SERMONS

AND

ESSAYS:

BY THE LATE

REV. MR. JOHN M'LAURIN,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF GLASGOW.

PUBLISHED FROM THE AUTHOR'S MANUSCRIPTS,

BY JOHN GILLIES,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF GLASGOW.

To which is prefixed,

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR

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PHILADELPHIA:

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1811.

RECOMMENDATION.

THERE are some books of an inferior class—they were not without their use at the time that they were published; but they soon sink into oblivion—they have performed their office. There is a middling class, which edifies the generation for which they were composed, and descends with respect to the next; and they are read with profit. But there is a third kind, exalted far above these, and which ranks high in the estimation of mankind. The authors were men of superior endowments, and they are greatly and justly admired in every succeeding age. When they become scarce, the person who reprints them does a service to the world.

In this last class Maclaurin has an exalted place. This little volume may be put into the scale with any work of its size which the eighteenth century produced, and it will not disgrace the hand which threw it in. The author appears to have been a man very superior to most, both in intellect and in goodness. It will be difficult to find two sermons more excellent than the second and third in this collection. Along with a wonderful mass of select ideas, solidity of judgment, profoundness of research, ingenuity of thought, and vivacity and brilliancy of representation, they display the most powerful and impressive eloquence on subjects where eloquence is most difficult and uncommon, namely, in stating, illustrating, confirming, and enforcing the fundamental Doctrines of the Gospel.

Young Preachers should carefully study this little volume. When men of talents, education, and learning, are unhappily prejudiced against Evangelical Principles, we know no book more proper to be put into their hands than this. If any thing human can convince them of the impropriety of despising the truth, it is the lovely representation of it by the superior intellect of Maclaurin, united with the display of the most ardent devotion, and of a holy, humble, and benevolent heart. We have often read this book; but we never read it without feeling ourselves to be but children, and sinking into nothing, from a consciousness of his vast superiority.

Evangelical Magazine for July, 1802.

SOME

ACCOUNT

OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE AUTHOR.

MR. JOHN M'LAURIN was born in October, 1693, at Glenderule, in Argyleshire, where his father was minister. He was the eldest of three brothers, of whom the second, Daniel, died young, after giving proofs of an extraordinary genius; and Colin, who was the youngest, is well known to have proved one of the most celebrated Mathematicians of the age. Their father dying in 1698, and their mother in 1707, their uncle, Mr. Daniel M'Laurin, minister at Kilfinnan, took them under his care, and bestowed great pains on them; to which he was, no doubt, encouraged by the promising appearances of their uncommon capacity and application. While they studied philosophy in the University of Glasgow, they were taken notice of, not only for their diligence, but for their piety, in which the two younger had the advantage of an excellent example from their eldest brother. Agreeably to this eminent part of his character, he made an early choice of divinity for his own study, and observing his brother Colin's taste for the sciences, he advised him to apply to the mathematics, for which he had an excellent genius himself, had he indulged it; but he had consecrated all his talents to the more immediate service of Christ in the gospel. This plan he followed ever after with such steadiness and uniformity, that it serves for a short description of his whole life.

Havingattended the Divinity-College at Glasgow and studied some short time at Leyden under Professor Mark,

man of an extraordinary genius, joined with great prudence, and as great activity, extensive reading, and a competent knowledge of the world, all devoted to the service of God in the gospel. Animated with no worldly views, but with an unshaken and well-grounded belief of Christianity, and a continual joyful hope of heaven.

Such was the life and character of this excellent person. May the short account that has been given of it be blest of God to every reader.

JOHN GILLIES.

GLASGOW, April, 1755.

Wesselius, etc. He was, in 1717, licensed to preach the gospel by the presbytery of Dumbarton; and in 1719 was ordained minister at Luss, a country parish situated upon the banks of Lochlomond, about twenty miles north-west from Glasgow.

In this retirement he had an opportunity of pursuing his studies, which he did not fail to improve. Having no relish for rural employments or diversions, his time was wholly taken up, either with the duties of his office, or with his book. And he well knew how to make all his reading subservient to religion.

But he was not suffered to continue long in so private a station. His uncommon talents were soon taken notice of in the neighbourhood of Luss, and by all every where who had access to know him. His unaffected Christian piety made him acceptable to many, his learning and ingenious thoughts to others, and his modest and cheerful temper to all; so that, having occasion sometimes to preach at Glasgow, which he did with universal approbation, he was translated thither on an invitation from the city, after the death of the reverend Mr. Anderson,* and admitted minister in the North-West parish in 1723, to the great satisfaction of all concerned.

He was now in a sphere that did not allow so much time for his studies as he formerly enjoyed, but was very proper for one who had laid so good a foundation, and had devoted all his time and talents to the work of the ministry.

The pastoral office in Glasgow, by reason of the largeness of the parishes, and the multiplicity of necessary or very important duties, is a business of no small labour at any rate: but Mr. M'Laurin's activity and zeal carried him through a great deal more work than ordinary. His calls to visit the sick were uncommonly frequent. He was often consulted by persons that were thoughtful about their eternal interests. He preached once a month to the Highlanders living in Glasgow, in their own language. He assisted in concerting measures for the regular maintenance of the poor; and particularly when the Glasgow hospital at its first erection met with considerable obstacles, he promoted it with great diligence, and had a chief hand in composing the printed ac-

* Known to the public by his writings.

count of that excellent foundation. In all the schemes for suppressing vice and impiety he was a principal mover, and was no less active in carrying them into execution. In his sermons, before the societies for reformation in Glasgow, he made it his business to inculcate upon the conscientious inhabitants the necessity of doing *their part* to bear down wickedness, by giving information against offenders, without which the best laws and most zealous magistrates could avail nothing. He laboured to take off the unjust odium affixed by some to the name of informers, and to shew that they who declined giving themselves the trouble of preventing sin in their neighbours were like Cain, who said, *Am I my brother's keeper?* The account of the societies for reformation which arose in England and Ireland about the end of the last century, was a book he read with great pleasure, especially as it narrates the surprising success with which Providence blest their vigorous endeavours at their first setting out. He was much for encouraging a like spirit, and using like prudent methods in Glasgow: and although the success of these methods might not be so great as were to be wished, he was not for laying them aside. He heartily agreed with those who think it is the duty of Christians to improve all the countenance given by human laws for restraining wickedness, because, otherwise, bad as we are, we should still be worse. For which reason he greatly approved of the design of the friendly society lately erected in Glasgow, who are endeavouring to raise a fund to prosecute such wicked persons as might otherwise escape the law.

But if his zeal and activity was great for the reformation of manners, it was still greater in what regards inward religion. Some years ago, when numbers of people in different parts of the world became uncommonly concerned about their salvation, such an appearance engaged all his attention. He was at the greatest pains to be rightly informed about the facts; and having from these fully satisfied himself that it was the work of God, he defended and promoted it to the utmost of his power. Nothing gave him so much joy as the advancement of vital religion. This part of the Saviour's temper was exceedingly remarkable in him. Luke x. 21. With what earnestness used he to apply these words of the evangelical prophet, *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the*

righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. Being invited by the ministers in whose congregations the religious concern chiefly appeared, he cheerfully went and assisted them. He did not consult his own ease, nor his reputation among many who would pass for wise and prudent men, but sacrificed all to what he was fully convinced was the work of God. He was at great pains to procure and communicate well-attested accounts of it both at home and abroad. His correspondence with the reverend Messrs. Cooper and Prince, and other ministers in Boston, and the reverend Mr. Edwards, (then at Northampton, now at Stockbridge) was always much valued by him, especially at this time.* When he received their accounts, he spread them amongst his acquaintances, and wrote largely to his American correspondents what intelligence he could procure, of the state of religion in Scotland. He met once a week with some Christian friends, to receive and communicate religious intelligence, and to converse on religious subjects, which he did with inimitable spirit and cheerfulness.

When those who made a profession of piety were guilty of any thing that tended to hurt the cause of religion, it vexed him to the heart, and bore so heavy on his spirits as to make him restless whole nights.

He encouraged the societies for prayer which multiplied in Glasgow about this time. With his approbation there was a general meeting appointed once a month (which still subsists), consisting of a member from each society, with a minister for their Preses, to inquire into the state of the societies, and to send more experienced persons to assist the younger sort. And several years afterwards, he was the chief contriver and promoter of the concert for prayer, which hath been complied with by numbers both in Great Britain and America†. And it may be proper to take notice here,

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* He had several other correspondents in Boston, and in other parts of New-England, whom he greatly esteemed and loved, particularly Abiel Walley, Esq.

† Mr. Edwards wrote a whole book to recommend it, entitled, "An humble attempt to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer," &c. Some account of which may be seen in "Historical Collections relating to the success of the gospel." Vol. ii. p 401.

that as he was remarkably earnest in his prayers for the public interests of religion, so he was always for beginning every deliberation of importance with prayer. And it was observed, that both as to his expressions and manner in prayer, none could go beyond him for profound reverence, or for freedom, fluency, and holy humble boldness; and very few equal his constant mixture of these in so remarkable a degree.

In the latter part of his life he was uncommonly concerned for the peace of the church of Scotland. He had all along endeavoured to prevent strife and division to the utmost of his power. What pains he was at in procuring the peaceable settlement of vacant congregations, appears in part from papers on this subject found among his manuscripts, and is otherwise well known. He was equally against the extremes of encouraging an unreasonable opposition among the people on the one hand, and of violently imposing ministers upon them on the other. A call and appointment to the holy ministry by ordination, he thought a very solemn business, and not to be made on any account subservient to political measures. He considered the great design of the sacred function, the edification of the body of Christ, which he thought could never be promoted by violent measures, and fixing a pastoral relation amidst an universal opposition. The arbitrary methods therefore lately pursued, in not only appointing and authorizing such settlements, but deposing from the holy ministry such as for conscience sake refused to have an active hand in them, made very deep impression on his spirits, as a dismal presage of the decay of vital religion, and the pulling to pieces our ecclesiastic constitution. Moved by such considerations, he interposed his most vigorous efforts to stop the progress of so unprecedented and ruinous measures. He acted, and wrote himself; and engaged others, who had talents for it, to write upon the subject.* Declining no step, however troublesome, unless it seemed to have a tendency to increase the flame.

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* See 1. The terms of Ministerial and Christian communion imposed on the church of Scotland by a prevailing party in the general assembly, in opposition to the great bulk both of office-bearers and private Christians. Printed at Glasgow, 1753.

2. An inquiry into the powers committed to the general Assemblies of the church, and the nature of deposition from the holy ministry, occasioned by the conduct and procedure of the

From this short account of things, it appears how active he was in matters of public concern, as well as in the more private duties of his office; so that one would think he could not spare much time for reading, especially as he was obliged to be often in company, persons of all ranks, who had any regard for religion, being fond of conversing with him. And indeed it was his duty, as well as his inclination, to gratify them. For he had such an inexhaustible fund of edifying pleasant discourse; such a constant cheerfulness and flow of spirits, attended with the most serious piety; so obliging a readiness to hear others; and so unaffected a desire to make all about him happy: that there never was perhaps a man better qualified to recommend Christianity in the way of conversation; nor were his endeavours in this way without success.

