we have acted contrary to the highest obligations, and been guilty of the greatest ingratitude.

These things we are to endeavour to be affected with, when drawing nigh to God in prayer, in order to our performing this duty aright.

The Graces which are to be exercised in Prayer

1. Among the several graces which are to be exercised in prayer, is that of repentance. This is necessary because we are sinners, and as such, are to come into the presence of God with confession, joined with supplication, which must be made with a penitent frame of spirit. The contrary to such a frame is a tacit approbation of sin, and a kind of resolution to adhere to it; which is very unbecoming those who are pleading for forgiveness. Accordingly, when God promised that he would 'pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications,' he adds, that 'they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him,' or for it, 'as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born,' and that this shall be done by 'every family apart, and their wives apart.' So when 'the priests, the ministers of the Lord,' are commanded to 'pray' that he would 'spare his people;' they are commanded, at the same time, to 'weep between the porch and the altar, to rend their hearts, and turn unto the Lord their God.'y And when Israel are advised to 'take with them words,' and instructed how they should pray, they are exhorted to 'turn unto the Lord,' to repent of their seeking help from Assyria and Egypt, and of that abominable idolatry which they had been guilty of.

Now, there are several very proper subjects of meditation which, through the divine blessing, may excite the grace of repentance when we are engaged in the duty of prayer; particularly, the multitude of transgressions which are charged on the consciences of men by the law, that 'every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may

become guilty before God;' and especially, the ingratitude which we have reason to accuse ourselves of, our contempt of Christ and of the way of salvation by him discovered in the gospel, and our having done many things in the course of our lives which fill us with shame and sorrow, whenever we come into the presence of God, to pour out our hearts before him in this duty.

2. The next grace to be exercised in prayer, is thankfulness; prayer and praise ought to be joined together. Thus the psalmist says, 'Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed, O thou that hearest prayer.' That this is a part of prayer was observed under a former Answer; where we considered the many blessings for which we have reason to be thankful. I shall only add, at present, that it is matter of thankfulness that we, who might have been for ever banished from his presence, or have been brought before his judgment-seat as criminals doomed to everlasting destruction, have liberty of access to God, in hope of obtaining mercy from him, as sitting on a throne of grace. Moreover, we are to bless him, not only for leave to come before him, but for our having often experienced that he has heard and answered our prayers, and so fulfilled that promise, 'I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.'c

That we may be brought into a thankful frame, we ought to consider the worth of every mercy; especially of those mercies which are spiritual, or accompany salvation. This we may judge of by the price which was paid for them. That price was no less than the blood of Jesus; and the apostle not only styles it 'precious,' but speaks of it as infinitely preferable to every thing which is 'corruptible.' We may, in some measure, also, take an estimate of the value of salvation by the worth and excellency of the soul, and by its being conducive to promote its eternal welfare.—Again, we are to consider every saving

blessing as the fruit and result of everlasting love, and as the consequence of God's eternal design, in having chosen those who are the objects of his love to salvation in Christ.e We must also consider the mercies of salvation as discriminating, or that God, in bestowing them, distinguishes his people from the world, and glorifies the riches of his grace in those who deserve to have been for over the monuments of his wrath.—Again, we might here consider as an inducement to the grace of thankfulness, the aggravations of the sin of ingratitude. This sin is a virtual disowning of our obligation to God, or dependence on him from whom we receive all mercies; and a behaving of ourselves as if we were not indebted to him for them, or could be happy without him, or as if we were self-sufficient, and did not look upon him as the fountain of blessedness. It is also a refusing to give him the glory of his wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness, which are eminently displayed in the blessings which he bestows. It is likewise unaccordant with the large expectations we have of the blessings he has reserved for his people, or promised to them, or that hope which he has laid up for them in heaven. Hence we cannot but conclude that ingratitude argues a person destitute of holiness; which eminently discovers itself in the exercise of thankfulness. Accordingly, the apostle joins ingratitude and unholiness together, when speaking of the vilest of men, whom he styles, 'unthankful, unholy.'

3. Another grace to be exercised in prayer, is faith. This implies an habitual disposition of soul, proceeding from a principle of regenerating grace, whereby we are led to commit ourselves and all our concerns into Christ's hands, depending on his merits and mediation for the supply of all our wants, considering him as having purchased, and as being authorized to apply, all the benefits of the covenant of grace, which are the subject of our supplications. More particularly, faith exerts and discovers itself in prayer, by

encouraging the soul, and giving it an holy boldness to draw nigh to God, notwithstanding our great unworthiness. If we are afraid to come into the presence of an holy God; if destruction from him is a terror to us; if the threatenings he has denounced against sinners, such as we know ourselves to be, discourage us from drawing nigh to him, so that we are ready to say with Job, 'Therefore am I troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him;' if his almighty power, which can easily sink us into perdition, overwhelms our spirits, and fills us with the utmost distress and confusion, so that we cannot draw nigh to him in prayer, considering him as an absolute God; we are encouraged by faith to look upon him as our covenant God and Father in Christ, and then all his divine perfections afford relief to us. His sin-revenging justice is regarded by faith, as fully satisfied by Christ's obedience and sufferings; so that it will not demand that satisfaction at our hands which it has already received from our Surety, who was 'made sin for us' though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'h His infinite power is no longer looked upon as engaged to destroy us, but rather as engaged to succour us under all our weakness; so that, as Job says, 'He will not plead against us with his great power; no, but he will put strength in us.' We consider it as ready to support us under the heaviest pressures, and to enable us to perform the most difficult duties, and to overcome all our spiritual enemies, who would be otherwise too strong for us. Hence, this attribute is so far from discouraging us from drawing nigh to God in prayer, that, by faith, we behold it as delighting to exert and glorify itself, in doing those great things for us which we have in view when we engage in this duty.

Faith farther discovers itself in prayer, by enabling us to plead, and apply to ourselves, the great and precious promises which God has given to his people in the gospel. As prayer cannot subsist without a

promise, so we are enabled by faith to apprehend and plead the promises, and to say, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' By faith we look upon God as ready to bestow the blessings which he has promised, and upon his faithfulness as engaged to make them good. Thus the psalmist says, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications; in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.'l There is nothing that we want, or ought to pray for, but there are some promises contained in the word of God which faith improves and takes encouragement from, in this duty. As what we pray for respects either temporal blessings, or those which are spiritual and eternal, these are looked upon by faith as promised. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' That there are promises on which faith rests might be very largely insisted on, and many instances might be given of them in scripture; but I shall more especially consider those promises which respect God's enabling us to pray, and his hearing and answering our prayers, which faith lays hold on and improves, in order to our performing this duty in a right manner. Thus there are promises of the Spirit's assistance to enable us to pray. This the apostle calls his 'making intercession for us, according to the will of God.'n And our Saviour says, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' There are also promises which respect God's hearing and answering prayer. Thus it is said, 'In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me;'p and, 'God will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.' That God will hear and answer prayer is considered as of very large extent. Thus our Saviour says, 'Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you;'r and, 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' These universal expressions of

God's giving believers 'what they will,' are to be understood of his granting their lawful and regular desires. Indeed, faith will never ask any thing but what tends to the glory of God; and it presents its requests with an entire submission to his will. Hence, its desires are always fulfilled; though it is far otherwise with respect to those prayers which are not put up in faith. Moreover, God has promised to hear and answer all kinds of prayer, provided they proceed from this grace. In particular, he promises to hear united prayers in the assemblies of his saints; as he says to Solomon, after the dedication of the temple, 'Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.'t He also promises to hear those prayers which are put up to him in families. Where a small number, though it be but 'two or three,' are joined together, Christ has promised to be 'in the midst of them,' not only to assist them in this duty, but to give them what they ask for. There are also promises made to secret prayer. Thus when our Saviour encourages people to 'pray to their Father, which is in secret,' he tells them, 'My Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.'x

Here it will be inquired, whether it be necessary in order to our praying by faith, that we be assured, at all times, that our prayer shall be heard. We answer, first, that it is not our duty to believe that every prayer shall be heard; for God heareth not sinners, that is, those who are under the reigning power of sin, and consequently are destitute of the grace of faith: nor will he hear those prayers that proceed from feigned lips. Thus it is said, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' Again, it is not the duty of those who have the truth of grace to believe that their prayer shall be heard when, by reason of their infirmity, or the weakness of their faith, they ask for that which is unlawful, and does not redound to the glory of God and their real good. Again, even if what we pray for may be for the glory of God, and redound to our advantage, it is not our duty to determine, with

too great peremptoriness, that he will certainly grant what we ask, immediately, or in the particular way which we desire; for he may answer prayer, and yet do it in his own time and way. Further, it is not our duty to believe assuredly, that God will give us all the temporal blessings which we ask,—especially if they be not absolutely necessary for us; for he may answer us in value, though not in kind, and so give spiritual blessings, instead of those temporal ones which we pray for. In this case none will say that he is unfaithful to his promise, though we have not those blessings in kind which we desire. It is hence our duty, and the great concern of faith in prayer, to be assured that, as God knows what is best for us, so he will make good his promises, in such a way that we shall have no reason to conclude ourselves to have been disappointed, or that we have asked in faith but have not obtained.

I am sensible there is a difficulty in the mode of expression used by the apostle James, 'But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.' By this language, the apostle does not intend that he who doubts whether his prayer shall be answered, cannot be said, in any sense, to pray in faith. For, as assurance of our salvation is not of the essence of faith, so that faith cannot subsist without it; so assurance, or a firm persuasion that the very thing we ask shall be given, is not such an essential ingredient of faith in prayer as to warrant us to determine, that for want of it, we shall receive nothing which is good from the Lord. I conceive, therefore, that the apostle, by 'wavering,' in this text, has reference to our being in doubt about the object of faith, or to our not being steadfast in the grace of faith, but praying with hypocrisy. For he illustrates it by the similitude of 'a wave driven with the wind,' which sometimes moves one way, at other times the contrary; and he farther explains it, when he says, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.'a Hence, the person

whom he describes as 'wavering' is the same with 'a double-minded man,' or an hypocrite. Such an one cannot ask in faith. The apostle, therefore, does not mean that no one can exercise this grace in prayer, but he who has a full assurance that his prayer shall be answered in the particular way which he expects.

It is objected by some that they have no faith; and as this grace must be exercised in prayer, they are very often discouraged from performing that duty. But though the want of a prepared frame of spirit for any duty, affords matter of humiliation, it is no excuse for the neglect of it. As for prayer, in particular, we are to wait on God in it for a prepared frame of spirit, that, by means of this, we may draw nigh to him in a right manner, as well as for a gracious answer from him. Again, if we cannot bring glory to God by a fiducial pleading of the promises, or applying them to ourselves; we must endeavour to glorify him by confessing our guilt and unworthiness, and acknowledging that all our help is in him. Again, it is possible for us to have some acts of faith in prayer, when we are not sensible of them, and even bewail our want of this grace. Further, if none were to pray but those who have faith, it would follow that none must pray for the first grace, which supposes a person to be in an unregenerate state. Yet, such are obliged to perform this duty as well as they can, and therein to hope for that grace which may enable them to do it as they ought.

It is objected by others that, though they dare not lay aside the duty of prayer, yet, as they do not experience those graces which are necessary for the right performance of it, nor any returns of prayer, they have no satisfaction in their own spirits. But there may be faith in prayer, and yet no immediate answer to prayer. God, in answering prayer, acts in a way of sovereignty; and he will have his people know that if he grants their requests, it shall be in his own time and way.

Hence, it is their duty to wait for him till he is pleased to manifest himself as a God hearing prayer, and till, in consequence, the discouragements which at present they labour under are removed. Besides, there are other ways by which the truth of grace is to be judged of, besides our having sensible answers of prayer. Sometimes, indeed, God may give many intimations of his acceptance of us, though, at present, we know it not.

4. The next grace to be exercised in prayer, is love to God. This implies an earnest desire of his presence, delight in him, or taking pleasure in contemplating his perfections as the most glorious and amiable object. Desire supposes him, in some measure, withdrawn from us, or that we are not possessed of that complete blessedness which is to be enjoyed in him; and delight supposes him present, and, in some degree, manifesting himself to us. Now, love to God, in both these respects, is to be exercised in prayer. Is he in any measure withdrawn from us? We are, with the greatest earnestness, to long for his return to us, whose loving-kindness is better than life. Is he graciously pleased, in any degree, to manifest himself to us as the fountain of all we enjoy or hope for? His doing so will have a tendency to excite our delight in him, and induce us to conclude that our happiness consists in the enjoyment of him. These graces are to be exercised at all times, but more especially in prayer; for this is an offering up of our desires to God, in which we press after the enjoyment first of himself, and then of his benefits. And as we are to bless and praise him for the discoveries we have of his glory, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to the securing of our spiritual good and advantage; we, in doing so, express that delight in him which is the highest instance of love.

5. Another grace to be exercised in prayer, is submission to the will of God. In practising this, we leave ourselves and our petitions in his

hand, sensible that he knows what is best for us. The submission required does not include a being indifferent whether our prayers are heard or not; for to have this feeling would be to contradict, by the frame of our spirits, what we express with our lips. Whatever may be concluded to be lawful for us to ask, as redounding to our advantage, and as expressly promised by God, we ought to request at his hand in prayer; and if we pray for it, we cannot but desire that our prayer may be heard and answered. Now, this desire is not opposed to that submission to the divine will which we are speaking of, provided we leave it to God to do what he thinks best for us, being content that the manner of his answering us, as well as the time of his bestowing those blessings which we want, together with the degree of them, especially if they are of a temporal nature, ought to be resolved into his sovereign will. Thus concerning the graces which we are to exercise in prayer.

Requisites to the Graces which are to be exercised in Prayer

There are some things mentioned in this Answer, which are necessary to our exercising the graces of which we have been speaking. These are the enlightenment of our minds, the enlargement of our hearts, and our having sincerity in the inward part.

1. There must be some degree of understanding. Ignorance is so far from being, as the Papists pretend, the mother of devotion, that it is inconsistent with the exercise of those graces with which we ought to draw nigh to God in prayer. The affections, indeed, may be moved, where there is but a very little knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel; but they will at the same time be misled. Nor, in such a case, can raised affections any more be called religious devotion, than the

words or actions of one who is in a frenzy, can be called rational. Hence, as prayer is unacceptable without the exercise of grace; so grace cannot be exercised without the knowledge of the truth, as derived from the sacred treasury of scripture. Here we might consider, that we must know something of God who is the object of prayer, as well as of all other acts of religious worship. We must also know something of Christ the Mediator, through whom we have access to him, as well as acceptance with him; and something of the work and glory of the Holy Ghost, on whom we are to depend for his assistance in presenting our supplications to God. We must know our necessities, otherwise we cannot tell what to ask for; and also the promises of the gospel, otherwise we cannot be encouraged to hope for an answer.

2. In order to our exercising grace in prayer, we must have some degree of enlargedness of heart. By enlargedness of heart is meant that state of mind in which every thing tending to contract our affections, abate the fervency of our spirits, or hinder that importunity which we ought to express for the best of blessings, is removed. Now, our hearts may be said to be enlarged in prayer, when we draw nigh to God in this duty with delight and earnest longing after his presence, and an interest in his love, which we reckon preferable to all other blessings; when we are affected with a becoming sense of his glorious perfections, and our own nothingness, in order to our adoring him, and coming before him with the greatest humility; when we have suitable promises given in, and are enabled to plead them with a degree of hope, arising from the goodness and faithfulness of God, that he will fulfil them, more especially as we draw nigh to him as to a covenant-God; and when our thoughts and affections are engaged without wandering, weariness, or lukewarmness, and filled with importunity, agreeable

to the importance of the duty, and our absolute need of the blessings we pray for.

3. In order to our exercising those graces which are necessary for our drawing nigh to God aright in prayer, we must have sincerity of heart. This includes much more than what is generally so called, as opposed to dissimulation in those who perform some good actions merely to be seen of men, or who take up religion to answer some base and vile end which they have in view. In this respect a sincere person is one who is no dissembler. But the sincerity which we are speaking of, consists in a person's acting from a principle of grace implanted in regeneration, or in his being able to appeal to God, as Job does, 'Thou knowest that I am not wicked;' that is, that there is no reigning sin, whereby my heart is alienated from thee, or set against thee. A sincere person is such an one as our Saviour describes, when he speaks of Nathanael, and gives him this character: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.'c In this case, a person's heart and actions go together; and he may truly say, as David does, 'Attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.' Thus concerning the graces which are to be exercised in prayer, and what is necessary in order to our exercising them.

Perseverance in Prayer

What is farther observed concerning prayer, is that we are to persevere in it; resolving not to desist from waiting on God in it, whatever seeming discouragements may, at present, lie in our way. Prayer is not a duty to be perfomed only at some certain times; as the prophet speaks of those who, 'in their affliction, will seek God early;' or, as the mariners in Jonah, who 'cried, every man unto his god,' in a storm, though it is probable they seldom prayed at other times.f

But we are to 'pray always with all prayer and supplication, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance;' that is, we ought always to endeavour to be in a praying frame, and on all occasions to lift up our hearts to God for direction, assistance, and success in every thing we do agreeably to his will, and for a supply of those wants which daily recur upon us.

There are various discouragements in our way which, through our unbelief, and the prevalency of corruption, often prevent our going on in this duty. Thus we are sometimes discouraged from persevering in prayer, by reason of the deadness and stupidity of our spirits, which we cannot bring into a suitable frame for the discharge of this duty; and therefore we are ready to conclude that, while we draw nigh to God with our lips, our hearts are far from him. This is, indeed, a very afflictive case; but we ought not to take occasion from it to lay aside the duty, but ought rather to depend on the assistance of the Spirit, to enable us to perform it in a right manner.

Another discouraging circumstance is, God's denying us sensible returns of prayer. This he may do for various reasons. Sometimes he sees defects in prayer, which he is obliged to testify his displeasure against; and this he sometimes does by hiding himself, or, as it were, withdrawing from us, and, in all appearance, shutting out our prayers, that we may take occasion to search out the secret sin which lies at the root of our defects, and confess it, and be humbled for it. Thus when Joshua, after a small defeat which Israel had received by the men of Ai, fell upon his face, and spread the matter before the Lord in prayer, God condescends to tell him the reason of the defeat, 'Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing; therefore could they not stand before their enemies.' And when the

sin was discovered, and Achan who troubled them was punished, what he asked for was granted. Again, God may deny an immediate answer of prayer, out of his mere sovereignty, in order that we may know that it is not for us to prescribe to him the time or way in which he shall dispense those benefits, which are not owing to our merit, but his own grace.

Sometimes we pray, but do not use other means, which God has appointed for obtaining the blessing. Thus when Israel was disheartened, being pursued by Pharaoh and his host, and did not care to move out of their places, Moses addressed himself to God for them in prayer; and 'the Lord said unto him, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;' and then he ordered him to 'lift up his rod and stretch it over the sea, and divide it, that they might go through the midst thereof on dry ground.' We are not only to pray, but to use other means which God has appointed; without which we cannot expect that prayer should be answered. Thus Hezekiah, when sick, prayed to God, who assured him that he had heard his prayers, and would heal him, but that, nevertheless, he was to use the means which God had ordered, by 'taking a lump of figs and laying it on the boil.' This he did accordingly, and was restored to health.k Do we pray for a comfortable subsistence in the world? We must, if we expect that God should answer us, use industry in our callings, as well as own him by prayer and supplications. Do we pray for any of the graces of the Spirit, in order to the beginning or carrying on of the work of sanctification? We must, at the same time, attend on the means of grace, which God has ordained for that purpose. Or do we pray for assurance of the love of God, and for the spiritual peace and comfort which are the result of that assurance? We must be diligent in the performance of the work of self-examination; else we are not to expect that God will answer our prayers.

Sometimes God delays to answer our prayers, because we have not given him the glory of former mercies, or because he designs to try our patience, whether we are inclined, not only to wait upon him, but to wait for him. Thus the prophet says, 'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.' So the psalmist says, 'As the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the eyes of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.'m And elsewhere the psalmist, though he was in great depths, and stood in need of an immediate answer when he cried to the Lord, yet determines to 'wait for him,' and to 'hope in his word;' that is, while he is expecting a mercy, he does not despair of having it in the end, because he depends on God's word of promise. He resolves to 'wait as those that watch for the morning;' and he thus practises two graces, namely, patiently waiting for the blessing expected, and yet earnestly desiring it. The practising of these graces is our indispensable duty, whereby we glorify God, sensible that it is not for us to prescribe to him when he should fulfil our desires. We ought to say, with Jacob, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;'o that is, I will persevere in prayer till thou art pleased to give me all the blessings I stand in need of, and bring me into that state in which I shall be satisfied with thy goodness, and my imperfect prayers turned into endless praises.

THE RULE OF DIRECTION FOR PRAYER

QUESTION CLXXXVI. What rule hath God given for our direction in the duty of prayer?

ANSWER. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in the duty of praying; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which our Saviour Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer.

QUESTION CLXXXVII. How is the Lord's Prayer to be used?

ANSWER. The Lord's Prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern according to which we are to make other prayers, but may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty.

The Necessity of a Rule of Direction for Prayer

As to what is said in the former of these Answers, concerning the word of God being a rule for our direction in prayer, it may be observed that we need some direction in order to our performing this duty. Man is naturally a stranger to both God and himself; he knows but little of the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and is not duly sensible of the guilt which he contracts, or the mercies which he receives; and, in consequence, he is at a loss as to the matter of the duty in which he is to engage. It is certain, that many have a general notion of religion, or of some moral duties, which they are sensible of their being obliged to perform, and yet are unable to address themselves to God in such a manner as he requires; so that it may truly be said of them, that 'they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness.' We find that the disciples themselves, who were intimately conversant with Christ, and who, as must be supposed, often joined with him in prayer, were, notwithstanding, at a loss as to this duty; and therefore they said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'q

The Word of God the Rule of Direction for Prayer

It is farther observed that the word of God is to be made use of for our direction in prayer. This is evident from the fact that we are to ask nothing but what is agreeable to his revealed will, which is contained in his word. Nor will any one who is well acquainted with scripture have reason to say, that he wants sufficient matter for prayer. This is a very useful Head; and we shall consider several things in scripture which ought to be improved, in order to our direction and assistance in the performance of this duty.

I. The historical parts of scripture, which contain an account of the providences of God in the world and the church, may be of use for our direction in prayer. As we are to pray, not only for ourselves but for others, his former dealings with his people will furnish us with matter accommodated to our observations of the necessities of the church of God in our day.

1. We find, from scripture, that the sins which a professing people have committed, have been followed with many terrible instances of the divine wrath and vengeance. Thus we have an account of the universal apostacy of the world from God, which occasioned their being destroyed by a flood; of the unnatural lusts of the inhabitants of Sodom, for which they were consumed by fire from heaven; and of the idolatry and other vile abominations committed by the Israelites, for which 'God was wroth, and greatly abhorred them,' and they were exposed to many temporal and spiritual judgments, so that, as the psalmist says, 'He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.' We may hence take occasion to inquire whether we have not been guilty of sins equally great, and, it may be, of the same kind; which are to be confessed, and the judgments

entailed by them to be deprecated. In the New Testament, also, we read of some flourishing churches, planted by the apostles in the beginning of the gospel dispensation, which have nothing left but a sad remembrance of the privileges which they once enjoyed; in whose history what Christ says concerning his removing 'his candlestick out of its place,' was soon fulfilled. Now, the case of these churches is of use for our direction in prayer, that he would keep his church and people of the present day from running into the same sins, and exposing themselves to the same judgments.

2. We have an account, in scripture, of the church's increase and preservation, notwithstanding the darkest dispensations of providence, and the most violent persecutions from its enemies. When they were in hard bondage, and severely dealt with in Egypt, it is observed that 'the more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew;' and when they, in all appearance, were nearest to ruin, God opened a door for their deliverance, and often did great things in their behalf, which they looked not for. We have also an historical account in scripture of God's owning and encouraging his people, so long as they kept close to him; and of his visiting their iniquities with a rod, when backsliding from him. Indeed, whatever we read concerning the providences of God towards particular believers in the Old or New Testament, is of very great use for our direction in prayer. Their experiences are recorded for our instruction, and their necessities, that we may know what to pray for, as far as there is an agreement between the account we have of them, and what we find in ourselves.

II. The word of God, as it is a rule of faith, contains those great doctrines, without the knowledge of which we cannot pray aright. Thus we have an account in scripture, not only of the being and perfections of God, which may be known by the light of nature, but of

these glorious truths which cannot be known but by divine revelation.

1. We have an account of the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father is considered as giving all spiritual blessings to his chosen people, in and through a Mediator. The Son is considered as invested in this office and character, and, as God incarnate, procuring for us, by his obedience and death, forgiveness of sins and a right to eternal life. The Holy Ghost is considered as a divine person, and therefore equal with the Father and Son, yet as subservient to them in his method of acting; as the application of redemption accomplishes the design of the purchase of it, just as the purchase of it was a means to bring about that 'purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began.' These doctrines are necessary to direct us in those things which respect the distinct glory which we are to give to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and the method in which we are to hope for the blessings which we ask in prayer. The apostle, speaking of this duty, supposes that we are acquainted with these doctrines, when he says, 'Through him,' that is, Christ, 'we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'x

2. In the word of God, we have not only an account of the works of nature and providence, or of God's being the Creator and Governor of the world, which we have some knowledge of by reasoning from the divine perfections; but we have an account of those works which have an immediate reference to our salvation, and of that special providence in which God expresses a greater regard to the heirs of salvation than to all the world besides. When we draw nigh to God in prayer, we are to consider him as the God to whom we owe, not only our being as men, but our well-being as Christians, delivered from that ruin which we brought on ourselves by our apostacy from him.

We are also, as the apostle expresses it in his affectionate prayer for the church at Ephesus, to consider 'what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.' And when we survey the works of providence, we are not merely to think of God as the Governor of the world in general, but to consider what have been those special acts of providence by which he has governed man before and since the fall. Accordingly, we are to consider the first covenant as made with man in innocency; and the covenant of grace as a dispensation of grace, established in and with Christ as the Head of the elect, in order to their being delivered from that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves. These doctrines will be of use for our direction in prayer, as we are led by them to acknowledge our fallen state, what we were by nature, and what we should have been had we been left in that state; and are also led to adore the riches of God's grace, as he brings the greatest good to his saints out of the greatest evil.

3. The word of God gives us a distinct account of the offices of Christ, as they are suited to the necessities of his people, and also shows us what we are to ask with a particular relation to each of them, and what hope we have that he will grant our request. As he is appointed by the Father to be our High Priest, to make atonement for sin; our Advocate, to plead our cause; our Prophet, to lead us in the way of salvation; and our King, to subdue us to himself, and defend us from the assaults of our spiritual enemies; so we are, in our prayers, to improve the discoveries made of him in these offices, as a means to direct us as to the subject both of prayer and of praise.

III. The word of God is of use for our direction in prayer, as we have an account in it of the duties which are to be performed by us as men or as Christians, in every condition of life, and in all the relations

which we stand in to one another. As for duty in general, or that obedience which we owe to God, it cannot be performed but by his assistance; which is humbly to be asked in prayer. Accordingly, we are to say, as one does, "Lord, work in me that which thou requirest, and then require what thou pleasest." Here we might show how all the commands which God has given us may be of use to direct us in prayer, and to lead us to apply to him that he would enable us to obey them; how all his prohibitions of sin may be of use to instruct us what to deprecate, when we pray that he would keep us from our own iniquities, and what to confess before him, and implore the forgiveness of; and how all those commands which respect instituted worship, or our attendance on the ordinances, and the exercise of various graces in the whole course of our conversation, are of use to direct us what to ask in reference to his worship, and particularly in reference to the advantage we hope to receive under the means of grace, whenever we draw nigh to God in the way which he has appointed.

IV. As the word of God contains many promises and predictions, together with their accomplishment, for the encouragement of our faith and hope in prayer; it is of use to direct us in the performance of this duty. As for the predictions which are fulfilled, so far as they respect the blessings which God designed to bestow on his church, they are equivalent to promises; and we are to take occasion from them to adore and magnify his faithfulness, and to hope that whatever remains to be done for us, or for his people in general, shall also have its accomplishment.

The promises which are contained in scripture, are also a motive and inducement to prayer. They are a declaration of God's will to give the blessings which he sees necessary for us; and therefore are of great use in order to our performing this duty aright. Thus God gives an

intimation of the great things which he will do for his people, or bestow upon them, when he says, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.' There are also many expressions of a similar nature, which contain the form of a promise.—But besides these, there are passages which are equivalent to promises, and may be applied by us as if they were laid down in the same form as the promises generally are. Thus when God is said, in his word, to be able to do his people good, or to bestow some particular blessings upon them, they have ground to conclude that he will do it, or that his power shall be engaged in their behalf. Thus God is said to 'be able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.'a And elsewhere it is said, 'God is able to make all grace abound towards' his people, 'that they always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.' This is the same as if it had been said that he would do this for them.—Again, any scripture in which God is said to glorify any of his perfections in giving those blessings which his people want, is also equivalent to a promise. Thus, when, 'the Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,' &c., it is the same as if he had said that he would show mercy to them, since the design was to encourage them to hope for this blessing.—Further, whatever blessings are said to be purchased by Christ as our Redeemer, or prayed for by him as our Advocate, may be included in the number of promised blessings; for they will certainly be applied by him, who will not lose what he has purchased by his blood, and is never denied what he asks.—Again, the universal experience of believers, relating to the blessings which accompany salvation, contains the nature, though not the form, of a promise. Hence, when this is recorded in scripture, for the encouragement of others in all succeeding ages, it is as much to be applied by us when we are in like

circumstances, as though it were more directly promised to us. Thus when God's faithful servants are said to be 'kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation;'d or when the psalmist says, 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread;' these and similar expressions are to be applied by us as promises.—Again, that which is proposed to us, or which we are to have in view as the end of our attending on ordinances, is equivalent to a promise. Accordingly, when we are commanded or encouraged to pray and hope for any spiritual blessings, while waiting upon God in ordinances in the way which he requires, it is the same as if he had said that he would give us those blessings. If a believer is thirsty, and encouraged to come to the waters,—if he wants grace or peace, and is told that they are to be attained in ordinances; the mere intimation that we are to seek these blessings in such a way, is equivalent to a promise.—Further, God's seeing our distress, or knowing our wants, is sometimes to be understood in scripture as containing the nature of a promise. Thus when our Saviour tells his disciples, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things;'f his words are the same as if he had told them that God had promised or designed to bestow those outward blessings upon them. And when he designed or promised to deliver his people out of their bondage in Egypt, he says, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people; I know their sorrows,' &c.

Having thus shown the manner in which the promises are laid down in scripture, we shall now consider how they are to be made use of in order to our direction and encouragement in prayer. Here it may be observed that the promises respect either outward or spiritual blessings, both of which we are to pray for. Thus the apostle says, 'Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' The former respects the temporal dispensations of

providence; the latter, grace and glory, or the things which accompany salvation.