Yet though so large a portion of his time was necessarily employed in action and conversation, he read a great deal to the last. There was hardly a new book of any note, but he made himself acquainted with it; nay, he found time to study and compose upon a variety of divine subjects. To account for which, we must consider, that as he had a very quick apprehension, so he was capable of extraordinary application, attended with a certain earnestness to finish every subject he had once begun. And then he generally retired several months in the summer season to the country, where his studies were both his business and recreation: for he never seemed to be weary of them, nor to give them up, except when necessarily interrupted.

At what time soever it was, 'tis certain he did write several valuable composures besides these published in this volume; such as, *An essay on the prophecies relating to the Messiah—Of the difference betwixt enthusiasm and true christian piety.—Of the Scripture Doctrine of continued*

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assembly, 1752. By the author of the queries in the Scots Magazine for July, 1752, with an introduction by another hand. Printed at Glasgow, for John Gilmour, bookseller, 1754.

3. The nature of ecclesiastic government, &c. being a second conference on the terms of communion, &c. Printed at Glasgow, 1754.

He had a great regard for the Authors of these pieces, and took upon himself the chief care and trouble of publishing them.

*forgiveness—Against the errors of the mystics**.—*A collection of remarks on the evidence of the miracles recorded in the New Testament.* And several smaller pieces, viz. *Letters on infant baptism—A consolatory letter to Lady Frances Gardner, occasioned by the Colonel's death—Remarks on Mr. R's manuscript on the nature of faith.* And some unfinished papers, as, *Remarks on Mr. Stinstras' pastoral letter.—Remarks on lord Bolingbroke's insinuations against the scriptures in his Letters on History.*

There are, perhaps, some of his manuscripts omitted in this list; but from those mentioned it appears in part, (though his intimate acquaintances only can have a clear notion of it) how *studious* he was as well as *active*. It is indeed hard to say which of the two he was most remarkable for; but he was never idle, and the great principle that visibly animated him all along, was a regard to the honour of his Saviour, and a zeal to promote his cause according to the opportunities afforded him.

Notwithstanding his incessant application, he enjoyed a very good state of health, seldom interrupted, except by some fits of a rheum in his head, and a pain and weakness in his eyes.

In spring, 1754, he was feverish, for some days, but soon recovered, and was so well as to attend the general assembly in May, where he had the pleasure to meet with the reverend Messrs. Tennent and Davies, agents for the college of New-

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* Some have expressed their surprise, that he could be at the pains to search into these obscure writers; but such as have read them without the prejudice of contempt (which may be more easily done, as some of them were men of a fine imagination and an affectionate heart) will soon perceive how apt they are to engage a devout reader. Upon several very important points, such as, "A constant sense of the divine presence, A supreme love and regard to the Deity; Conformity to his will," &c. they speak extremely well. But the great defect of the mystic divinity seems to be, that it overlooks, in a great measure, some of the peculiar doctrines and precepts of the New Testament, upon which our all depends; such as, "Justification by the blood and righteousness of the Saviour, and a zealous care to promote our own salvation and that of others." This, Mr. M'Laurin, no doubt saw, and upon this, and some other accounts, he might justly look upon the mystic scheme as the more dangerous, the greater resemblance it bears to real religion.

Jersey; a design to which he heartily wished well, as he did to all that tended to promote Christianity. It gave him great pleasure to see with what readiness the Assembly granted a collection for carrying on that good design.

After he came home, he had frequently in his hands a small volume of Mr. Shaw's pieces, one of which is entitled, *A farewell to Life.* About the end of August he complained much of the rheum in his head, which, notwithstanding the good effects of medicines for a short time, still returned. Yet he preached on Sabbath, August 25th, and went abroad next day, as usual. There were at that time some foreigners in town, who were desirous to be introduced to him, on account of the great esteem they had for his brother. As his humane, sociable, and Christian temper made him always behave in a very obliging manner to strangers, he waited upon them with great cheerfulness, and conversed with them in his usual entertaining and facetious way. He was again to have waited on them on Thursday, August 29th, but found himself so much indisposed by the pain in his head, that he could not go abroad. About two in the afternoon he became suddenly so ill, that his memory failed him, and he could not express himself with his ordinary readiness. After that, he had a continual inclination to sleep, attended with a slow fever. At the same time a little swelling under one of his cheeks increased, till it became what the physicians call an erysipelas. On Sabbath, September 1st, though he did not speak with his former distinctness, his discourse, in the intervals of his drowsiness, was in the same heavenly strain it used to be on that day; repeating many comfortable passages of Scripture, and improving every thing that came in his way as the means of devotion, and a spiritual frame; taking occasion, from the cordials he was using, to speak of *the fruit of the tree of life*, and of *the pure water of life.* Afterwards his trouble increased, and carried him off in the sixty first year of his age, on Sabbath, Sept. 8th, near 12 at night: the end of a Sabbath on earth being the beginning of an eternal Sabbath in heaven.

He was a man that had a very extraordinary degree of the most valuable gifts, and the most lovely graces united in him. A lively striking instance of the truth, power, and amiableness of Christianity: quite raised above the world: employed from day to day in some good design, without the

smallest appearance of vanity or ambition, or any interested view. And in general, so free from all discernible failings, that those who were most intimately acquainted with him may be appealed to, whether they could ever observe any; except, that in the decline of life he sometimes grew too warm in expressing his honest zeal. And even this was, in a great measure, owing to the decay of his bodily constitution, for he was very uneasy at it himself, and used to desire his friends to put him in mind when he was in danger of it. And when it had overtaken him, he used in a very sincere and affectionate manner to ask forgiveness of the person or company whom he might have offended. As for personal injuries, he always bore them with a patience and meekness that was truly Christian.

There was a perpetual cheerfulness in his temper, attended with that decency of behaviour, and that useful and pertinent discourse, that, in conversing with him, one enjoyed the pleasures of the gayest company, along with the advantages of the most serious. His conversation was always pleasant, but never trifling. He was ingenious in making the best improvement of every occurrence. He equally disliked debates, and a sullen reserve of temper, and diverted every thing of this kind, by introducing what tended to cheer and edify.

He was eminently *given to hospitality.* And was always *ready to distribute* to the necessitous to the utmost of his power, if not beyond it.

His kind and affectionate heart to those who were in any sort of trouble, whether of body or mind, was such as cannot well be expressed; and yet even when those who were dearest to him were under threatening diseases, he retained a tranquillity and cheerfulness of temper, always hoping for the most comfortable event; and when deeply afflicted by the disappointment of these hopes, he on every occasion overcame the tenderest grief by the most pious and cheerful resignation.

As a minister of the gospel, he was very exemplary. The great subjects of his sermons were the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, which were the life of his own soul. In dealing with the consciences of men, he thought the proper method was (according to the scripture pattern, particularly in the epistle to the Romans) to convince them first of their having

broken the divine law, and their being condemned by it, and then to lead them to the blood of Christ. He thought the alienation of the human soul from God, in its unconverted state, is a sufficient proof of its depravity and misery. He inculcated the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

His opinion concerning the nature of faith in Christ, was, that it is the receiving of a free gift, and lies much in a supreme and rooted esteem of Christ, and all his benefits, with proportionable desires after them. His clear and scriptural views of the imputation of the Redeemer's righteousness, and of the agreeableness of this doctrine to reason, may be seen in his Essay on Prejudices against the Gospel.

He was no bigot. He did not love party names, nor laid much stress upon lesser matters. The grand truths just now mentioned, of justification by the blood and righteousness of Christ, and sanctification by the holy Spirit, were the main objects of his attention. When he treated on other points, he made them subservient to these.

Besides the sermons in this volume, there were several others that were much esteemed by good judges who heard them preached. Particularly a set of sermons on the works of creation, full of ingenious observations on the wisdom and goodness of the Creator; intermixed all along with references to the works of redemption and grace.

The style and method of his sermons, which was abundantly clear in his younger days, became afterwards more obscure; so that it was hard to follow him attentively through a whole discourse: but every sentence was a short sermon, and the whole was in the true spirit and strain of the gospel.

In reproving sin, he was very sharp and severe in the case of insensibility or obstinacy, but far from condemning any person without evidence. When he heard bad reports, he was a strict but impartial examiner; and spared no labour to find out the truth. And his inquiries this way were attended with great success, and frequently made the means of vindicating injured innocence, and exposing concealed wickedness. With the same steadiness and application he pursued every good design; whether he was engaged in helping those who needed his assistance, or in promoting any public interest, he stuck close to it till he carried it through, if any success was to be expected.

He was much beloved by his brethren in the ministry in general, especially by his colleagues in Glasgow. And what heightened the value of all his other talents and graces, and endeared him to every one, was, that humility and self-diffidence, that so eminently distinguished him, and appeared in all his behaviour. Particularly when any thing of importance was to be proposed, though he had a great hand in it himself, he choosed the proposal should come from others, rather than from him.

What he was in his family, I am at a loss to express. He was so exceedingly and deservedly dear to all his relations, that the description must fall far short of the reality. Indeed, the remembrance is too affecting. Our only comfort is, that his Saviour and ours lives for ever, and that in his blessed presence we hope to enjoy a far happier society together, than we even did in this life.

His stature was a little above the middle size. His body pretty strong and nimble. A fair complexion, an honest, open countenance, full of cheerfulness, good nature, modesty and gravity*. He was liable to be absent, and lost in thought. Spoke very readily and agreeably. Sometimes continued speaking longer than he designed (though he was not tedious) his attention being carried away by the subject. The same amiable simplicity run through all his behaviour†. He was a

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* The proper names of these dispositions in him were joy, love and humility. See Gal. v. 22.

† In 1721, Mr. M'Laurin married Lilias, daughter of Mr. John Rae, of little Govan, by whom he had nine children, of which four died in their infancy. His son John, a very promising young man, died in 1742, in the seventeenth year of his age. His eldest daughter (spouse to the writer of these memoirs) died soon after the birth of her eighth child, Aug. 6th, 1754, about a month before her father, whom she very much resembled in a peculiar sweetness and vivacity, and in the most serious piety: "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided."

Mrs. M'Laurin (a woman of great plainness and integrity, and very dutiful and affectionate to her relations) dying in 1747, Mr. M'Laurin, in 1749, married Margaret, daughter of Mr. Patrick Bell, of Cow-Caddins, now his widow. His only surviving children are three daughters of the first marriage, of which the eldest is married to Mr. John Findley, writer, and the second to Mr. Andrew Craig, surgeon in Glasgow.

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS TO THE PUBLISHER

OF THE GLASGOW EDITION.

*** "I was entertaining hope that so precious a life would be preserved a while longer for the service of the church of Christ, at a time of so much need. But the Master has seen meet to call home his faithful and wise servant. As we loved him, let us rejoice that he hath gone to his Father; while justly bewailing the loss to his surviving friends, the general loss to the church, to the world; how rare such a character! how difficult to find a successor to such a minister of Christ in any period of the church!

"It strikes me with pleasant wonder, and excites my grateful praise to the supreme and most gracious Orderer of all that concerns us and our intercourse in the world, that I was led to such close correspondence for some time past, as brought me an extraordinary share of communication with that eminent servant of our common Lord, in the very last scene of his life. Oh may I have grace to improve such a blessing, to excite some measure of that spirit which breathed in every thing that dropped from him by word or write.