1. We shall consider the promises which respect temporal or outward blessings, which we are obliged to pray for, as we stand in need of them. These are of various kinds. There are promises of health and strength, whereby our passage through this world may be made easy and comfortable, and we better enabled to glorify God in the present life. Thus it is said, 'Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones;' and, 'Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.'k There are promises of food and raiment, or the necessary provisions and conveniences of life. 'Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' And, 'He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.'m There are promises of comfort and peace in our dwellings. 'Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.' And, 'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'o And, 'The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth and for evermore.' There are promises of quiet and composed rest by night, on our beds. 'Thou shalt take thy rest in safety; also thou shalt lie down and none shall make thee afraid.'q And, 'When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.' There are promises of success and a blessing in our worldly callings. 'Thou shalt cat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.' And, 'Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the fruit of thy cattle, and the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land, in his season, and to bless all

the work of thine hand. And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and shalt not borrow.'t And, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.' There are promises of an entail of blessings on our families. 'Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive-plants round about thy table.'x And, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children.' And, 'The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.'z And, 'Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.' I might have mentioned many more promises of outward blessings which God will bestow on his people; though with the limitation that they are subservient to his glory, and their real good. Thus there are promises respecting riches, 'Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever;'b and honours, 'Them that honour me I will honour;' and long life, 'Length of days are in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.'d 'What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.' Or there are promises that, if God does not think fit to give his people long life, he will take them out of the world in mercy, and gather them into a better, to prevent their seeing the evil which he designs to bring on the inhabitants of the earth. 'The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.'f He has also promised some blessings which respect their good name. 'I will make you a name and a praise among all the earth.' 'The memory of the just is blessed.'h

But what I shall principally add concerning outward blessings, is that God has promised, not only that he will give them to his people, but that he will sanctify them to them for their spiritual advantage, and

that he will enable them to improve them aright to his glory, so that the blessings shall become more sweet and desirable. Thus God has promised that he will free his people, who enjoy outward good things, from the sorrow which is often mixed with them, and which tends greatly to embitter them. 'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.' He has also promised to give them inward peace, together with outward prosperity. 'The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'k Again, he has promised to give them spiritual and heavenly blessings, together with the good things of this life. 'Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.' 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest mine head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will,' or, I shall, 'dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'m Again, God has promised, together with outward blessings, to give a thankful heart, whereby his people may be enabled to give him the glory of what they enjoy. 'When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee.' 'Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never me ashamed.'o Further, he has promised, not only that he will confer outward good things on his people, but that he will make them blessings to others, and enable them to lay out what he gives them for their good, to support his cause and gospel in the world, and to relieve those who are in distress. 'I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.' 'Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee and unto thine house, thou and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.'q These promises

more especially respect those who are in a prosperous condition in the world.

But there are others which are made to believers, in an afflicted state. Indeed, there is scarcely any affliction to which they are liable, but what has some special promises annexed to it. There are promises made to believers when lying on a sickbed 'The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.' 'The Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all that hate thee.'s' I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.' There are promises made to believers, when poor and low in the world. 'I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread.'u There are promises which respect God's giving a full compensation for all the losses which his people have sustained for Christ's sake. 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit life everlasting.' 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my name's sake shall find it.'y There are promises made to believers under oppression. 'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.' 'In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.'a 'A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.' There are promises made to believers when reviled and persecuted for righteousness' sake. 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.'c 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.' There are promises made to God's people,

when they are in distress, and at present see no way of escape. Thus when Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the prison, he had this promise given him: 'Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.'e There are promises suited to the condition of God's people, when their lot is cast in perilous times. Thus it is said, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'

Now, there are several mercies which God has promised to his people, under the various afflictions to which they are exposed. Sometimes he promises to prevent the afflictions which we are most afraid of. 'The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul;' 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.'h He has promised to preserve his people from a time of trouble, or defend them in it. 'Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' 'Thus saith the Lord; although I have cast them afar off among the heathen; and although I have scattered them among the countries; yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.'k He has promised to moderate their afflictions. 'In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind.' 'Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord; for I am with thee, for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will not I leave thee wholly unpunished.'m He has promised that, if need be, he will shorten their afflictions. 'The red of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.' 'In these days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be

saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.'o He has promised his people that he will enable them to bear the afflictions which he lays upon them. 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.' He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'q He has promised to show his people the particular sin which is the cause of their affliction, that they may be humbled for it. 'If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded.' He has promised to bring good to them out of their afflictions. 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.'s 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' 'I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, that it is my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.'u Thus concerning the promises which more especially respect outward blessings which God bestows on his people.

2. There are promises contained in scripture which relate more especially to spiritual blessings; and these are of great use to us when we are asking such blessings of God in prayer.

There are promises which relate more especially to the ordinances or means of grace. These are various. Some respect the duty of prayer, and the success which shall follow, in God's giving gracious returns on answers to it. 'He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.' 'Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.'y 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Another

ordinance to which promises are annexed, is meditation about spiritual things. 'Mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.'a 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.' To those also who read the word of God, there are promises made that he will make known his words to them, so that they may understand them. 'Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.'c There are promises made to those who attend on the public worship of God. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.' 'The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.'e There are promises made to religious fasting on special occasions. 'When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' There are promises made to almsgiving. 'The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.'g 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.' 'He that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully. God loveth a cheerful giver, and is able to make all grace abound,'i &c. There are promises made to believers when they appear in behalf of truth, at times when it is opposed and perverted, that it shall not be run down, nor they confounded or put to silence by its enemies. 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist.' There are promises made to the religious and strict observance and sanctification of the Lord's day. 'Blessed is the man that doth this; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.'

Again, there are promises in scripture which respect God's giving his people special grace, together with the joy, peace, and comfort which flow from it; and these will be of great use to them, in order to their engaging aright in the duty of prayer. There are promises of the grace of faith; and promises made to that grace. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' 'By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'n There are promises of the grace of repentance. 'There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' 'Ye shall remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.'p There are promises of love to God. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love.' 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.'r 'Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.'t There are promises of an holy filial fear of God. 'I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.'x Obedience to God's commands, which is an indispensable duty, is also considered as a promised blessing. 'Thou shalt return, and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.' Moreover, as there are promises of the graces of the Spirit, so the comforts which flow thence are also, promised. Thus it is said, 'I, even I am he that comforteth you.'z 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,' &c. In particular, there are promises of peace of conscience; which is a great branch of those

spiritual comforts which God gives his people ground to expect. Thus it is said, 'I will restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord.'b 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.' Again, God has promised a good hope of eternal life. 'Now, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.'d 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' Further, God has promised spiritual joy to his people. 'The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.'f 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.'

Here we shall consider a believer, when drawing nigh to God in prayer, as depressed and bowed down in his spirit, and hardly able to speak a word to him in his own behalf. Thus the psalmist says, 'I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' We shall consider also how he may receive great advantage from those promises which he will find in the word of God. Thus, when he complains of the wickedness, hardness, and perverseness of his heart; God gives him these promises: 'I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh;'i and, 'Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' Again, when a believer is sensible of his ignorance, or, at least, that his knowledge of divine truths bears no proportion to the means of grace which he has been favoured with, and that he is often destitute of spiritual wisdom to direct his way, and to carry him through the difficulties he often meets with as to his temporal or

spiritual affairs; there are promises suited to this case: 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.'m Again, if believers complain of the weakness of their memories, that they cannot retain the truths of God when they hear them; Christ has promised that the Holy Ghost shall 'teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance.' Further, if they complain of their unthankfulness, or that they have not hearts disposed to praise God for the mercies they receive; God gives them these promises: 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.'o 'Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name; the upright shall dwell in thy presence.' Further, there are many who are not altogether destitute of hope that they have the truth of grace, but yet are filled with trouble, apprehending that they do not make those advances in grace which they ought, but seem to be at a stand; and they reckon their state little better than if going backward, and they dread the consequences. Now such may take encouragement from those promises which respect a believer's growing in grace. 'Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.'q 'He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.' And if they complain of their unprofitableness under the means of grace, and of not receiving any spiritual advantage by the various dispensations of providence which they are under; there is a promise adapted to their case: 'Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.'s Again, are they afraid that they

shall fall away, after having made a long profession of religion? There is a promise which our Saviour himself took encouragement from, though never liable to any fear of this nature, which a believer may apply to himself, as affording relief against these fears and discouragements: 'I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' And there is another which is more directly applicable to this case: 'Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.'u And if the believer has fallen, and, at the same time, is afraid that he shall never be able to rise again, and recover what he has lost, there is another promise: 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints.' God also says, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'y Again, if a believer be under divine desertion, which he may be, and yet be kept from apostasy; if he is mourning after the Lord, and earnestly desiring that he would return to him; he may take encouragement from that promise: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.' And, 'Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together. For I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord.'a Again, is he cast down under a sense of the guilt of sin, and afraid of the punishment which will follow? There are many promises in the word of God which respect the forgiveness of sin. 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.' 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'c 'heven I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' Finally, is a believer afraid of the last enemy, death; by reason of the fear of which 'he is all his life-time subject to bondage?' There

are promises suited to his case. 'This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.'e 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.'g Thus we have considered the promises of God as suited to every condition, and, consequently, as affording matter of encouragement to us in drawing nigh to him in prayer.

V. Those reproofs for sins committed, and threatenings which are contained in the word of God, as a means to deter from committing them, may be improved for our direction in prayer. We are induced by these reproofs and threatenings to hate sin, beg strength to subdue and mortify it, and deprecate the wrath and judgments of God. We are also led by them to see our desert of punishment, while we confess ourselves to be sinners, and to bless God that he has not inflicted it upon us; especially if he has given us ground of hope that he has delivered us from the condemnation which was due to us for sin. Moreover, the reproofs of sin and threatenings against it contained in the word of God will be of use to us in prayer, as we are led by them to have an awful sense of the holiness and justice of God, and to draw nigh to him with fear and trembling, lest we should provoke his wrath by our unbecoming behaviour in his presence, and so bring on ourselves a curse instead of a blessing.

VI. The word of God is of use for our direction in prayer, as it contains many examples of the performance of this duty in a right manner by the saints, whose graces, and the manner in which they have drawn nigh to God, are proposed for our imitation. Thus we read of Jacob's wrestling with God, and of his great importunity. It is said, 'He had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him.' This refers to what is mentioned in Gen.

32:26, 28. There 'the angel,' that is, Christ, says, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh;' as if he had said, 'Cease thy importunity, which thou hast maintained to the breaking of the day; during which time I have given thee no encouragement that I will grant thy request.' Jacob now persists in his resolution, and says, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;' that is, 'I will not leave off importuning thee, till thou givest me a gracious answer.' Our Saviour then says, 'As a prince hast thou power with God,' that is, with me, 'and with men,' that is, with Esau thy brother, 'and hast prevailed;' so that he shall do thee no hurt, but his heart shall be turned towards thee. Again, we read of Abraham's humility in prayer. He says, 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.'k 'Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak.' We also read of David's sincerity, 'Attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips.'m We likewise read of Hezekiah's addressing himself to God with tears in his sickness. Having done so, he immediately received a gracious answer; and when he had recovered, he gave praise to God: 'The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. The father to the children shall make known thy truth.'o Again, we have an instance of Jonah's faith in prayer, when his disobedience to the divine command had brought him into the utmost distress. 'Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.' We have also an instance of Daniel drawing nigh to God with an uncommon reverence and awful fear of his divine Majesty, and an account of the manner in which he addresses himself to him, with confession of those sins which Israel had been guilty of. 'I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy

precepts, and from thy judgments.' We have this humble confession and supplication continued to the nineteenth verse; and then an account of the success of it, in the gracious answer which God sent him by an angel from heaven. We also read of Joshua's interceding for Israel, when 'he fell upon his face before the ark of the Lord, with his clothes rent;'r and we have the plea that he made use of, 'What wilt thou do unto thy great name?' We have also an instance of fervency in Moses, when pleading for the people after they had worshipped the golden calf. He prefers God's glory to his own happiness; and had rather have no name in the church, or be 'blotted out of the book' which God had 'written,' than that his 'wrath' should 'wax hot against Israel, to consume them.'t There are many other instances mentioned in scripture; which, for brevity's sake, I pass over. Indeed, the whole book of Lamentations is of use to direct us in prayer, under pressing afflictions, either feared or undergone; and the book of Psalms is a directory for prayer to the believer, suited to every condition which he may be supposed to be in, and of praise for mercies of all kinds, whether temporal or spiritual. And the same may be said of many other parts of scripture.

Practical Inferences from the Word of God, being a Rule of Direction for Prayer

From what has been said concerning the word of God being a direction to us in prayer, several inferences may be drawn. First, as reading the scriptures in our families and closets is a great help to raise our affections, and bring us into a praying frame; so the application of scripture doctrines and examples to our own case, will supply us with fit matter and expressions upon all occasions, when we draw nigh to God in this duty.—Again, the pretence of some that they know not how to pray, or that they cannot pray without a prescribed form, arises, for the most part, from an unacquaintedness

with the scriptures, or a neglect to study them, to answer this end.—Again, since the word of God is a directory for prayer, we ought not to affect modes of expression, or human strains of rhetoric, which are not deduced from scripture or agreeable to it; but, on the other hand, we are to use such a simplicity of style, and spirituality of expression, as we find contained in scripture,—especially in those parts of it which are more directly subservient to this duty.—Further, it will be of very great use for us sometimes, in the course of our reading scripture, especially in private, to turn what we read into prayer, though it do not contain in itself the form of a prayer. Thus when we read of the presumptuous sins committed by some, and the visible marks of God's displeasure which followed, we ought to lift up our hearts to him, that he would keep us from them, or, if we have reason to charge ourselves as guilty of them, that we may be humbled and obtain forgiveness from him. And when we read the excellent characters of some of the saints in scripture, we ought to pray that God would enable us to be followers of them in their excellencies; or when, in some parts of scripture, believers are represented as praying for particular mercies, we ought to lift up our hearts to God for the same. Our pursuing this practice will be a means, not only to furnish us with matter and proper expressions in prayer, but to excite our affections when we engage in this duty, in those stated times which we set apart for it.

The Lord's Prayer a Special Rule of Direction for Prayer

We are now to consider that there is a special rule of direction contained in that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer. This prayer is mentioned by only two of the evangelists, Matthew and Luke.x Though there is a perfect harmony between their reports of the prayer, as there is between all other parts of scripture, as to the matter or sense of the words; yet it

is obvious to all who compare them together, that there is some difference as to the mode of expression,—particularly in the fourth and fifth petitions. Nor is this difference only in the translation, which is sufficiently just; but it is in the original; and it would not have existed, had the Lord's prayer been designed for a form if prayer. Thus in the fourth petition, Luke teaches us to say, 'Give us day by day our daily bread;' while in Matthew, it is expressed, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Here there are different ideas contained in the respective words as is very common when the same sense is in substance laid down in different parts of scripture. 'Give us this day our daily bread,' contains a petition for what we want at present; and, 'Give us this, day by day,' implies that our wants will daily recur upon us, so that it will every day be necessary to desire a supply from God. Hence, if both accounts of the petition be compared together, we are directed to pray, 'Lord, give us the blessings which we want at present; and let these wants be daily supplied, as we shall stand in need of a supply from thee.' Again, in the fifth petition, Luke directs us to pray, 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us;' while, in Matthew, the expression is very different, namely, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' Again, the evangelist Luke leaves out the doxology, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen;' which Matthew adds. Hence, it may be inferred, I conceive, that our Saviour did not design, in dictating this, prayer to his people, that they should confine themselves to the mode of expression used in it without the least variation; for in that case, doubtless, the two evangelists would have laid it down in the very same words. But he rather, designed it as a directory respecting the matter of prayer.

I am sensible it will be objected, that the preface which Luke prefixes to it, is, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father,' &c., which seems to intimate that these very words should be used, and no other. We reply, that

the evangelist Matthew, who, beyond dispute, laid down this prayer more fully than Luke does, says, by way of preface to it, 'After this manner pray ye.' Now, these words seem to be an intimation that it was designed to be rather a directory as to the matter of prayer, than a form of words to be used without the least variation. Hence, I cannot but think that what Luke says, 'When you pray, say,' &c., imports nothing else but, 'Pray after this manner.'

That our Saviour principally designed this prayer as a directory respecting the matter of our petitions, rather than as a form, further appears from the fact that it does not explicitly contain all the parts of prayer, particularly, confession of sin, or thankful acknowledgment of mercies. I say, it does not contain these explicitly, but only implicitly, as a deduction, or inference from the petitions themselves. Thus our saying, 'Forgive us our debts,' or sins, supposes that we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. Nor can it be denied that there are some expressions which contain matter of thanksgiving. Thus our saying, 'Hallowed be thy name,' implies a thankful acknowledgment of all those instances in which God has sanctified his name, as well as a desire that he would sanctify it: it is as if we should say, 'Thou hast, in the various dispensations of thy providence, and in all thine holy institutions, set forth the glory of thy perfections, that thou mayest be adored and magnified by thy creatures. This we own with thankfulness, at the same time that we desire the continuance of it.' Again, when we pray, 'Give us daily bread,' we, in effect, acknowledge the bounty of his providence, whence we receive all the comforts of life, and his having hitherto supplied our wants. The Lord's prayer, then, is an implicit direction for thanksgiving. But if our Saviour had designed that it should be a perfect form of words, to be used without varying in the least from them, he would have given us some more full and direct account of what sins we are to acknowledge, and what mercies we are to thank

him for. Such an account is more plainly contained in some other scriptures than it can be supposed to be in this prayer. Hence the prayer seems to be principally designed as a rule for our direction what we are to ask for, or how that part of prayer which includes petition, ought to be performed agreeably to the mind and will of God. Moreover, there is no explicit mention of the Mediator, in whose name we are to pray; nor of his obedience, sufferings, or intercession, on which the efficacy of our prayers is founded, and to which our faith is to have a great regard. These things, therefore, are to be supplied by what we find in other parts of scripture, all which, taken together, give us a perfect directory for prayer; though neither this prayer, nor any other used in scripture, sufficiently appears to have been designed as a form of words which we are to confine ourselves to, without the least variation.

It is observed in the latter of the Answers under consideration, that the Lord's prayer is not only for direction as a pattern, but may be used as a prayer, provided it be done in a right manner. Now, it is granted that the Lord's prayer is of use, as a pattern and rule for our direction, in common with all other prayers contained in scripture; but the main difficulty is, whether our Saviour designed that his disciples, and the church in all following ages, should confine themselves to the words of the prayer, so far as that the mode of expression should not be in the least altered, or any thing added to the petitions contained in it, how agreeable soever to the sense and words of scripture. Now, this does not seem to have been his intention, As it will not be denied by any, that every one of the petitions contained in the prayer may be interspersed and joined with other petitions; so, when this has been done, or at least the sense of the petitions expressed in other words, it will be very hard to prove that it is absolutely necessary that the petitions should be recollected and prayed over again, in the same method in which they

are laid down in the prayer, merely for the sake of our making use of it as a form. It will be especially hard to prove this, if the making use of the prayer as a form is not expressly commanded by our Saviour; and that it is not so commanded, appears from what was formerly observed, that these words, 'When you pray, say, Our Father,' &c. imply nothing else but, 'Pray after this manner.' I would be very far, however, from censuring or blaming the practice observed by many of the reformed churches, who conclude their extempore or premeditated prayers with it, provided it be done with understanding, reverence, and suitable acts of faith. For any other petition contained in scripture may be made use of by us in prayer; not only as to its sense, but in its express words. The principal thing which I would militate against, is not so much the using of the words, as doing this in a formal way, supposing that the mere recital of them does, as it were, sanctify our other prayers; which, though very agreeable to the sense of the Lord's prayer, are, as some suppose, so incomplete, that they will hardly be regarded by God without it. Moreover, I cannot but conclude the Papists highly to blame, who think that the frequent repetition of it, though in a tongue unknown to the common people, is not only necessary, but in some measure meritorious. And the practice of some ignorant superstitious persons, who think that it may be made use of as a charm, and that the words of it may be repeated, as the Jews of old did their phylacteries, as a means to drive away evil spirits, is not only to be disapproved, but is a vile instance of profaneness, very remote from the design of our Saviour in giving it.

THE PREFACE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CLXXXVIII. Of how many parts doth the Lord's prayer consist?

ANSWER. The Lord's prayer consists of three parts, a preface, petitions, and a conclusion.

QUESTION CLXXXIX. What doth the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us?

ANSWER. The preface of the Lord's prayer, contained in these words, "Our Father, which art in heaven," teacheth us, when we pray, to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein, with reverence, and all other childlike dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension; as also to pray with and for others.

IN this prayer we are taught to begin our prayers with a preface, and therein to make an explict mention of the name of God, and some of his divine perfections. The preface to this prayer is contained in those words: 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' It shows us that we are to draw near to God with reverence, and suitable apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and other divine perfections, and with an holy confidence of his fatherly goodness. The phrase, 'Our Father,' shows us also that we are to pray with and for others; and instructs us to begin our prayers with some expressions of reverence, agreeable to the nature of the duty in which we are engaged, whereby we express the sense we have of his essential or relative glory. We have various instances in scripture in which God's people, when addressing themselves to him, made mention of his glorious names, titles, and attributes, in variety of expressions. Thus David, in his psalms, which contain the matter and form of prayers, sometimes begins with the mention of the name of God, to whom they are

directed. He says, for example, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us,' &c. And elsewhere, 'O God, thou art my God.'z Sometimes, also, he makes mention of his name Jehovah; which we translate Lord. Thus he says, 'O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath,' &c. 'I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.'b 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!' Solomon begins his prayer at the consecration of the temple, 'Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above, or earth beneath; who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.'d Ezra begins his prayer, 'O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.' Daniel expresses himself thus, in the preface to his prayer, 'O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.'f These are all expressions which denote reverence and adoration; and, along with other expressions of a similar nature, they are of use for our direction, as to the preface or beginning of our prayers to God. But the preface to the Lord's prayer is somewhat different; and affords us some particular directions.

1. It teaches us to address ourselves to God as a Father. This relation includes something common to mankind in general; and, in respect to this, we are to adore him as our Creator, our owner, and benefactor, 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being.' Thus the prophet says, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?'h Elsewhere, also, it is said, 'He formeth the spirit of man within him;' on which account he is called, 'the God of the spirits of all flesh,'k and, 'the Father of spirits.'—Again, God's being a Father to his people, sometimes denotes that external covenant relation which they stand in to him, as a people called by his name, favoured with the means of grace, and, as such, the objects of his care and goodness; whom he is pleased to govern by laws given by special revelation from heaven, whom he encourages to wait on him in those

ordinances in which they may hope for his presence, and to whom, as persons who give themselves up to him by faith, he promises all saving blessings. In this sense we are to understand those scriptures in which God says, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born.'m 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.' 'Wilt thou not from this time cry to me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?'o—Further, the relation which God stands in to his people, as a Father, is sometimes taken in the highest sense, as implying discriminating grace, or special love, which he is pleased to extend to the heirs of salvation. Thus he is called so by right of redemption. Accordingly, Christ is styled, 'the everlasting Father,' as being the Head and Redeemer of his people. And the church says, 'Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.'q And believers are called his children by regeneration; in which respect they are said to be 'born of God,' and to be 'made partakers of a divine,'s that is, an holy and spiritual 'nature,' which had its rise from God, when he was pleased to stamp his image upon them, consisting in holiness and righteousness. They are also called the children of God by adoption. Thus he is said to have 'predestinated them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself;' and they are said to 'receive the adoption of sons;'u and, as such, they have a right to the inheritance of children.

These various senses in which God is said to be a Father to man, may serve for our direction when we style him, 'Our Father,' in prayer. Unregenerate persons, when they pray to God, can ascend no higher than what is contained in their relation to him as a God of nature, and of providence. They are obliged to adore him for the blessings which they have received from him as the effects of common bounty, which include all the blessings belonging to this life, together with his patience, forbearance, and long-suffering, in delaying to inflict the punishment which sin deserves. Hence, when they say, 'Our

Father,' they acknowledge that they derive their being from him. Though they cannot lay claim to the benefits of Christ's redemption, yet they confess their obligations to God as their Creator, and consider him as having given them souls capable of spiritual blessings, and themselves as daily receiving the good things of this life from him. and as dependent on him for those things which tend to the comfort and support of life. They also stand in need of those blessings which are suited to the nature of the soul, and consequently beg that they may not remain destitute of the things which may conduce to their everlasting welfare. Hence, they may use the psalmist's words, 'Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.'

As for those who are God's children by an external covenant-relation, there is something more implied than merely their being creatures; for, in considering that relation, they are led to adore him for the discoveries which he has made in the gospel of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, who calls and invites sinners to come to him, and encourages them to hope that those who are enabled to do so in a right manner, he will in no wise cast out. Hence, when they call upon God in prayer, as their Father, they in effect, say, "Lord, we cannot conclude ourselves to be thy children as redeemed, effectually called, and sanctified; nor can we lay claim to the inheritance laid up for thy saints in heaven; yet we are encouraged to wait on thee in the ordinances of thine appointment, and to hope for thy special presence in them, whereby they may be made effectual for our salvation. We are, indeed, destitute of special grace, and cannot conclude that we have a right to the saving blessings of the covenant; yet, through thy great goodness, we still enjoy the means of grace. We have not been admitted to partake of Christ's fulness, nor to eat of the bread of life; yet we are thankful for those blessings of thy house which thou art pleased to continue to us; and since thou still

includest us in the number of those who are thy children as favoured with the gospel, we humbly take leave, on this account, to call thee our Father, to wait and hope for thy salvation, and to continue to implore that grace from thee which will give us a right to the best of blessings that we stand in need of."

As for those who are God's children in the highest sense, by redemption, regeneration, and adoption, they may draw nigh to him with an holy boldness. For they have, as the apostle expresses it, 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father;' and have reason to adore him for privileges of the highest nature which he has conferred upon them, and to encourage themselves that he will bestow upon them all the blessings they stand in need of as to this or a better world. Such may draw nigh to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and their interest in it; and they ought to take notice of that goodness and improve it, in order to their drawing nigh to him in a right manner in prayer, as well as to induce them to behave themselves, in the whole course of their conversation, as those who are taken into the honourable relation of being his children. They ought to have admiring thoughts of God, that they, who were by nature strangers and enemies to him, should be admitted to partake of this inestimable privilege; as the apostle says, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' They should also take encouragement to hope that he will hear and answer their prayers, though very imperfect, so far as his doing so may tend to his glory and their real advantage. Thus our Saviour says, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?'a Do we pray for spiritual blessings, such as the increase of grace, strength against corruption, and to be kept from temptation, or from falling by it? We have ground to conclude that these shall be

granted us, inasmuch as they are purchased for us by Christ, promised in the covenant of grace, and secured to us, as we have the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit in our hearts, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And when we pray for temporal blessings, we have reason to hope that they shall be granted, if they be necessary for us; since our Saviour says, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things.'

In particular, our being the children of God ought to excite in us those childlike dispositions which are agreeable to this relation, not only when we draw nigh to God in prayer, but in the whole conduct of our lives. One childlike disposition is humble reverence. This is not only becoming those who have an interest in God's love, and a liberty of access into his presence, with hope of acceptance in his sight; but it is what we are obliged to as his peculiar people, and is a branch of that honour which is due to him as our God and Father. Thus he says by the prophet, 'A son honoureth his father;' and he here intimates, that humble reverence of him as their Father, is the character and disposition of those who stand in the relation of children to him. And the apostle argues from the less to the greater, when he says, 'We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits?'d—Another childlike disposition is patience under rebukes. This we are to exercise, when we consider our proneness to go astray, whereby not only do we deserve rebukes, but they are rendered necessary; and especially when we consider that they flow from love, and are designed for our good; as the apostle says, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and seourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'—Another childlike disposition is being grieved for our Father's frowns; especially that we have incurred his displeasure by our misbehaviour towards him. This disposition includes a readiness to confess our faults, and a carefulness to avoid

them for the future.—Again, contentment with the provision of our Father's house, whatever it be, is another childlike disposition. We shall never, indeed, have the least cause to complain of scarcity; for, as the returning prodigal in the parable said, even 'the hired servants of his father had bread enough, and to spare.'f It can hardly be supposed that he who is at the fountain-head can perish for thirst. Yet, though we are not straitened in God, we are often straitened in our own bowels, through the weakness of our faith, when we are not inclined to receive what God holds forth to us in the gospel; and then we are discontented and uneasy, while the blame lies at our own door. If, however, we behaved ourselves as the children of such a Father, we should not only be pleased with the fulness of grace which is in Christ, but constantly adore and live upon it; and whether he is pleased to give us more or less of the blessings of common providence, we should learn, 'in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.'—Again, obedience to a father's commands, without disputing his authority, or his right to govern us, is another childlike disposition. Thus, when we draw nigh to God as to our Father, we are to express a readiness to do whatever he requires. And by acting thus, we not only approve ourselves subjects under a law, but, as the apostle styles it, 'obedient children,' as being 'holy in all manner of conversation.'h—Another disposition of children is, that they have a fervent zeal for their father's honour, and cannot bear to hear him reproached without the highest resentment. Thus the children of God, how much soever they may be concerned about their own affairs, when injuriously treated by the world, are always ready to testify their utmost dislike of every thing which reflects dishonour on God, or his ways.—Another childlike disposition is love; which the relation of a father engages to. Thus when we draw nigh to God as to our Father, we express our love to him; and this is founded in his divine excellencies, which render him the object of the highest delight and esteem.—Again, he who has a childlike disposition,

retains a grateful sense of the obligations he is under to his father. Thus we ought to be duly sensible of all the favours which we have received from God, which are more than can be numbered. The contrary to this disposition is reckoned the basest ingratitude and disingenuousness, altogether unbecoming the temper of children. Thus Moses says to Israel, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise? is not he thy father who hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?' A believer's obligations to God are so very great, that he cannot look back upon his former state, or consider what he was, how vile and unworthy of any regard from him, how miserable and unable to help himself when he first had compassion on him, without seeing himself under the strongest engagements to be entirely and for ever his. This is a becoming behaviour towards such a Father.—Further, love to all who are related to us as children of the same father, is another childlike disposition. Thus our love to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, is a temper becoming the children of God. Indeed, it is no other than loving God in them. We behold his image stamped upon them; and in loving them, we express the high esteem we have for regenerating grace, whereby God is denominated our common Father; and we, being acted by a principle common to all, are obliged and inclined to love as brethren. Thus they who love God are induced to love his children. Accordingly, the apostle says, 'Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him;'k and he adds, 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.' Thus concerning our drawing nigh to God, as to a Father, as we are taught to do in the Lord's prayer.

2. We are directed in the preface of this prayer, to draw nigh to God as being in heaven. Heaven is the most glorious part of the frame of nature, in which his power, wisdom, and goodness are eminently displayed, and which he designed to be an eternal habitation for the

best of creatures, to whom he would discover more of his glory than to any others. In this respect, it is called his 'throne.'

Now, God's being in heaven should lead us to have high and awful thoughts of the majesty and greatness of God, whom all the hosts of heaven worship with the utmost reverence, being satisfied with the immense treasure of his goodness. We therefore take occasion to admire his infinite condescension, that he will look upon creatures here below. Thus Solomon, in his prayer, says, 'Will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee;' will he therefore look down upon those, who are so mean, deformed, and destitute of his image, as we are, who dwell in houses of clay, and deserve to be banished out of his sight?— Again, God's being in heaven should be improved by us to teach us humility and modesty, in our conceptions and discourse concerning God and divine things. It is but a little that we know of the affairs of the upper world, and of the manner in which God is pleased to manifest himself to his saints and angels there; and we know much less of his divine perfections, which the inhabitants of heaven adore, being sensible of the infinite distance they stand at from him, as creatures, on which account they cannot comprehend the Almighty, or find him out to perfection; and shall we pretend to search out the secrets of his wisdom, or express ourselves in prayer as though we were speaking to one who is our equal, or could fathom the infinite depths of his unsearchable counsels? Solomon's advice may be well adapted to this case, 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.'o We are not to think that we may say what we please, or be 'rash' and inconsiderate in what we say, when we are 'before the Lord;' 'for he is in heaven.' 'Therefore our words should be few;' that is, we should not think that the efficacy of our prayers depends upon the multitude of our words;

or if we speak more or less to God, our expressions ought not to be bold, rash, hasty, or inconsiderate, but should be framed with decency and reverence, becoming those who are speaking to the Majesty of heaven,—Further, God's being in heaven should put us upon meditating frequently on the glory of the heavenly state, as those who hope at last to be joined with that happy and numerous assembly who are in God's immediate presence in heaven. Hence, our conversation should be there; and we should profess ourselves to be sojourners on earth, seeking a better country, looking and waiting for the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour, and hoping that, when he comes, he will receive us to heaven, where our hearts are at present, as our treasure is there.