"Please let me know what sermons or other performances of Mr. M'Laurin's are to be found among his papers fairly wrote out. Copies of sermons of his had got into several hands; some I heard him preach in Glasgow, before he was a minister there: and I have read some of these copies I mentioned, from which, and others of the same masterly composition, I am persuaded a volume may be furnished out, which nothing I ever saw in print would exceed. ***

"JOHN ADAMS"

"FALKIRK,
"10 Sep. 1754.

*** "I heartily approve the inserting some account of Mr. M'Laurin's character in the preface to his Sermons. Since you desire it, I shall hint a few particulars, which I think worthy of your notice. (1.) His habitual spiritual-mindedness and devotion, evidenced by frequent ejaculatory prayers and thanksgivings, and by his delight to turn conversation into a religious and edifying channel. (2.) His unwearied diligence to promote whatever he thought tended to the welfare of the church, of which he was a member. His warm concern for the advancement of religion, even in the most distant parts; and his joy for agreeable appearances of the success of the gospel. (3.) His deep insight into the doctrines and duties of religion, and the most proper methods of removing prejudices and objections against them. The strength of his genius, and the solidity of his judgment, furnished him with sentiments new and ingenious, and yet solid and convincing, when explaining, or vindicating some of the most important articles of our Christian faith. When consulted upon controversies, which seemed quite exhausted by the labours of others, he would often strike new light on the question in debate, and offer a more distinct and satisfying solution of difficulties, than had hitherto been advanced. Such was his knowledge of the nature of religion, as equally preserved him from right and left hand errors. He saw and felt, that the true Christian does not act merely from selfish and interested motives; but is animated to duty, by love to God, to Christ, and to holiness, flowing from views of their intrinsic glory and excellency; and yet he cautiously avoided the dangerous extremes of enthusiasts and popish mystics. (4.) Boldness, courage, zeal and faithfulness, in opposing whatever he thought contrary to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. (5.) Remarkable hu-

mility, which appeared in preferring those to himself, who in gifts and graces were much his inferiors; in his excessive modesty, which made him unwilling to publish his excellent compositions, though frequently importuned by the best judges; and in preaching usually in the plainest and most familiar manner, though many of his manuscripts discover his uncommon genius for abstract reasoning; and in some of them, *e. g.* his sermon on Gal. vi. 14. the sublimest sentiments are expressed in a lively and eloquent manner. There are passages in the above sermon, which will stand a comparison with an excellent paper in the Spectator on the same subject. (6.) A spirit uncommonly vigorous and active. Few made greater conscience of redeeming the time, and spending every moment in planning or executing something worthy the man and the Christian. One while he is engaged in closet devotions; another, pursuing his studies; then discharging, in the most exemplary manner, the various duties of his ministerial function; then conversing or corresponding with others on subjects of general importance; next approving himself the best and most faithful friend, and the most valuable and affectionate relative. I account it one of the most pleasant and happy circumstances of my life, that for eleven years this eminent servant of Christ, honoured me with his friendship, and often profited me by his instructions and advice.

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"CULROSS,
"19 Sep. 1754."

*** "As his departure is a loss to me, in some respects irreparable, and I apprehend a great loss to the church of Christ in general, and especially in Scotland; it has been a very sensible affliction to me ever since I heard it, and is like in some degree to last as long as I continue here. My chief consolations are, that the glorious Head of the church, who so singularly raised him up, accomplished and adorned him, and enabled him by his Spirit to do signal service to his church, has the same cause and interest to maintain, and has the residue of the Spirit.

"I heartily sympathize with you. May we double our diligence, be faithful to our Divine Redeemer to the death, and meet together in the world above with unmixed and unceasing joy. In the mean while, I am very desirous to know when he died, with the circumstances of it, etc. Whether there be any funeral sermon on him, or character of him published; and if there are, to have them; as also any of his writings published. For as he was a most agreeable correspondent with me, his writings and memory will be ever dear and precious to me. And as his fame is known and valued by many here, if I could have been informed of those particulars, I should have gratified many, by printing the most material passages concerning him in our news papers.***

"THOMAS PRINCE."

"BOSTON, N. E.
"Decem. 23, 1754.

ON MR. M'LAURIN.

ADORN'D with learning, taste, and manly sense,

Wisdom with genius, wit without offence;

Modest, yet resolute in virtue's cause;

Ambitious, not of man's, but God's applause.

Each talent that enrich'd his heaven born mind,

By Jesus given, to Jesus he resign'd.

Swift was his race, with health, and vigour blest;

Soft was his passage to the land of rest.

His work concluded, e'er the day was done,

Sudden the Saviour stoop'd and caught him to his Throne.

EDINBURGH,
8 MARCH, 1755.

MENS' SINS NOT CHARGEABLE ON GOD:

GLORYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST:

AND

GOD'S CHIEF MERCY:

THREE SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN M'LAURIN.

SERMON I.*

THE SINS OF MEN NOT CHARGEABLE ON GOD.

JAMES i. 13.

Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man.

THE word of God frequently teaches us, that a principal hindrance of our embracing Christ's righteousness, is want of a due sense of our own unrighteousness. There is a stupidity in this, as unaccountable in its nature, as it is dangerous in its effects. All men are persuaded, that they have broken the precepts of God's law; it might be expected of course, they should be persuaded also, that they have deserved to suffer the penalty of it: but experience makes it evident, that it is otherwise. All men are convinced that they are sinners; but very few are convinced that they deserve to be miserable. The word of God, which searches the heart, unfolds the secret cause of this. In like manner, men are insensible of their ill deserving; not that they absolutely deny their sins, but that they excuse them: nor is this a new artifice; it is as ancient in the world, as sin itself. It is natural for our affections to bias our judgment; and therefore, when sin has polluted the one, no wonder it should pervert the other. The first man on earth was no sooner accused, than, since he could not deny it,

* This sermon was preached about the year 1720, when the Author was minister at Luss.

he strove to defend it, and heightened his guilt by a presumptuous attempt to extenuate it We, his offspring, to this day, do not more resemble him in committing sin, than in excusing it when we have done. Generally, either men do not regret their sins at all, or else regret them as misfortunes, rather than faults, and as deserving pity, rather than punishment. Prosperous sinners scarce see the harm of sin at all; others, while they feel the harm of it redounding to themselves, lay the blame of it on something else. It were less unaccountable if men only justified or excused themselves to their fellow creatures, their partakers in guilt: one sinner may easily find a thousand plausible answers to the upbraiding language of another sinner; for how can a man be at a loss for a defence against those who cannot accuse him without condemning themselves; he may answer them in the apostle's words, Rom. ii. 1. *Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest another; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things.* But the misery of men's self love is, that it makes them pretend to vindicate themselves, not only against the oftentimes too partial contempt of their guilty fellow-creatures, but also against the most impartial challenges of their offended Creator. When men vindicate themselves only against their associates in guilt, it may be constructed as a pretence only to equality with others; but for men to defend themselves before God, is in effect a pretence to innocency. By this means the chief vexation many have about their most unrighteous practices, is murmuring against God's most righteous precepts, according to the old complaint, *who can bear these hard sayings?* Many are not so sorry for their sins against God's law, as for the severity of God's law against their sins; and one great cause of it, is, their imagining these temptations that allure them to sin, sufficient excuses for the committing of it; which is surely a disposition of mind that undermines repentance, and saps the very foundation of true religion.

Yet this is not the highest pitch the arrogance of sin-

ners arrives at in defending their sins. It is indeed high enough presumption in one, who has, times without number, offended God without cause, to justify himself, when God accuses him; but it is still a far higher pitch of presumption, when a sinner not only defends himself before God, but also defends himself by accusing God, discharging himself of the blame of his sin, and laying it over upon God: in this likewise men seem to copy after their first parent Adam; the scripture tells that God gave him a help meet for him, which was, no doubt, an act of goodness on God's part; yet when he sinned against God without cause, rather than want a defence altogether, he made the gift he received from God, an excuse for his disobedience to him; that is, he made God's goodness to him an excuse for his ingratitude to God.

It is easy to observe how truly this conduct of his is imitated by his posterity. God has placed us in a beautiful world, where we are surrounded with a variety of useful and delightful objects, his good creatures; all of them display his glory, many of them are for supplying our necessities, others of them for our innocent gratification and comfort; all of them therefore are favours from God, and consequently should be effectual motives to love him. Instead of this, they are first made occasions of departing from him, and afterwards excuses for so doing. As there is something of this perverse disposition in the corrupt nature of all men, so it has appeared in all ages; and that it discovered itself in the days of the apostles, is evident from this text, which was designed to check it, *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God*, &c.

In which words, it is useful to observe these two things. First, A rebuke to the arrogance of men, that would lay the blame of their sins on God. Secondly, A strong assertion of God's untainted holiness and purity, as a God who is infinitely free from tempting others, and from being tempted by others to any thing that is evil.

1. The words contain a check to the impious arrogance of men, that would lay the blame of their sins

on God: *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God;* that is, Let no man say it with his mouth, or imagine it in his heart; let no man dare to commit such an outrage against the holiness of God, as to charge him with the blame of his sin, in whole, or in part. The apostle here assures us that if we entertain such thoughts in our hearts, God will justly look upon it as a heinous violation of that homage and respect we owe him: it is one of the chief things that distinguishes the laws of God from those of men; that whereas the latter reach only our outward actions, the former reach our thoughts. One principal part of that holiness which the law of God requires of us, is to entertain just thoughts of him, that is, high and exalted thoughts, such as shall represent him what he truly is, perfectly pure, and infinitely lovely. Nothing can be more contrary to this, than to blame him for our sins; and when God's law forbids such thoughts, it is a certain evidence that they are false, and that we are under the strongest obligations to reject them. God's truth is infallible, and therefore whatever natural corruption suggests, it can suggest nothing that should come in competition with that evidence.

2dly. To strengthen our impression of this, the apostle adds a strong assertion of God's spotless and incorruptible purity. His assertion consists of two parts.

1 He teaches us, that *God cannot be tempted with evil*, that is, That there is nothing in his own nature, that can incline him to any thing but what is perfectly good and just; and that there is no outward object that can make any impression, or have any influence on him, to bias him from these eternal laws of justice and righteousness, by which he always did, and ever will govern the world. The word, *tempting*, is sometimes taken in another sense, when it signifies not perverting God to do any evil action himself, but provoking him to punish the evil actions of others; thus the Israelites are said to have tempted him in the wilderness: in such cases, though that, by which men tempt or provoke God, be evil, that which he is provoked to do, is always just and good. Men are said to tempt God,

when they carry themselves towards him, as if they desired and expected he should transgress these laws, which himself has established, whether in the works of nature, or of grace: the God of order works by means in both, and when men expect or pray for the end, without using the appointed means, they are said to tempt him; because indeed they behave, as if they thought they could tempt him, that is, prevail with him to violate the perfect order that himself hath established. But since all their thoughts and desires can have no influence upon him, that way, the apostle affirms justly, that God cannot be tempted with evil, because he cannot be perverted, or corrupted with it.