3. We are, in the preface to the Lord's prayer, farther taught that it is our duty to pray with and for others. When we say, 'Our Father,' we signify our relation to, and concern for, all the members of Christ's mystical body. Hence, if we do not join with others in prayer, we are to have them upon our hearts, who are the objects of Christ's special love and care. We have thus a sympathy with all those who are exposed to the same wants and miseries as ourselves; we take much delight in considering them as subjects of the same common Lord, joining in the same profession with ourselves; and we desire and hope concerning them, that they and we shall be glorified together.—Moreover, if we join with others in prayer, so that the whole assembly make their supplications by one who is their mouth to God, we practise what is called social worship. It is hence our duty to pray with as well as for others. Now, we must take heed that nothing be contained in united prayer but what the whole assembly may join in, as expressive of their faith, desires, or experiences; otherwise there cannot be such beautiful harmony as the nature and design of the duty we are jointly engaged in calls for. Besides, in all social or united prayers, the petitions are to be adapted to the particular case of every

one who addresses himself to God, how numerous soever the worshipping assembly may be; and therefore we are obliged to make use of that mode of expression, in which we are taught to say, 'Our Father.'

Thus our Saviour directs us how we should begin our prayers to God. And as the direction he gives us ought to be reduced to practice, I shall give a summary account of what is contained in the preface to the Lord's prayer. We shall thus be furnished with matter for our addressing ourselves to God in prayer, in a way agreeable to what is taught in that preface, when we come into his presence with such a frame of spirit as the importance of the duty requires. We are to express ourselves, then, to this effect: "O our God, we desire to draw nigh to thee with a becoming reverence, and an awful sense of thine infinite perfections. When we consider thee as a jealous God, and ourselves as sinful, guilty creatures, we might well be afraid to come before thee; but thou hast encouraged us to approach thy presence as to a Father, in and through the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore we come with an humble boldness before thy throne of grace, confessing that though we are called thy children, we have been very undutiful and rebellious against thee, and therefore unworthy of that relation, or of the inheritance which thou hast laid up for those whom thou hast ordained to eternal life. Thou, O Lord, hast established thy throne in the heavens, where there is an innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect, who all behold thy face, and are made completely blessed in thine immediate presence. As for us, we dwell in houses of clay; but we earnestly beg that we may be made meet for that happy society, and then admitted into it, that we may worship thee in a more perfect manner than we are capable of doing in this imperfect state. May all the powers and faculties of our souls be renewed, and influenced by thy Holy Spirit, that we may have our conversation in

heaven, whilst we are here below, and, in all things, may be enabled to approve ourselves thy children; have a constant sense of duty, and of the manifold obligations thou hast laid us under, that we may love thee, delight in thee, and submit to thee in all things; and have a fervent zeal for the honour of thy name as becomes thy children, that we together with all thy faithful servants, may be under thy safe protection here, and be received to thy glory hereafter."

THE FIRST PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CXC. What do we pray for in the first petition?

ANSWER. In the first petition, which is, "Hallowed be thy name," acknowledging the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves and all men to honour God aright, we pray that God would, by his grace, enable and incline us, and others, to know, to acknowledge, and highly to esteem him, his titles, attributes, ordinances, word, works, and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by, and to glorify him in thought, word, and deed; that he would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonourable to him; and, by his overruling providence, direct and dispose of all things to his own glory.

HAVING explained the preface to the Lord's prayer, we are next to consider its petitions. These are six; and are laid down in the following method. First, we are taught to pray for what concerns God's glory. This is the highest and most valuable end; and therefore ought first to be prayed for. It is the subject of the three first petitions. Secondly, we are directed to pray for what respects our own advantage. This is the subject of the three last petitions. In these we are directed to pray for outward blessings, as in the fourth petition; and then for spiritual, without which outward blessings would not afford us any relish or savour, or render us truly happy. These spiritual blessings include forgiveness of sin, which we pray for in the fifth petition; and our being sanctified and delivered from the prevalency of corruption and temptation, together with all the

evils to which sin exposes us, and this blessing we pray for in the sixth petition.

What we are more particularly to consider in this Answer, is, what we are taught to pray for in the first petition, which is contained in these words, 'Hallowed be thy name.' By the 'name' of God we are to understand every thing by which he is pleased to make himself known to his creatures. Thus he discovers himself in his divine perfections, which are either essential or personal, absolute or relative; and in his glorious titles, as the Lord of Hosts, the God and Rock of Israel, the Hope of Israel, the God that cannot lie, the Father of mercies, the God of all grace and glory, the Preserver of man; which have all a tendency to raise in us the highest veneration for him, and esteem of him. He has also made himself known by his ordinances, word, and works. These are the subject of this petition; and when we pray that they may be sanctified, we are to understand, not that they may be made holy, but that the holiness and glory of them may be demonstrated by him, and that we may be enabled to adore and magnify him in a becoming manner. Now, the name of God may be said to be sanctified in some respects by himself, and in other respects by his people.

I. We pray that God would sanctify his name, that is, demonstrate the glory of it, or proclaim it and make it visible to the world, so as to excite that adoration and esteem which is due to him. His name, indeed, has been eminently glorified in all ages, in the various methods of his providence and grace; whereby his power, wisdom, and goodness have been illustrated in the eyes of angels and men; and, in all his works, he has appeared to be a God of infinite holiness. We therefore pray that he would continue to glorify these perfections, and enable us to improve the displays of them to our spiritual advantage.

This is a subject of the highest importance, without which we cannot give to God the glory due to his name. Hence, as praise is joined with prayer, it is necessary for us to take a view of the various ways by which God has manifested the glory of this holiness. We might here consider how he did this in creating man at first, without the least blemish or disposition in his nature to sin, and in stamping his own image upon him, consisting principally in holiness, which was the greatest internal beauty and ornament that he could be endowed with. But what we shall principally consider, is, how the holiness of God is demonstrated in his dealings with fallen man. His suffering sin to enter into the world, was not inconsistent with the holiness of his nature. For his providence, as was formerly observed, was not conversant about it, by bringing any under a natural necessity of sinning; and therefore there is not the least ground to charge him with being the author of sin. We now proceed to show how the holiness of God was glorified in the dispensations of his providence towards fallen man, and in the methods he took in order to his recovery.

1. The holiness of God was glorified, or he sanctified his great name, in the dispensations of his providence towards fallen man, before he gave him any hope of salvation. It cannot be supposed that man's rebellion against God, and apostasy from him, should not be highly resented by him. Accordingly, we read of his proceeding as a judge against the rebel, charging his crime upon him, and passing sentence according to the demerit of his sin. And all the miseries to which we are exposed, either in this life or in that which is to come, are the result of the display of his holiness, as a sin-revenging Judge. As soon as our first parents sinned against him, he charged their guilt on their consciences, and filled them with a dread of his wrath. Hence proceeded an inclination to flee from his presence; and when they heard the voice of the Lord coming to call them to an account

for what they had done, they were afraid. This is God's usual method in dealing with sinful creatures. He first convinces them of sin by the law, and awakens the conscience, so that his terrors are set in array against it round about; and then he speaks good and comfortable words by the gospel. He thus sanctifies his name, and discovers his infinite hatred of all sin.

2. God glorifies his holiness in the method he has taken to deliver man from that guilt and misery under which he had brought himself. The terms of reconciliation and salvation were such as tended to secure the glory of his justice; and therefore he insisted on a satisfaction to be given; without making the least abatement of any part of the debt of punishment which was due for our sin. Accordingly, 'he spared not his own Son,' but delivered him over unto death, and obliged him to drink the bitterest part of that cup which was most formidable to nature, and which, had it been possible, he would fain have been excused from drinking. Hence, Christ is represented, by one of the evangelists, as praying that God the Father would 'take this cup from him;'q and by another, that he would 'save him from this hour.' Yet he expresses the utmost resignation to the divine will; and, being sensible that his sufferings were an expedient to glorify the holiness of God, he does, as it were, give a check to the voice of nature, and submits to bear the punishment he came into the world to suffer, how terrible soever it might be. Hence, he says, 'Father, glorify thy name;'s which is as if he had said, 'Take what method is most expedient to demonstrate the glory of thy holiness; let the whole debt be exacted on me; I am willing to pay the utmost farthing.' God then says, by a voice from heaven. 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again;' that is, 'In every step which has been or shall be taken, in order to the bringing about of the work of redemption, I have hallowed my name, and will do it hereafter.' Thus was God's holiness glorified in finishing

transgression, making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and also in the impetration of redemption, by our great Mediator and Surety.

3. God has sanctified his name in all the methods which he has taken in the application of redemption, in the various dispensations of his providence and grace towards his church and people. He has determined that 'if his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; if they break his statutes and keep not his commandments; he will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes;' and he does all this in order to manifest the glory of his holiness. Though he is pleased to pardon their iniquity for the sake of Christ's righteousness; yet they shall know by experience that he hates it. Whatever be his designs of grace with respect to his redeemed ones, they shall find that their sin shall not altogether go unpunished; though their punishment is not of the same kind as that which was suffered by Christ, from the hand of vindictive justice demanding satisfaction. Moreover, God has sanctified his name, in his having connected sanctification with salvation. Hence, he has said, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'u He makes his people first holy, and then happy. Every mercy which he bestows, is a motive or inducement to holiness; and all the ordinances and means of grace are made subservient to this end. Here we may take occasion to observe the various methods whereby God has sanctified his name, in all his dealings with his church, in various ages, both before and since our Saviour's incarnation.

The people whom, under the legal dispensation, he chose out of all the nations of the earth, and called by his name, among whom he designed to magnify his perfections in such a way as argued them to be the peculiar objects of his regard above all others, as he designed to make them high in name, in praise, and in honour, are styled 'an

holy people,' and elsewhere, 'holiness unto the Lord.'y The wonderful things which he did for them in destroying their enemies, when he brought them out of the Egyptian bondage, gave them occasion to celebrate his name, as a God 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.' The worship which he established among them was such as expressly required holiness, both in heart and in life. And when, at any time, they cast a reproach on his perfections, or defiled and debased his holy institutions, he testified his displeasure against them in the highest degree. Of this we have various instances in the judgments which he executed on particular persons, for not performing with the greatest exactness what he had commanded in things which related to his worship. Thus when Nadab and Abihu 'offered strange fire,' they were 'devoured, before the Lord, by fire from heaven.'a When David was bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem, we read that Uzzah put forth his hand to take hold of it to prevent its falling, when shaken by the oxen. This he, doubtless, did with a good design, and it is therefore called an 'error,' rather than a presumptuous sin. Yet it is said, that 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against him, so that he smote him that he died by it.' For what he did was contrary to an express law which God had given, that the sons of Kohath should 'bear the ark, but they should not touch it, or any holy thing' that was covered, 'lest they die.'c We read, too, that some of the men of Bethshemesh, because they had 'looked into the ark of the Lord, were smitten, so that fifty thousand, and threescore and ten of them died;' for God had forbidden that any should indulge their curiosity, so far as to look on the holy things on pain of death.e He also threatened the children of Israel with death, if any of those who were not appointed to minister in holy things, came nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, so as to perform that service which they were not sanctified or called to; since their doing so was reckoned no other than an instance of profaneness. Even if Aaron himself, whose office it was to go into the holiest of all to

perform the yearly service, in which he was to make atonement for the sins of the whole congregation, presumed to do this at any other time but that day which God had appointed, was to be punished with death.—Again, when any thing was brought into the worship of God, contrary to what he had instituted, which was reckoned no other than profaning it, God hallowed his own name, by pouring forth his wrath on those who gave occasion to or complied with it. Thus when Jeroboam set up calves in Bethel and Dan, 'made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi,' 'ordained feasts' like those which God had appointed, and, in many other instances, corrupted his worship, so that the people who followed him were led aside from God, it is said, 'This became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.'g When 'Ahaz erected an altar, according to the pattern of that which he saw at Damascus, and sacrificed to the gods of the people,' from whom he took the pattern, he brought 'ruin' on himself and his kingdom. When Uzziah usurped the priest's office, by offering incense in the temple, God immediately testified his displeasure against him, by 'smiting him with leprosy;' whereby he was separated from the congregation of the Lord, and rendered unfit to govern his people to the day of his death.i—Moreover, when holy men, in any instance, have not sanctified God's name in the eyes of the people, ho has highly resented their behaviour. Thus when Moses and Aaron 'spake unadvisedly with their lips,' on which account they are said 'not to have sanctified the name of God at the waters of Meribah,' he told them that therefore they should 'not bring the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, but should die in the wilderness.'—Again, as we have many instances of the judgments of God on particular persons, for not sanctifying his name; so we have a public and visible display of his holiness, in his dealings with the whole nation of Israel, after their many revolts from him, when they served other gods, and not only corrupted but laid aside his

institutions, and were guilty of vile abominations which were inconsistent with the least pretensions to holiness. God then sanctified his own name, not only by reproving them by the prophets, but by sending the many judgments which were the forerunners of that desolation which they had reason to expect, and afterwards by delivering them into the hands of those who carried them captive, Israel into Assyria, and Judah into Babylon.

Let us now consider how God has sanctified his name, and continues to sanctify it, under the gospel dispensation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head and Saviour of his church, has, in his whole administration, set forth the glory of God's holiness. He came into the world, with a commission from his Father, to engage in the work of our redemption; and accordingly, he is said to have been 'sanctified and sent into it' for this very purpose. When he entered on his public ministry, he produced his commission, and gave undeniable proofs that he was the Messiah, the person whom God the Father had 'sealed,' and set over his house, to manage this great affair. Every miracle which he wrought, was a divine testimony for the confirmation of the truth that the gospel dispensation took its rise from Christ our great Mediator, and was a glorious display of the holiness of God. The world could not have the least ground to think they were imposed on, when they concluded that, according to the predictions of all the holy prophets who went before him, this Jesus was he who was to come into the world to erect that dispensation in which his own and his Father's glory were eminently to shine forth, and by which the name of God was to be hallowed in a greater degree than it had ever been before.—Again, God sanctified his own name under the gospel dispensation, in raising Christ from the dead, after he had finished the work which he came into the world to perform. In this respect it may be said of him, that 'for,' or after, 'the suffering of death, he was crowned with glory and honour,'m and put into a

capacity of applying the redemption which he had purchased; so that God the Father 'glorified the Son, that the Son also might glorify him.' That this was not done till he had made a full satisfaction to the justice of God, and thereby glorified his holiness to the utmost, has been already considered. After his resurrection, he entered upon his glory; and, from that time, the gospel dispensation might, by way of eminency, be said to begin. Hence we may apply to this occasion the words of the psalmist, 'Sing unto the Lord ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.'o—Again, God sanctified or hallowed his name in his dealings with the Jewish nation, after Christ's ascension into heaven. These dealings made way for the establishment of the gospel church, and were an awful display of his holiness. It must be supposed that the treatment which our Saviour met with from that nation, in which they might be said to fill up the measure of their iniquities to the utmost, would be followed with some terrible displays of divine vengeance. Accordingly, the utter ruin of their civil and religious liberties was the immediate consequence; and it is a visible proof of the truth of the Christian religion, and a very awful instance of God's being sanctified in them. —Further, the holiness of God appears in the methods which he took to propagate his gospel through the world. This was not to be done by might or power, nor by those methods of secular policy whereby civil states are advanced; but by his Spirit, whereby they who were called, were sufficiently qualified for this important work. These preached the gospel to all nations, according to the commission which was given them, confirmed it by miracles, and were instrumental in gathering a people out of the world, who yielded themselves willing subjects to Christ, a people called by his name, and subjected and entirely devoted to him.—Again, the holiness of God appears in all those doctrines which were preached, on which the faith of the church is built; and in those ordinances in which they were to express their subjection to Christ, and hope of salvation by

him. The doctrines of the gospel are all pure and holy. Their great design is to set forth the harmony of the divine perfections, as displayed in the method of salvation by Jesus Christ, and to induce those who are made partakers of it to serve him in holiness and righteousness. There is no gospel doctrine which leads to licentiousness, or gives the least countenance to it. None have a right to claim an interest in Christ's righteousness, or to hope for that salvation which he has purchased, but they who believe; and none can be said to believe to the saving of the soul, but they who are enabled to perform all those duties whereby it will appear that they are an holy as well as an happy people. All those ordinances also which Christ has instituted in the gospel, have a tendency to set forth the holiness of God. What these are, has been considered under some former Answers; as also that they were instituted by Christ, and that no creature has a right to invent any modes of worship, or make any additions to his institutions, without incurring the guilt of depraving and sullying the beauty of gospel worship. All therefore that I shall add under this Head, is, that as these are set apart, and sanctified by God, to be means of grace, and pledges of his presence; so those who engage in them are to do so with the view of their being made holy in all conversation, as he who hath called them is holy. Thus God sanctifies his own name in the dispensations of his providence and grace.

Now when we pray, 'Hallowed be thy name,' with a particular view to what God does in order to the sanctifying of it, we adore him with an holy trembling, beholding the displays of his vindictive justice in punishing sin. If he sees the punishing of sin to be necessary to secure his own honour as the Governor of the world, so that without it he would not appear to be an holy God, nor the glory of his truth in those threatenings which he has denounced against sin discovered, we are fully satisfied that all his ways are right, and acquiesce in his

providence; and when his judgments are made manifest, we say, 'Hallowed be thy name.' When, however, we put up this petition, with a particular view to God's executing his threatened vengeance on his enemies, several cautions are to be used. We are to take heed that we do not offer the petition out of hatred to the persons of any. For even they who are the monuments of divine justice, in whom God will be glorified as a sin-revenging Judge, are the objects of our compassion, as they are miserable; how much soever that sin which is the cause of their misery, is to be hated and detested by us. We must always pray, also, that God would rather convert than destroy his enemies, were it consistent with his purpose, which must be accomplished. Again, we are never called to pray expressly for the damnation of any one, how great an enemy soever he may have been to God or us. On the contrary, we are to pray that God would glorify his name in his salvation by Jesus Christ. Further, if we pray that God would prevent those evils to which his church is exposed, through the power or malice of its enemies, and that, in order to this, he would remove these enemies out of the way, that they may not be able to hurt them; we are to consider their removal only as an expedient for the church's safety, so that if one of the two must suffer ruin, we desire that it may be rather his enemies than his people. We should be glad if God would be pleased to bring about the welfare of his church some other way; but if not, when we pray that his name may be hallowed, by the removal of their enemies, we do so principally with submission to his will, and an humble acknowledgment that all his judgments are right. Thus concerning God's sanctifying his own name, as the subject of our prayer in this petition.

II. When we pray, 'Hallowed be thy name,' we signify our desire that we may be enabled to glorify God in every thing whereby he makes himself known. Here there is something supposed, namely, that all

men are utterly unable and disinclined of themselves, to honour God aright, or to improve the various displays of his glory which we behold in his word and works. This arises from the sinfulness of our nature, our alienation from an holy God, and opposition to him; so that without the assistance of his Spirit, we are not able to do any thing which is good. Hence, we pray that God would make us holy, by rendering the means of grace conducive to our sanctification, that we may give him the glory due to his name.

But the thing more especially prayed for, with respect to ourselves and others, is, that we may be enabled to act suitably to the discoveries which God has made of his divine perfections; that we may adore his wisdom, power, and goodness in all he does, and worship him in all his ordinances in an holy manner, or, as the psalmist expresses it, 'worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.' We are also to desire that all his holy institutions may be made means of grace to us, that we may be sanctified by his truth, that beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we may be transformed into his image, consisting in holiness and righteousness, that we may have an high esteem of every thing whereby he makes himself known, and glorify him in thought, word, and deed.

In particular, we pray that we may never think or speak of the divine perfections, but with a becoming reverence, and suitable acts of faith. When he discovers himself as a God of infinite wisdom, we are to pray that we may not only admire the traces and footsteps of that wisdom as they are visible in all his works, but that we may thereby be made wise unto salvation. When we conceive of him as a God of infinite power, we are to desire that he would enable us to have recourse to him, to work all that grace in us which can be effected by none but him, with whom all things are possible. When he discovers himself as a God of infinite goodness and mercy, we are to pray that

we may be encouraged to hope that we shall be made partakers of his goodness, by his communicating to us the blessings which accompany salvation. When he reveals himself as a God of infinite holiness, we are to desire that we may be conformed to him, in some measure, so as to be enabled to hate and flee from every thing which is contrary to holiness; and that all sin, which contains a reflection on the purity of his nature, as well as a contempt of his authority, may be abhorred and detested by us. When he discovers himself as a God of infinite faithfulness, a God that keepeth covenant and mercy to them that fear him, who has made many promises respecting their salvation, and will certainly accomplish them, we are to pray that we may depend upon him, put our trust in him, and that he would remember his good word unto us on which he hath caused us to hope. When he makes himself known as our Creator, he the Potter and we the clay, we are to pray that we may be well-pleased with all the dispensations of his providence towards us, considering that he has a right to do what he will with his own. When he reveals himself as our Redeemer, we are to pray that we may be able to conclude that we are bought with that invaluable price which Christ gave for his elect; and if we have a comfortable hope concerning our interest in Christ, we are to desire that we may walk as becomes those who are laid under the highest obligations to love him and live to him.

Again, we pray that we may worship God in a right manner, in all his ordinances. Accordingly, when he encourages us to attend to what he imparts in these ordinances, as in hearing or reading the word, we pray that we may be enabled to receive the truth in the love of it; that we may improve it as that which is 'not the word of men, but of God, which effectually working in them that believe;' that we may esteem it as the only infallible rule of faith and duty; that we may be enabled to 'hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against him.'s When we draw nigh to him in prayer, in which he requires that we should

sanctify his name as a God all-sufficient, on whom we depend for the supply of our wants; or when we bless and praise him for what we have received, we supplicate that the frame of our spirits may be suited to the spirituality and importance of the duty we are engaged in, that we may not be like those whom our Saviour speaks of, who 'draw nigh to him with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, while their heart is far from him.'

Further, as God makes himself known to us by his works, we are to beg of him that, in the work of creation, we may see and admire his eternal power and God head, and that from his works of common providence in which he upholds and governs all things, we may take occasion to adore the manifold wisdom of God, his almighty power, and the inexhaustible treasure of his goodness. But more especially when he discovers himself in the gracious dispensations of his providence, in those things which have an immediate reference to our salvation, we are not only to beg that he would enable us to look on them with admiration, but are particularly to express our love and thankfulness to Christ our great Mediator and Advocate, as those who humbly trust and hope that we have an interest in him by faith. Thus concerning our requesting these things for ourselves.

We might here observe something concerning our praying that others may be enabled to act suitably to the discoveries which God has made of his perfections. We are to pray that they may have the highest esteem for God in all the points of view which we have specified; and consequently, that his name may be known throughout the whole world, not merely as the God of nature, but as he has revealed himself in his word. Hence, we are to pray that the way of salvation by Christ may be known, and his name adored and magnified as a Redeemer and Saviour, in those parts of the world which are at present destitute of gospel light; and that, where the

word is preached, it may be received with faith and love, that they who are called Christians may walk more becoming that relation which they stand in to the blessed Jesus. Thus concerning the subject of our requests in this petition, respecting God's enabling us and others to glorify him in every thing by which he makes himself known. There are two things inferred hence in the close of this Answer.

1. When we pray that God would sanctify his name, we, in effect, desire that he would prevent and remove every thing which is dishonourable to it. Some things tend to cast so great a reproach on the name of God, that sinners are hardened in their opposition to him; as David, by his sin, is said to have 'given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.' God is highly dishonoured by those open and scandalous sins which are committed by such as make a profession of religion. By these sins, they make it apparent that they are strangers to the power of religion; and they lay a stumbling-block in the way of persons who are ready to take an estimate of the ways of God, from the conversation of those who in words profess but in works deny him. Some deny the very being, perfections, and providence of God, or being ignorant of him, worship they know not what; and there are others who treat things sacred with profaneness and scurrility; and, instead of sanctifying the name of God, openly blaspheme and cast a contempt on all his sacred institutions. Hence, we are to pray that God would prevent and remove atheism. When persons not only act as though there were no God, but with blasphemy and daring insolence express their atheism in words, they are generally hardened in their iniquities, and bid defiance to his justice; as though they were, as is said of the leviathan, 'made without fear,'x and were not apprehensive of any ill consequences. These are not to be convinced by arguments; though there is nothing which occurs in the works of creation and

providence, but what might confute them and put them to silence, did they duly attend to it. Hence, we are to pray that God would assert his divine Being and perfections, and give them some convincing proof of these, by impressing the dread and terror of his wrath upon their consciences, that so they may learn not to blaspheme; or that he would give them that internal light by which they may be brought to adore and sanctify his name. And as there are multitudes of practical atheists, who behave themselves as though there were no God to observe what they do, or punish them for it, and who presumptuously conclude that they may rebel without being called to an account; we are to pray that God, by his grace, would prevent prevailing impiety, by working a thorough reformation in the hearts of men, to the end that practical godliness may be promoted, and his name glorified.—Again, we are to pray that God would prevent and remove that ignorance which is inconsistent with persons sanctifying his name. This respects, more especially, the not knowing or inquiring into those great doctrines which are of the highest importance, and which more directly tend to the advancing of the glory of God, and the obtaining of eternal life. In those who are destitute of divine revelation, this ignorance is invincible. Hence, with respect to such, we are to pray that God would grant to them the means of grace, by sending his gospel among them; that they who sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, may have a glorious light shining about them, whereby they may be made acquainted with the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. But there are others who sit under the sound of the gospel, and yet remain strangers to its great doctrines, who have no love to the truth, and act as though it did not belong to them to study the scriptures. These are wilfully ignorant, like those who are said to 'hate knowledge, and not to choose the fear of the Lord.' We are to pray with regard to such, that in order to their sanctifying the name of God, they may be led into the knowledge of those great doctrines in which the glory of the

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is set forth, as it is in the work of redemption by Christ, together with the way in which righteousness and life may be attained; and that they may know what are those graces which are inseparably connected with and necessary to salvation.—Again, we are to pray that God would prevent or remove idolatry; either such as is more gross, and practised by the heathen and others, who give that worship to creatures which is due to God alone; or that idolatry which may be observed in the hearts and lives of many who, though they abhor its grosser acts, are nevertheless guilty of it in their loving the creature more than God. This sin is what we all are either chargeable with or in danger of, and is directly contrary to our sanctifying the name of God. Hence, we are to pray, with respect to the former, that he would convince them that what they falsely call worship, is a dishonour to him, and is abhorred by him; and, with respect to the latter, that he would convince us that he deserves our supreme love, and will not admit of any thing to stand in competition with him; that he would enable us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; that, in order to this, he would deliver us from the iniquity of covetousness, or those inordinate affections by which we are inclined immoderately to pursue the world, and which are inconsistent with an heavenly conversation; and that we may be kept from self-seeking, or trusting to our own righteousness for justification, or giving that glory to any other which is due to God alone.—Further, we are to pray for the preventing and removal of that profaneness which is contrary to the sanctifying of the name of God; that persons may not give themselves that liberty, which many do, to treat things sacred in a common way, or make religion the subject of wit and drollery; which is very disgusting to the ears of those who have an awe of God on their spirits, and altogether unbecoming persons professing godliness. We are also to beg that God would deliver us from engaging in religious duties in a formal way, as though his name were to be sanctified only by an

external show or appearance of religion, without that internal disposition of heart which is required in all those who draw nigh to him in a holy manner; and also that we may be kept from making any innovation in the worship of God, and thereby profaning it, while we pretend to add to its beauty and its acceptableness in his sight,—conduct which is so far from hallowing his name, that it is highly provoking to him.

2. Another thing inferred from the account we have had of those methods by which the name of God is said to be sanctified, is, that we are to beg of him, that, by his overruling providence, he would direct and dispose of all things to his own glory. This is his immediate work; without which his name would not be sanctified by his creatures. It consists in his bringing a revenue of glory to himself, out of those things which seem to be subversive of it. One of the glories of providence is, that God brings good out of evil, and renders some things subservient to his interest, which in themselves have a tendency to overthrow it. This may be observed in several things consequent upon the sins and persecutions of the church. Thus, when Israel revolted from God, by making the golden calf in the wilderness, he first humbled them greatly for it, and then spirited them with zeal to execute judgment on those who did not repent of it. And afterwards, when, at Moses' entreaty, he forgave this sin, he filled them with a zeal for the establishing of his worship, equal to that which had been expressed before in profaning his name; so that, as they then parted with their golden ear-rings to make the idol which they worshipped, they now made a very large contribution for the building of the tabernacle.a—Again, when, by their abominable idolatry, they had provoked God to give them into the hands of those who carried them captive into Babylon, the event was so overruled by his providence, that they were never guilty of idolatry afterwards, whatever temptations they had to it. Hence, when they returned

from captivity, how much soever they were chargeable with want of zeal for building the temple, and setting up public worship in it, or with many other crimes, in the priests seeking their secular interest rather than the glory of God, in their performing several branches of their office in a profane manner, and thereby rendering the public worship contemptible, and in their offering the refuse of the flock in sacrifice to God, for which they were reproved by him;c yet we never find them reproved for idolatry after their captivity. Accordingly, some think that the vision which the prophet Zechariah had of the woman who was called wickedness, 'sitting in the midst of the ephah,' and of this being 'borne by two women that had wings like the wings of a stork into the land of Shinar,' or Chaldea, 'to build an house for it,' that it might there be 'established, and set upon her own base,' intimates that the idolatry of the heathen should not spread itself among the Israelites as it had done, but be confined to those parts of the world which had formerly set it up, and which therefore are considered as the proper seat of it, and not the church. The same thing seems to be foretold by the prophet Hosea, when he says, that 'the children of Israel, after they had been many days without a king, without a priest, and without a sacrifice, should be without an image.'e The former part of this passage denotes that they should have their civil and religious state broken and discontinued; the latter seems to intimate, that providence would so far overrule this affliction that they should be disinclined and averse to idolatry, as they are at this day, though, in other respects, altogether alienated from God.—Again, all the persecutions which the church has met with from its enemies, with a design to bring about its ruin and destruction, have been overruled for the furtherance of the gospel. Thus when Saul, before his conversion, 'made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison,' so that 'a great persecution' was raised by his instigation, and the people of God could not meet safely at

Jerusalem, but were 'scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria;' the event was ordered by the providence of God for the greater spread of the gospel, so that the Samaritans received the word of God. In following ages, also, we may observe that whatever attempts have been made against the interest of Christ in the world, have, contrary to the design of his enemies, been made subservient to its greater advancement. Accordingly, some have observed that the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church. Thus, too, the psalmist's prediction has been fulfilled, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'g And often, when the gospel has, like the sea, lost ground in one part of the world, it has gained it in another.— Moreover, we may observe that God glorifies his holiness by overruling the falls and miscarriages of particular believers. They are hereby made more humble, watchful, and circumspect for the future; and, when restored from their backslidings, they are put upon admiring his grace, and excited to thankfulness, which the nature of their case requires. They also take occasion to warn others, lest they be entangled in the snare out of which they have escaped; or if fallen, to recommend to them those methods of divine grace whereby they themselves have been recovered. This improvement the psalmist made of the dealings of God with him. When he speaks of his being 'brought out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, his feet set upon a rock, and his goings established;' he adds, 'Many shall see it and shall fear, and shall trust in the Lord.' And when God's people have been greatly dejected under the troubles they have met with, he has overruled their sufferings for the restoring of comforts to them, and for enabling them to comfort others in similar afflictions. Accordingly, the event, as the apostle expresses it, 'redounds to their consolation and salvation.' Thus concerning the first petition of the Lord's prayer, as it is explained in the Answer before us.

We shall now consider how this petition may be reduced into practice, that we may be directed in our addressing ourselves to God in those things which concern the glory of his name. Accordingly, it is as if we said, "We adore thee, O our God, that thou hast been pleased to make such discoveries of thyself to thy people, as thou hast done in all ages. In particular we give thanks at the rememberance of thine holiness. Thou mightest, indeed, have glorified thy name in the everlasting destruction of the whole race of fallen man; but thou hast sanctified thy name, and advanced thy perfections in bringing about the work of our redemption by a Mediator, in which justice and mercy are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other; and thou hast hereby a greater revenue of glory redounding to thy name than by all thine other works, or than could have been brought to thee by the united services of the most excellent creatures. We also bless thee that thou hast been pleased to make such bright discoveries of thyself in thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name; that thou hast given us thy gospel, and all the ordinances and means of grace, that hereby thou mayest gather to thyself a people out of the world, who might be holy in all conversation, as thou who hast called them art holy. We confess that we have not sanctified thy name as we ought; nor attended on thine ordinances with that reverence and holy fear which is due to thy divine majesty, for which thou hast testified thy displeasure against us, in withdrawing thy presence from thine own institutions. We acknowledge that herein thou art righteous, and hast punished us less than our iniquities have deserved; for thou mightest have removed thy candlestick out of its place, or taken thine ordinances from us, as thou hast done from many, who once worshipped thee, as we do at this day, but are now wholly estranged from thee. Revive thy work, O Lord, we beseech thee, and hereby sanctify thy great name. Let thy word have free course and be glorified. Set up thy standard against every thing which opposes

thine interest in the world. Send forth thy light and thy truth, whereby the ignorant may be instructed in the way of salvation by Christ. Give a check to that atheism, profaneness, and irreligion that abounds among a professing people; and let all the dispensations of thy providence have a tendency to bring about the work of reformation, that thereby thou mayest be glorified, and thy people enabled, more and more, to sanctify thee in every thing whereby thou makest thyself known."

THE SECOND PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CXCI. What do we pray for in the second petition?

ANSWER. In the second petition, which is, "Thy kingdom come," acknowledging ourselves, and all mankind, to be, by nature, under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate, that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted; that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever; and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

IN this petition there are, first, some things supposed, relating to the sovereignty and dominion of God over men, and the opposition which it meets with,—which, how great soever it be, shall not hinder its advancement in the world. Secondly, there are several things which we are directed to pray for, in reference to these things which are supposed.

What is supposed in the Second Petition

I. One thing supposed in this petition, is, that God is a great and glorious King. This is the necessary result of his being the Creator of all things. From that character arises an universal propriety in all things, and a right to dispose of them at his pleasure, in the methods of his providence; so that he can no more lose his right to govern the world, than he can cease to be God. It may be farther observed, that the subjects governed are intelligent creatures; for, though all other things are upheld by him, and made use of to fulfil his pleasure, yet they cannot be said to be under a law, or the subjects of moral government. Hence, God is more especially related to angels and men as their King. As to that branch of his government which is exercised in this lower world, it principally respects men. Now when God is said to be their King, the exercise of his dominion is variously considered, according to the different circumstances in which they are.

1. As men, they are the subjects of his providential kingdom. In this respect, they are the objects of his care and common goodness, which extends itself, as the psalmist says, to 'all his works,' or to his 'giving to all, life, and breath, and all things.'l Moreover, whatever he does in the world, is, in some way or other, designed for their use or advantage, either as subservient to their happiness, or as objects in which they behold the glory of his divine perfections shining forth. In

this respect, as the God of nature, he is King over the whole world, whose glory infinitely surpasses that of the greatest monarch on earth. When men are said to have dominion, they derive it from his will and providence. It is also limited; while his is universal. They are likewise accountable to him for the administration of that authority which he commits to them; but he giveth no account of his matters to any one, inasmuch as there is none superior to him. There are also many flaws and imperfections in the government of the best kings on earth, because their wisdom, holiness, power, and justice are imperfect; and sometimes the most desirable ends are not attained. But the divine government is such as tends to set forth God's glorious perfections, and answer the highest ends, namely, the advancement of his own name, in promoting the welfare of his creatures. We may also observe that, not only are the greatest potentates on earth mortal, but their government is often subject to change, and liable to be resisted and controlled by other kings like themselves. But God, on the contrary, has none equal with him, so that his government cannot be controlled; and being all-sufficient, he cannot be destitute of what is necessary to fulfil his purpose, or advance his glory. Again, none but God has a right to give laws to the consciences of men. Indeed, no government is properly spiritual, and such as reaches the heart, like his; nor does the honour which is due to any other, include the least right to divine worship or adoration, which belongs only to him.

2. As God has a peculiar people in the world, who are the objects of his grace, these are the subjects of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, in which respect he is styled, King of saints. This is not only a divine honour which we ascribe to him, but it belongs to him in particular as our Redeemer; and so it is to be understood whenever he is called a King in scripture, as denoting that kingdom which he has received from the Father. His governing the world, on the other hand, which

is styled his providential kingdom, necessarily belongs to him as God, and is no more conferred upon him by the will of the Father, than his divine nature, or personality. We do not therefore pray in this petition, that he would govern the world; for we may as well address ourselves to him, that he would be an infinite Sovereign, and act agreeably to his divine nature, which he cannot but be and do. But the kingdom which is here intended, to which we have a more immediate regard, as the subject of this petition, is that which belongs to him as Mediator, which he received from the Father; who is said, in respect to it, to have 'set him' as his 'King upon his holy hill of Zion,' and concerning which it was foretold, that 'the government' should be 'upon his shoulder.'n This is therefore not only an honour, but an office which he is invested with, having received a commission from the Father to execute it. And whenever he is said to do any thing in the methods of his providence, which have an immediate reference to the salvation of his people, what he does is an exercise of this dominion, or is a branch of the glory of his mediatorial kingdom; and this is what we have a peculiar regard to, when we desire that his kingdom may come. In this respect, we pray that all the dispensations of his providence may tend to the application of that redemption which is purchased for his people; and in particular, that he would subdue them to himself, take possession of their hearts, govern them by his laws, defend them by his power, restrain and conquer all their enemies, and at last, admit them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

In the New Testament, Christ's kingdom is generally taken for the gospel dispensation. He is represented as sitting on a throne of grace; and sinners are invited to come and bow down before him, and receive the blessings which he encourages them to expect, as their merciful Sovereign. This kingdom of grace shall not cease to be administered by him, till all his redeemed ones are made willing, in

the day of his power, and eventually brought into a better world; and then it will receive another denomination, and be called the kingdom of heaven. It is true, the gospel dispensation is often so called in the New Testament, as it respects the administration of his gracious government begun and carried on in this world. But, in heaven, that government will be administered in a most glorious manner, agreeably to the state of perfection to which his saints shall there be brought. As, however, these things have been particularly insisted on under a former Answer, in which Christ's kingly office was explained; we shall pass them over at present, and proceed to consider another thing supposed in this petition.

II. Though God is the only supreme and lawful Sovereign, yet there are some who pretend to stand in competition with him, and usurp that dominion which belongs only to him. Man no sooner rebelled against him, than he was under the dominion of sin, and was inclined to serve divers lusts and pleasures, and willingly gave himself over as a vassal to Satan, who from that time was styled 'the prince,' or god, 'of this world, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.' We must not suppose that he has the least right to this kingdom, or dominion, in which he sets himself against the divine government; yet sinners who rebel against God, are said to be Satan's subjects. Where the gospel is not preached, he reigns without control; and false churches which oppose the faith contained in the gospel, are called 'synagogues of Satan.'q Indeed, in all those places to which Christ's kingdom of grace has not been extended, persons are said to be subjects of Satan's kingdom; which is opposed to the kingdom of Christ. These two kingdoms divide the world. Hence, when we pray that Christ's kingdom may be advanced, we express an earnest desire that whatsoever has a tendency to oppose it may be ruined and destroyed.

What is prayed for in the Second Petition

We are now led to consider what we are to pray for in this petition. Now, we are not to pray that God would govern the world, or exercise his providential kingdom; for that he cannot but do. Nor are we to pray that Christ's kingdom may come, in the same sense in which the church prayed for its coming before the gospel dispensation, which is called his kingdom, was erected; for to do so would be, in effect, to deny that there is such a kingdom, or that our Saviour has a church in which he exercises his government in the world. We are to pray, however, that God would eminently display his perfections for the good of his people, in his providential government of the world, and overrule all the dispensations of that government for the advancement of his own name, and the happiness of his church and people. And though, as we have just observed, we are not to pray that the gospel dispensation may be erected; yet we are to pray that Christ's spiritual kingdom may be farther extended, that subjects may be daily brought into it, and that the blessed fruits and effects of it, which tend to promote his own glory and his people's happiness, may be abundantly experienced by them.

I. In particular, when we say, 'Thy kingdom come,' we express our desire that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed. This kingdom Christ will certainly destroy in his own time, inasmuch as it is directly opposite to his own kingdom. The devil's chief design is to draw Christ's subjects off from their allegiance to him. Hence, Christ will certainly plead his own cause, that his enemies may not take occasion to insult him, as though they had gained a victory over the Almighty. Moreover his holiness and justice oblige him to do this; for as Satan's kingdom is supported by sin gaining strength, and as its being so supported tends to cast a reproach on the divine perfections, it must be destroyed. We may add, that every one who is converted,

is, as the apostle says, 'delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.' Hence, we pray that Christ's interest may flourish in the world; and so we express a desire that whatsoever is contrary to it may be thrown down. There are various steps and degrees whereby Satan's kingdom has been, and shall be, weakened, till it shall be at last wholly destroyed.

1. It met with a great shock when the first gospel promise was given to Adam in paradise, relating to 'the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head,' or Christ's coming to defeat Satan's deep laid design against the interest of God in the world, by giving the deceiver a total defeat. Till this promise was given, there could not be the least hope of salvation for fallen man. His condition was not only deplorable but desperate, and, in all appearance, remediless. But by this first display of divine grace, a door of hope was opened, and Satan's kingdom began to be broken and demolished.

2. It met with a farther shock, when men began to lay hold of this promise, and take encouragement from it; when public worship was set up in the world; and when the coming of the Messiah, who was expected to appear in our nature, and in the fulness of time to destroy the works of the devil, was farther made known to the church, and clearer intimations given of the glory of his Person, and the offices he was to execute, so that he was regarded as the object of faith by those who waited for and earnestly desired the gospel day, when all the types and prophecies relating to his coming should have their accomplishment.

3. Satan's kingdom met with a very great defeat, when Christ, who was the desire of all nations, took our nature, and dwelt among us, and, in the whole course of his ministry, discovered the way of salvation to his people more clearly than it had been in former ages;

when he finished the work of redemption in his death, whereby he paid to divine justice an infinite price for his elect, and, at the same time, 'destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,' or, as it is expressed elsewhere, 'spoiled principalities and powers, openly triumphing over them in his cross.'u In particular, when he was raised from the dead, and the work which he came to perform was brought to perfection, Satan's kingdom was so effectually destroyed, that he shall not be able to maintain that dominion which he had over those who previously were his vassals, but are now become Christ's subjects by right of redemption.

4. The success of the gospel in the various ages since our Saviour was on earth; his gathering and building up his church, and defeating all the attempts of his enemies who have threatened its ruin, so that the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against it; and its having been favoured with his special presence, and the bestowal and continuance of the means of grace, together with the various instances of success which have attended them; have all had a tendency to weaken and destroy Satan's kingdom.

5. All the victories which believers are enabled to obtain over sin and Satan's temptations, and all the graces which they exercise, and comforts which they experience, are a gradual weakening of Satan's kingdom. It is true, the victory over him is at present not complete, inasmuch as he has too great an interest in the hearts of God's people through the remains of corruption; yet they shall at last be made more than conquerors over him, and the fruits and consequences of the victory which Christ has obtained over him shall be perfectly applied.

II. In desiring that Christ's kingdom may come, we pray that the gospel may be propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, and

the fulness of the Gentiles brought in. When the gospel dispensation, which is Christ's kingdom, was first erected, the apostles, who were employed in the important work, were to fulfil the commission which he gave them, in preaching the gospel to all nations. This they accordingly did; and, by the extraordinary hand of God attending their ministry, the gospel was spread, in a short space of time, through a considerable part of the world. Many of the Jews were called,—among whom all that were ordained to eternal life believed: and as for the Gentiles, who formerly were unacquainted with the way of salvation, they had Christ preached to them, and many churches were gathered from among them. Thus the kingdom of Christ was advanced; and a foundation was laid for the propagation and flourishing state of the gospel in all succeeding ages, the effects of which are experienced at this day. Hence, when the petition relating to the coming of Christ's kingdom was used by the first disciples, that which was principally intended by it, was that Christ might be preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in the world,—that the vail, or the face of the covering which was spread over all nations, might be taken away,—and that the way of salvation might be known by those who sat in the region and shadow of death. When, however, it is used by us, we signify our desire that the invaluable blessing of the gospel may be still continued, and that the promises relating to the greater success of it may have a more full accomplishment. The apostles, indeed, in executing their commission, are said to have preached the gospel to all nations, that is, to a very considerable part of the heathen world. It does not appear, however, that every individual nation in the world has yet been favoured with this privilege; so that what was foretold concerning the earth being 'full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,' and other predictions to the same purpose, do not seem hitherto to have had their full accomplishment.y It is very evident, too, that many nations, who had the gospel preached to

them by the apostles, are now wholly destitute of it. And, though it is true a considerable number of the Jews at first believed in Christ; yet the greatest part of that people were cast off, and all remain, at this day, strangers and enemies to him. Hence, we cannot but suppose that those prophecies which respect their conversion, in the latter day, together with the fulness of the Gentiles being brought in, shall be more eminently accomplished than they have hitherto been. This, therefore, is what we are to pray for when we say, 'Thy kingdom come.'

1. We are to be importunate with God, that his interest may be still maintained in the church; that the glory may not depart from it; that it may still enjoy the ordinances of his grace, and those privileges by which it is distinguished from the world, notwithstanding all the attempts of hell and persecuting powers to undermine and overthrow it; and, though it be brought to a very low ebb at this day, that he would revive his work in the midst of the years, till he shall be pleased to cause that glorious day to dawn which his people are now desiring, waiting and hoping for.

2. We are to pray that there may be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit. This is absolutely necessary to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, a farther reformation of the church, and a greater spread of the gospel in those nations where it is not at present known.

3. We are to pray that the church may be furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances necessary to the furtherance of the gospel. We are not to pray, indeed, that new ordinances may be instituted, which at present are not known, and which we have no warrant from scripture to expect. But we are to pray that God, by the good hand of his providence, would send his ordinances, namely, the word, sacraments, and prayer, which are his outward and ordinary means

of salvation, into those parts of the world which are at present strangers to them. In particular, we are to pray that wherever God has a people who thirst after the word, but enjoy not the preaching of it, especially with such zeal and clearness as is necessary to their spiritual advantage and edification in Christ, he would send faithful labourers among them, that their souls may not pine, starve, and be in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge. Again, we are to pray that where the word of God has been preached with success, so that many believe in Christ, who, nevertheless, have not the advantage of walking together for their mutual edification in a church relation, God would so overrule and order matters that they who have given up themselves to the Lord, may encourage and strengthen the hands of one another, by joining together in religious societies, owning Christ's kingly government, and worshipping him in all those ordinances which he has given to his churches. We are to pray also that, in such circumstances, there may be proper officers spirited, qualified, and raised up, so that there may be a constant supply of 'pastors according to his heart, which shall feed them with knowledge and understanding.' These are necessary to the well-being of a church. And though extraordinary gifts aro not to be expected, as when God was pleased to bestow them on his apostles at the planting of the gospel; yet there are some gifts which Christ has purchased, and we are to pray for, which are particularly adapted to the furnishing of those who are called to minister as officers in his churches, for the promoting of his cause and interest, and the advancing of his spiritual kingdom.

4. We are to pray that the church may be purged from those corruptions which tend to defile it, and which are a great reproach to it, and very unbecoming the relation which it stands in to Christ. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that any church in the world is so pure that there are no corruptions in it, which appear to the eye of the

heart-searching God. Some, however, are visible to the world, being notorious, and inconsistent, not only with the purity, but, if allowed of, with the very being of a church of Christ. These are matter of lamentation to the godly, a reproach to those who are chargeable with them, and, as the apostle styles them, 'a root of bitterness, springing up and troubling' them, 'whereby many are defiled.' These corruptions are such as respect either the faith or the conversation of professors.—First, there are corruptions in matters of faith. These consist in denying the most important doctrines, which are necessary to be known and believed in order to our salvation. With respect to them, we are to pray that Christians may not depart from the faith which was once delivered to the saints, being 'carried about with divers and strange doctrines,'b or as it is said elsewhere, 'soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.' We are also to pray that he would root out those errors and heresies which are in consistent with the church's purity; and which have a greater tendency to bring about its ruin than all the persecutions it can meet with from its most enraged enemies.—Again, there are corruptions which more especially respect the conversation of those who are called Christians, who walk not as becomes the gospel of Christ, so that as regards them there is no visible difference between the church and the world. Thus the apostle tells the church at Corinth,d that some of them were 'carnal, and walked as men;' that is, notwithstanding the profession of religion which they made, they differed little in their conversation from the men of the world. He also speaks of others who 'profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.' Now, with respect to these, we are to pray that their profession may be adorned by a holy life; that none may cast a stumblingblock in the way of those who watch for their haltings, and are glad to take all opportunities to improve the falls and miscarriages of Christians against them; and that God, by

his providence, or rather by his Spirit, poured out from on high, would refine and purify his church, and, as the prophet expresses it, 'purge away the dross, and take away all the tin.'f

5. We are to pray that the ordinances of Christ may be administered without any mixture of human inventions, which tend to debase them, and are far from adding any beauty or glory to them. It is natural, indeed, for man to be fond of, and pleased with, those ordinances which take their rise from himself; but God, who is jealous for the purity of his own worship, can in no wise approve of them; and they are so far from advancing Christ's kingdom, that God reckons the introducing of them no other than 'setting our threshold by his thresholds,' and 'our post by his,' and calls it 'a defiling his holy name, by the abominations which are committed,' and denounces it as the ground and reason of his 'consuming' men 'in his anger.' Hence, we are to pray that whatever intrudes itself into any branch of the worship of God, without receiving any warrant or sanction from himself, may he removed out of the way, that so his church may be reformed, and its destruction prevented.

6. We are to pray that the church may be encouraged by civil magistrates; that their government may be subservient to Christ's spiritual kingdom; that, according to God's promise, 'kings may be' its 'nursing fathers, and their queens' its 'nursing mothers;' that by this means the church may have peace and safety, and not be exposed, as it has often been, to the rage and fury of persecuting powers; and also that magistrates may be guardians, not only of the civil, but of the religions liberties of their subjects, which are necessary to complete the happiness of a nation, and bring down many blessings from God upon it. We are also to pray that God would not only incline magistrates to advance religion, by rendering the administration of civil government subservient to that purpose,

but that by a steady adherence to it themselves, they may strengthen the hands of the faithful, and encourage many others to embrace it. If, on the other hand, they are disposed to exercise their power in such a way as tends to the discountenancing of religion, and the weakening of the hands of those who profess it; we are to pray that God would overrule their counsels, and incline them to deal favourably with those who desire steadfastly to adhere to it.

7. We are to pray that the means of grace may be made effectual to the converting of sinners, and to the confirming, comforting, and building up of believers; that a great and effectual door may be opened for the success of the gospel; that it may 'come, not in word only, but also in power;' that by this means the Lord would be pleased to add to the church daily such as shall be saved; and that thus Christ's government, or spiritual kingdom, may be promoted in the hearts of his people, and they be enabled to testify a ready and willing subjection to his authority, and to yield obedience to him with all the powers and faculties of their souls.

8. We are to pray for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, at his second and glorious coming; when the work of grace shall be brought to its utmost perfection, and all the elect, who shall have lived from the beginning to the end of time, shall be gathered together and brought into Christ's kingdom of glory, as they have formerly been into his kingdom of grace; and when the highest honours shall be conferred upon them, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever. As the church under the Old Testament dispensation prayed that Christ's kingdom of grace might come, that is, that it might be administered, as it has been, and now is, under the gospel dispensation,—or, as the scripture expresses it, that Christ would be 'like a roe, or like a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,' or, that the Desire of all nations would fill his house with glory; so the

New Testament church is represented as praying that Christ would 'come quickly,' according to his promise,l and put a final period to every thing which has a tendency to detract from the glory of his kingdom, or the happiness of his subjects. Hence, we must pray that the elect who are Christ's mystical body, may be gathered and brought in to him; and then we may be sure that he will hasten his coming. Till this is done, we are to wait patiently, as 'the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth,' in the desired harvest; and, in the meantime, we are to pray that he would be pleased to exert his power, and make the dispensations of his providence in the world conducive to the ends desired, and more particularly with respect to ourselves. Accordingly, we are to pray that we may have, not only an habitual, but an actual meetness for his heavenly kingdom; that when our Lord shall come, we may not be like those 'virgins' mentioned in the parable, who 'all slumbered and slept,' but that, upon the first alarm, we may go out to meet him with joy and triumph; that, as an evidence of our meetness for his coming, we may be enabled to walk as 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth,' or as those who 'desire a better country, that is, an heavenly;'o that we may keep up an intercourse with Christ, and be ready to entertain him with delight and pleasure whenever he comes, so that when he who is our life, our hope, and Saviour, as well as our King, shall appear, we may appear with him in glory.

We have thus considered the administration of Christ's kingly government, as the subject of this petition. That we may be further assisted in directing our prayers to God agreeably to the petition, we may consider his children as addressing themselves to him to this effect: "We adore and magnify thee, O God our Saviour, as the Governor of the world; who dost according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. Thy power is irresistible, and thy works wonderful. But it is matter of the highest

astonishment, that thou shouldst exercise that gracious government in which thou condescendest to be called the King of saints. What is man that thou shouldest thus magnify him, and set thine heart upon him; that they whom thou mightest have dealt with as traitors, and enemies to thy government, and, as such, have ruled them with a rod of iron, and broken them in pieces, like a potter's vessel, should be admitted to partake of the privileges which thou art pleased to bestow on thy servants and subjects! Thou hast often invited us, by holding forth thy sceptre of grace, to come and acknowledge thee to be our Lord and Sovereign; but our hearts have been filled with rebellion against thee. We have served divers lusts and pleasures, and been in confederacy with hell and death, yielding ourselves slaves to Satan, thine avowed enemy. But now we desire to cast ourselves down before thy footstool; and, while we stand amazed at thy clemency, we, with the greatest thankfulness, accept of the overture of a pardon which thou hast made in the gospel, accounting it our highest privilege, as well as our indispensable duty, to be thy subjects. Write thy law, we beseech thee, in our hearts; bring down every high thought and imagination, which sets itself against thine interest; and make us entirely willing to be thy servants, devoted to thy fear. We also beg that thou wouldst take to thyself thy great power and reign. Let Satan's kingdom be destroyed, and thy gospel propagated throughout the world. May thine ancient people, the Jews, who now refuse that thou shouldest reign over them, be called and inclined to own thee as their King; and may the dark parts of the earth see thy salvation. Reform thy churches; let them be constantly supplied with those who shall go in and out before them, and shall feed them with knowledge and understanding. May they be purged from those corruptions which are a reproach to thy government. Let not the commandments of men be received, instead of thine holy institutions. May thine ordinances be purely dispensed, that thy people may have ground to hope for thy presence in them; and may

they be made effectual for the converting of sinners, and the establishing of thy saints in their holy faith. And let all the dispensations of thy providence in the world have a tendency to advance thy kingdom of grace, that, as thou hast in all ages appeared in behalf of thy church, so it may be preserved and carried through all the difficulties which it meets with, and be secured from the attempts of thine enemies against it, till they who rejoice in thy government here shall be received into thy heavenly kingdom hereafter."

THE THIRD PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CXCII. What do we pray for in the third petition?

ANSWER. In the third petition, which is, "Thy will he done on earth as it is in heaven," acknowledging that, by nature, we, and all men, are not only utterly unable and unwilling to know and to do the will of God, but prone to rebel against his word, to repine and murmur against his providence, and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh and of the devil; we pray that God would, by his Spirit, take away from ourselves and others, all blindness, weakness, indisposedness, and perverseness of heart, and by his grace, make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to his will in all things, with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, as the angels do in heaven.

The Meaning of Doing the Will of God

To understand this petition, we must inquire what is meant by the will of God, and how it is said to be done by us. We considered, under

a former Answer, that the will of God is distinguished into his secret and revealed will; and we showed that, as the former of these is the reason of his own actings, and determines the event of things, so the latter is what we are more especially concerned about, as it is a rule of duty to us. The will of God is also farther distinguished into his preceptive and providential will. The former of these we are to obey; the latter we are to admire, submit to, and be well-pleased with. Accordingly, when we pray, 'Thy will be done,' we desire that his laws might be obeyed, and his universal dominion and right to govern the world practically acknowledged; and that, by this means, sin might be prevented, and this earth might not become so much like hell as it would be if this method which God has taken to direct our actions and give a check to our corruptions, were wholly disregarded by us. When we consider God as the Creator of man, the next idea we have of him is, that he exercises his dominion and sovereignty in giving laws to him. Now, these laws man is under a natural obligation to obey; otherwise he disowns himself to be a creature, or a subject; and his doing this is the highest affront which can be offered to the divine Majesty, and exposes him to that punishment which is due to those who are found in open rebellion against him. This is what we are to pray against in this petition.

Now, here there is something supposed; it is supposed that the will of God must be known by us, otherwise it cannot be obeyed. Hence, his law has been promulged; particularly as it was written by God on the heart of man at first, in such legible characters that our apostasy from him has not wholly erased it. But besides this, there must be an internal impression made on the minds and consciences of men, whereby they may be brought to see the excellency and glory of the law, and their indispensable obligation to yield obedience to it. Again, it is supposed that the will of man is naturally averse and disinclined to obey the divine commands. This aversion is the result

of our fall and apostasy from God; and, through the corruption of our nature, we are prone to say, 'Who is lord over us?'r and, 'What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?' This is the source of all that opposition which the heart of man expresses against the laws of God; while sinners entertain a fixed resolution to give laws to themselves, and are wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh and of the devil. Such conduct the apostle calls 'fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;' and 'walking according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.'t This will of the flesh is agreeable to the dictates of Satan, by whom it is contented to be kept in perpetual bondage; and his suggestions aro agreeable to the corruption of nature. On the other hand, the commands of God, being contrary to it, as containing the signatures of his holiness, are grievous and burdensome to fallen man. The law is spiritual, and therefore cannot be agreeable to those who are carnal, and, as it were, sold under sin. Accordingly, sinful man is determined to do, not what is lawful, but what is pleasing to himself. He considers, not what he ought to do, as being accountable to God, the Judge of all, for his behaviour in this world; but whether any action is agreeable to his own inclinations, and affords some present delight to his carnal appetite. As for Satan, he uses his utmost endeavours to strengthen our sinful resolutions, and increase the depravity and corruption of our nature. With this view, he daily presents objects to our imaginations which are agreeable to the desires of the flesh; and these are received with pleasure and delight. Thus a snare is laid for the ruin of the soul, so that it becomes more and more alienated from the life of God, and not only indifferent as to matters of religion, but utterly averse to them. This is the reason of all the dishonour which is brought to God in the world; whereby it appears, that his will is not done in it as it ought to be.

Moreover, as the will of man sets itself against the commanding will of God, so it expresses the same aversion to his providential will. This will, indeed, is not said to be 'done;' but it ought to be submitted to by us. Yet, we are as much inclined to find fault with what God does in the world, as we are to rebel against his law. We are discontented and uneasy, for example, with the allotments of providence, especially when we are under the afflicting hand of God; and are apt to charge him as dealing hardly with us, because we have not the opportunities which we desire to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, or because some check is given to our corrupt appetites or inclinations. How ready are we to complain of injuries done us, as though God were obliged to give us whatever we would have, how contrary soever it may be to our real good and advantage, as well as his own glory! Of this we have many instances, in the perverse behaviour of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They frequently complained of the hardships they endured; and, by their murmuring against God, provoked him to send those terrible judgments which, as they might have foreseen, would be the consequence of their conduct. Such behaviour as theirs is most unreasonable towards him who has a right to do what he will with his own, and directly contrary to that temper of mind which the gospel suggests; for we are there taught, in whatsoever state or condition of life we are, therewith to be contented. Now, it is in respect, both to our obeying the divine commands, and to our being contented with the divine appointments, that we are instructed, in this petition, to pray that 'the will of the Lord' may 'be done.'

What is prayed for in the Third Petition

We are now led to consider what we are taught to pray for in this petition, when we say, 'Thy will be done.'

1. With respect to God's commanding will, we are to pray that he would incline and enable us to yield obedience to it. We are to be earnest with him, that he would remove the ignorance and blindness of our minds, that we may see a beauty and glory in every thing which he commands; for, next to the sovereignty of God, which is the first motive to our doing the divine will, the excellency of what he commands is to be considered as an inducement to obedience. Hence, we are to be convinced that his 'law is holy,' his 'commandment holy, just, and good,' or that duty and interest are inseparably connected, so that the one can never be secured without the other. To convince us of this is the work of the Spirit of God, when he directs and leads us in the way in which we ought to walk.

Again, we are to pray that God would take away the obstinacy and perverseness of our wills, that our obedience may be matter of choice, and performed with delight, otherwise it cannot be pleasing to him. Accordingly, we are to pray that our obedience may be performed with the utmost sincerity, as approving ourselves not to men, but God, who searcheth the heart; and that it may proceed from a principle of spiritual life and grace, and be done with a single eye to his glory, whose we are and whom we desire to serve. We are also to pray that our obedience may arise from a filial fear of God, and a love to him, and not merely from a dread of punishment, or fear of his wrath, as the consequence of our rebellion against him, or from a mercenary frame of spirit which looks at nothing farther than some advantages which we expect to receive from him; and that it may also proceed from a sense of gratitude for the many benefits which we receive from him, whereby we are, as it were, constrained to do his will. We are to pray likewise that our obedience may be universal, with respect to the matter of it, and constant with respect to our perseverance in it. We are not to choose to obey some of the divine commands, and refuse others; or to perform those duties which are

most easy, and reject those which are difficult; or to obey the will of God, so far as it comports with our secular interest, and plead with him to be excused as to things which are inconsistent with it. But we must leave it to him alone to prescribe the matter of duty, and express an entire compliance with whatsoever he requires. Thus the psalmist says, 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.' Moreover, we are to pray that our obedience may be constant, without our growing cold and indifferent in it, or desisting from it, according as our condition in the world is altered; as though we had nothing to do with God and religion but when we are under some pressing difficulties; for to act so is to set our faces heavenward for a time, and afterwards to draw back unto perdition.