2dly. As God cannot be perverted to transgress his own laws himself, neither does he pervert any other to do so. As he cannot be tempted with evil, *neither tempteth he any man*, i. e. he neither deceives any man's judgment, nor perverts his will, nor corrupts his affections, nor does any thing else whatsoever that can charge him with the blame of men's sins. But for understanding this and the like expressions; we should consider, that tempting sometimes signifies, not seducing men from good to evil, but discovering what is in men, whether it be evil or good. In Abraham's case, the temptation was not an allurement to sin, but a trial of grace. It is true, God needs no means to discover to himself what is in men; but he uses means for discovering men to themselves, and to others, for ends worthy of infinite wisdom, and in a manner agreeable to spotless holiness. Even men oftentimes find it their duty to discover the good or evil that is in others; and though in some of these cases, the disposition of mind, which is discovered be evil, the action by which it is discovered may be good: in the trials men make of one another, it is oftentimes so; in the trials God makes of men, it is always so. The actions by which God proves the good that is in men, do not tend to lessen it, but to increase it, and to perfect it; the actions by wh ch he discovers the evil that is in men, do not tend to increase, but to lessen it, and oft-times effectually cure it.

From all which it is evident, that these scriptures, where God is said to tempt or try men, contain nothing inconsistent with the apostle's doctrine in the text; that is, that however their corrupt hearts may be too much inclined to blame God for their sins: yet that imputation is really as contrary to truth and justice, as it is to the honour of God, who is as free from tempting or corrupting others with evil, as he is uncapable of being corrupted with it himself. That branch of the doctrine, which affirms that God cannot be tempted with evil himself, is what there is least need to insist upon, after what has been considered already; because it is, what men are least troubled with prejudices against. The design of this discourse is to consider that important truth, which is evidently the apostle's principal scope. That whatsoever dishonourable thoughts, sinful men may have of God to the contrary, yet it is a certain evident truth, that God is infinitely free from the blame of their sins.

It is useful here to observe the great importance of this doctrine, which, beside other reasons, is evident from the great pains the scriptures take to inculcate it upon us It is plain, this doctrine is in effect maintained in every scripture that maintains God's perfect holiness; and it is no less obvious to those who read the scriptures, that of all God's attributes, his holiness is that which is most frequently asserted, and the belief of which is most earnestly inculcated upon us. That blessed name of purity is represented as thrice repeated in the hallelujahs of the heavenly host, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*, Isa. iii. Rev. iii.

The same doctrine is presented to our minds, in a beautiful variety of expressions near the beginning of the heavenly song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 4. *He is the rock, his work is perfect, his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.* But there is one remarkable scripture, that deserves our special consideration on this subject, because it makes the right knowledge of this doctrine (together with the knowledge of God's goodness) the only thing in the world we are allowed to glory in; that is, Jer. ix.

20, 21. This should excite in us a holy curiosity, to be well versed in the knowledge of a doctrine which we are commanded to glory in, almost to the exclusion of every thing else. It should excite us to join prayers and endeavours in order to have a firm persuasion of it rooted in our minds, and an habitual lively impression of it fixed upon our hearts.

To set this matter in its true light, let it be observed, that as it is one main end of divine revelation in scripture, to give us the true knowledge of God, and of ourselves; so the impression it endeavours all along to give us of him, and of ourselves, is, that his holiness is unblameable, and our sin unexcusable, that so we may ascribe the glory of perfect righteousness to him, and take shame and confusion of face to ourselves; that is, to use the words of the Psalmist, Psal. li. 4.; and of the apostle, Rom. iv. 19. "That he may be just when he judgeth, and righteous when he speaketh;" and, on the other hand, "Every mouth may be stopt, and we and the world be guilty before him." It is an indispensable duty on all rational creatures to love God; but sin has brought an additional obligation on us who are guilty creatures, not only to love God, but also to loath ourselves; without this, we can neither know his righteousness, nor his loving kindness, which he bids us glory in; his righteousness in all we suffer, his loving kindness in all we enjoy; how unworthy we are of the one, how richly we have deserved the other: that is, without a right sense of the doctrine in the text, we can neither practice due submission in our afflictions, nor due gratitude for our comforts; and consequently run the greatest risk of losing the one, and having the other multiplied upon us.

In discoursing on this doctrine in such a manner as may be a mean, through divine grace, to give us a right impression of the importance and certainty of it, it will be proper to treat of these following things. 1. To consider some observations, from scripture and experience, to shew, that the unworthy thoughts of God, which the text rebukes, however unreasonable, are, notwithstanding, very ordinary, and do a great deal

of harm to men's souls, as well as dishonour to God. In the next place, we shall collect the evidences we have for the doctrine in the text, from God's works and ways; and shall consider the arguments that are most proper for resisting these injurious thoughts of God, which the apostle warns us against. These will afford us sufficient answers to all the objections and prejudices that natural corruption suggests against the doctrine. After considering which, it will be easy to reflect, what improvement we should make of a truth of so great moment, and in which, the honour of God is so much concerned.

First, There are several obvious things, that may easily convince us, that these impious thoughts, which the apostle rebukes, are too common and ordinary.

1. It is not the way of the scriptures to caution men against imaginary sins, *i. e.* sins that men are seldom or never guilty of, but sins which natural corruption really inclines them to; especially we cannot suppose that the scriptures would caution men against sins of the heart and thought, which the heart is not really liable to. It can never be the intention of the Holy Ghost to raise evil thoughts in men's hearts that were not there before; but to discover these that are there, to discover them, in order to cure them. An ingenious Christian will not stand to acknowledge that this text represents to him what has been sometimes the suggestion of his own heart, and has much troubled his repose; (and it is great matter of comfort to him, that he has been troubled for such thoughts, and struggled against them,) he will not stand to acknowledge that this text is a confirmation of that character, which the epistle to the Hebrews gives of the word of God,—"That it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." He was a person of eminent goodness otherwise, as well as ingenuity who was wont to confess, "That whatever curiosity others had in perusing the writings of libertines and heretics against Divine truths, for his own part, he could find nothing in them that was new to him, nothing but what he had read before in the imaginations of his own corrupt heart;

and that the chief prejudices against God's perfections and precepts were enforced there, with as much eloquence and efficacy, perhaps, and set in as strong a light, as in any heretical book in the world." It is certain, while a man is under the slavery of sin, he carries in his breast a capacious source of heretical thoughts against God's attributes, as well as of libertine thoughts against his laws; the former of which, have as great influence in hindering due love and esteem of God in his heart, as the latter have in hindering obedience to him in his life: and it is certain, that of all the ungodly thoughts that arise from unrestrained corruption, none flow more naturally from it, than these, by which men justify or excuse themselves, which they cannot do, without blaming God.

2. Men's inclination to blame God for their sins, discovers itself by their forwardness in blaming him for their sufferings; sin is the cause of their trouble; and therefore were men perfectly and sincerely convinced, that God is infinitely free from the blame of the cause, they could not be so prone to blame him for the effect. It requires no great insight into human nature, to observe an unaccountable inconsistency that appears in the way of thinking many men have about God's providence: they ascribe the good, that befalls them, to chance or to themselves, and the evil that befalls them to God; they are very ready to acknowledge his providence in their affliction, in order to repine and fret against him; while perhaps, they seldom or never seriously acknowledge it in their prosperity, to thank him for it; while they overlook his undeserved goodness in what they enjoy, they pretend it is undeserved displeasure, that makes them suffer.

It is remarkable, the day in which men are to be called to an account for such thoughts, with all their other thoughts and actions, is called the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. ii. 5. Men must then answer, not only for their disobedience in committing of sin, but also for their arrogancy in blaming him for it. And as real aggravations of sin

are now covered with pretended excuses, so when the books of that awful court shall be opened, it is certain, pretended excuses will appear in their true colours, and rising to view in their blackest forms, will be found to be real aggravations. Men must then give an account how they came to blame God for what they suffered, without thanking him for what they enjoyed. Happy were it for us, if we had the same view of sin now, that we shall certainly have then: and surely nothing can be more rational; for what will appear true then, must really be so now; and therefore it is certainly an useful preparation for that day, to be active now in acquiring, through God's grace, that view and sense of sin, which will otherwise be forced upon us by his righteous vengeance.

But not to insist further on this: the principal evidence of this branch of the doctrine, that deserves to be carefully considered, is the ingratitude of men to God for his infinite mercy, in sending his Son to save them from their sins; and the more we consider it, the more we may be convinced, that their cold thoughts about divine mercy in the work of redemption, flow, in a great measure, from their false thoughts of his righteousness in the works of providence; that is, plainly, their hearts do not love him ardently for their deliverance, because they blame him secretly for their danger. This point deserves our particular attention, because gratitude for redeeming mercy being the soul and centre of Christianity, to which all religious meditations should be referred, the chief importance of the doctrine in the text, consists in its subserviency to that end. It is plain to any who considers the doctrine of redemption that it represents to us such infinite love, such incomparable tenderness and condescension, that as God's conduct towards us is an incomprehensible mystery of kindness, so our conduct towards him, is, if we may so speak, an incomprehensible mystery of ingratitude. There are indeed many mysteries in human nature, but they come all far short of this; for if we consider that human nature, corrupt and perverse as it is, is not yet wholly lost to all sense of gratitude

in other cases, but that frequently the hearts even of the worst of men are softened with a kindly sense of singular favours; especially that the coldest and hardest hearts are sometimes melted with undeserved favours; if we consider that, in other cases, our acknowledgments rise naturally in proportion to our obligations, and that, after all, the greatest temporal favours, when compared with eternal ones, are but trifles; and yet, as insignificant as they are, they beget sometimes a very high degree of gratitude, and swell men's hearts with such generous sentiments toward their benefactors, that they take pleasure in nothing in the world more than in serving them. If we consider all this, and compare it with the returns we make to our greatest (yea, in effect, our only) benefactor, for the greatest benefits he could give, or we receive, or imagine; if we compare these things together, it may be a question, whether we have more reason to be astonished at God's love, or at our own unthankfulness; or, which of them is the greatest wonder. To think that we should be so strongly affected with earthly favours; favours from worms like ourselves; favours of so little importance, of so short continuance; favours, proceeding from such imperfect love, and oftentimes mixed with many injuries; that we should be so strongly affected with such favours as these, and so little with the love of God in Christ. That love which is so perfectly pure, and disinterested, in the grounds of it, so free as to its motives, that it is exercised towards objects, who had neither merit to deserve it, nor power to requite it, nor used importunity in seeking after it; a love that is so infinitely tender in its nature, so inestimably precious in its effects, so rich and abundant in its fruits, so constant, so lasting, yea everlasting, so glorious in all its manifestations; that this should be the only friendship to which most men make no returns, the only kindness, of which they have no grateful resentment, is such a miracle, or rather monster of stupidity, that it might seem incredible, if there were any arguing against experience.

The cause of it can never perhaps be perfectly

known, while we are not perfectly free from that deceitfulness of the heart, which the prophet Jeremiah affirms to be so mysterious, that God only knows it: yet some of the causes of it are unfolded to us in scripture; and the more we consider the text, the more we may be convinced, that it makes a very remarkable discovery this way; for it is plain, men are incapable of due gratitude to God, for sending Christ to redeem them from sin, while they barefacedly blame him for their temptations to sin. Men will not be thankful to a deliverer for rescuing them from danger, if they blame him for their falling into it. All which being duly considered, comparing men's unjust thoughts of providence, and their ingratitude for redemption, the former will be found to be a principal source of the latter; and the latter discovers the former, as the effect shews the cause.