2. We are to pray that God would enable us to submit to his disposing will, as being satisfied that all the dispensations of his providence are right. Accordingly, we are to say with David, 'Here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' Now, our submission consists in maintaining a quiet, easy, composed frame of spirit, fitted for the exercise of religious duties, though under trying dispensations of providence. It consists also in our justifying God, and laying the blame on ourselves, whatever afflictions we are exercised with. Thus when the psalmist speaks of himself as deserted, and of God as 'far from helping him,' he acknowledges the equity of his dispensations, and says, 'Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel;'z or, as he elsewhere expresses himself, 'The Lord is upright, he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.' Moreover, our submission consists in our being disposed to bless God when he takes away outward mercies, as well as when he gives them. Thus Job, when he was stripped at once of all he had, says, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'b

How the will of God is to be done

We are now to consider the manner in which the will of God is to be done. We are taught to pray that it may be 'done on earth as it is in heaven.' We are not to suppose, indeed, that the best saints can arrive, while in this world, at the perfection of the heavenly state; so that it is possible for them to do the will of God in the same manner or degree as it is done in heaven. The particle 'as' respects similitude, rather than equality; and all that we can infer from the use of it in the petition is, that there is some analogy or resemblance between the obedience of the saints here, and that of the inhabitants of heaven.

In particular, the expression, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' implies that the will of God may be done with great humility and reverence. Thus the angels are represented, in the emblem or vision which the prophet Isaiah saw of 'the Lord sitting on a throne' and the seraphim attending him, as having their 'faces covered with their wings,' in token of reverence and humility. And others are described as 'casting their crowns before the throne,'d intimating that all the glory which they enjoy is derived from him who sits on the throne, and that their honour is not to be regarded or mentioned, when compared with him who is the fountain of it.—Again, this expression implies a desire to do the will of God with all cheerfulness. Some think that the doing of the divine will in this manner is intimated in the vision which John saw concerning the seven angels, who were employed to inflict the seven last plagues on the church's enemies, they are represented as inflicting these plagues with 'harps in their hands,' and, at the same time, as singing the praises of God.—Again, we are said to do the will of God on earth, as it is done by the angels in heaven, when we do it with faithfulness. Thus when they are represented as ministering to God's people, and as having charge over them to keep them in all their ways, they are

spoken of as performing their ministry faithfully. Accordingly, it is said, 'They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'—Further, the angels are represented as a pattern of diligence in doing the will of God. Thus it is said of the angel Gabriel, that when the word of command was given him to carry a message to Daniel, he 'flew swiftly,' being expeditious in fulfilling the work about which he was employed.g—Further, the angels are said to do the will of God with zeal and fervency. For this reason, some think they are called, in the scripture just mentioned, 'seraphim,' or, as they are elsewhere styled, a 'flaming fire.'—Again, the angels are said to do the will of God sincerely. Thus the inhabitants of heaven are represented as having 'no guile found in their mouths,' and as being 'without fault before the throne of God.'i—Finally, they are said to do the will of God with constancy. We read of them as 'serving him day and night in his temple.' And the angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, are said 'always to behold the face of God in heaven;'l that is, they never give up or are weary of his service.

We have thus an excellent example set before us, in the obedience of the angels; and are exhorted to pray that, in our measure, we may yield similar obedience to God, though we fall very short of doing it as they do who are in a perfect state. We are therefore taught, in this petition, to lift up our hearts to God in a way of adoration, confession, and supplication, as if we should say, "We acknowledge, O Lord, that thou hast a right to the obedience of all creatures, and hast been pleased to give them thy law as the rule of it. It is our glory, as well as our happiness, to be thy servants; for thy law is holy, thy commandment holy, just, and good. But we acknowledge and confess before thee, that we have rebelled against thee, and have refused to yield obedience to thy commands. And when we behold the universal corruption of human nature, we blush and are ashamed to think how

little glory is brought to thy name, by the service and obedience of thy creatures here below. In heaven thy will is done perfectly, by those who serve thee with the greatest delight and pleasure; but on earth thou hast but little glory. It is an instance of condescending goodness that thou hast not, long since, abandoned our world, and thereby rendered it like hell. But we beseech thee, take to thyself thy great power and reign in the hearts of men; subdue their wills to thyself, that they may cheerfully and constantly obey thy commanding will, and submit to thy providential will, as being satisfied that all thy dispensations are right, and shall fend to thy glory, and the welfare of all that fear thy name."

THE FOURTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CXCIII. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

ANSWER. In the fourth petition, which is, "Give us this day our daily bread," acknowledging that in Adam, and by our sin, we have forfeited Our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them; and, that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us, nor we to merit, or by our own industry, to procure them, but prone to desire, get, and use them unlawfully; we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day, in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and, as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them, and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them, and contentment in them, and be kept

from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.

The Meaning of the Word 'Bread' in the Fourth Petition

IN order to our understanding this petition, we must first consider what is meant by 'bread.' Some have thought that our Saviour hereby intends spiritual mercies, or that bread which is suited to the necessities of our souls; and particularly, an interest in Christ, who is called 'the bread of life,' 'the living bread which came down from heaven.'n It must be allowed, indeed, that this is a blessing exceeding all those which are of a temporal nature; as much as the happiness of the soul is preferable to that of the body; and it is, doubtless, to be made the subject of our daily and importunate requests to God, as if we should say, Give me an interest in Christ, else I can have no delight or pleasure in any of the enjoyments of life. Yet this does not seem to be intended by our Saviour in this petition. The bread which we pray for has a more immediate respect to the blessings of this life, which, according to the scripture mode of speaking, are often set forth by the word 'bread.' Thus God tells Adam, after his fall, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;' by which we are to understand, that he should take a great deal of pains to provide for himself the necessaries of life. So when God promises outward blessings to his people, he tells them that 'bread shall be given' them, and their 'water shall be sure.'p And elsewhere', he says, 'I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread.' The blessings of the present life, then, are the bread which we are taught to pray for in this petition.

What is supposed in the Fourth Petition

1. It is supposed, in this petition, that, by our sins, we have forfeited a right to the outward blessings of the present life. This was the

consequence of the forfeiture of life itself, and a part of the curse to which we are exposed by our rebellion against God and apostacy from him. If he should deprive us of all the conveniencies of life, and so embitter it to us that we should be almost inclined to make the unhappy choice which Job did of 'strangling and death, rather than life;' there would be no reason to say that there is unrighteousness with God.

2. It is farther supposed that outward blessings are God's free gift to us. Whether we have a greater or a smaller portion of these, they are to be acknowledged as the fruits of divine bounty. It is God who spreads a table for us. To some he gives a smaller and to others a larger share of temporal good things; but, whatever we enjoy, it is to be owned as the effect of his providential goodness. We are not excluded, indeed, from the use of those means which are ordained for the preserving of life, and our obtaining the good things of it; but we must, while using these means, acknowledge that all the wisdom, industry, and success which attend our endeavours are from God. It is he who 'giveth power to get wealth.' Or, as is elsewhere said, 'The rich and poor meet together;' that is, they agree in this, that 'the Lord is the Maker of them all,'t or that, whatever he their circumstances in the world, it is he who provides for them what they have. And if what we enjoy is sweetened and sanctified to us for our good, so that we have not only the conveniences of life, but a blessing with them, and are enabled to make a right use and improvement of them, to the glory of God and the advantage of ourselves and others; we must reckon our enjoyments an instance of divine favour, or the gift of God.

3. It is farther supposed that temporal good things may lawfully be prayed for. As the providence of God does not, as was formerly observed, exclude the use of means; so it is not inconsistent with

prayer, but is rather an inducement to it. Indeed, prayer is an ascribing of glory to God, as the fountain of all we enjoy; and without this, it would be an affront to the divine Majesty to expect any blessing from him. This remark is applicable to prayer in general, and, in particular, to our making supplication for outward blessings.

What is prayed for in the Fourth Petition

We shall now consider the subject of the petition, or what we are to understand when we say, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

1. The thing prayed for is bread; whereby our Saviour intimates, that we are to set due bounds to our desires, when we are pressing after outward blessings. He does not order us to be importunate with God for the great things of this life; but rather for those things which are necessary,—in the enjoyment of which we may be better enabled to glorify him. He does not put his followers upon asking crowns and sceptres, as though his kingdom were of this world. Some, indeed, who were influenced by carnal motives, fondly imagined that his kingdom was of an earthly kind, and were ready to expect that many worldly advantages would accrue from their adhering to him; and, when they found themselves mistaken, they shamefully deserted his cause, and relinquished the profession which they once made of him. But Christ never gave his people ground to expect that their secular interest should be promoted by embracing the gospel. Accordingly, when any one seemed desirous of being his disciple, he generally put the trying question to him, Whether was he content to leave all, and follow him, or to lead a mean life in the world, and be hated of all men for his name's sake? His disciples, indeed, were sometimes filled with too great solicitude about their future circumstances in life. But he encourages them to hope for necessary provisions, when he says, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.'

It is always found, too, that where there is the greatest degree of faith, it tends to moderate our affections as to the things of this world; and if at any time they are apt to exceed their due bounds, it gives a check to them, as the prophet says to Baruch: 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.'x We have an admirable instance of this in Jacob. When he was in a most destitute condition, fleeing from his father's house to Padan-aram, not knowing what entertainment he should meet with there; the principal thing which he desires, together with the divine presence and protection, is that he might have 'bread to eat, and raiment to put on.' He does not ask that people and nations might bow down to him, or that God would take away the life of his brother Esau, whose malicious design against him occasioned his present hazardous journey; he is not anxiously concerned for the great things of this world, but only desires that he may have the necessaries of life. And Agar's prayer is not unlike this; he says, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.'z Such a frame of spirit our Saviour supposes those to have who address themselves to God in prayer for bread, or the outward accommodations of life.

2. What we pray for is called 'our bread.' The meaning of this, is, that there is a distinct property which every one has, by the allotment of providence, in those outward blessings which God has given him, whatever be the measure or proportion of them. This we are taught to acknowledge with thankfulness, as if we should say, 'Thou didst not design that one man should take possession of the whole world, or engross to himself all its stores; and that the rest should starve and perish for want of the necessaries of life. In the arrangement thou hast made, thy wisdom and sovereignty appear; and to this it is owing that there are some things which we have a right to, distinct from others,—not without thy providence, but by its gift and blessing.' Hence, whatever God thinks fit that we should receive, we

call our own, and as such, pray for it. But whatever God does not think fit that we should receive, we are not in the least to desire or covet; in as much as we are taught to pray for that only which we may call ours, as having a natural or civil right to it, which we have not to that which belongs to another. Now there are two ways, more especially included in this petition, by which we are said to receive, from the hand of God, outward blessings which we may call our own.

God, by his distinguishing hand, gives us that measure of outward blessings which he sees convenient for us; and he does this either by giving success to our endeavours, or by supplying our wants in some way which was altogether unexpected by us, and thereby making provision for the comfort of our lives. There is sometimes a chain of providences leading to this result. Thus God speaks of his 'hearing the heavens;' that, when they want store of water, he may furnish them with it, and 'they may hear the earth,' so as to moisten it with showers, when parched, and becoming unfruitful; and 'that the earth may hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil,' so as to produce them; and that 'these may hear,' that is, may be distributed among God's people, as he sees they want them. And the psalmist says, 'He watereth the hills from his chambers. The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth fruit out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine; and bread which strengthened man's heart.' Hence, there are various causes and effects subservient to one another, which are all owing to the blessing of providence, whereby we come to possess that portion of the good things of this life which is allotted for us.

Again, the outward blessings of this life may be called ours, when God is pleased to make them blessings to us, and give us the

enjoyment of them. He must add his blessing to all the mercies he bestows, else they will not conduce to our happiness, or answer the general end designed by them. Without the divine blessing, the bread we eat would no more nourish us than husks or chaff; our garments could no more contribute to our being warm, than if they were put upon a statue; and the air we breathe would rather stifle than refresh us. Thus it is said, 'Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which Proceedeth out of the mouth of God;' that is, it is not merely by second causes, or the use of means, but by the blessing of God, or his power and providence, that life and health are sustained. Moreover, it is God alone who can give us the comfortable enjoyment of the things of this life. This all have not. Their tables are plentifully furnished, but they want that measure of health which is necessary for their receiving advantage from them. Thus it is said of the sick man, that 'his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.'d Such do, as it were, starve in the midst of plenty. And there are others who, though they have a great deal of the world, and are not hindered from the enjoyment of it by the weakness or decays of nature, yet are made unhappy by the temper of their own minds. There are some, for example, who abound in riches, who may, nevertheless, be said to be poor; because they want an heart to use what they have, which is God's peculiar blessing. Accordingly, the wise man says, 'Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour, this is the gift of God.' For the lawful things of this life, then, and the divine blessing upon them, we are dependent on God; and the asking of them is what we mean, when we pray that God would 'give us our bread.'

3. We are farther taught to pray, that God would give us our bread 'this day;' thereby denoting that we are to desire to have our present necessities supplied, as those who cannot be certain that we shall live

till to-morrow. How often does God break the thread of our lives in an instant, without giving us any notice beforehand! We may truly say that in the midst of life we are in death; and we are advised to take no thought for the morrow, but to leave that entirely to the providence of God. Food nourishes but for a day; so that what we now receive will not suffice us to-morrow. Nature is always craving supplies; and therefore we are taught to have a continual recourse to God by prayer for them. If we look farther than the present time, we are to do so with the condition that the Lord has determined to prolong our lives, and has rendered it necessary for us to pray for those things which will be needful for the support of it. Our praying on this condition seems to be the meaning of that variation of expression which occurs in the evangelist Luke, 'Give us day by day our daily bread;' and it may obviate an inference which will be drawn by some, that if we are not to pray for what respects our future condition in this world, we are not to make provision for it. But not to make provision for the future is contrary to what we are exhorted to do, when we are called to consider the provision which the smallest insects make for their subsistence: 'The ant provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.'g And the apostle says, 'If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' We hence ought to make provision for our future wants. Accordingly, we are to pray that God would give success to our lawful endeavours, in order to the attainment of this end. We must pray thus, however, with the limitation of our maintaining a constant sense that our times are in his hand. Hence, whether he should be pleased to grant us a longer or a shorter lease of our lives, which to us is altogether uncertain, we are to beg of him that we may never be destitute of what is necessary for our glorifying him while on earth.

4. This petition is to be considered as having reference to others as well as to ourselves. By the words, 'Give us,' &c., we express a concern for their advantage, in what respects the good things of this life. The blessings of providence flow from an inexhaustible fountain; and therefore we are not to think that, by desiring that others may have a supply of their wants, there will not be enough remaining for us. Now, our being bound to pray for the good of others, should always teach us to bear our part in relieving them, that they may not, through our neglect, perish for want of the necessaries of this life. Thus we are exhorted 'to deal our bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are cast out to our houses; and when we see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide ourselves from our own flesh.' Job having been severely accused by his friends, as though all the afflictions which befell him were in judgment for his having oppressed and 'forsaken the poor,' and 'violently taken away an house which he builded not,' as Zophar insinuates,k vindicates himself from the charge in the strongest terms, when he says, 'I have not withheld the poor from their desire, nor caused the eyes of the widow to fail; nor eaten my morsel myself alone, so that the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; nor seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering.' This is not only to pray that God would give others their daily bread, but to help them, so far as it is in our power; and thus to help them is very agreeable to what we pray for in their behalf, as well as our own, when we say, as in this petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

Thus concerning the matter of the petition, as explained in this Answer. We shall give a summary account of it in the following meditation, which may be of use for the reducing of our Saviour's direction into practice:—"Our eyes wait on thee, O thou Preserver of men, who givest to all their meat in due season. We are poor, indigent creatures, whose necessities oblige us to request a daily

supply for our outward as well as our spiritual wants. Thou hast granted us life and favour; and, having obtained help from thee, we continue unto this day. Thou preparest a table for us; our cup runneth over; we have never been wholly destitute of those outward blessings which tend to make our pilgrimage through this world easy and comfortable. We therefore adore thee for the care and goodness of thy providence, which continues to us forfeited blessings. We have, by our sins, deserved to be deprived of all the good things we enjoy; which we have not used to thy glory as we ought to have done. We acknowledge ourselves less than the least of all thy mercies; yet thou hast encouraged us to pray and hope for the continuance of them. We leave it to thine infinite wisdom, to choose that condition of life which thou seest best for us. It is not the great things of this world that we are solicitous about, but that portion of it which is necessary to our glorifying thee in life. We desire, agreeably to what thou hast enjoined as our duty, to use that industry which is necessary to attain a comfortable subsistence in the world; yet we are sensible that the success of our endeavours is wholly owing to thy blessing. We therefore beg that thou wouldst prosper our undertakings; since it is thy blessing alone that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow. Keep our desires after the world within their due bounds; and enable us to be content with what thou art pleased to allot for us, that our hearts may not be turned aside from an earnest pursuit after that bread which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life. If thou art pleased to give us the riches of this world, let not our hearts be set upon them. But if thou hast ordained that we should be in low circumstances, may the frame of our spirits be suited to them; and may they be so sanctified that it may appear that we are not too low to be the objects of thy special regard and discriminating grace,—that, having nothing, we may really possess all things, in having an interest in thy love. As to our future condition in this world, though thou hast made it our duty to use a provident

care that we may not be reduced to those straits which would render the last stage of life uncomfortable; yet we would do this with a constant sense of the uncertainty of life, since our times are in thy hand, our circumstances in the world at thy disposal,—and we rejoice that they are so. Therefore we earnestly beg that, if it be thy sovereign will to call us soon out of it, we may be as well pleased to leave, as ever we were to enjoy it, as being blessed with a well-grounded hope of a better life. And, if it be consistent with thy will that our lives be prolonged in the world, 'Give us day by day our daily bread,' that we may, at all times, experience that thou dost abundantly bless our provision, and satisfy us with those things which thou seest needful for us, till we come to our journey's end, and are possessed of that perfect blessedness which thou hast reserved for thy saints in a better world."

THE FIFTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CXCIV. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

ANSWER. In the fifth petition, which is, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," acknowledging that we, and all others, are guilty both of original and actual sin, and thereby become debtors to the justice of God; and that neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt; we pray for ourselves and others, that God of his free grace would, through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin, accept us in his Beloved, continue his favour

> and grace to us, pardon our daily failings, and fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness, which we are the rather emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect, when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we, from the heart, forgive others their offences.

HAVING been directed, in the former petition, to pray for outward blessings, we are now led to ask for forgiveness of sin. It is with very good reason that these two petitions are joined together; inasmuch as we cannot expect that God should give us the good things of this life, which are all forfeited by us, much less that we should have them bestowed on us in mercy and for our good, unless he is pleased to forgive those sins whereby we provoke him to withhold them from us. Nor can we take comfort in any outward blessings, while our consciences are burdened with a sense of the guilt of sin, and we have nothing to expect, as the consequence of it, but to be separated from his presence. Hence, we are taught to pray that God would 'forgive us our sins,' as one evangelist expresses it, or our 'debts,' as it is in the other.

It may be here observed, in general, that sin is a debt. As contrary to the holiness of God, it is a stain and blemish, a dishonour and reproach to us; as a violation of his law, it is a crime; and as involving us in guilt, it is called 'a debt.' This is the principal thing considered in this petition. There was a debt of obedience demanded from us as creatures; and in case of the failure of it, or of our committing any other sin, there was a threatening denounced in terms of the sanction of the law, whence arises a debt of punishment. Now, it is in the latter respect that we are directed, more especially, in this petition, to pray for forgiveness. There are several things regarding the nature of forgiveness, as founded on the satisfaction given by Christ, as our surety, which have been largely insisted on under some

former Answers. Hence, in considering the subject of this petition, we shall, first, take a view of sinful man as charged with guilt, and rendered uneasy under a sense of it; secondly, we shall consider how he is to address himself to God by faith and prayer for forgiveness; and thirdly, we shall show the encouragement which he has to hope that his prayer will be answered. Under this last head we shall take occasion to consider how far that disposition which we have to forgive others, is an evidence of our prayer for forgiveness having been heard.

Man's Uneasiness under a Sense of Guilt

We are first to consider the charge of guilt which is upon us, and that uneasiness which is the consequence of it. Here we view the sinner as apprehended and standing before God, the Judge of all. An accusation is brought in against him; he is charged with apostacy and rebellion against his rightful Lord and Sovereign; his nature is, in consequence, represented as vitiated and depraved, his heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; whence proceed all actual transgressions, with their respective aggravations, which, according to the tenor of the law of God, deserve his wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come. This charge is made good against him by such convincing evidence, that he must be very much unacquainted with himself, and a stranger to the law of God, if he does not see its truth. But if we suppose him stupid, and persisting in his own vindication, through the blindness of his mind, and hardness of his heart, and ready to say with Ephraim, 'In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin;'o the charge will, notwithstanding, appear to be just, his mouth shall be stopped, and he shall be forced to confess himself guilty before God. His conscience is now awakened, and he trembles at the thoughts of falling into the hands of an absolute God, who appears no otherwise

to him than as a consuming fire. His terrors set themselves in array against him, and cannot but fill him with the greatest anguish, especially as there is no method which he can find out to free himself from the misery which he dreads. If he pretends to extenuate his crimes, his excuses will not avail him; and if his own conscience does not come in as a witness against him, as having been a party concerned in the rebellion, its being silent is an evidence of its having been rendered stupid by a continuance in sin. Nothing which it can allege in its own vindication, will be regarded in the court of heaven, but will rather tend to add weight to the guilt he has contracted; for the omniscience of God will bring in an unanswerable charge against him, as a transgressor of his law, and liable to condemnation, and then vindictive justice will demand satisfaction. If the sinner make an overture to pay the debt, he must either yield sinless obedience, which is impossible from the nature of the thing, or bear the stroke of justice, and suffer the punishment due to him; and if he is content to do the latter, he knows not what it is to fall into the hands of the living God, or to be plunged into an abyss of endless misery. If he think that he shall be secure by fleeing from justice, he will find every attempt to flee from it vain: for God is omnipresent, and 'there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.' Nothing therefore remains but that he make supplication to his Judge, that he would pass by the crimes he has committed, without demanding satisfaction. But to do this is to desire that he would act contrary to the holiness of his nature; which would be such a blemish on his perfections, that he is obliged to reject the suit, or else must cease to be God. What would his pardoning crime without satisfaction be, but to relinquish his throne, deny his sovereignty, and act contrary to his own law, which is the rule of his government? Sinners, besides, would take occasion to transgress, expecting that they may do with so impunity. But, is there no intercessor who will plead the sinner's cause, or appear for him in

the court of heaven? There can be no such intercessor but one who is able to make an atonement, and thereby secure the glory of divine justice, by having the debt transferred or placed to his account, and giving a full satisfaction for it. But this work belongs to none but our Lord Jesus Christ, who has obtained redemption and forgiveness through his blood. Now, no one can take encouragement from what he has done but he who addresses himself to God by faith. But we are now considering the sinner as destitute of faith, and therefore the charge of guilt remains upon him. And it is certain that the consequence is such as tends to fill him with the greatest uneasiness under the burden which lies on his conscience; so that he has a perpetual dread of the execution of the sentence which is in force against him. His spirit is wounded; and it is impossible for any one to apply to him healing medicines, but by directing him, according to the prescription contained in the gospel, to seek forgiveness in that way in which God applies it in and through a Mediator.

How a Sinner is to ask Forgiveness

We are now to consider how a person is to address himself to God by faith and prayer for forgiveness. This is the principal topic exhibited in this petition. Here it is to be acknowledged that, when we draw nigh to God, we do so with a sense of guilt, and, it may be, with great distress of conscience arising from it. Yet this sense of guilt differs very much from what was observed under the last Head, when we considered a sinner as standing before an absolute God, without any hope of obtaining forgiveness. What such a person suffers is dread and horror; but his drawing near to God under the sense of guilt of which we now speak, is an expedient for his obtaining a settled peace of conscience. Indeed, there is nothing of greater importance, than our performing this duty in a right manner.

1. Let it be considered, then, that when we pray for forgiveness of sin, it is supposed that none can bestow this blessing upon us but God. No one has a right to forgive an offence, but he against whom it is committed. Sin is a neglect or refusal to pay the debt of obedience which is due from us to God; and consequently it would be an invading of his right, for any one who had no power to demand payment of that debt to pretend to give a discharge to the sinner, as an insolvent debtor. This would be to act like the person mentioned in the parable, who was appointed, indeed, to receive his lord's debts, but not to cancel them; and therefore our Saviour calls him 'an unjust steward;' and he is said to have 'wasted his lord's goods,' by compounding without his order, the debts which were owing to him. Now, as obedience is a religious duty, it is due to God alone. It is only he who can give a discharge to those who have not performed it. As it belongs to him as a Judge and Lawgiver to punish offenders, it would be the highest affront to him for a creature to pretend to this prerogative. Hence, God appropriates it to himself, when he says, 'I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake;'r an expression which is to be understood of him exclusive of all others. Accordingly, when the Jews charged our Saviour with blasphemy on his forgiving sins, and said, 'Who can forgive sins but God only?' the proposition was true, how false soever the inference was which they deduced from it to disprove his Deity.

2. We shall now consider that all ought to pray for forgiveness, and in what sense they are to do so. That all ought to pray for forgiveness, one would think is so evident, so agreeable to the condition of fallen man, so obviously founded on many scriptures, and expressly commanded in the petition which we are explaining, that it is needless to give a farther proof of it. Yet, some have asserted that a justified person ought not to pray for pardon of sin, since he already enjoys it. This is an inference from what they advance as to actual

justification being from eternity. They hence suppose that it is as absurd for a justified person to pray that God would forgive him, as it is to pray that he would choose him to eternal life, or that Christ would satisfy the divine justice for the sins of his people, which he has already done. It is, indeed, not very easy to understand what some persons mean, when they insist on this subject; for they lay down propositions, without sufficiently explaining them. And while they allege in their own vindication that they intend nothing but what is agreeable to the sentiments of the reformed churches, it is certain that they advance several things, or, at least, make use of unguarded expressions, which are altogether disowned by these churches; and, at the same time, they give occasion to some to run into the contrary extreme, who, for fear of being thought to assert eternal justification, deny the eternal purpose of God relating to it.— But whatever they intend, when they say that a justified person ought not to pray for pardon of sin; the contrary to this opinion is sufficiently evident from scripture. For, as every believer is a justified person, any instances which we have of believers praying for the pardon of sin, sufficiently confute the absurd notion which we are opposing. Now, that many have prayed for pardon of sin, who have, at the same time, been true believers, is evident from David's praying for the pardon of sin, as he often does. Thus he says, 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great;' and yet, at the same time, he expresses himself like a justified person, 'O my God, I trust in thee,'u and, 'Thou art the God of my salvation.' Again, he prays, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified;'y yet, at the same time, he appears to be a believer; for he speaks of his 'trusting in God,' and 'lifting up his soul to him,' and 'fleeing to him,' that he would 'hide him,'a which are all acts of justifying faith. Again, he prays, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions;' 'hide thy face from

my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.'c Yet he had had a previous intimation from God, that he had pardoned his sin. This appears from the preface to the psalm in which this prayer occurs; so that the Spirit of God put words into his mouth, and taught him, notwithstanding the assurance he had had from him of his having obtained forgiveness, to pray for it. Moreover, the apostle Paul was in a justified state, when he expressed his earnest desire of being 'found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'e Besides, that justified persons ought to pray for forgiveness, might be argued from all those scriptures which represent believers as praying for salvation; for they cannot pray for salvation without praying for forgiveness of sin, as being inseparably connected with it. I shall therefore add no more concerning the obligation which all are under, to pray for the pardon of sin.

I now proceed to consider in what sense we are to pray for forgiveness. This may without much difficulty be determined, if we rightly state the doctrine of justification. If justification be considered as an immanent act in God, or as the eternal purpose of his will not to impute sin, which is what divines call decretive justification, it is to be allowed that it is no more to be prayed for than eternal election. Nor are we to pray that Christ may be constituted the Head and Surety of his elect, or that he might finish transgressions, make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness, for that is already done. But the scripture often speaks of justification as consisting in the application of Christ's righteousness, or in the right which we have to lay claim to it. This is styled justification by faith, and is the only foundation on which we build our hope, that we have an interest in what Christ did and suffered, and are thereby discharged from guilt and condemnation. But this justification cannot take place before we believe; and in this

sense we pray that God would justify us. Now, as forgiveness of sin is a branch of justification, it is in this sense that we pray for the pardon of sin. [See Note 2 D, page 643.]

In praying for forgiveness, we express an earnest desire that God would not lay those sins to our charge which we daily commit, or that he would not, as the psalmist says, 'enter into judgment with us,' and, in consequence, that he would not punish us as our iniquities deserve. We thus pray for the application of Christ's righteousness, as the ground and foundation of our claim to forgiveness. Again, we are to pray for the comfortable fruits and effects of forgiveness, that 'being justified by faith, we may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand;'g or that we may be able to conclude that our persons and services are accepted in the Beloved, and that Christ hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Further, we are to pray for the assurance or comfortable sense of forgiveness, so that we may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And, inasmuch as we daily contract guilt, we are to pray that this blessing may be daily applied to us, and that, both living and dying, we may be dealt with as those who are interested in Christ's righteousness as our Surety and Redeemer.

It may be objected that these blessings are what every believer has; and that therefore he ought not to pray for them. I answer, that there are many privileges which God does or certainly will bestow upon his people, which they are, nevertheless, to pray for; otherwise they who are in a state or grace, are not to pray for perseverance in grace, because they are assured that it shall be maintained unto salvation, according to God's promise. Indeed, whatever promises are contained in the covenant of grace, a believer ought not, according to this objection, to pray that God would apply them to him, and so

glorify his faithfulness in accomplishing them, since he is certainly persuaded that he will do it. Yet, all allow that we are to pray for the fulfilment to us of these promises. Hence, even if we have a full assurance that God has forgiven our sins, yet, as we daily contract guilt, we are daily to pray that he would not lay it to our charge, or deal with us as our iniquities deserve.

3. We shall now consider how we are to address ourselves to God, or what views we are to have of him when we pray for forgiveness of sin. This depends on the idea we have of those perfections which he glorifies in bestowing this privilege. These are, more especially, his mercy, grace, and faithfulness, in accomplishing what he has promised in the covenant of grace. As for his justice, it is considered, as will be observed under a following Head, as having received full satisfaction. It is concerned, however, in the purchase, not in the application of forgiveness. God, indeed, appears, in respect to it, with the glory of a Judge resolving to make no abatements of the debt which was contracted, that so he may express his utmost detestation of the sins committed. In this sense, forgiveness is not to be obtained by entreaty; for it is inconsistent with the character of a Judge, to be moved by entreaty, and contrary to the demands of law and justice. But, on the other hand, when we draw nigh to him, we consider him as a Father who delights in mercy, as is particularly intimated in the preface to this prayer; and therefore we do not come before him as summoned to stand at his tribunal, and to be weighed in the balance by him. Were we in this position, we should be found wanting; and, if our iniquities should be marked by him, we could not stand. But we consider ourselves as invited to come into his presence, in hope of obtaining forgiveness; and we consider him as he has revealed himself in the gospel, in which we are told that there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, not as the criminal fears his judge, who is ready to pass sentence upon him, but as a child comes into his

father's presence with such a fear as proceeds from love, and is the result of the encouragement which is given him that he shall be accepted in his sight. The great inducement to our thus approaching God, is the intimation he has given of his love, in the promises of the covenant of grace, particularly in those which respect forgiveness. There he has discovered himself as a God ready to pardon, 'gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness;' with whom is 'plenteous redemption.'i He also styles himself, 'Our God, who will abundantly pardon,' inasmuch as 'his thoughts and ways are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth.' He has likewise promised that he will 'cast all the sins' of his people 'into the depths of the sea.' Hence, we consider him, in forgiving our sins, not only as glorifying his mercy, but as 'performing his truth,' and acting agreeably to his faithfulness.l And all this depends entirely on the discoveries he has made of himself to us through a Mediator.

4. We are thus led to consider the way in which God bestows forgiveness, and in which we are to seek it at his hand by faith and prayer. We formerly observed that it would be an affront to the divine Majesty, to suppose that he will extend mercy to guilty sinners, without securing the glory of his vindictive justice; and the securing of this depends wholly on the satisfaction which was given by Christ. Hence, we are to beg forgiveness for his sake, whom God has 'set forth to be a propitiation for sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' Accordingly, we are first considered as having his righteousness imputed to us; and then this blessing which we pray for is applied to us. In this method of praying for forgiveness, we take occasion to adore the wisdom of God, which has found out this expedient to hallow or sanctify his own name, as well as to secure to us an interest in his love; and, at the same time, we express the high esteem we have for the person of Christ, who has procured it for us, and also our sense of the infinite value of the price

he paid in order to procure it. We refer our cause to him, that, as our Advocate, he would appear on our behalf, in the merit of his obedience and sufferings; that our petition may be granted in such a way, that God may have the highest revenue of glory redounding to himself, and that we may receive the consequent blessings.

We are now to consider the frame of spirit with which we are to pray for forgiveness. There is no grace but what is to be exercised in prayer, agreeably to the subject of it. In particular, it is evident, from the nature of the thing, that when we pray for forgiveness, it ought to be with a penitent frame of spirit. Accordingly, repentance and forgiveness of sins are often connected in scripture. Thus it is said, 'Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.' We are not to suppose, indeed, that repentance, or any other grace, is the cause of God's secret purpose or determination to forgive sin, or that he accepts of it as any part of that atonement or satisfaction which his justice requires to be made for it; for to suppose this is to ascribe that to repentance which belongs entirely to Christ's righteousness. Repentance, however, is so far necessary to forgiveness, that it would be a very preposterous thing for any one to ask this favour either of God or of man without it. Not to repent of a crime committed, is, in effect, a pleading for it, and a tacit resolution to persist in it, and, in consequence, disqualifies us from pleading for a pardon. Besides, it would be contrary to the divine perfections for God to give pardon to those who, in this manner do, as it were, practically disown their need of it. Moreover, the necessity of repentance, in those who are praying and hoping for forgiveness, appears from the connection which there is between it and all other graces. These, though distinguished, are not separated from it; and they are all necessary to salvation,—which we can, by no means attain, without being forgiven.

The Connexion between forgiving others and enjoying forgiveness from God

We proceed to consider the encouragement that they, who plead for forgiveness, with the exercise of faith, repentance, and other graces, have to expect, that they shall be heard and answered; and, more particularly, how far the disposition which we have to forgive others, is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness from God.

Grace exercised, is an evidence of forgiveness. That it is so appears from the fact that it is a work and fruit of the Spirit, a branch of sanctification, and an earnest of eternal life. In this respect, that good work may be truly said to be begun, which God will certainly carry on, and perfect in glory. Every grace, I say, provided it be true and genuine, is an evidence of our right to forgiveness, or justification. Accordingly the apostle says, 'Whom he called, them he justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.'

We are now to consider how far, or in what respect, our exercising forgiveness towards others, is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness from God; which is the sense given in this Answer, of those words, 'as we forgive our debtors.' We may here observe the variation of the expression in Matthew and Luke. In the former it is, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;' and in the latter, 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.' There is a little difficulty contained in the sense of the particles 'as' and 'for;' and these must be so explained that the sense of the petition, in both evangelists, may appear to be the same. When Matthew says, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,' the particle 'as' is a note, not of equality, but of similitude. Accordingly, it signifies that we are to forgive others, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, or as we hope to obtain forgiveness from him. If,

indeed, we compare our forgiveness of others with God's forgiveness of us, there is an infinite disproportion between them, as to the injuries forgiven, and the circumstances attending the act of forgiveness. The injuries done to us are very small, if compared with the crimes which we commit against God; and when we are said to forgive them, there is no comparison between our forgiveness and that which we desire from the hand of God. God's forgiving us is, indeed, a motive to us to forgive others; but the one is not the measure or standard of the other. Hence, the petition implies that, while we ask for forgiveness, we ought to do so with a becoming frame of spirit, as those who are inclined to forgive others, and, at the same time, to bless God that he has wrought this disposition in us. So far as we make use of our forgiving others as an argument in prayer, the meaning is, that as God has made it our duty to forgive others, and we trust has also given us grace to do so, we hope that he will, in like manner, 'forgive us our trespasses.' The petition as laid down by the evangelist Luke, 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us,' is, in substance, the same as laid down in Matthew, and as now explained. The particle 'for' is not causal, but demonstrative. Hence, we are not to understand it as though our forgiving others were the ground and reason of God's forgiving us; for to do this would be to put it in the room of Christ's righteousness. But the meaning is, that we are encouraged to hope that he will forgive us, from the demonstrative evidence he has afforded us of his disposition to forgive, in his having bestowed upon us that grace which inclines and disposes us to forgive others. For from his having given us that grace, we have ground to conclude that we shall obtain the blessing for which we pray. We are thus led to consider the nature and extent of forgiveness, as exercised by us, and our obligation to perform this duty; and when our performing it may be said to be an evidence of our obtaining forgiveness from God.

1. As to the nature and extent of forgiveness, there are some things to be premised. The injuries which are done us, are to be considered as either an invasion or a denial of those rights which belong to us, agreeably to the station and condition in life in which the providence of God has fixed us. Any such invasion must be reckoned an injury, because it is detrimental to us, and an act of injustice. It may also be considered as a crime committed against God, inasmuch as it infers a violation of the law of nature, which is stamped with his authority. By this law, the rights of every particular person are determined; and to deprive us of them, is a sin against God, in the same sense in which sins immediately committed against men are said to be committed against him.—Again, injuries are to be forgiven by us, only as they are against ourselves. God alone can forgive them as they are against him. The reason is, that no one can dispense with that punishment which is due for the violation of a law but he who gave it. The precept which is to be obeyed, and the sanction which binds over the offender to suffer for his violation of it, must be established by the same authority. Hence, as the creature cannot demand that obedience which is due to God alone; so, for the same reason, he cannot remit that debt of punishment which belongs only to God to inflict. We are to desire, however, that God would pardon, rather than punish, those who have injured us. Our doing this is the only sense in which we may be said to forgive others those crimes that are committed against God; if, indeed, our doing it may be called forgiveness. But so far as any injury respects ourselves, as being detrimental to us, it is our duty to forgive it, and not to exercise that private revenge which is inconsistent with the scope of this petition. —Again, so far as an injury which more especially respects ourselves, includes a violation of human laws, so that the offender has rendered himself obnoxious to a capital punishment; it does not belong to us, as private persons, to forgive the criminal, so as to obstruct the course of justice. This matter does not concern us, as we have not the

executive part of human laws in our power. To pretend to this executive power, would be not only to violate the laws of men, but to commit an offence against God, who has established the just rights of civil government. Hence, that forgiveness which we are obliged to exercise towards others, does not extend to injuries which violate human laws. Nor are we obliged, when we forgive those who have injured us, to be unconcerned about doing justice to ourselves, when it is possible, or at least easy, for us to have redress in the course of law or equity; especially if the damage we sustain be, in a very great degree, prejudicial to ourselves or families. If an injury affect our good name in the world, the forgiving of it is not inconsistent with our using endeavours to vindicate our own reputation; though, it may be, we can hardly do this without exposing him who has done us the injury, to suffer that shame which he has brought on himself by his calumnies.

These things being premised, we proceed to consider the nature and extent of forgiveness, as it is to be exercised by us, so far as the injury committed respects ourselves. This forgiveness is opposed to our bearing the least degree of malice against the offender, or carrying our resentments too far, by magnifying lesser injuries, and meditating revenge. Nor ought we to be so partial in our own cause, as to deny or altogether overlook those things which are, in other respects, commendable in him; as though a crime committed against us were altogether inconsistent with the least degree of virtue or goodness in him who has committed it. His having done injustice to us, does not excuse any act of injustice to his person or character in instances which have not an immediate relation to ourselves. To look at him in his other conduct in the light of his injury against us, is to see things through a false medium, or to infer consequences which cannot fairly be deduced from any thing which he has done, how injurious soever it may have been to us. Moreover, we are not to take

occasion, from the ill treatment we have met with from any one, to endeavour to ruin him, as to his estate or character in the world. For to act thus is not a proper expedient, either to do justice to ourselves, or to bring him who has done us the injury to repentance.

Here we may take occasion to inquire, how far a person who is injured by another may demand satisfaction; and whether it is our duty to forgive him, though it be neither in his power nor in his inclination to make satisfaction. The answer which I would give is, that the law of God and nature does not prohibit us from demanding satisfaction in proportion to the injury received; satisfaction being a debt which we ought to claim, in justice to ourselves and our character in the world. It may sometimes, however, be out of the offender's power to make full satisfaction. In this case we must be content, and forgive the injury, without it; and we are to deal with him, as we are obliged to do with those who are insolvent in pecuniary debts. On the other hand, the person who has injured us may be able, at least, in some measure to make satisfaction; but he is so far from being willing to do so, that he refuses to acknowledge his crime, and, what is still worse, seems inclined, as occasion may offer, to commit it again. This is the worst of tempers; especially if the injury be not merely supposed, but real. Yet the temper of the offender is no rule for us to proceed by, in forgiving injuries. For understanding this, let it be considered that satisfaction for injuries committed, consists either in making a compensation in proportion to the damage sustained, or in a mere acknowledgment of the fault committed. The former we may, in justice, insist on; though in most cases, where the injury respects only ourselves, it may be dispensed with or demanded at pleasure. But whether it be given or not, it is so far our duty to pass it by, as not to bear the least degree of malice against him who has injured us. In the latter kind of satisfaction, no more is demanded than a mere acknowledgment of the offence

committed, which cannot be supposed to be, out of the power of the offender; but he is resolved that he will not make it, he persists in his own vindication, and determines to do the same injury as occasion offers. Now, we are to let him know that he sins, not only against us, but against God, and to exhort him to confess his crime before him; and therefore we pity his obstinacy, while we express our readiness to pass by the injury he has done us. Yet out of a principle of self-preservation, such an one is not to be chosen by us as an intimate friend or associate, that he may not be in a capacity to injure us for the future, which his obstinacy discovers him to be inclined to do. Thus concerning the nature and extent of the duty of forgiving injuries.

2. We proceed to consider the indispensable obligation we are under to forgive injuries. Without practising this duty, we could not make that appeal to God which is contained in the petition we are considering, or take encouragement to hope that we shall obtain forgiveness from him. To induce us to perform it, let us consider that if God should deal with us as we do with our fellow-creatures, when we refuse to forgive them, we should be for ever miserable. This our Saviour illustrates by the parable of the debtor and creditor. There a person is represented as 'owing ten thousand talents;' and 'his lord,' upon his entreaty, 'forgave him the debt.' Afterwards the person dealt severely with one who owed him but 'an hundred pence;' and by doing so he provoked his lord to 'deliver him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.' Though this parable does not argue the least mutability in the divine purpose relating to forgiveness; yet we may infer from it how inconsiderable the injuries which are done us are, when compared with those which we have done against God; and how little ground we have to expect forgiveness from him, if we are not disposed to forgive others.—Again, an implacable spirit meditating revenge for injuries done

against us, will render us altogether unfit for the performance of any holy duty, and particularly for imploring forgiveness from God. It also exposes us to many temptations. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of anger retained in our breasts, or 'letting the sun go down upon our wrath,' as that which 'gives place to the devil.'p—Again, malice and fury tend to exasperate an enemy; while forgiveness melts him into friendship, and very much recommends the gospel, which obliges us to do acts of brotherly kindness, even where they are least deserved. —Further, we have many bright examples for our imitation, of the best men, who have been highly injured, and yet have expressed a forgiving spirit. Thus Joseph forgave the injuries done against him by his brethren. After his father's death, they were jealous that he would hate them, and requite them all the evil which they had done to him; but he not only comforted them and spake kindly to them, but made very liberal provision for the subsisting of them and their families. Moses, when Miriam was smitten with leprosy for speaking against him, prayed for her recovery.r When the Syrian host was sent on purpose to destroy the prophet Elisha, and when God delivered them into his hand in the midst of Samaria, and the king of Israel was ready to smite them, had he desired it; he was so far from wishing them to be destroyed, that he said to the king, 'Thou shalt not smite them. Wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword, and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.' In the New Testament, we have an instance of a forgiving spirit in Stephen, when, in the very agonies of death, having been before insulted, and now stoned by his enraged enemies, 'he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'t But the highest instance which can be given of the exercise of this grace we have in our Saviour, who prayed for those who crucified him, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' These

examples are worthy of our imitation; and therefore we should reckon ourselves obliged to forgive those who have injured us.

It will be objected by some, that the injuries done them are so very great, that they are not to be borne; that it would be dishonourable for them not to take any notice of them; or perhaps that the ingratitude expressed in them, is such as deserves the highest resentment; and that to pass over the injuries, might be reckoned a tacit approbation of them, and give occasion to the offenders to despise and injure them for the future. But if the injury be great, it will be much more commendable, and a greater instance of virtue and grace, to forgive than to resent it. In this case, a man overcomes himself, subdues his own passions, and so lets his enemy know that he has a due sense of the divine command relating to forgiveness, and that his spirit is sanctified and calmed by the power of divine grace. To act thus is reckoned one of the greatest victories. Accordingly, it is said, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' As for our honour, which is pretended to be concerned in our forgiving injuries, they who allege it are very much mistaken in their sentiments about true honour. For it is said, 'The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.'y Again, the forgiveness of injuries does not, in the least, argue that the person who forgives, approves of his crime who has injured him. For our forgiving an offender is not inconsistent with our charging his sin on his conscience, and endeavouring to bring him under a sense of guilt, as having not only injured us, but done that which is highly displeasing to God. He may also be given to understand that he has wronged his own soul more than us, and therefore has great reason to be humbled before God, and repent of his sin committed against us, which, as it is committed against God, he only can forgive; though we let him know, that we are disposed to forgive him, so far as the

crime is directed against us. As to the pretence that the forgiving of injuries will make those who have done them grow bold, and be more hardened in their crimes, and that they will take occasion from it to insult and injure us for the future, such a result very seldom follows. But if it should, we must consider that the ungrateful abuse of a kind and generous action, is no sufficient excuse for our not performing it. If, however, there be the least ingenuousness of temper, or if it pleases God, by his grace, to bless our kind behaviour towards them for their good, our forgiveness of their injuries will have a far different effect. Accordingly, it is observed, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.' Thus concerning the obligation we are under to forgive the injuries which are committed against us.

3. We are now to consider how our forgiveness of injuries is an evidence, or may afford us ground of hope, that we shall obtain forgiveness from God, when we are praying for it. Here let it be observed, that the forgiving of injuries may be considered merely as a virtue, proceeding from a goodness of temper, or from a sense of the equality and reasonableness of the duty, and from other motives which the light of nature may suggest, or, as it is recommended by Seneca, Epictetus, and other heathen moralists. Now, while the forgiving of injuries from such must be reckoned a very commendable quality, and a convincing evidence that a person is, in a great degree, master of his own passions; we cannot conclude from it that a person is in a state of grace; and nothing short of that can be an evidence of our right to forgiveness. Hence, we must consider the disposition to forgive injuries as a Christian virtue, or as containing some ingredients which manifest it to be a grace wrought in us by the Spirit, and a branch of sanctification, and, as such, having several other graces connected with it. Accordingly, when our forgiving injuries is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness, we must

practise forgiveness out of an humble sense of the many crimes which we have committed against God. The disposition, therefore, is joined with the grace of repentance, and flows from it. Moreover, it contains several acts of faith. In forgiving injuries, we, in effect, acknowledge that all we have is in God's hand, who has a right to take it away when he pleases. If we are deprived of our reputation and usefulness in the world, or of our wealth and outward well-being by the injurious treatment we meet with from those who, without cause, are our enemies, we are sensible that what we suffer could not come upon us without God's permissive providence; and in this we entirely acquiesce. We wholly lay the injury or injustice done us to the charge of those who hate us; yet, in obedience to our Saviour's command, we desire to express our love to them in the most valuable acts, and, at the same time, to acknowledge and adore the sovereignty and justice of God in suffering us to be thus dealt with by men, and hoping and trusting that he will overrule this and all other afflictive providences for our good. Thus David says when he speaks of God's suffering Shimei to curse him: 'It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.' Further, when we forgive those who have injured us, we do so with an earnest desire that God would give them repentance; so that his name may be glorified, and his interest promoted, whatever becomes of our name and usefulness in the world. When we are enabled to exercise such a frame of spirit as this in forgiving those who have injured us, we have ground to hope that, when we pray for forgiveness, the great God, who is the Author of all that grace which we exercise in forgiving others, will grant us the invaluable privilege which we desire.

Having explained this petition, we shall now consider it as a directory, agreeably to which we may put up our requests to God. Accordingly, we are to cast ourselves before his footstool, with

humble confession of sin, and imploring forgiveness from him, to this effect:—"We adore thee, O Lord, as a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts, and hast revealed thy wrath from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. We acknowledge that we have, by our transgressions, become debtors to thy justice. Our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespasses grown up unto the heavens; and thereby we have deserved to be banished out of thy sight, and cast into the prison of hell, without hope of being released thence. We are not able to stand in judgment, and therefore we dread the thoughts of appearing before thine awful tribunal, as an absolute God. If thou shouldst contend with us, we cannot answer for the least sin that we have committed; and it would be an injury to thy justice, and an increasing of our guilt, to expect or desire that thou shouldst pardon our sins without receiving satisfaction for them, which we are sensible that we are not, nor ever shall be able to give thee. But we bless thy name that thou hast sent thy well-beloved Son into the world, who gave his life a ransom for thy people; by which means thy justice is satisfied, thy law fulfilled, and all thy perfections infinitely glorified. He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness; which is to and upon all them that believe. Thou hast therefore given us leave and encouragement to come to thee by faith, to plead with thee for redemption and forgiveness through his blood, according to the riches of thy grace. In him thou art a God pardoning the iniquity, and passing by the transgressions of the remnant of thine heritage. We pray for this invaluable privilege as those who humbly hope and trust that we have those graces wrought in us, which are an evidence of our having Christ's righteousness imputed to us, for which we bless thee. In particular, we bless thee that thou hast enabled us to forgive all the injuries which are done us by our fellow-creatures; which are very small and inconsiderable, when compared with those

affronts which we daily offer to thy Majesty. We beseech thee, grant that this and all other graces may more and more abound in us, that thereby our evidences of an interest in Christ's righteousness may be more strong and clear; that though we daily contract guilt by our transgressions, we may be enabled to conclude for our comfort, that there is no condemnation to us, and that iniquity shall not be our ruin."

[NOTE 2 D. Prayer for Pardon.—Prayer for justification, in any just or scriptural sense whatever of justification before God, is essentially of the same nature as prayer for regeneration; and either must be regarded as formal and unbelieving, or presupposes the possession of spiritual life,—a justified condition and a regenerated heart. The remarks made in a former note (See Note headed "Are unconverted persons to be exhorted to pray?" appended to Sect. "How the word is to be preached," under Quest. clx.) on prayer as a means of conversion, apply in all their force to prayer as an antecedent to justification. To exhort a person, therefore, to pray that he may be justified, will as much tend to obscure in his view the gospel's invitation to him to believe and live, as to exhort him to pray in order that he may be converted.

Prayer for pardon appears to me to derive its distinctive character from a very different source than the fact that justification includes the pardon of all past iniquity. Pardon is very often spoken of in scripture quite apart from justification; and if I am not mistaken, is always so spoken of when represented as a blessing to be asked by prayer. Viewed as included in justification, it is the removal of guilt as entirely forfeiting the divine complacency, and placing the sinner under unqualified condemnation; but viewed apart from justification, it is the pardon of particular offences, the forgiveness of sin committed by persons partially sanctified, the removal of guilt

which, while it entails chastisement and stripes, does not occasion the withdrawal of God's covenant or promises of saving mercy. In the one view, it is a blessing once bestowed, ever complete, and conferred on the spiritually dead when they are made alive to God; in the other, it is a blessing daily needed, often received, and properly or exclusively bestowed upon erring and delinquent believers,—persons who, while justified and regenerated, are still so far under the influence of remaining corruption as in many things to transgress the divine law. In the former case, it is a result of Christ's atonement, or of the offering once for all which he made for taking away the sin of the world; in the latter, it is a result of his intercession,—of his continuing in the presence of God on behalf of his people, and ever living to plead the merits of his blood, that he may save on to the last point those who have come unto God by him. See Heb. 7:25; 4:15, 16; 9:23, 24; Rom. 8:33, 34. The parties, therefore, who pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' are 'disciples' who say, 'Our Father who art in heaven,'—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption in their hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father;' and they who 'come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need,' are those who 'have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,' and who are exhorted to 'hold fast their profession,' Heb. 4:16, compared with verse 14.—ED.]

THE SIXTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CXCV. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

ANSWER. In the sixth petition, which is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," acknowledging that the

most wise, righteous, and gracious God, for divers holy and just ends, may so order things,' that we may he assaulted, foiled, and, for a time, led captive by temptation, that Satan, the world, and the flesh, are ready, powerfully to draw us aside and ensnare us; and that we, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of our corruption, weakness, and want of watchfulness, are not only subject to he tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations; but also, of ourselves, unable and unwilling to resist them, to recover out of them, and to improve them, and worthy to be left under the power of them; we pray, that God would so overrule the world, and all in it; subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan; order all things, bestow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we, and all his people, may, by his providence, be kept from, being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that, by his Spirit, we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation, or, when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof; that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, Satan trodden under our feet, and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil for ever.

The Meaning of the Word 'Temptation'

OUR Saviour having, in the preceding petition, exhorted us to pray for forgiveness of sins, whereby the guilt of past crimes may be removed, advises us in this to pray against temptation, lest, being overcome by it, we should contract fresh guilt, and walk unbecoming those who hope for or have obtained forgiveness from God. In order to our understanding this petition, it will be necessary for us to premise something tending to explain the word 'temptation.' This word may be taken in a good sense. Thus God himself is sometimes

said to 'tempt,' or rather, which is all one, to 'try' his people. This he does by the various dispensations of his providence, whether prosperous or adverse. Sometimes also he does it by his commands, when he puts us upon the performance of difficult duties, that he may prove us, whether his fear is before us. In this respect he is said to have tempted Abraham, proved his faith, and discovered his readiness to obey his command in offering Isaac; and, after he had tried his faith, he commends him, when he says, 'Now I know that thou fearest God.' Sometimes likewise he is said to tempt or 'allure' to what is good,c to invite his people to do those things which redound to his glory and their real interest. In this sense we may and ought to tempt others, or persuade, and, as much as in us lies, engage their affections to the performance of what is good. Thus the apostle advises us to 'consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.' We are not, however, to understand the word 'temptation' in these senses in this petition. Here it is to be understood of our being tempted to sin. In this respect God never tempts any one. Thus the apostle says, 'Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.'e Nor ought we, in this sense, to tempt one another. These things being premised, we come more immediately to explain this petition. In doing this, we shall consider some things which are supposed, and also the subject of the petition.

What is supposed in the Sixth Petition

1. When we are taught to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' it is supposed that man, in this imperfect state, is very much exposed to temptations. The world is always ready to present its lures which are suited to the corruption of our nature, and therefore too easily complied with. The influence of these lures is farther promoted by

Satan's suggestions, who is daily endeavouring to entangle us in the snare which is laid for us.

2. As we are daily tempted to sin, so we are in great danger of being overcome by temptation. This danger arises not only from the methods used to draw us aside from God, and the many secret snares laid for us which are not easily discerned, but principally from the treachery of our own hearts, which are deceitful above all things, and very apt to incline us to commit those sins which involve a great deal of guilt. It also proceeds sometimes from a want of watchfulness; in consequence of which the enemy comes upon us undiscovered, and we are overcome before we are aware. The temptation offers itself, and we are not only unable, but unwilling, to resist it; and if we have fallen by temptation, our fall tends still more to weaken us, so that we cannot recover ourselves from the pit into which we are plunged. We also find it very difficult, if God is pleased, at any time, to suffer us to fall by temptations, to improve our falls aright to his glory and our own good.

3. It is farther supposed, that God may suffer his people, though their sins are pardoned, and their souls sanctified, to be tempted, and sometimes even foiled and led captive for a time. Here let us consider in what sense he may be said to tempt his people, or lead them into temptation. This he does, without being the author of sin; and he does it either objectively or permissively. He does it objectively, when his providential dispensations, which in themselves are holy, just, and good, offer occasions of sin. These occasions of sin, however, would not follow the dispensations, did not our corrupt natures lay hold on them as such, and abuse them. Thus all God's works of providence or grace may prove temptations to men. The psalmist, speaking of 'the prosperity of the wicked,' intimates that it raised his envy. Elsewhere also he considers the blessings of common

providence as proving a temptation to carnal security and indifference in religion. Accordingly, it is said concerning some, 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.'g On the other hand, afflictive providences sometimes prove temptations to us to murmur and entertain hard thoughts of God. Moreover, his threatenings are often abused, and made the occasion of thinking him severe and unmerciful. Others complain of his commandments as grievous, because he does not give them those indulgences to sin which their corrupt natures desire. In these respects God may be said to lead into temptation. Yet we are not to pray that he would alter the methods of his providence, or make abatements as to the duties which he commands us to perform: we are rather to pray that he would not suffer us to make a wrong use of them. Again, God leads into temptation permissively. This he does when he does not restrain the tempter, which he is not obliged to do, but suffers us to be assaulted by him, and, at the same time, denies tho aids and assistance of his grace, to prevent our compliance with his temptations. Hence, when we pray that he would 'not lead us into temptation,' we desire that he would prevent the assault, or fortify us against it, that, through the weakness of our grace, or the prevalency of corruption, we may not comply with the temptation.

We shall now consider the reason why God thus leads his people into temptation, or suffers them to be tempted; or what are those holy, wise, just, and gracious ends which he designs by doing so. Now, it cannot be expected but that he should thus deal with us, when we choose to go in the way of temptation, or indulge those corruptions whereby we are inclined to yield to it. In this case God's judicial hand appears; as he punishes for one sin, by suffering us to be tempted to another. Again, God hereby gives us occasion to see our own weakness, and the deceitfulness of our hearts, and the need we have of his grace to prevent our falling by temptation. Thus when

Hezekiah sinned in showing the ambassadors of the king of Babylon the treasures which he had in his house, and so discovered too much pride, while he would have done better to have shown them the bed he lay on when he was nigh death, and taken occasion thence to give God the glory of his miraculous recovery, which was the reason of their being sent to compliment him, it is said, 'God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' Again, God acts thus that, when we experience the superior force of our spiritual enemies, we may, by faith and prayer, have recourse to his almighty power and grace. Thus when the apostle Paul was in danger of being 'exalted above measure,' through Satan's temptations, he says, 'For this, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.' Further, he acts thus that we may have an evidence of the imperfection of the present state, and be induced to press after and long for that state of perfect freedom, not only from sin, but from temptation, which is reserved for us in heaven. Again, we are led into temptation, that we may see the necessity of making use of the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand our ground. As the soldier will not put on his armour except when he is going to engage the enemy; so God has ordained that our life should be a perpetual warfare, and that we should be continually exposed to the assaults of our spiritual enemies, that we may always be prepared for them, having 'the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'k He has ordered matters thus also, that we may, in the end, know what it is to conquer, that we may have the pleasure and satisfaction arising thence, and that he may have the glory of the victory. Again, God suffers us to be tempted, that he may cure our sloth, and excite us to greater watchfulness, as those who are never wholly out of danger. Thus the apostle says, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; and our Saviour advises his

disciples to 'watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.'m Finally, God suffers us to be tempted that we may know the depths of Satan, which we should be otherwise unapprized of; and that, in consequence, we may be more prepared to make resistance, and when we are enabled to overcome, may be better furnished to direct others who are liable to similar temptations, how they should behave themselves under them, and to encourage them to hope that they shall be delivered as we have been.

4. It is farther observed that, though God suffers his people to be tempted, and even foiled and led captive, yet he suffers this only for a time. In this respect, the temptations of believers differ from those of the unregenerate. The latter, it is said, are 'taken captive by Satan at his will;' but concerning the believer, it is said, that 'only for a season, if need be, he is in heaviness through manifold temptations.'o

Temptations, and Prayer for Deliverance from them

We now come to consider what is meant by our praying that God would 'not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' The only difficulty in laying down the method in which this is to be insisted on, arises from the indeterminateness of the word 'evil.' Various senses are given of it by those who explain the Lord's prayer. Some understand by it, the evil one, or the devil. According to this sense of the word, one part of the petition may be considered as exegetical of the other. Hence, not to be led into temptation, is the same as to be delivered from the assaults of Satan, the evil one, that we may not be brought under his power, or become vassals to him, as complying with his temptations. Others, however, understand the word in a more large sense. They view the petition as an intimation of our desiring to be delivered from evil of all kinds,—either from the evil of sin, or from the evil of afflictions, which are the consequence of sin.

But as deliverance from the evil of sin respects deliverance from its guilt, and from the punishment which is due to it; the petition, if understood to refer to this, differs little or nothing from the preceding one, in which we pray that God would 'forgive us our sins.' Or if deliverance from the evil of sin be understood as including a part of sanctification, that is, deliverance from the dominion and slavery of sin, the petition, in this case also, is well connected with the preceding one; for when we pray for pardon of sin, we ought also to pray for deliverance from its reigning power. To pray for this is very well connected with our praying against temptation; for it is, in effect, to desire either that we may not be assaulted by the tempter, or that we may not be drawn aside by his assaults to sin against God. As for the evil of affliction, I cannot think that is intended by the word 'evil' in this petition; because the opposition between deliverance from it and deliverance from temptation would not appear to be so just as we must suppose it is, unless we take temptation itself to be an affliction. In the latter case, the petition is as if we should say, 'Deliver us from temptation, that we may not be afflicted with it;' for we must suppose ourselves to be afflicted by it, on account of the danger we are in of falling by it. But passing by these critical remarks on the sense of the words, 'Deliver us from evil,' we shall consider the subject of this petition under two general Heads. First, we shall inquire what are the temptations to which we are exposed. Secondly, we shall consider how we are to pray that we may not be led into temptations, or, if led into them, how we may be delivered from the evil consequences of our compliance with them.

I. We shall first inquire what those temptations are to which we are exposed. These are of various kinds; and all take their rise from either the world, the flesh, or the devil. Their manner of acting, indeed, is different; yet they are very often united in their assaults,—

whence we are in perpetual danger of being overcome, if God, by his grace, is not pleased to interpose.

1. We shall consider the temptations which we meet with from the world. One class of these are such as arise from the solicitations of those whom we converse with, who, under a pretence of friendship, persuade us to sin. Thus we read of some who 'entice others to lie in wait for blood,' and desire those whom they would ensnare into this crime to 'cast in their lot among them.' But we are advised not to consent to their enticements, or to be confederate with them.— Another class of temptations from the world are such as arise from things which present themselves to us, and are allurements to sin in an objective way. These things are not so much the cause as the occasion of sin; and, in many instances, the use of them is lawful, while the abuse alone proves hurtful. Temptations of this latter class are what we shall principally consider at present; and we shall show how the good and evil things of the world, or the various conditions in which we are, whether prosperous or adverse, prove temptations to us.