By this means it is, that men forego that inestimable blessing of love and joy in believing, that joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory. No doubt indeed, with many the cause of ingratitude for redemption, is their disbelief of it; but it is hard to charge all that are guilty of ingratitude, with downright infidelity; rather as the tares in the parable mixed with the wheat, so the belief of the doctrine of redemption is sadly clouded, and its influence marred by a wretched mixture of mean and unworthy thoughts of God, at least suspicions and suggestions, which indeed men are liable to in different degrees, but which all men, less or more, have need to guard, and wrestle against. If it were not for these inward prejudices, the doctrine of redemption, if it appeared in its native beauty, has such light and brightness, such glory in it, that it is hard to conceive how it should not have an irresistible influence, in ravishing every heart, that sincerely believes, with a love stronger than death, and with such transports of joy and admiration, as would make up the happiest state of mind in the world. But while such dismal prejudices are entertained, no wonder though the minds of men are so darkened, and their hearts so disordered and confused, that that amiable doctrine of

the crucified Jesus appears mean and low in their eyes; so that many have no relish of it, nothing is almost so distasteful to them; they look on it as a doctrine that importunes them for more gratitude than they think they see cause for: to them, Jesus Christ has no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, why they should thank him.

2. These considerations make it too evident, that the unworthy thoughts of God, which the text rebukes, are both very ordinary, and very hurtful. It should not therefore be looked upon merely as an amusement, or matter of curious speculation, but as a meditation of the greatest importance, to take a view of the clearest evidences, that serve to refute these thoughts, and to shew, that they are as false and unreasonable in themselves, as they are disparaging to God. But before we proceed to this, it will not be improper to observe, that, when men, instead of rejecting such thoughts, cherish and entertain them, they deal far more unjustly with God, than they do with some men in the like cases. For example, when a good man has once attained an established character of holiness and virtue, if it happens that a known impostor brings a great many plausible accusations against him, they that know that good man, though they should not be able perfectly to answer all the accusations laid against him, yet they will not believe them; especially if the affair be dark and intricate; and if they are certain that the virtuous person could not propose to himself any profit or pleasure by the unbecoming action laid to his charge. To set this matter in a clearer light, we may observe, that appearances and probabilities may be sometimes on the side of error and falsehood, otherwise there would be no difference between probability and certainty; and in some singular cases it has happened, that there has been such a strange complication of presumptions and probabilities of guilt laid against an innocent person, that strangers to his character have indeed believed him guilty, while they that were acquainted with it, found it impossible to doubt of his innocency. Now, to apply all this to the present case with regard

to God, (and it is a sad thing if God alone should have no friends to vindicate him) had men either due respect to him, or were they heartily inclined to do him justice, all the reasons that restrain them from rash censures of the most virtuous creatures in the world would have unspeakably more force against rash censures, and mean thoughts of the Creator. Thus we should reflect in the first place, that the devil and our own corrupt hearts are such notorious impostors, that the experiences we have of their deceitfulness, are innumerable; and so also are the evidences we have of God's holiness and goodness. If there are some intricacies and difficulties about the divine actions, that have a relation to our actions (from which our hearts would take occasion to blame the former for the latter;) yet all the rest of God's innumerable actions, (if we distinguish, as certainly we should, his actions from those of his creatures,) the whole history of his providence, the whole tenor of his works and ways, do so plainly and evidently represent to us an uniform character (so to speak) of the most spotless holiness, the most amiable goodness, the most untainted righteness, that the imputation which the corrupt hearts of men asperse him with, is as absolutely inconsistent with the rest of his character (which is unquestionable) as night is with day, and darkness with light. To this we should add, that God's providence, especially concerning the actions of his rational creatures, is very dark and intricate; nor is this just matter of wonder, if we consider, that all his works and ways are united and linked together by such numberless reciprocal relations and dependencies, that none can perfectly know one part of them unless he knows the whole: we are but lately sprung from nothing, lately entered into God's world; we see but a very small part of his works, and that part itself very darkly: that we therefore should not know the reasons of all his actions, is so far from being just matter of wonder, that indeed it would be an incomprehensible wonder, if it were otherwise. Lastly, To complete the parallel, we should reflect, that infinite happiness being incapable of

addition, it is impossible God could propose any advantage to himself by these unbecoming things, which the corrupt hearts of men lay to his charge; and therefore on all these accounts we should conclude, that whatever difficulties corruption may suggest against God's holiness, they should by no means be put in the balance with that infallible evidence we have for it, and that both from God's word, which cannot deceive us, and from his works, which are so perfectly agreeable to it. Corruption has nothing on its side, but such colours and appearances as may be on the side of error; whereas the apostle's doctrine is in effect supported by demonstration.

We may have a more lively impression of this (through divine grace) by taking a particular view of the principal evidences we have for the apostle's doctrine from God's word and works. To tempt a man to sin, in its most proper sense, is to propose some motive to him, to compel, or allure him to it; to entice him to it by promises and rewards, or constrain him to it by threatenings and punishments.—God is infinitely free from this; because, instead of proposing any motives to sin, he proposes the greatest motives possible against it. This is evident from his promises and threatenings of eternal rewards and punishments; these are plainly the greatest motives possible. And, as it is the distinguishing privilege of human nature, above all earthly creatures, to be capable of extending its view to eternity, (since the longest time imaginable, though made up of ever so many myriads of ages, much more this uncertain fleeting moment of life, when compared to eternity, is nothing;) it is plain that eternal motives are properly the only motives that should govern immortal souls: to let temporal motives counterbalance them, is the most outrageous violence to reason that can be imagined. In effect, when temporal motives interfere with eternal ones, they are no motives at all.

Besides the duration of these motives, it is proper to consider here their extensive influence; none can reasonably pretend to be exempted from it, not even these who have only the light of nature. The apos-

tle Paul, who was inspired by that Spirit, who searches the hearts of men, assures us, that even the consciences of heathens accused them; it is very reasonable to suppose that the accusations of that witness had some relation to a judge, and might be attended with secret misgivings, and rational forebodings of an after-reckoning (since innumerable sins pass unpunished here;) at least, it ought to have been so. Reason might have satisfied them, that the less sin they committed in this world, it would be the better with them in the next.

Nor can these pretend to be exempted from the influence of eternal motives, who should imagine, that, having incurred the divine threatenings already, they can be no worse than they are. In perfect justice, the punishment deserved bears an exact proportion to the wickedness committed; and surely an eternal addition to misery, is an evil which no temporal motive can weigh with, much less counterbalance.

It deserves our serious attention, how plainly God's threatenings are revealed to us who have the scriptures. His threatenings are as plainly revealed as his promises. Mat. xxv. 46. and we have many things from reason and experience, that should confirm our belief of them; particularly God's attributes, his truth, holiness, and justice; the nature of sin, which separates from God our only happiness, that part of the divine threatenings, which we see fulfilled already, these samples of misery that are to be seen in the afflictions of life, and pains and terrors of death: if any person inclines to doubt of the eternity of future punishment, unless he saw it, that person seeks such a way of being satisfied about it, as the nature of the thing does not admit: for though a man saw the place of punishment, with his eyes, he could not see that it is eternal, unless he saw the end of eternity, which is impossible; so that a man can never have evidence for this by sight, if he refuse to give faith to God's word, which is surely the best evidence in the world.

As to the eternal reward; though our actions cannot merit it, yet since it is offered to us on the most

reasonable terms, through the merits of another; whosoever is not at more pains about these terms, than about any earthly thing, must blame himself as the author of his own misery, and acknowledge that God is infinitely free from the blame of it.

These eternal motives would make a strong argument for the apostle's doctrine, though God had proposed no other motive against sin, but them only; though he had permitted the course of things to fall out so, that there should be vastly more pleasure in sin, and trouble in duty than there really is, all this could have no proportion to these rewards and punishments that are eternal. But it is still a further confirmation of the doctrine, that as God has proposed everlasting motives against sin as to the next world, so he is so far from proposing any motives to it, in this world, that his various dispensations in the works of providence as well as of grace, are manifestly calculated for restraining it, and have numberless happy effects that way. It is true, other sinful men lay many motives before us to sin; but we ought no more to blame God for the evil actions of others, than for our own: God is the author of neither, but in numberless instances hinders and restrains both. As to his permission, he has as holy reasons for permitting, what he permits, as for hindering what he hinders: to deny this is in effect pretending to know all the reasons that a God of infinite knowledge can have for his actions, which is the most extravagant presumption imaginable.—We are obliged in justice, as was hinted before, to distinguish God's own actions, and the actions of his creatures: it is the former we are to vindicate, and not the latter; and for this end, the more we consider God's actions in the works of nature and providence, the more we may be satisfied that he is not the author even of any temporal motives to sin, because he has annexed no pleasure to it. He has indeed annexed pleasure to the enjoyment of his own good creatures, but that enjoyment is not sinful, it is on the contrary our duty. These good objects indeed may be obtained by evil means, and enjoyed in an evil manner; but

that is no just reflection on God's providence, as shall be made appear more clearly afterwards. To set this matter in a true light, we may reflect on the two different sorts of pleasures we are capable of, that is, the pleasures that are to be had in God himself more immediately, and these that are to be had in his creatures; as to the former, it is plain, we can neither exceed in the desire, nor in the enjoyment of them; as to the latter, God himself is the author, and has appointed them all for good ends. This is one of the chief things that shew the folly of sin. That the pleasures which men seek after in the ways of sin, are such as may really be had in the way of duty; for it is certain, there is no pleasure in the world peculiar to sin: if it were otherwise, the apostle would not have affirmed so generally, that every creature of God is good, and to be received (that is enjoyed) with thanksgiving; the apostle affirms this, when he is speaking of things sacrificed to idols, which he shews, however they were abused to bad purposes, yet were in themselves good and harmless, being the creatures of a good God, which ought to be enjoyed in a way of obedience and thanksgiving to him. The same may be said of all God's creatures, which, however too oft sacrificed to men's lusts and idols, yet are not thereby deprived of that natural goodness and usefulness which God has endowed them with, nor rendered incapable of being enjoyed in a lawful way.

We should consider here the proper tendency, and natural use of all the pleasure that is in the creatures; some of them give us pleasure only by the view and contemplation of them. It is plain, the direct tendency of that is to excite love and esteem of the divine perfections manifested in them; this is one of the chief duties we owe more immediately to God. Others of the creatures give pleasure, not merely by the view of them, but by applying them to the subsistence of our bodily life; the direct tendency of that pleasure is to excite mankind to self-preservation; this is a duty we owe more immediately to ourselves, and it is justly enjoined by God: it would be a duty, though there

were no pleasure in the means of it; but it is a double act of goodness in God, and consequently a double obligation on us, that he has both furnished us with these means, and made them delightful as well as useful. There is no useless superfluous pleasure in nature; all tends either to promote life and health, or, which is no despicable means of health, innocent and comfortable refreshment. It is evident, therefore, that when God makes these objects that are useful to men to be at the same time pleasant, it is a hiring them to what is their duty, and a giving them a present reward in doing what he requires of them for their own good. The direct tendency, therefore, and proper use of all the pleasure that is in God's creatures, whether in the contemplation of them, or of the enjoyment of them any other way, is to excite us to adore all God's perfections in general, and particularly his abundant goodness to ourselves; to love him as a kind and bountiful father, who provides for the several living inhabitants of the world, as for one large family; on whom the eyes of all things wait, and who opens his hand liberally, satisfying the desire of every living thing: nothing can be imagined more just on this head, than the apostle's reasoning with the heathens of Lystra, who were about to worship him. That all the good and pleasure in the creatures were witnesses for God, testifying men's obligations to love and praise Him, who filled their hearts with food and gladness. Acts xiv. 17.