The good things of the world, namely, its riches, honours, and pleasures, are sometimes a snare to us or an occasion of sin. Thus our Saviour speaks of 'the care of this world,' that is, the care either of gaining or of increasing it, and 'the deceitfulness of riches,' as 'choking the word,' so that we receive no advantage by our attendance on it. The apostle speaks of some who had 'forsaken the right way, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,'r or acted contrary to his conscience for gain. Felix perverted justice for want of a bribe, concerning whom it is said, 'He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.' We read of others who 'will be rich,' that is, who immoderately pursue the gain of the world, and who, in

consequence, 'fall into temptation, and a snare, and many hurtful lusts.'t—Moreover, the honours of the world are a temptation to many. Thus our Saviour says, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?' Others, again, are ensnared by the pleasures of the world; and are styled 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.'x Indeed, we often find that the necessary duties or enjoyments of life, such as eating, drinking, and recreation, and the various relations we stand in to others, prove a temptation to us. Many things are temptations, as they are used unseasonably, immoderately, and without a due regard to the glory of God, which ought to be our highest end in all worldly enjoyments. In fact, whatever has a tendency to draw forth our corruption, may be said to be a temptation to us. Sometimes the prosperous condition of others has this effect upon us. Thus Cain, beholding Abel to have a more visible token of the divine regard to his person and offering than he had, hated and 'slew him.' Joseph's being a favourite in his father's house, and honoured by God in having divine dreams, gave occasion to his brethren to envy him; who first designed to slay him, and afterwards, out of malice, sold him into Egypt. When Joshua saw Eldad and Medad prophesying, supposing that the gift of prophecy was possessed only by Moses, and that it only was a lessening of his honour for them to pretend to it, he desired that they might be 'forbid.' But he was plainly under the influence of a temptation; for Moses gave him a check, intimating that he did not do well in 'envying' them 'for his sake.'—Moreover. we often find that our own condition in the world, when we enjoy the outward blessings of providence, proves a temptation. Some are like the vessel which is in danger of being overset by having too much sail, and no ballast to keep it steady. The abundance of this world, without the grace of God to sanctify and set bounds to our affections, will often prove a snare to us. Some are hereby tempted to covetousness, than which nothing is more preposterous, yet nothing more common. The psalmist's

advice, 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them,'a is an intimation that our desires often increase with our substance, so that the more we have, the more we want, and are less disposed to contribute to the necessities of others. We have an instance of this in Nabal, when David sent him an obliging message, and instructed his messengers to 'say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants, and to thy son David.' Nabal's refusal to comply with David's request showed that he was of a churlish disposition, that his prosperous circumstances in the world were a temptation to his corruptions, and that he had no sense of gratitude for the favours which he had received from David and his men, while they resided in the wilderness, and were conversant with those who kept his flocks there. It would have been a more plausible excuse, had he alleged the danger which might accrue from his compliance with David's request, that it was possible that Saul might hear of it, and deal with him as he had done with Ahimelech and the other priests at Nob for the small respect which Ahimelech had shown to David. He, however, takes no notice of any such danger, but treats David morosely, when he says, 'Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?' This reply manifested him to be 'a man of Belial,' as Abigail confesses, when she says, 'Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.'c—Again, we sometimes find that a prosperous condition in the world is a temptation to God's people to presumption and carnal security. Thus the psalmist says, 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.' The wicked also are hereby tempted to obstinacy and disobedience. Thus God says by the prophet, to the Israelites, 'I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.'e Sometimes, likewise,

prosperity tempts to pride, haughtiness, and oppression. Thus the psalmist speaks of some who were 'not in trouble, neither plagued like other men; therefore,' says he, 'pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment.' We are not, indeed, to suppose that this is the necessary result of a prosperous state in the world; since that temptation which is only objective, may be guarded against. The pernicious tendency of prosperity arises from the depravity of our nature, and its proneness to abuse the blessings of providence; whence some take occasion to cast off fear, and put the evil day far from them. When, therefore, we pray that the world may not prove a temptation to us, we desire that God would keep us from using any indirect means, either to get or increase our worldly substance, but, on the other hand, enable us to improve what we have to his glory. We pray also that our affections may not be so much set upon it as to alienate them from him; but that we may make it the matter of our deliberate choice rather to be deprived of outward blessings, than to receive them as our only portion, and, by having our hearts set too much upon them, forfeit and be denied an interest in his special and distinguishing love.

We now observe, that the evil things in the world often prove a temptation to us. By 'evil things.' we mean afflictive providences. These are inseparable, from the present state; for 'man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards.' They are either personal or relative. Some are more immediately from God; others from men, as instruments in his hand. Some arise from the experience we have of affliction; others from our expectation or fear of future troubles. All these sometimes prove temptations to us, unless God is pleased to interpose in a way of preventing grace and make them conducive to our spiritual advantage. They prove temptations to us, when we are discontented and uneasy under the hand of God, complaining of the burdens which he is pleased to lay on us, as though they were

insupportable, and it were impossible for us to bear up under them; or when we are ready to conclude that no affliction is like ours, and are apt to insinuate that God, in subjecting us to it, deals hardly with us. Again, afflictions prove temptations to us when they disturb or disorder our thoughts, weaken our faith, and unfit us for spiritual meditations, or attending aright on the ordinances, of God; or when we are more concerned about our afflictions than about sin, the cause of them. Further, afflictions are temptations to us when we have unbelieving apprehensions concerning the event of them, concluding that they will certainly end in our ruin, notwithstanding the promises which God has made of their working together for good to those who love him. David felt affliction working in this way when he said, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul;'h for what he experienced was an ungrounded fear, especially considering the promises which God had given him, and the many instances he had of his being a help to him in the time of trouble. Again, afflictions are temptations to us, when we take occasion from them to question God's fatherly love, or to conclude that they are sent in wrath, and are intimations that we are cast off by him, when we have no reason to think so from any thing in the nature of the affliction itself; also when we are hindered from applying those suitable promises which God has made to his people under affliction, for their comfort and support. Now, when we pray that God would 'not lead us into temptation,' as afflictive providences expose us to it, we are to pray against them with submission to the divine will. We are not indeed to pray against them as if the removal of them were of as much importance, or as necessary to our happiness, as the taking away of the guilt or power of sin; but we are to pray that they may be sanctified to us, that corrupt nature may not take occasion from them to have unbecoming thoughts of God, and that we may be led by them nearer to himself, so that they may not prove a temptation

to us, or at least that, with the temptation, he would make a way for our escape.

2. Another sort of temptations proceed from the flesh. These are the greatest and most dangerous of all. The apostle speaks of them as if they were the only temptations, when he says, 'Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.' All other temptations might, without much difficulty, be resisted and overcome, were there not a corrupt disposition in our nature, which the apostle calls 'lust,' which inclines us to adhere to them and comply with them. This corrupt disposition of our nature consists in the irregularity and disorder of our passions, which, as the result of our fallen state, are not only prone to rebel against God, but to act contrary to the dictates of our own consciences. The temptations are often various, according to the prevailing bias of our natural temper. A melancholy constitution sometimes inclines us to slavish fears, or distrust of God's providence; or to have such black and dismal apprehensions of our spiritual concerns, that we are led even to the very brink of despair. A choleric temper prompts us to revenge, injustice, and oppression, and puts us upon magnifying small offences, and expressing a furious resentment without ground. A sanguine and airy constitution often proves a temptation to cast off all serious thoughts about God and another world, to count religion a needless, melancholy, and distasteful thing, and to make a jest of what is sacred and ought to be treated with the utmost reverence. This temper frequently exposes persons to the pernicious influence of bad company, and induces them to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Again, a stupid, phlegmatic, and heavy constitution, often proves a temptation to negligence in our civil and religious affairs, and not to mate provision for a time of trial. Hereby persons are often tempted to neglect holy duties, especially such as are difficult; or to perform them in a careless manner, and so rest in

a form of godliness without its power. This difference of natural tempers is the reason why we behold lust appearing in different shapes; so that the same temptation, presenting itself from without, suits the natural disposition of one who eagerly embraces it, while it does not greatly move another. Now, when we pray against those temptations which arise from the flesh, it is not to be supposed that we expect to be perfectly freed from them in this world; for while here, as has been elsewhere observed, there are the remnants of sin abiding in every part, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit, even in those who are sanctified. What we pray for is, that God would restrain and prevent the irregularity and pernicious tendency of our natural temper; or that he would keep us from those sins which more easily beset us, by reason of the propensity of our nature to commit them. We pray also that he would sanctify our affections, and bring them under the powerful influence of a principle of grace, which may maintain a perpetual opposition to those habits of sin which are daily leading us to turn aside from God; so that whatever temptations we meet with from objects without us, our souls may be internally fortified against them, and disposed to hate and avoid every thing which is contrary to his holy law, or tends to his dishonour.

3. We shall now consider those temptations which arise from Satan. He is called 'the tempter;' and he is also said to 'enter into'm sinners, and 'fill their hearts.' As for the unregenerate, they are wholly under his power. Hence, conversion is called a 'turning them from the power of Satan unto God.'o There are some, indeed, who deny that Satan has any hand in those temptations to which we are exposed. In this opinion they are too much disposed to adopt the error of the Sadducees of old. If they do not expressly deny the existence of spirits, yet they will not allow that they have any thing to do in this world. Indeed, they think it impossible for the devil to give us any

disturbance, seeing he is shut up in chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. As to those things which we read in scripture of his doing against men in this world, they suppose that they are to be understood in a metaphorical sense, and that nothing else is intended by them but the temptations we meet with from men or from our own lusts. These, according to them, are the only devils that we need to fear. This error they are led into under a pretence of avoiding the contrary extreme of those who seem to lay all the sins they commit to the devil's charge, rather than their own; when, probably, he has nothing to do with them, and they wholly proceed from their own corruptions. The middle way between these extremes, is, as I conceive, much more consonant to scripture and experience, and rather to be acquiesced in. We shall, therefore, endeavour to prove that we are often tempted by Satan as well as by our own lusts.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that spirits may so far have access to our souls, as to suggest good or bad thoughts. Being reasonable creatures, it is beyond dispute that they are able to converse with one another; and if so, there is no absurdity in supposing, that they may, some way or other, have conversation with the souls of men, which are capable of having things internally suggested to them, as well as of receiving ideas from sensible objects by means of the bodies to which they are united. As to the manner in which this is done, we pretend not to determine it; it being sufficient to our present purpose to make it appear that we are exposed to temptations from Satan, as well as from ourselves. Again, it is obvious from scripture that the devil and his angels are conversant in this lower world. Accordingly, he is styled, 'the prince of the power of the air,' 'the god of this world;'q and elsewhere he is said to 'walk about, seeking whom he may devour.' It is objected, indeed, that his being conversant in this world is inconsistent with his being shut up in hell. But this may

respect principally his state, as being unchangeably separated and banished from God's favourable and comfortable presence. Now, notwithstanding this, God may suffer him to attempt many things against men in this world, for the trial of the graces of his people, and the punishing of his enemies. There is, indeed, a place of misery allotted for devils, though they may not be at present confined to it. That there is such a place seems to be implied in the request they made to our Saviour, that he would not command them to 'go into the deep;' by which it is probable, the place of torment is intended, in which they expect to be for ever shut up after the day of judgment. Hence, they are represented elsewhere, as 'crying out, Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?'t Again, our first parent, in innocency, was tempted by the devil, who, as has been proved elsewhere,' made use of the serpent to 'speak to Eve.x Our Saviour also was tempted by him, when led by the Spirit into the wilderness for that purpose. But neither of these could be said to be tempted by the lusts of the flesh; for their being so was inconsistent with Adam's sinless state, before he fell, and with the sinlessness of our Saviour's nature. It is certain, too, that the temptation offered to each was more than objective; for there were words spoken, and a perverse method of reasoning made use of to ensnare them. Nor could they be tempted by men, for in this respect they were alone. It therefore follows that Satan was the tempter of each. Moreover, there are several other scriptures which expressly prove that Satan has sometimes tempted persons to sin. Thus we read that 'he stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number them.'z Elsewhere our Saviour tells the Jews, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do;' that is, you eagerly commit those sins to which he tempts you. It is farther said, that he was 'a murderer from the beginning;' which cannot be understood otherwise than of his murdering man, by tempting him to sin, and prevailing. It is also said, that 'he abode not in the truth,' and is 'a liar, and the father of

it;' that is, he deceives us by his suggestions, and prevails on us, when we comply with them, to deceive ourselves.

We may here take occasion to inquire, how we may distinguish those temptations which take their rise from Satan, from others which proceed from ourselves. This question is very difficult to be resolved, for our corrupt nature, for the most part, tempts us to the same sins which Satan tempts us to do. Now, where there are two causes of the same action, it is hard to distinguish one from the other; just as when two candles are set up in the same room, we cannot distinguish the light of the one from the other. If, indeed, the sins to which we are tempted by our lusts on the one hand, and by Satan on the other, had been described as of different kinds, we might more easily determine the difference which there is between them. Or if we had not the least inclination to comply with the temptation, and were able to say, as our Saviour did, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,' we might easily know where to fasten the charge of guilt; and it would be no injustice to exculpate ourselves, and lay the blame wholly on the devil. But it is far otherwise with us, by reason of the corruption of our nature; which would render us prone to sin, though Satan did not tempt us to it. Hence, as we often contract guilt by complying with his temptations, just as he does by offering them; it is necessary that something be said in order to our knowing, so far as we are able to determine the matter, when the temptation is to be laid at our own door, and when at Satan's. We observe, then, that when we are tempted to those sins which we cannot think of but with the utmost abhorrence; when we are so far from entertaining any pleasure in the thing to which we are tempted, that we take occasion to express the greatest aversion to it, and would not comply with the temptation for ten thousand worlds; when we count the suggestion an invasion on our souls, an affliction grievous to be borne; and when, instead of complying with it, we are led to the exercise of those

graces which are opposite to it; in such cases, I humbly conceive, we do not incur guilt by being tempted, and the sin is wholly to be charged on Satan. On the contrary, when we are pleased with the temptation, frequently meditate on the subject of it, and either commit the sin to which it tempts us, or if we abstain from the commission of it, do so only out of fear or shame; and when the propensity of our nature leads us, at other times, to those sins which bear some resemblance to it, then our own lusts, as well as Satan, are causes of the sins which follow.

These things being Considered, we shall proceed to speak more particularly concerning Satan's temptations. Here we shall lay down, by way of premisal, some things which relate to this matter; and afterwards we shall consider the method in which he manages his temptations. Let it be observed, then, that, though Satan may tempt to sin, yet he cannot force the will; for then the guilt would devolve wholly on himself, and not on us. Our condition would certainly be very miserable, were it impossible for us to resist his temptations; for we should then lie at the mercy of one who would have more power to destroy us than we would have to withstand him. Besides, this would be to extend the servitude of the will of man beyond its due bounds; for, though it is not free to what is spiritually or supernaturally good, we do not deny that it is free as to its having a power to avoid many sins, into which, on this supposition, it would be inevitably hurried. It would, moreover, be a reflection on the providence of God, so far to leave man in the hands of Satan that he should be laid under a necessity of sinning and perishing without the choice and consent of his own will, so that his destruction could not be said to be of himself. Again, Satan's power is not equal to his malice; for he is under divine restraints, and, indeed, can do nothing against believers but by God's permission. This may be argued from our being obliged to desire that God would keep us from being

tempted, that is, restrain the tempter, as well as enable us to resist him. If it were otherwise, no one could be saved; for Satan's malice is boundless, though he is not suffered to do that to which it prompts him. This is a very great blessing to God's people; as it is a comfortable thing to consider that they are in his hands who is a merciful Father, and not in Satan's power, who breathes forth nothing but revenge and cruelty. Again, as it is not a sin to be tempted, since our Saviour is said to have been 'in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;' so, on the other hand, when we are pleased and comply with the temptation, it will be no sufficient excuse for us to allege that Satan had a great hand in it, since, as we already observed, he can only tempt, but force the will. How formidable soever he may be, by reason of the greatness of his power and malice; yet we have the expedient to make use of, that we can say, 'The Lord rebuke thee, Satan.' Further, there is a vast difference between the condition of those who are converted, and that of those who are in an unregenerate state, as to the event and consequence of Satan's temptations. The former, indeed, by reason of the remains of corruption in them, are often foiled and overcome by these temptations. Yet they shall not be wholly destroyed; but God will find out a way for their recovery out of the snare in which they may at any time be entangled. The latter, however, are wholly under Satan's power, by their own choice and consent, and will remain so, till, by the grace of God, they are delivered from the dominion of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

We shall now consider the method in which Satan manages his temptations, in order to his inducing men to sin. Sometimes he endeavours to ensnare and deceive us by his subtilty. On this account he is called 'that old serpent, which deceiveth the whole world.' Elsewhere we read of 'the depths of Satan,'e that is, his deep-laid designs; and of his 'wiles,' which it is an hard matter to withstand.

He is also sometimes said to be 'transformed into an angel of light,'g when he tempts to sin under a pretence of our bringing glory to God, as well as good to ourselves and others. There are likewise other methods of temptation in which, though he manages them with equal subtilty, he appears, not as an angel of light, pretending to help us in the way to heaven, but as a roaring lion, rendering himself formidable, and not concealing his design to devour us, or make a prey of us, and to fill us with that distress of conscience which brings us to the very brink of despair. These, it is probable, the apostle intends by his 'fiery darts,' as distinguished from his 'wiles.' In the former, he shows himself a tempter; in the latter, an accuser. These are the usual methods which he takes in managing his temptations. We shall consider them under four Heads;—first, his endeavouring to produce and strengthen the habits of sin; secondly, what he does to prevent conviction of sin, or to hinder the efficacy of conviction; thirdly, his discouraging those who are under convictions from closing with Christ by faith; and lastly, his injecting blasphemous and atheistical thoughts into the mind of men, and using endeavours to drive them to despair.

(1.) Satan endeavours to produce and strengthen the habits of sin. These are generally attained by frequent acts, or by making a progress in sin, by which the heart is hardened. It is with greater difficulty that those who contract these habits are reclaimed from them. Of such the prophet speaks, when he says, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.' We may observe that Satan does not usually tempt, at first, to the vilest and most notorious acts of sin, especially where he has ground to suspect that his temptations will not be readily entertained or adhered to; as in the case of those who retain some impressions of a religious education, or are, at present, under the influence of restraining grace. These are first tempted to

commit lesser sins before they proceed to greater. He generally begins with tempting to sins of omission, or to formality and indifference in the performance of religious duties, or by pretending that God gives us some indulgences or allowance to commit those to which our natural constitution most inclines us, that we have been mistaken when we have thought that religion is so difficult a matter as some have pretended it to be, that we may safely follow a multitude, though it be in doing that which is in itself sinful,—that we are not to take an estimate of religion from the apprehensions which some melancholy persons entertain of it,—that strictness in religion is being righteous overmuch, and striving against the stream is a needless precaution,—that therefore we may consult our own honour and reputation in the world, and adopt that scheme of religion which is uppermost, and that denying ourselves, taking up the cross and following Christ, though it may be reckoned a safe way to heaven, yet is not the only one. The habits of sin are thus strengthened, the heart hardened, and persons proceed from one degree of impiety to another, till at last they abandon themselves to every thing vile and profligate, and run with others in all excess of riot.

That his design may be more effectually carried on, he suits his temptations to every age and condition of life. As to those who are in the prime and flower of their age, he endeavours to persuade them that it is time enough for them to think of being religious hereafter; and that religion is too austere and melancholy a thing for them to pretend to at present, and is inconsistent with those pleasures and youthful lusts which are agreeable to their age and condition of life. If they are children, he suggests to them that they have time enough before them; that when they are more advanced in years, they will have a greater degree of understanding, and be better able to perceive the force of the arguments which are usually brought to

induce persons to lead a religious life; and that then they may make choice of it out of judgment. If they are servants, he persuades them that they have other business on their hands; that they had better stay till they are free from the engagements which they are, at present, under to their masters; and that when they are at their own disposal, it will be the fittest time for them to embrace the ways of God. This temptation carries in it the highest instance of presumption, tends greatly to harden the heart in sin, and has been the ruin of multitudes.

When persons are come to years of maturity, being no longer children or servants, but about to engage in those secular employments to which they are called in the world, he has temptations of another nature to offer to them. He has hitherto kept possession of their hearts, and desired them only to wait for this age of life, pretending that then they would have a more convenient season to lead a religious life; but this convenient season has not yet come, for there are other stratagems of which he now makes use to keep them in subjection to him. Youthful lusts are now grown to a greater height, and the impressions of a religious education, if they were favoured with it, almost worn out; and it is no difficult matter for him to persuade them, that the principal thing they are to be concerned about is their living comfortably in the world, that they have now an opportunity to increase their substance and make provision for their future happiness on earth, and that therefore they ought to converse with those who are in the same station of life with themselves. And he generally points out and tempts them to make choice of such associates as may be a snare to them, whose conversation is very remote from any thing tending to promote religion and godliness. Sometimes he endeavours to make them ashamed of the ways of God, as though to walk in these were inconsistent with their reputation in the world, especially with their

present situation or condition. On the other hand, if persons are poor and low in the world, and find it difficult to maintain themselves or families, he persuades them that religion is not the business in which they are called to engage, that they must rather take pains to live,—that God does not require more than he gives, or expect that those should spend a great deal of time in religious duties who have none to spare from that business which is necessary for their getting a livelihood in the world,—and that therefore religion belongs, not so much to them, as to others.

If persons have arrived at old age, the last stage of life, and have, as it were, their latter end in view, being not far from it, according to the course of nature; they are now at that age of life which was formerly pretended by Satan to be the most fit and proper season for entertaining thoughts of religion; and it was in expectation of it that, when they were formerly under any convictions, they generally stifled them by resolving that they would apply themselves to a religious life in old age. Thus has the tempter hitherto beguiled them. But now he has other temptations to present to them, which are suited to old age; and he insinuates that the weakness and infirmities of the decline of life render them unfit for religious duties. Indeed, their hearts have contracted such a degree of hardness, by a long continuance in sin, that it is difficult for anything to make an impression on them. Yet Satan endeavours to persuade them, that, notwithstanding all the wickedness of their former life, and their present impenitency for it, they may hope for salvation from the mercy of God, though they continue still in a state of unregeneracy; and he thus entices them to soul-destructive presumption. Or he tempts them utterly to despair of the mercy of God, and tells them that it is too late for them to begin that work which they have put off to the extremity of life. By either of these methods he effectually

brings about their ruin. Thus concerning Satan's suiting his temptations to the several ages and conditions of life.

But we may observe that he also uses methods of temptation which are agreeable to the temper and disposition of those whom he assaults, in order that he may not shoot his arrows at random, without answering the end he designs. By this conduct his subtilty farther appears. Thus he observes those times for tempting men to sin in which it is most likely that his temptations will take effect. Hence his assaults are generally most violent when they are least upon their guard, and give way to sloth and indolence. Or when the Spirit of God withdraws his influences, and when, in consequence, their faith is weak, and they are not able to make great resistance against his temptations, he crowds in a great multitude of them at once, and so lays hold on the opportunity to improve the success which he has gained against them. If they are afraid of the consequences of a compliance with his temptations, he endeavours to stupify their souls, that they may have no present apprehensions of the evil which would follow. Again, he often takes occasion to raise in our minds some doubts about the matter of sin or duty; whether what he is about to tempt us to be lawful or unlawful; or how far a person may venture to go in the way of temptation, and yet maintain his integrity. This is generally the first step towards the commission of those sins to which we are tempted. Again, if shame or fear are like to hinder the success of the temptation, he undertakes to find out some mode of secrecy, whereby public scandal may be avoided. Thus Joseph's mistress tempted him to sin when Potiphar was absent, and 'there was none of the men of the house there within;'so that he had no occasion to fear that his crime would be detected. Sometimes he proceeds so far as to insinuate, that they may even hide themselves from the all-seeing eye of God, and tempts them to say, 'How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a

covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.' Thus the prophet Isaiah denounces a woe against them that 'seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?'l This method seldom fails of answering his end. Further, if conscience be awakened, and deters them from adhering to the temptation from a sense of the guilt which they will contract, Satan is some-times content to take the blame upon himself, that they may think that they are to be excused, by reason of the violence of the temptation, which they could not well withstand. Again, he sometimes persuades them to throw the blame on providence, as being the occasion of sin, or rendering it necessary or unavoidable from our condition or circumstances in the world. This is the highest injury which can be offered to the divine Majesty. Thus Adam tacitly reproaches God, when he says, 'The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' Finally, he often tempts men to presume on the mercy of God, and to hope that, though they continue in sin, they shall obtain a pardon from him. Or, since pardon is not be expected without sincere repentance, he tempts them to presume that by the influence of the Holy Spirit they shall have the grace of repentance hereafter, whereby their perishing in their iniquities may be prevented. Thus concerning the methods which Satan takes to produce and strengthen the habits of sin.

(2.) We proceed to consider how he endeavours to prevent our being brought under conviction of sin, or, if we are convinced of it, to hinder its making any deep or lasting impression on us. This he does various ways. One way is by dissuading others, who ought to deal faithfully with us, from reproving sin committed by us. Thus Ezekiel, speaking concerning the false prophets, says, that they 'strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.' Sometimes he improves the

consideration of our circumstances in the world to dissuade us from reproving sin in others, especially if they are our superiors, or those on whom we are dependent, or from whom we have some expectations, lest we should make them our enemies, and lose some advantages which we hope to receive from them. Others he does not wholly dissuade from reproving sin; but there are some circumstances attending the reproof, or the person who gives it, which he makes use of to hinder it from taking effect, so that his end is no less answered than if sin had not been reproved at all. Thus, when we reprove with too much lenity, those who are notorious offenders, and who ought to be treated with a greater degree of sharpness, and when we speak to them of their offence as if it were only a sin of infirmity, they are only hardened in the commission of it. This was Eli's fault in dealing with his sons, when he said to them, 'Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress.'o Instead of reproving them in this way, he ought to have restrained them by those acts of severity which the nature of their crime demanded. Satan often prevents the reproof from taking effect, also by inclining the reprover to use indecent behaviour, or to express haughtiness of temper, as if there were no respect due to superiors, as such, because they are worthy of reproof. Or he inclines the reprover to express a kind of hatred against the person reproved; while hatred ought to be directed principally against the crime he has committed, and care ought to be used to convince the person reproved that it is love to him, as well as zeal for the glory of God, which moves us to reprove him. Satan often hinders reproof from taking effect, likewise, by tempting those to give it to commit the sin they reprove, or, at least, by persuading those against whom the reproof is directed, that there are other sins equally great with which the reprovers are chargeable, and that therefore they

ought to look to themselves, rather than take notice of what is done by others.

Again, Satan hinders the work of conviction, by endeavouring to suppress the preaching of the word, or to prevent the success of it when preached. The preaching of the word is God's ordinary way for convincing of sin; and Satan sometimes stirs up those who are under his power and influence to persecute or suppress it. Thus the apostles were 'commanded by the Jews, not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus;' and when they refused to obey this command, they were 'put in prison.'q This method has been taken, in all ages, by Satan's instigation, with a design to hinder the spreading of Christ's interest in the world. But as, in spite of it, the gospel has, by the blessing of providence, continued to this day, there are other methods which Satan make use of to hinder the success of the word. Sometimes he perverts those who preach it; so that they endeavour to corrupt the word of God, and turn aside the minds of men from that simplicity which is in Christ. At other times he tempts them to be very sparing in reproving sin, or to reprove it in a general way, as though their only design were to let their hearers know that there are some sinners in the world, and not that they should be brought under conviction of sin themselves. This is done sometimes in compliance with the corruptions of those whom they do not care to disoblige; and others shun to declare some of the most important truths of the gospel, and affect a method of preaching as has not such a tendency to bring real advantage to the souls of men, as when it is delivered with more zeal and faithfulness. Again, Satan endeavours to hinder the success of the word, by stirring up the corruptions of those who attend upon it. For this reason he is represented, by our Saviour in the parable of 'the seed which fell by the way side,' and which 'the fowls came and devoured,' as 'catching away' the word. Hearers of the word are, in consequence, not much affected with it,

and do not endeavour to retain it in their memories. Sometimes also Satan injects vain thoughts under the word preached. Accordingly, our Saviour, in the parable just-mentioned, speaks of the 'seed that fell among thorns,' and explains it of 'the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choking the word.'s Sometimes, likewise, Satan endeavours to raise prejudices in the minds of men, against what is delivered; so that plainness of expression, when addressed to the consciences of men, in such a way as has a tendency to bring them under conviction, is contemned, and called a low, mean way of address, and disliked because destitute of that elegance of style, or ingenious turn of thought, which is adapted rather to please the ear than to affect the heart.

By these methods Satan endeavours to hinder persons from being brought under conviction. But if their consciences are, notwithstanding, awakened under the word, or by some providences which God often makes use of for that end; there are methods of another kind, which Satan uses, to prevent convictions from making any deep or lasting impression. Thus he endeavours to make the soul easy, from the consideration of the universal depravity of human nature. He accordingly insinuates, that all have reason to accuse themselves of sins which would tend to their disquietude, if they made a narrow search into their hearts, or had such formidable thoughts of the consequences of sin. Here he produces many examples of persons who have been quiet and easy in their own minds, though they had as much ground to perplex and torment themselves with melancholy thoughts as those who are awakened have; but who, nevertheless, go on in a course of sin, without any checks of conscience, and, as Job says, 'spend their days in wealth,' or, as it is in the margin, in mirth, 'and in a moment go down to the grave,' being resolved to give way to nothing that shall disturb their peace, or render their lives uncomfortable. If this stratagem will not

take effect, inasmuch as the persons awakened are sensible, that while they remain in an unconverted state they can have no solid foundation for peace, then Satan endeavours to persuade them that the work of conversion is over, and that conviction of sin, though unaccompanied by faith, is true repentance, or that a partial reformation, and abstaining from some gross and scandalous sins, or engaging in the external duties of religion, especially with some degree of raised affections, is a sufficient ground for them to conclude that they are in a state of grace. If they resolve to go on in this way, he puts them upon depending and relying on their own righteousness, and expecting to be justified by it, without seeing a necessity of laying hold on what Christ has done and suffered, in order to the removing of the guilt of sin; and, so long as they continue in this way, they shall meet with no disturbance from Satan, this not being the method which God has prescribed for our attaining justification, or that peace which flows from it. Again, Satan puts them upon making vows and resolutions in their own strength, that they will perform several religious duties with the greatest exactness, and abstain from those sins which he is sensible they will commit, if not prevented by the grace of God, that so, by too great confidence in their own strength, they may provoke him to leave them to themselves. They, in consequence, soon break their resolutions, and bring themselves under greater perplexities than they were in before. Then to make them easy, he endeavours to persuade them that God does not require them to lead so strict a life as they seemed determined to do, but has allowed them some innocent liberties, as he calls them, in giving way to those sins which their condition in life renders necessary. As he had before tempted them to rely on their own strength, he now tempts them to carnal security, and a slothful, stupid frame of spirit, whereby they will be rendered more receptive of those temptations he has to offer, to turn them aside from that strictness in religion which they before resolved to maintain.

Further, Satan dazzles their eyes with the glittering vanities of this world, that he may divert their minds from serious thoughts or any concern about a better. If their secular callings are attended with some encumbrances, through the multiplicity of business, or the constant care they are obliged to take to live in the world; he alleges how inconsistent it will be to give way to convictions of sin which will be an hinderance to the necessary business of life. Thus concerning the method which Satan uses to prevent conviction of sin, or to hinder its efficacy. But as this does not always take effect, especially when convictions make a deep impression upon us,

(3.) We proceed to consider those methods which are used by Satan to hinder persons from closing with Christ, and believing in him. Thus he endeavours to keep them in ignorance of the great doctrines of the gospel, and to turn them aside to embrace those errors which are inconsistent with faith in Christ. He suggests, that to press after the knowledge of the sense of scripture belongs not to them, but to persons of learning, or to those who are called to preach or defend the truth; and that it is enough for them to have some general notions of the doctrines of religion, whereby they may be induced to practice those moral virtues to which their station in life engages them, while they leave the more abstruse parts of Christian doctrine to those who are inclined to study them. Moreover, he improves the different sentiments of men about the doctrines of the gospel to answer this end; and infers that, as one asserts one thing for truth, and another the contrary, there is nothing certain in religion; so that they are safest who keep clear of all controverted matters, among which he includes the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. This method of temptation leads men to scepticism, and, if complied with, is inconsistent with faith in Christ. They, in consequence of it, imbibe those doctrines which tend to sap the very foundation of revealed religion. If they pretend to adhere to any scheme of doctrine, it is

generally such as has a tendency to strike at the divinity and glory of Christ, the necessity of his satisfaction, or of our justification by his imputed righteousness, the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the need we have of his powerful operations in the work of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. These are the doctrines on which our faith is built. Hence, to deny them, as it is the result of the alienation of our minds from God, is not only inconsistent with our closing with Christ, but is agreeable to the working of Satan in the children of disobedience, whereby he answers his character, as a deceiver, as well as a tempter.

Satan further endeavours to hinder men from believing in Christ, by persuading them to hope for salvation from the mercy of God, without any regard to the display of this attribute in Christ, as our Mediator, or faith in him, without which we have no ground to conclude that we shall obtain mercy. Or as faith is necessary to salvation, he persuades them to be content with such a faith as consists only in a general assent to some things contained in scripture, without the exercise of other graces which are inseparably connected with and flow from true faith. If they are satisfied with such a faith, it is no wonder that Satan, by his false reasoning, carries on the temptation yet farther, and persuades them that faith is in their own power, and that it is an easy matter to believe; and their being persuaded of this is a certain indication that they are destitute of saving faith. Thus we have considered Satan as endeavouring to strengthen the habits of sin, as endeavouring to hinder the work of conviction or to prevent its taking effect, and as using methods to keep those who are under convictions, from closing with Christ by faith.

(4.) We now proceed to consider Satan's injecting atheistical and blasphemous thoughts into the minds of men, and using his utmost

endeavours to drive them to despair. He sometimes injects atheistical and blasphemous thoughts into the minds of men. His nature inclines him to hate and oppose God; and his malice breaks forth in tempting men to blaspheme his perfections. Thus some are represented as 'opening their mouths in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven;' and this they do by the instigation of Satan. There is, however, a vast difference between those blasphemous thoughts which are injected into the minds of wicked men, and those which are often complained of by the believer. The devil stamps his own image upon the former; and they are like a spark falling into combustible matter, which immediately sets it on fire. The latter are like a flash of fire that lights upon water, without doing any execution. We read of some who are entirely under his dominion, who 'blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repent not of their deeds.'x But there are others into whom he injects blasphemous thoughts, to whom they are a grief and burden. Some are tempted to deny the being or providence of God; and others to have unworthy and injurious thoughts of the divine perfections. Such thoughts cannot be reckoned any other than blasphemy; and so far as they proceed from us, bring with them a very great degree of guilt. That believers themselves have been sometimes guilty of them, appears from what the psalmist utters in words, when he says, 'Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?' Indeed, it is no uncommon thing for believers to complain of their having injurious and unworthy thoughts of the divine perfections, which they dare not utter in words, and which fill them with the greatest uneasiness. It is therefore necessary for us to inquire, when these blasphemous suggestions take their rise from ourselves, and when from Satan. It is certain that sometimes they proceed from ourselves. Thus our Saviour says, 'Out of the heart proceed blasphemies that defile a

man.'z We have reason to charge ourselves with them, when they arise from or are accompanied with other presumptuous sins; or when we do not strive against them, but rather give way to them, as well as to other suggestions of Satan, and, in consequence, dishonour God, grieve the Holy Spirit, and defile our own consciences. On the other hand, we may humbly hope and trust that they are to be charged on Satan rather than ourselves, when they are the result of some bodily distemper, as in those who are under the prevailing power of melancholy. In such persons it may be observed that when, by the use of natural means, the distemper is abated, and the constitution mended, the blasphemous suggestions cease. Again, blasphemous thoughts are to be charged on Satan, when our souls tremble at the temptation they suggest, and oppose it with the utmost abhorrence, as our Saviour, when the devil tempted him to 'fall down and worship him,' immediately replied to him, 'Get thee hence, Satan.' Further, any unholy suggestion is from the tempter, when we can appeal to the heart-searching God, that so far from having any inclination to comply with it, that nothing is more grievous to us, than to be assaulted with it; and especially when we take occasion from it to exercise that reverential fear of the divine Majesty which is opposite to it.

As Satan gives disturbance by blasphemous suggestions, so he uses endeavours to drive persons to despair. We observed under a former Head, that so long as he can persuade any one to take up with a false peace, and fancy himself secure, though going on in a course of rebellion against God, he gives him but little uneasiness, endeavouring rather to increase his stupidity than to awaken his fears. He previously attempted to bring ruin upon him, by suggesting those temptations which led to presumption, and by pretending to him that all things were well, when the ground was sinking under him, and his hope built on a sandy foundation. But, when the frame

of his spirit is somewhat altered, and he is brought to a sense of his miserable condition, so that none of those stupifying medicines which have been used will heal the wound; Satan endeavours to persuade him that his condition is hopeless, or that there is no help for him in God. To this temptation believers, as well as the unregenerate, are sometimes liable. Of this we have many instances in scripture, besides those which are matter of daily experience. But it may be observed, that there is this difference between the despairing thoughts of believers and those of the unregenerate, that we scarcely ever read of a believer's despair without finding that it either argued his faith in God, or that there was a mixture of hope which was like a beam of light shining in darkness. Thus the psalmist, in the eighty-eighth psalm, expresses himself like one in the depths of despair; yet it may be observed that he addresses himself to God as 'the Lord God of his salvation.' When the church is represented as saying, 'My hope is perished from the Lord;' she is considered afterwards as encouraging herself in him: 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.'c 'For the Lord will not cast off for ever.' On the other hand, the despair of unbelievers is attended with an obstinate resolution to go on in a course of sin, and a total withdrawing of themselves from the ordinances, or instituted means of grace. Thus when Cain complained that his 'punishment was greater than he could bear,' 'he went out from the presence of the Lord.'e In this case despair, especially if it does not proceed from a bodily distemper, as it sometimes does, is a sad mark of a person's being under the dominion of Satan; who was before a tempter, but now proves a tormentor.

Here we may take occasion to consider how Satan proceeds against men in tempting them to despair. He takes the fittest opportunity, when we are most likely to be overcome by his temptation. He

observes our constitution when most addicted to melancholy, and therefore more easily led to despair. He also takes notice of some circumstances of providence under which we are brought, which are more than ordinarily afflictive, and tend to deject and render us more receptive of temptation to despair; and he endeavours to add weight to our burden, and depress our spirits under our afflictions. He also lays hold, more especially, on times when we are under divine desertion, and when, in consequence, our faith is weak, and we are very much indisposed to seek help from God. Moreover, he often takes occasion, from some great fall and miscarriage of which we have been guilty, and by which we have grieved the Holy Spirit and wounded our own consciences, so far to aggravate our crime that we may conclude our state to be altogether hopeless. Again, he endeavours to stop all the springs of comfort which might fortify us against temptation to despair, or afford us any relief under it. Accordingly, he turns our thoughts from the promises of the covenant of grace, and persuades the soul to conclude that they are not made to him, and that therefore he ought not to apply them to himself for his, comfort. He also persuades him to determine peremptorily against himself, that he is not elected to salvation; not from any marks of reprobation which he finds in himself, but by entering into God's secret counsels, and pretending to search the records of heaven, into which he has no warrant to look. In acting thus, despair includes a mixture of sinful presumption. At the same time, the person tempted has a secret aversion to converse with those who are able to speak a word in season to him. If any endeavours are used to convince him that the mercy of God is infinite, that his thoughts are not as our thoughts, and that the merit of Christ extends itself to the chief of sinners, they are all to no purpose; for his general reply to all such arguments is, that the mercy of God belongs not to him, or that his iniquities have excluded him from the divine favour. Further, Satan endeavours to hinder a soul,

at this time, from waiting on God in ordinances. As for the Lord's supper, he not only dissuades him from attending on it. but endeavours to insinuate that, in partaking of it in times past, he has 'eat and drank' his own 'damnation.' He thus gives a perverse sense of the passage in Corinthians; which, as appears from the context, is to be applied, not to weak believers, but to such as engage in this ordinance in a profane and irreverent manner, as though it were not a divine institution, and without any desire of obtaining spiritual mercies from God while observing it. The word which we render 'damnation' ought to be rendered 'judgment,' denoting that they expose themselves to temporal as well as spiritual judgments in this world for this wickedness, and not that they are to conclude that their eternal damnation will unavoidably follow. Hence, the design of this scripture is to lead to repentance, and not to despair. As for the word preached, the person tempted concludes that every thing which is delivered in it contains an indictment against him; and therefore he cannot endure to hear it. As for prayer, Satan discourages him from it, by pretending that he is not in a right frame for the performance of the duty, and by giving a false sense of such scriptures as these: 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.'g 'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination.' But the meaning is not that the duty itself is sinful because performed by sinners, or that God hates them the more for praying; but it is that he hates the hypocrisy, formality, and other sins committed by them, when engaged in it. Hence, they should rather strive and pray against this unbecoming frame of spirit, than lay aside the duty itself, as they are tempted to do. Again, Satan makes use of false reasonings, by which he endeavours to tempt persons to despair. He puts them upon concluding that, because they have no grace, they never shall have it. This reasoning, if it were just, must be applied to all unregenerate sinners; and then we must conclude that the whole work of conversion in this world is

at an end. But, blessed be God, it is not. He farther argues that, because they have lived a great while in a course of sin, and their hearts are very much hardened by it, they cannot be brought to repentance; or their wound is incurable, and there are no healing medicines. This is to set limits to the almighty power and grace of God. Satan farther induces them to conclude that there is something uncommon in their case, that they are greater sinners than ever obtained mercy. This, however, is more than it is possible for them to know. Yet they are tempted to apply the presumptuous and discouraging suggestion to themselves to heighten their despair, and to hinder the force of any argument which may be brought to the contrary. But the most common argument which Satan uses to induce persons to despair, is that they have sinned against light and the convictions of their own consciences, that they have grieved and quenched the Spirit of God, and that therefore they have probably committed the unpardonable sin. This is often alleged by persons against themselves, though, at the same time, they know not what this sin is, and regard not any thing which is said to convince them that they have no reason to conclude that they have committed it. Indeed, their very fears, and the desires they express that it were otherwise with them, are an undeniable argument that they are mistaken in the judgment which they pass on themselves, by adhering to Satan's suggestions, leading them to despair.i Thus we have given some account of the great variety of temptations to which we are exposed from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

II. We are now to consider how we are to pray that we may not be led into temptation, or, if led into it, by what means we may be delivered from the evil consequences which will arise from our compliance with it. An hour of temptation is not only afflictive, but dangerous, by reason of the united assaults of the enemies with whom we have to deal. The world continually presents objects which are agreeable to

corrupt nature; and Satan is unwearied in his endeavours to turn us aside from God by means of these objects, in order that he may have us in his own power, and drive us from one degree of impiety to another. Hence, though it is not impossible to be tempted without sin, yet it is exceedingly difficult. As, therefore, we are to take heed that we do not go in the way of temptation; so we are to address ourselves to God, that he would keep us from it, if it be his will. We are not, indeed, absolutely to pray against it, as we are to pray against sin; for, while it is not possible for us to commit sin without contracting guilt, we may be tempted to sin, and yet come off conquerors over it. But as the enterprise itself is hazardous, the conflict difficult, and the event, with respect to us, uncertain, we should rather desire that, if God has not some gracious ends to answer, by our being subjected to temptation, which are, at present, unknown to us, he would be pleased to prevent it. The case is the same as if we were apprehensive of an infectious distemper raging among us. This we are to pray against; though God could, by his power, preserve us, in particular, from its evil consequences. Or if we were informed that an enemy lay in wait secretly for our lives, it is possible for God to deliver us out of his hand; yet if the matter were referred to our own choice, we would rather desire that he may not be suffered to assault us. Thus we are to pray that God would keep us from temptation. We are not, however, to question his power, or distrust his providence, as though he could not carry us safely through it; and we are to hope that he will do so, if he suffers us to be tempted. Nor are we to suppose that we can be altogether free from those temptations which arise from the imperfection of the present state; in which we must expect to be subject to the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit. Hence, we are to direct our prayers to God principally that he would keep us from falling by temptation, or that he would recover us when fallen, prevent the evils which would

otherwise follow, and overrule our sinful compliance to his own glory and our future advantage.

1. We are to pray that he would keep us from falling by temptation, that it may be like a wave dashing against a rock, which remains unmoved, or like a dart shot against a breastplate of steel, which only blunts its point, and returns it back without receiving injury. Now God prevents our falling by temptation, either by his restraining or by his renewing grace. The former is common to the regenerate and the unregenerate; and, when it is unaccompanied with any higher grace, it consists chiefly in some alteration made in the natural temper or present inclinations of men, so that sin, though it remains unmortified, is abstained from, just as a river is kept from overflowing a country, not by ceasing to be fluid in its nature, but by being contained within its proper banks. These restraints, in some, proceed from the change which providence makes in their outward condition or circumstances in the world; so that temptations which formerly they were ready to comply with, are either discontinued or offered without success. Thus when a person is bowed down with some affliction, it gives a different turn to his passions; so that, as Job says, 'the heart is made soft,' in a natural way, by those troubles which tend to depress the spirits. Sometimes a person is unexpectedly surprised with a fit of sickness, which gives him a near view of death and another world; and then the violence of any temptation with which he is assailed, for the present, ceases, or at least, he is deterred from complying with it. Or it may be, his spirits are decayed, his constitution weakened, and his natural vigour abated by affliction, so that he has no inclination to commit some sins to which he was formerly addicted. Others want leisure to pursue those lusts to which they are habitually prone, being engaged in a hurry of business, or conflicting with many difficulties for the subsisting of themselves and families. These are not exposed to the

temptations which often attend a slothful and indolent way of living. Or it may be, they are separated from their former associates, who have been partners with them in sin, and tempters to it. Sometimes, too, there is a sudden thought injected into their minds, which fills them with an inward fear and dread of the consequence of committing sins which are more gross and notorious. This is the result of an awakened conscience; whereby persons are kept from the commission of many sins, by the restraints of common providence, though they are, notwithstanding, in a state of unregeneracy, and sin in general remains unmortified.—On the other hand, the believer is preserved by the power of sanctifying grace, whereby an habitual inclination is wrought in him to detest the sin to which he is tempted. The Spirit of God, by his immediate interposition, internally disposes him to exercise the contrary graces; which proceed from a principle of filial fear and love to God, together with a sense of gratitude for all the benefits which he has received from him. Hence, in repelling a temptation, he says, with Joseph, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'

2. We are also to pray that God would prevent the evil consequences which very often follow temptations, that our hearts may not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; that we may not willingly yield ourselves bond-slaves to Satan, or take pleasure in those sins which we have been tempted to commit; and that we may not be exposed to divine desertion, how much soever we have deserved it.

3. We are likewise to pray that God would recover us, or bring us out of the pit into which we are fallen; so that Satan may not take occasion, after he has overcome us, to insult us; that we may not be given up to a perpetual backsliding, but that our souls may be 'restored,' and 'led in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.'

4. If we have fallen by a temptation, we are farther to pray that God would overrule it to his own glory and our spiritual advantage. Though there is nothing good in sin, yet God can bring good out of it. This he does when he humbles the sinner for it, makes him afraid of going near the brink of the pit into which he fell, and inclines him to be more watchful, that he may not, by indulging some sins, lay himself open to temptations which would lead him to the commission of many others. God's overruling a believer's fall for his good, will also induce him to depend on Christ by faith, sensible of his inability to resist the least temptation without him. It will likewise excite in him the greatest thankfulness to God, who has found a way for his escape out of the snare in which he was entangled; so that he will receive abundant advantage, and God will be greatly glorified.

Thus we have considered God's people as exposed to various temptations, and how, in reference to them, they are to direct their prayers to God, agreeably to what our Saviour has taught us in this petition. That we may farther enlarge upon the subject in our meditations, we may express ourselves to God in prayer to this effect: —"We draw nigh to thee, O our God and Father, as those who are exposed to many difficulties, by reason of the snares and temptations which attend us. We find it hard to pass through the world without being allured and drawn aside from thee by its vanities, or discouraged and made uneasy by those afflictions which are inseparable from the present state. But that which gives us the greatest ground of distress and trouble, and makes us an easy prey to our spiritual enemies, is the deceitfulness and treachery of our own hearts, whereby we are prone to yield ourselves the servants of sin and Satan. Every age and condition of life has been filled with temptations, by which we have been very often overcome. We therefore implore the powerful aids of thy grace, that we may be kept

in the hour of temptation. Enable us to overcome the world, to mortify and subdue our corrupt inclinations, and to stand against all the wiles and fiery darts of the devil. Let us not be tempted to presume that we shall be happy without holiness, or that we shall enjoy the benefits which are purchased by Christ, without faith in him. May we also be freed from all unbecoming thoughts of thy divine perfections, and not give way to any temptations which may lead us to despair of thy mercy, which thou art pleased to extend to the chief of sinners. We farther beg, though with submission to thy will, that we may be kept from the temptations of our grand adversary, because we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to resist him. Yet we are confident that we can do all things by thine assistance. If, therefore, thou sufferest us to be tempted, appear in our behalf, that we may be made more than conquerors; and when we fall by temptation, let us not be utterly cast down, but let us be upheld with thine hand, and let thy strength be made perfect in our weakness. And in the end, bring us safely to that happy state where there is neither sin nor temptation; when we shall be delivered from all the evils of the present state, that thou mayest have the glory, and that we may praise thee throughout the ages of eternity."

THE CONCLUSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

QUESTION CXCVI. What doth the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

ANSWER. The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, which is, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen," teacheth us to enforce our petitions with arguments, which are to be taken, not from any worthiness in ourselves, or in any

other creature, but from God; and with our prayers, to join praises, ascribing to God alone eternal sovereignty, omnipotency, and glorious excellency; in regard whereof, as he is able and willing to help us, so we by faith are emboldened to plead with him that he would, and quietly to rely upon him that he will fulfil our requests, and to testify this our desire and assurance, we say, "Amen."

As we are taught to begin our prayers with those expressions of reverence which become the majesty of God when we draw nigh to him; so we are to conclude them with a doxology, or an ascription of that glory which is due to his name. Thus praise is joined with prayer; and we are encouraged to hope that he will hear and answer our petitions. In the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, we are directed to ascribe to God 'the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever,' and to sum up all with the comprehensive word, 'Amen.' This doxology may be considered in two respects,—as we express by it the due regard we have to the divine perfections; and as we improve or make use of the clauses of it as so many arguments or pleas in prayer.

I. We shall consider the doxology as expressing the sense we have of the divine perfections.

1. We say, 'Thine is the kingdom.' Here God's sovereignty and his universal dominion over all creatures are acknowledged, as he has a right to every thing to which he gave being. As this is more especially a branch of his relative glory, since the idea of a king implies subjects over whom his dominion is exercised; so it supposes in us an humble expression of subjection to him, and dependence on him for all things which we enjoy or hope for. We also consider him as having a right to make use of all creatures at his pleasure; inasmuch as the

earth is his, and the fulness thereof. As we are intelligent creatures, we profess our obligation to yield obedience to his revealed will, and our fear of incurring his displeasure by rebelling against him, with whom is terrible majesty. And when we take a view of him as seated on a throne of grace, and of his government as extended to his church, on which account he is adored as 'King of saints,' we hope for his safe protection, and for all the blessings, which he bestows on those whom he governs in a way subservient to their everlasting salvation.

2. We adore him as a God of infinite power, 'Thine is the power.' Dominion without power will not be sufficient to maintain its rights. Hence, as God is described as having the kingdom belonging to him, or as being the Governor among the nations, his attribute of power ought to be next considered; whereby he can, without the least difficulty, secure the welfare and happiness of his subjects, and bring to nought the designs of his enemies; or as it is elegantly expressed, 'look on every one that is proud, and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place, hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret.'

3. It is added, 'Thine is the glory.' This expression maybe understood in two senses. The 'glory' may be viewed as including all his perfections, whereby he is rendered glorious in the eyes of angels and men; so that there is nothing which we esteem beautiful or excellent in the whole system of created beings, but what is deformed, and, as it were, vanishes and sinks into nothing, when compared with him. Or the meaning of the expression is, that all the praise which arises from every thing done in the world which appears great and excellent, or which has a tendency to raise our esteem and admiration, is to be ascribed to him. In ascribing to him this praise, we disclaim the least shadow or appearance of divine honour; which

we are ready, on all occasions, to acknowledge to be due to him alone. Thus we adore him as having all divine perfections, when we say, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.'

4. It is farther added, that they belong to him 'for over and ever.' By this expression, it is intimated that, whatever changes there may be in the nature or condition of created beings, he is unchangeably the same; and therefore will remain glorious in himself, and be for ever admired and adored by all his saints, whose happiness depends upon his immutability.

II. We shall consider these divine perfections, as they afford us so many arguments or pleas in prayer, whence we take encouragement to expect a gracious answer, from him. That they are to be viewed in this light, appears from the illative particle 'for,' which is prefixed to the doxology. We may hence consider the doxology as subjoined to the petitions, as the strongest motive to induce us to hope that the blessings we pray for shall be granted us. Accordingly, we disclaim all worthiness in ourselves, and desire that our name or righteousness should not be mentioned, but that the whole revenue of glory may redound to God, as all our expectation is from him. We might here apply the several arguments or pleas contained in the, doxology to every one of the petitions; and, if thus applied, they would tend very much to enforce them, and afford matter for enlargement in prayer. But I choose rather to reduce the subject of them to the two general Heads, under which they are contained. Accordingly, I shall show how we may make use of them in our praying for those, things which concern his glory, agreeably to what we are directed to ask for in the three first petitions; and how we may make use of them in our, praying for temporal or spiritual advantage, agreeably to what we are directed to ask in the three last.

1. As to the glory of God in the world, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom advanced, and his will be done, we pray that, as he is a great King, the blessed and only Potentate, the Governor of the world and the church, he would sanctify his glorious name; that his interest may be maintained, and prevail against every, thing which opposes it; and that he would take to himself his great power and reign. And, as the success of the gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom of grace, is a work surpassing finite power, and there are many endeavours used to weaken and overthrow it; we trust, we hope, we plead with him, for the glory of his name, that he would check and defeat the designs of his and our enemies, that the enlargement of his kingdom may not be obstructed, nor his subjects disheartened, while Satan's kingdom, which is set in opposition to it, makes such sensible advances and prevails so much against it. Moreover, in order that his name may be sanctified by his people, and his kingdom advanced in the world, we pray that his subjects may be inclined to obey him and submit to his will in all things, or that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Hence, when we ascribe the kingdom, power, and glory to him, we in effect, say:—"Lord, what would become of this wretched world, if it were not under, thy gracious government, which is its glory and defence! Thou sittest on the throne of thy holiness, which thou hast established of old. We are, therefore, encouraged to hope that thou wilt not forsake thy people, who are called by thy name, nor suffer thine interest to be trampled on, or thy name to be profaned by those who say, 'Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?' Thine arm is not shortened, that thou canst not save; for thine is the power, and therefore nothing is too hard for thee. Thou hast given us ground to expect that thou wilt show thy people marvellous things; and thou hast promised that all nations shall bow down before thee and serve thee, and that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Christ. This thou canst easily accomplish by thine almighty power, though it be

too hard for man. Thou art never at a loss for instruments to fulfil thy pleasure; for all things are in thy hand. Nor, indeed, dost thou need them; for by thy powerful word, thou canst cause light to shine out of darkness, and revive thy work in the midst of the years, that thy people may rejoice and be glad in thy salvation. Take the work, therefore, into thine own hand, and, thereby, give us occasion to admire and ascribe to thee the glory which is due to thy name."

2. We are to consider how we may plead for temporal or spiritual blessings, as making use of the argument that the kingdom, power, and glory belong to God. Accordingly, we pray that he would give us that portion of the good things of this life which he sees necessary for us, and that we may enjoy his blessing with it, in order to our being prepared for a better. We say, in effect:—"Give us daily bread; for the earth is thine, and the fulness thereof. Thou hast subdued us to thyself, and hast told us that thou wilt surely do us good, and bring us at last to thy heavenly kingdom. We therefore humbly wait upon thee, that we may not be suffered to faint by the way, or be destitute of those blessings which are needful for us in our present condition. Thou art able to supply all our wants. We have hitherto been upheld by thy power, and thou hast sometimes done great things for us, which we looked not for, and hast been our refuge and strength, a very present help in every time of trouble. Thou hast granted us life and favour; and thy visitations have preserved our spirits. What thou hast given us we have gathered; thou hast opened thy hand, and filled us with good. And, as the treasures of thy bounty are not exhausted, nor thy power diminished; so we desire to exercise a constant dependence on thee, and to hope in thy mercy, that, as thou hast given us those better things which accompany salvation, thou wilt also bestow upon us what thou seest needful for us in our way to it. Grant us, O Lord, the mercies which we need, that the bestowal of

them may redound, not only to our comfort, but to thy glory, who givest food to all flesh; for thy mercy endureth for ever."

We also encourage ourselves to hope for those spiritual blessings which we stand in need of. Accordingly, when we pray for forgiveness of sin, we consider God as sitting upon a throne of grace, and inviting us to come and receive a pardon from his hand. Hence, we say, "Lord, thou art ready to forgive, and thereby to lay eternal obligations on thy subjects, to love and fear thee. If thou shouldst resolve to display thy vindictive justice, in punishing sin according to its demerit, thy kingdom of grace would be at an end; but thou encouragest us to hope for forgiveness, that hereby grace may reign through righteousness unto life eternal. And, as thou art a God of infinite power, we beg that thou wouldst work in us those graces which flow from, and are the evidences of, our having obtained forgiveness, that being delivered from the guilt of sin, we may walk before thee in newness of life. We also ask this privilege, as what thou bestowest for Christ's sake, that hereby he may be glorified as the purchaser of this blessing, and we laid under the highest obligations to love him, being constrained by his love, expressed to us in washing us from our sins in his own blood."

When we pray to be kept from temptation, or to be recovered when fallen, we consider ourselves as the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and his enemies as endeavouring to draw us aside from our allegiance to him; and dreading the consequence of their seductions, we address ourselves to him, to secure us from the danger we are exposed to from them. Accordingly, when we say, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,' we are furnished with arguments adapted to our present exigencies; and we pray to this effect:—"The power of our spiritual enemies is great, and is specially formidable on account of the treachery of our own hearts; yet we are encouraged to implore

thine assistance against them, O our God and King, that we may be kept in the hour of temptation; inasmuch as all the attempts which are made against us include an invasion on thy sovereignty and dominion over us. We desire always to commit ourselves to thy protection, and hope to find it. For there are no snares laid for us but thou art able to detect them, and prevent our being entangled by them. Thou canst also bruise our enemies under our feet; and if we are at any time overcome by them, thou canst recover us from the paths of the destroyer. Do this for us, we beseech thee, that thou mayest have all the glory. We have no might; but our eyes are toward thee, who art able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy."

The word 'Amen,' with which our Saviour concludes this prayer, is of Hebrew origin. It is sometimes prefixed to what is asserted with a vehemency of expression, and is designed not only to confirm what is said, but to bespeak for it the utmost attention, as being a matter of very great importance. In this case it is rendered by the word 'verily.' It is also sometimes repeated in order to add greater force to the confirmation. Thus when our Saviour asserts the necessity of regeneration, he says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Elsewhere, also, he says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.'q—Again, it is placed at the close of each of the evangelists, to denote, that whatever is contained in the narrative is to be depended on as of infallible verity. Almost all the epistles also are concluded with it. In the book of Revelation, it is placed after a short prayer or doxology; and, in that position, it signifies that what is requested of God is earnestly desired, and that the petition is summed up and ratified by it; or that the glory which is ascribed is again acknowledged to belong to God, and that we rejoice in the discovery of it which is made to us.—Again, the word is

sometimes not only used, but at the same time explained, as containing a summary account of what we ask for. Thus when Benaiah preferred a petition to David in behalf of Solomon, and had a grant from him that he should reign in his stead; it is said, 'He answered the king, and said, Amen; the Lord God of my lord the king say so too.'

Thus, then, the word 'Amen,' with which this and other prayers are to be concluded, signifies, 'so it is,' 'so let it be,' or, 'so it shall be.' In all these significations it is to be used in reference to the subject of our prayers. As it respects sins confessed, or the glory which we ascribe to God for mercies received, it denotes, 'so it is.' As it refers to the promises which we plead and take encouragement from, or the blessings which we desire, it signifies, 'so it shall be,' and 'so let it be.' Thus it is to be applied in the Lord's prayer. In particular, as it is immediately subjoined to the doxology, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever,' it is an expression of our faith, as well as of our adoration of the divine perfections.—Moreover, there are some prayers, or doxologies, in which the glory of Christ and the gospel state is described, which are concluded with the repetition of the word. Thus when the psalmist had been enlarging on this subject, he concludes with, 'Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen;' that is, God has determined that it shall be so, and the whole church is obliged to express their faith, and say, 'Amen, so let it be.'

Some have thought it expedient in social prayer, that the whole assembly, together with him who leads the devotions, should say 'Amen,' with a loud voice, and thereby signify their consent to the prayer, and their concern in its petitions. This appears to have been the practice of the church in the early ages. Justin Martyr observes

that the practice was followed in his time; and it was afterwards observed in Jerome's time, who compares the sound which the assembly made with their united voices to that of thunder.t But though this practice was followed with a pious design, and was not in the least to be blamed, yet it is not to be insisted on as necessary; for all who are present professedly join in every part of the prayer, as much as if they repeated the words with an audible voice. It is sufficient for every one, when prayer is publicly concluded with this comprehensive word, to lift up his heart to God, and thereby express the part he bears in the devotion. As to the contrary extreme, when one, whose office was altogether unknown to the primitive church, is appointed to say 'Amen' in the name of the whole congregation, it is, I think, altogether unwarrantable. Several Popish commentators, indeed, defend it from the apostle's words, where he speaks of him who 'occupieth the room of the unlearned,' as 'saying Amen, at the giving of thanks.' Here, however, by 'the unlearned,' is meant, not the clerk of a congregation,x but one who understands not the prayer, which the apostle supposes to be put up to God in an unknown tongue. All therefore which can be inferred from the apostle's words is, that we ought to pray to God with understanding and faith, and so may be able to sum up our requests, and glorify him by saying, 'Amen.'

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