What we commonly call unlawful pleasures, are nothing else but pleasures in themselves lawful and useful, but procured by wrong means, or enjoyed in a wrong way, either obtained by injustice, or abused by intemperance; but neither injustice nor intemperance have any real pleasure annexed to them; on the contrary, unless a man have a very unnatural temper of mind and body, injustice must be painful to the former, as well as intemperance to the latter.

If this were duly considered, it might convince us, not only that the pleasures in the creatures may be had in a course of obedience to the Creator, but also, that this is incomparably the best way of enjoying them,

even as to this life itself; that to live righteously, soberly, and godly (abstractly from some singular cases, as persecution, or the like) is the way to live joyfully even in this present world; that it is one and the same disposition of mind (that is, holiness and righteousness) that is best adjusted for the true enjoyment both of God and his creatures. Injustice and intemperance argue an immoderate love of temporal pleasure, and that is really the chief source of temporal perplexity and uneasiness. It causes painful impatience in desiring these objects, and painful labour in pursuing them, anxiety in possessing them, because they are always liable to danger; nauseousness and loathing in using them, because their pleasure is less in enjoyment than in expectation; and, little as it is, it is always decaying; and lastly, manifest vexation in losing them; and as such losses in the present state of things are unavoidable, so the uneasiness is always proportionable to the love men bear to uncertain vanities; for so they may be called, though good things in themselves, when an immortal soul places its happiness in them. On the other hand, temperance enables a man to possess earthly objects without anxiety, by being prepared to lose them; to enjoy them without loathing, by using them with moderation; to seek them without impatience, and to lose them without despair.

This the ancient Epicureans were so sensible of, that though they were reckoned patrons of vice, because they placed happiness in pleasure, yet they made temperance an ingredient of happiness, because it gives pleasure a relish. These, and many other things, serve to show that the pleasures men seek by a course of sin, may be had, and may be had with advantage, in a course of duty.

To this we may add, that there are many sins, in which there is no real pleasure at all. This is evident of those sins which do not consist in an unlawful enjoyment of the creatures, but in a direct affronting of the Creator. Thus it cannot be alleged, without the greatest absurdity, as well as impiety, that there is

any pleasure annexed to the sins of profaneness, blaspheming, mocking religion, censuring God's laws, word or works, or the like; no person ever pretended, that that common sin of cursing and swearing had any tendency to promote his health, or increase his estate: the Author of nature is infinitely free from annexing any pleasure to these unnatural practices: if men have made them in any sort pleasant to themselves by custom, all that this argues is, their outrageous contempt of God, (for which he never gave them any cause) which is so great, that they take pleasure in expressing it. The same consideration might be applied, not only to the sins that are most immediately against the love of God, but also to these that are most immediately against the love of our neighbours, as hatred, wrath, malice, &c. These words or actions, by which a man wrongs his neighbour's reputation, by backbiting, or disturbs his peace by contention, have no proper tendency to promote a man's own peace or reputation, but the contrary. It is indeed otherwise as to those sins by which a man wrongs his neighbours' interest by injustice; but it is as true, that as the pleasures of intemperance may be had in a greater abundance in a life of sobriety; so the profits of injustice may be had much more safely in a life of industry: nor can any pretend to be under any necessity to injustice; for if a man be in such a condition (which however is very rare) that he can neither get the necessary means of sustenance by his own industry, nor by the charity of others, the indulgent laws of God make some things to be in that case just and lawful, that would not be so otherwise.

These things serve to prove, that there is no pleasure in nature peculiar to sin; it is no less certain that there is no trouble peculiar to duty: any man may fully satisfy himself of this, by taking a particular view of the several parts of true holiness. The love of God, and of our neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law, is so far from having any trouble annexed to it, that it is the pleasantest disposition the mind of man is capable of; and is a demonstration of what the apostle John

teaches us, that God's commandments are not grievous. Many indeed have a strange aversion from these duties; particularly from the serious exercises of the love of God, which they avoid, as if it were a disease: but these are the exercises of heaven, where no trouble can enter, and are real foretastes of it, as well as preparations for it. The antipathy men have to these duties, the more it is considered, the more it will appear unaccountable. No man can pretend, that the love of God tends to impair his health or waste his fortune, as the love of lusts and idols oftentimes do.

If a man's charity to his neighbour sometimes impairs his interest, yet it does not ruin, but rather tends to secure it; and it is certain, there never were so many impoverished by charity, as have been by debauchery and extravagancies, or even by covetousness, which so frequently loses what it has, by grasping at more. Faith, and reliance on Christ Jesus, do not cause such shameful disappointments, as commonly flow from reliance on the world and the flesh. To be heavenly-minded does not eat away a man's flesh, as worldly anxiety does. Temperance does not lead to diseases, nor industry to poverty, nor humility to contention, nor honesty to shame. Meekness and kindness do not make a man pine away, as envy does: nor will a man blush for being found true to his word, and just in his dealings. It were easy, by taking a view of the other duties of a holy life, to shew, that not only there is no peculiar trouble in them, but that really in their own nature they have no tendency to trouble at all, but rather the contrary, as will be considered more directly afterwards.

There are perhaps only two particular duties, that may be objected against this assertion, viz. *Repentance for sin*, and *suffering persecution for righteousness' sake*, when called to it. As to *repentance*, it cannot be denied, but that both sorrow for sin, and mortifying corruption have some trouble and uneasiness in them; but that trouble is neither the native fruit of duty and obedience, but of sin, nor is it peculiar to duty, and the pleasure of it surpasses its trouble; the uneasiness

that is in repentance, is not the fruit of obedience, but disobedience; because had mankind continued in their duty, there would have been no occasion for repentance; nor is the trouble, that is in this duty, peculiar to it; for impenitent sinners have consciences, which, like serpents in their breasts, can sting them, and cause more uneasiness oftentimes, than the deepest humiliation can give a believing penitent. Faithless remorse was far more painful to Judas, than goodly sorrow was to Peter. There are some kinds of melancholy, which human nature takes pleasure in; and surely the noblest, and most rational melancholy in the world is, melancholy for these unworthy actions, by which we have lost the chief perfection of our nature, *the image of God;* by which we have made such unbecoming returns to his infinite kindness, and forfeited his inestimable favour, presence, and friendship: no wonder such a melancholy, as this, should have something of a sublime pleasure in it, since it is plainly an exercise of the love of God: besides, we should consider that that gospel repentance, which we are obliged to, ought to be joined with hope in God's mercy, through the merits of his Son; and hence it is, that by the exercise of the love of God, and hope in his mercy, (which are the sources of this sorrow, and the concomitants of it,) those that have most experience of it, when they attain to the greatest melting of heart that way, find such satisfaction, that they desire more of it: their sin is the cause of their sorrowing, which is their duty, and that duty gives them pleasure and comfort; not that it can merit it, but that it is a mean of it.

As to that part of repentance, which consists in the mortifying of corruption, neither is the trouble of this duty peculiar to it. A wicked man oftentimes cannot gratify one corruption without mortifying another; the graces of God's spirit are linked together by a golden chain that cannot be dissolved; but the corruptions of nature are full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and make the soul that is enslaved by them a Babel of confusion. The love of riches, the love of honour, and pleasures, pride, covetousness, vanity,

and luxury, justle and interfere in a thousand various rencounters. They are justly compared by Solomon to the daughter of the horse-leech, Prov. xxx. 15. Ever crying, "give, give," and to the grave, that never says, "it is enough:" so that if mortifying our corruptions be uneasy, the satisfying them is absolutely impossible.

As to the other duty, viz. Suffering for righteousness' sake, when called to it; this is neither a just objection against the doctrine, nor against the particular arguments adduced to confirm it. This will appear, by reflecting on what was hinted before, namely, that we are obliged in justice to distinguish carefully between God's actions, and those of his creatures; and that the same reasons which prove we cannot blame God for our own sins, prove also, that we cannot blame him for the sins of others. The reasons already adduced shew, that God is infinitely free from the blame of these evil inclinations in wicked men, that make them persecute others who are more righteous than themselves, and therefore it is the height of injustice in men to blame him for the persecutions they suffer; though, after all, the best men know, that they suffer infinitely less than they deserve: God is so far from being the author of persecutions, that in numberless instances he entirely prevents and hinders them in a very remarkable manner, and always restrains them, over-ruling them at the same time for the good of them that love him. We are not competent judges of the reasons why God does not hinder all as well as some of these, or the like fruits of sin; yet this much we may know of many persecutions by their visible effects, that of all the events in the world, there are few, perhaps, by which religion, that is, the true interest of mankind, has reaped more benefit, considering how they have been over-ruled by Providence, for promoting those very ends, against which evil men designed them, that is, the propagating and confirming of the truth, promoting the power of godliness, the trial, exercise, triumph, and splendor of grace in the saints of God, which are among the brightest events that have

adorned the theatre of the world, and history of mankind. Besides all this, it is plain, whatever troubles good men may suffer for the testimony of a good conscience, they are but troubles that others suffer oftentimes without that testimony; and therefore these troubles are no just objection against holiness, unless we were certain to be secured from trouble by wickedness; but this is so false, that it is evident God keeps up such order in the world, that men suffer much oftener by sin, than by duty; and, what with the justice of magistrates, the special judgments of Providence, and the native effect of sin; it is certain, that all that some men have ever suffered for righteousness, is incomparably less than what others have suffered for wickedness. It may perhaps be objected, that besides the case of persecution, even in the ordinary course of things, several duties of a holy life expose men to various injuries and affronts, as meekness, humility, forgiveness, and the like. In answer to this, we should reflect, That these duties are misunderstood, if they be imagined to hinder self-defence; when duty is practised, instead of being hinderances, they are helps to it; if sometimes they expose men to injuries, the contrary vices are no security against such injuries; the vain-glorious are oftentimes affronted as well as the humble; and proud oppressors have generally far more enemies than the meek and the just. The like may be said of many other sins and duties, when compared together: and nothing is more certain, than, that as there is no pleasure peculiar to sin, so there is no trouble peculiar to duty; and that as the pleasures that may be sometimes had in sin, are pleasures which have not a necessary or direct tendency to excite to it, so the troubles that sometimes attend holiness, are troubles which holiness itself has no natural tendency to produce. From all which it appears, that as God is the author of eternal motives against sin, so he is the author of no temporal motives to it.

It is still a further confirmation of the doctrine, That God has proposed very rational temporal motives against sin. This will appear by reflecting, that these

are even in this life innumerable pleasures peculiar to holiness, and innumerable troubles peculiar to wickedness; both these have been hinted at already: but it is proper here to consider them a little further, though it is scarce possible to enumerate and describe them fully, the subject being in effect inexhaustible; it is sufficient to our purpose, to take a general view of it. The word of God tells us "that the ways of wisdom are the ways of pleasantness and peace: That Christ's yoke is easy, and his burthen light: That gladness is sown for the upright in heart: That the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy and peace: That it is the privilege, and should be the practice of believers to rejoice even evermore: That the joy unto which they have access, is a joy unspeakable, and full of glory: That their peace is perfect peace, and a peace that passeth all understanding:" Both the prophets and apostles employ the most beautiful images in nature to paint to us the greatness of these joys; as when they speak of the oil of joy, garments of praise, everlasting joy on their heads; the budding and blossoming of the rose; the time of the singing of birds; the joy of banquets and marriage-feasts: and they represent the lifeless part of the creation as joining in the triumph of God's people, the mountains and hills breaking forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the fields clapping their hands; besides many other bright images, whose scope is to shew, that a life of faith and holiness is the way to the greatest solid joy here, as well as hereafter.

If many sincere believers do not attain to all these joys, yet that cannot weaken the force of the argument in view; they must impute the imperfections of these joys to the weakness of their faith and love. It is sufficient to our purpose that God proposes such motives to holiness, as should excite men to higher and higher advancements in it. It is certain, all these joys have been attained by some good men, and are offered to all; and even those who never felt any of them, may yet reasonably be persuaded of the reality of them, by considering the nature of faith, and all the

duties of the covenant of grace on the one hand, and the promises of it on the other.

If we consider the nature and design of holiness; it is not merely a preparation for happiness, but also an ingredient of it. And it is a very just as well as common observation, That grace is glory in the end; it is an imitation of the disposition and employment of these who are already happy, and consequently has the nearest resemblance to their state. Nothing can be more evident in the nature of the thing, than that the true happiness of the soul must increase in proportion to its union to the infinite source of all happiness and joy.

Faith in Christ has for its object the gladest tidings we can conceive, and the greatest gift we can desire. The love of God contemplates infinitely amiable excellency and beauty, and lays hold on all sufficiency. The sincere and gracious love of our neighbour is so delightful a duty, that all the pleasures of society, which even wicked men enjoy, are founded on some resemblances of it. Meekness, humility and disengagement of mind from the world, give such serenity and tranquillity of spirit, as is inestimable. Contemplation is one of the most valuable enjoyments in the world; a great part of holiness consists in the noblest kind of it: all we can know, is either something concerning God or his creatures; and surely the noblest view of the latter is in the contemplating of their relation to the former; all of them manifest his glory: and therefore if we were accustomed to consider them in that light, whatever way we turned our view, every sensible object might be matter of spiritual joy.— To all which we may add, that the well-grounded hope of eternal happiness, if duly improved, is a greater present pleasure than any earthly enjoyment whatsoever.

If we consider, on the other hand, the promises of the covenant of grace, it is plain that God promises to his people, not only future happiness, but also present peace, pardon of sin, strength to perform duty, acceptance of it, communion with himself, comfort un-

der affliction, returns of prayer; and which comprehends numberless blessings, that he will make all things work together for their good, and let nothing separate them from his love. These are the present encouragements God proposeth to duty; and surely, they are incomparably more important than any other motives which the devil or wicked men can offer against it.

Let us take a short view, in the next place, of the present troubles that natively flow from wickedness, many of which are peculiar to it; this will serve to vindicate God's holiness, and to shew his goodness in the frame of our nature in contriving it so, that these things that are contrary to our greatest interest should be at the same time inconsistent with our present ease; which is surely a very rational motive to avoid them: perhaps indeed many of these uneasinesses that attend sin may be the absolutely necessary consequences of it. Thus it is necessary in the nature of the thing, that desires and passions that cannot be fully satisfied, should be exceedingly tormenting; but it is no less certain, that many of the troubles that are inseparable from sin, are not so properly owing to the necessity of the thing, as to a good and wise contrivance for making it more hateful to us.

The two great sources of our sinful actions, are, *unruly desires and bitter passions*; and they are the great sources of our troubles as well as our sins. As to the former, it was observed already, how they entangle men's mind, almost in a constant train of perplexities and disquiet, painful impatience, superfluous toil, anxiety, loathing, grief and vexation. Bitter and malicious passions are no better, but rather worse; they tend to make us enemies to our fellow-creatures, and make them so to us; and are the greatest enemies of all themselves. When they exert themselves with vigour, they are like furious storms and tempests, filling the soul with disorder and confusion, and making it like troubled waters, when they cannot rest: when they cannot be satisfied, they frequently rack and harass men's breasts with pains that cannot be des-

cribed, and that sometimes with such violence, as unhinges the frame of their nature, and ruins soul and body at once. When they are gratified, and obtain their end, if it gives any joy, it is but the joy of devils, and such pleasure as is in hell, that is to say, pleasure in the misery of others: Instead of that, oftentimes they have been observed to turn to a thousand melancholy wishes that they had been restrained: sometimes one passionate word or action proves the beginning of a long chain of confusion, strife, contention, and all the other wormwood that embitters human life; which would be vastly more tolerable and pleasant than it is, notwithstanding all its other disasters, were it not for those furies in men's own breasts, which not only lead them to misery, but anticipate it, and torment them before the time.

It would be too long to enumerate even all the remarkable present disadvantages that attend wickedness; such as comfortless affliction, and unsatisfying prosperity, dismal fears of death, and confounding forethoughts of judgment and eternity, (which will be sometimes so importunate as to force their way through all the amusements and diversions that are made use of to keep them out) remorse of conscience, which is a refined sort of pain, when the blood of sprinkling is not applied for curing it. Every vice seems to have some way of punishing itself: Pride makes every affront almost a torment; Envy hinders a man from relishing his own enjoyment till he see his neighbour's misery; Impiety makes those thoughts and discourses of God (which otherwise would be ravishing) to be uneasy and perplexing. While men entertain such plagues in their souls, it is of little importance to their peace and happiness, that all is right without, when all is wrong within: In the midst of magnificent buildings, sumptuous feasts, gay clothing, and all the other fantastic pageantry he can desire, the slave of sin is still but a painted sepulchre, outwardly bright and beautiful, inwardly full of filth and rottenness. From all which it is evident, that God is so far from being the author even of any temporal motives to sin, that

he has ordered matters so, that the rational motives against it, even in this life, are incomparably superior to any that can be adduced for it.

Beside the troubles annexed to sin, whose proper tendency is certainly to restrain it, we may observe likewise several principles God has implanted inwardly in the frame of our nature, and several things he has established in the order of providence, that have a very native tendency to the same good end, and in numberless instances are effectual that way. Thus, it is God, that has given us the faculty of reason, by which no doubt men avoid many sinful actions; and, if they improved it right, would hate every sin. We are obliged in justice to thank God for giving us that faculty, and to blame our sins, and not him, for our voluntary abuse or neglect of it. If a poor man receive a thousand talents in a gift, every body will own that he is obliged to acknowledge his benefactor for all the good things he purchases by that money, and to blame himself only, if he misimproves and squanders away any part of it. And, indeed, if we inquire narrowly into the nature of sin, we shall find, that every sin is an abuse of some good gift that God has given us, which is in itself good, and might have been improved to excellent purposes.

It is God that has implanted in men that natural conscience, which is, as it were, God's lieutenant or deputy in the soul, and which gives such an indelible sense of the difference between moral good and evil; that they who cherish sin most in themselves, cannot oftentimes but hate it in others, so that a man abhors his own corruptions when he sees them in his nearest friends, or in the child of his bosom. Thus they who are most addicted to pride, oppression, treachery, or ingratitude, do frequently condemn these when practised by others; and though this natural conscience is far from hindering every sin, yet certainly it hinders and restrains a great many. It is a principal means of hindering the world from running into a chaos; and all its good influence that way is owing to God.

Further; God has implanted in us that thirst after

complete happiness, which is the spring of men's actions; and since the above-mentioned faculty of reason shows where that thirst may be satisfied, the direct tendency of both, if duly improved, would be to lead the soul to the eternal fountain of all good. God has also planted in us several principles which should tend to promote our love to him and his creatures; as for instance, that delight in the contemplation of things that are most perfect and excellent in their kind, which, if duly improved, would excite us to the contemplation of God's perfections that are unchangeable and infinite. As to the love of our neighbour, there is that sympathy in human nature, which makes a man in some degree, feel the miseries of others, when he sees them, unless he has acquired such an unnatural temper of mind, as is no small degree of misery itself: beside this, God has laid a very rational foundational for Universal Friendship, by making all mankind spring from one family, so that they are all united by the ties of blood-relation: he has taken care also to cement them by their very necessities; for it is plain, that of all earthly creatures, men have most need of mutual help, and of society, in order to their subsistence and comfort.

In the order of providence, God has so contrived things, that most kinds of wickedness are generally attended with present outward shame and punishment. Of all these that practise the greatest wickedness, few dare openly defend it; they rather take all precautions to hide it; hence the apostle judged it proper to recommend to christians living among heathens, "Whatsoever things were lovely, whatsoever things were of good report;" And hence also it is, that when men are persecuted really for righteousness' sake, they must first be branded with wickedness, and generally calumny must pave the way for persecution. To all this we may add, That the divine ordinance of magistracy is plainly owing to the special wisdom and goodness of providence, and it is certainly every where in numberless instances an effectual terror to evil doers.

Beside all these restraints that God has laid upon sin by the present shame and punishment that so frequently attends it, he has laid other very powerful restraints upon it, by the shortness and insignificancy of all the pleasures that can be had by it; this appears from the shortness and uncertainty of human life; but it is not the uncertainty of life only that makes the pleasures of it uncertain: for though we were never so sure of life, that cannot secure us of the enjoyments of it; they are liable to a thousand dangers, which all the precautions human prudence can suggest, are not capable always to prevent. If we consider, that all the pleasures in sin, are pleasures which we are sure to part with at death, and are not sure to retain till then; that let men idolize them never so much, the pleasure of them at its height is very inconsiderable, and, little as it is, naturally decaying; that the pursuit of them is attended with much toil, and the enjoyment of them with much trouble; it is plain, that, when for the sake of such decaying, uncertain, toilsome, troublesome vanities, men offend God, they may be said, in a very proper sense, *To offend him without cause.* But what deserves our particular consideration on this subject, is the shortness of life; men are oftentimes very inconsistent with themselves in their peevish complaints about it; sometimes they seem to grudge that it is too short for the great business of it, and yet live as if they thought it too long for that business, since they delay it to the end of it: it is plain, if our present life were much longer, future rewards and punishments, by being more distant, would have probably weaker influence; so it was before the flood, and the event was answerable; but as matters are ordered at present, the pleasures of sin, and troubles of duty are so uncertain and short-lived, that it is unaccountable how rational creatures are seduced to wickedness for obtaining the one, or avoiding the other.

To all this we may add, That mankind have naturally some sense of justice and gratitude, as well as of interest; and besides the motives in point of interest, God has given the greatest motives in point of justice

and gratitude, to excite us to duty and restrain us from sin; reason teaches us, that, as we should do justice to all, by giving them their own: it is to God we owe ourselves, and all we have. He has manifested to us in his works and word such glorious perfections as in justice deserve the highest esteem, and particularly such goodness as deserves the profoundest gratitude; his long-suffering and abundant goodness in providence, constantly returning good for evil, has the most rational tendency imaginable to melt our hearts with sorrow for sin, and to kindle in us the greatest indignation against it. But nothing can have a more powerful tendency this way, than his mysterious mercy in the work of redemption, the love of God in Christ who died for us; and, after that blessed redemption is wrought for us, the tenderness and earnestness with which God, in a manner, presses it upon us in his word, makes it unaccountable in those who have that word, to give way to these unworthy thoughts of God, which the text rebukes; he not only freely offers us that redemption, but earnestly importunes us to embrace it; bewails our unwillingness, stretches out his hands to us all day; stands knocking at the door of our hearts; condescends to reason with us, that though our sins be as crimson and scarlet, yet he can make them to be as wool and as snow; expostulates with us as an affectionate father with undutiful children, why we spend our money for that which is not bread; draws us with cords of men, and bands of love; swears to . e does not delight in the death of a sinner; argues the case with us, wherein we can bear witness against him, why we should perish, and why we will not come to him that we may have life; beseeches us to be reconciled to him; and promises, if we consent, that he will keep us as a seal on his hand, count us as his own jewels, and keep us as the apple of his eye. Surely these and the like expressions of infinite condescension, have the most native tendency possible to dissuade men from offending God, and ruining themselves. This is plainly the design of them, and, on many accounts, is the happiest effect of them; and

whatever use men make of them, these manifestations God gives of himself in his word, with the other manifestations of himself in his works, make conjunctly a complete proof of the apostle's doctrine, and shew, that God can take heaven and earth to witness that he is infinitely free from the blame of men's sin and misery; that if they perish, the blood of their souls must be upon themselves, and that their ruin is the fruit of their own doings, and not of his.

After insisting so much in proposing the evidences of the doctrine, it will be the easier to apply them for answering the objections against it, which are drawn either from God's *decrees*, or his *providence*: the reasons that vindicate the latter do at the same vindicate the former; and therefore the former needs not much be insisted on: it is plain, that if God does not actually tempt men by his providence in time, he never decreed to do it from eternity; the scriptures make, and all sound Christians believe, a difference, betwixt what God decreed to do himself, and what he decreed to permit in others; and though reasons of both may be unknown, yet we are obliged in reason to believe they are not unjust; not only the reasons of God's decrees, but his decrees themselves are unknown till the event discover them; and surely it is the wildest absurdity for men to allege that they are tempted by things they know nothing about. God in his decrees laid down measures for hindering innumerable sins, which would otherwise have happened, were it not for the restraints of his providence and his grace: so that if his decrees should be considered on this subject at all, we should consider, that his decrees, as executed by his providence, are not the cause of sin, but the cause why there is not vastly more wickedness in the world than there is, and why the wickedness that is in the world is so much restrained, and kept within such bounds, and over-ruled for such good ends.

As to objections drawn from providence, the most remarkable of them that are found either in the writings of libertines, or that great source of libertinism, the suggestions of natural corruption, are perhaps

these, 1*st*, That it is God himself, who has endowed the creatures with that goodness and pleasure, that inclines us to idolize them ; That he has implanted in us desires after them, and yet has made laws contrary to those desires, as if we had laws given us one way, and desires another way ; That these tempting objects continue pleasant and delightful, even when abused by wicked men in the pursuit or enjoyment of them ; and lastly, that we are placed in such circumstances, that they surround us on all hands, and make continual impression on our senses.

As to the first suggestion, That it is God that has made these objects (and made them so pleasant) which tempt us to sin, or, to express the thing truly, which we pervert into an occasion of sin : this is so far from being a just reflection on God, or an excuse for us, that it is the very reverse. This is the thing that testifies God's goodness to us, that he has given us so many good creatures to enjoy, which are both useful and delightful to us, and therefore should excite us, not to sin against him, but to love and obey him ; and this is the very thing that shews our inexcusable folly and ingratitude, that the objects we prefer to God, are his own creatures, and the things, for the sake of which we offend him, his own gifts.

It is not the true worth and real goodness that God has put in the creatures that is to be blamed for our preferring them to the Creator, but a false and imaginary worth we feign in them ourselves. It is lawful, yea, it is our duty to have a true esteem and value for God's creatures, as they are manifestati of his glory, or fruits of his bounty ; sin does not sist in valuing the creatures, but in over-valuing ' .— The former shews a man's esteem of the au .or of them ; it is the latter that makes us neglect him. If we loved the creatures only in proportion to their real worth, there would be no irregularity or disorder, consequently no sin in it. It would be the perfection of our nature, if all our desires bore a true proportion to their objects ; sin breaks that proportion ; it imagines a kind of all-sufficiency or independency in the

creatures; this is the most chimerical imagination in the world, and it is the great cause of all our folly: it is plain it is a creature of our own; God's works cannot be blamed for it; their true worth is not the cause of our false esteem, nor can it be made an excuse for it. All the creatures declare their own insufficiency with the clearest evidence; they direct us to their Author, and acknowledge their absolute dependence upon him.

If men therefore are deceived in this matter, it is because they impose upon themselves; their error is wholly inexcusable. Every practical error indeed is so, because it is voluntary. A man may be passive in believing the truth; irresistible evidence may force his assent to it. Falsehood is incapable of such evidence; it is impossible that the devil or any external cause whatsoever, can force an error on a creature endowed with reason; but there is a peculiarity in this error we are speaking of, though a man should pretend to some small shadow of reason for other mistakes, he can pretend none for this, that God's works should be preferred to himself, the stream to the fountain, the shadow to the substance. Though there might be some colour of excuse for falsely preferring one creature to another, surely there can be none for preferring any creature to God.

If any thing be self-evident that some call in question, or seem by their actions to do so, surely this is self-evident, that God is our chief, yea indeed, our only true happiness. Want of consideration cannot be alleged to excuse or extenuate a man's mistake about this. Indeed men cannot consider all things, and therefore may be ignorant or mistaken about some things without danger; but there is one inquiry which no man can excuse himself for neglecting, though he should neglect every thing else, and that is, to inquire wherein his chief happiness lies, and which is the true way to it; and such a neglect is the more inexcusable, because that inquiry scarce requires any pains, nor is there the least occasion for demur about it, the thing

being so plain, that He only who gave us being, can give us happiness.

If the objection proposed be enforced by asking the reasons of that goodness and pleasure that is in the creatures, which, though it should not excuse our sin, yet is abused at least into an occasion of sin.—Though we are not fit judges of the reasons of God's actions, yet we may know enough about this, not only for vindicating his holiness, but also for extolling his goodness: for what can be more agreeable to that divine perfection, than that he, who is perfectly good himself, should have made his works all very good likewise? that the workmanship might be worthy of the workman, and that the effects might not disparage the cause. Nothing can be more absurd, than to pretend, that it would have been agreeable to God's goodness to have made evil works himself, to prevent the evil works of his creatures. The brightest manifestations of God's glory have been made occasions of dishonouring him: but surely none will say, that it had been better these manifestations had not been made, lest they should be abused; that God's glory had not been so displayed, lest some should have made it an occasion of offending him; that is, that we had wanted those things that are really means and motives of adoring God, lest some should abuse them (contrary to their natural tendency) into occasions of despising him. The old heathens took occasion from the visible glory, beauty, and usefulness of the sun, moon and stars, to worship them; how absurd would it be to censure the Author of nature, for endowing these creatures, with such beauty and usefulness, because it was abused. Many curious persons have taken occasion from the regularity, order, and deep contrivance that is in God's works, to employ their minds wholly in amusing speculations and inquiries into nature, without regarding its Author: but surely that cannot reflect upon him for forming his works, with such regularity and harmony, that the very contemplation of them gives delight. Let us consider the native consequences of it, if matters had been ordered otherwise, if instead of all that beauty and delight

that is in the creatures, they had been made unpleasant, deformed, and useless; let us reflect, that the love and esteem of God, is a principal part of holiness, and then consider whether it would have been a greater mean or motive to love and esteem the Author of these works, that the works themselves were unworthy of love or esteem; or whether there would have been any incitements and materials for praising the cause in the effects not deserving praise.

In considering the actions either of God or good men, we should distinguish between two very different sorts of consequences that may follow upon them.

1st, Their true and proper effects for which they are designed, and which they have a native tendency to produce, and *2dly*, those indirect consequences that may follow on them, not through any tendency in the good actions themselves to these evil consequences, but through the perverse dispositions of others; in this last sense, very bad consequences may follow upon the very best actions; but the latter can no-wise be blamed as the cause of the former: when a good man is about to do an excellent and useful action, he may foresee that some envious person will take occasion from that, to be guilty of slander, backbiting, and perhaps worse, and that others will be very ungrateful for the good he does; but he can neither be blamed for that, nor ought he to forbear his duty to prevent their sins. No man is obliged to do evil, or to forbear what is absolutely good, in order to prevent the evil of others; that would indeed be doing evil, that good might come of it. A man of a wicked disposition may take occasion from the best action to do things directly contrary to the nature of that action, and to its native tendency, and proper effects.

To apply these things to the present case; the direct tendency of all the goodness and pleasure with which God has endowed the creatures, is to manifest his being and glorious perfections, particularly his goodness and all-sufficiency, and our absolute dependence on him, and to make us long for the enjoyment of himself, the fountain, when there is so much goodness even in the

streams that flow from him: accordingly God's actions produce these their true and proper good effects in numberless multitudes of holy creatures, angels and saints. These same works of God from which wicked men take occasion to neglect him, are to all holy creatures means and motives of love, esteem, adoration, praise and thanksgiving, reliance on him, and desire of union to him; light is not more opposite to darkness, than these native effects of God's works are to the unnatural evil uses, that wicked men make of them; they make the effects of his power occasions of despising him; the evidences of his all-sufficiency occasions of alienating their desires from him. And, which is the most monstrous abuse imaginable, as was before observed, they make his benefits occasions of ingratitude.

It was proved already, that the pleasures of sense are evidences of God's goodness, because they are means of preserving mankind; but there is a wise temperament in this, which serves both to illustrate the doctrine, and to refute the objections in view. It is God's goodness, that these objects being so useful, are so pleasant as they are; it is God's goodness likewise that they are not more pleasant; it is dangerous to exceed in them; such excess tends not only to divert the thoughts, but to alienate the mind from the higher objects, to which these inferior things should lead us; for preventing that excess, it is wisely ordered, that these pleasures are neither too numerous, nor too violent, nor durable; it is otherwise with spiritual and intellectual enjoyments; these tend directly to the perfection of our souls, whereas the former are but for the subsistence of our bodies. Intellectual enjoyments have something in their nature that is immortal, like the soul; but sensible pleasures are made fleeting and short-lived; because, however innocent in themselves, they are dangerous when exceeded in; it is but a small part of life they can fill up, and, when idolized, they decay by use, and cloy by repetition.—Things are so well adjusted, that there is just so much pleasure in these objects, as may effectually excite men

to use them, and so little, as should in all reason hinder them from abusing them.

These same considerations serve also to refute the second objection that was mentioned, *viz.* That these objects which are the occasions of sin, are not only made pleasant but necessary to us, and that there are desires after them implanted in our nature. This objection carries its answer in its bosom, (though through men's stupidity it does harm.) If these objects are necessary to us, that itself shews that the use of them is lawful, and the just and natural desire of them innocent. God has only implanted in men desires towards what is their duty, that is, self-preservation; but if men's wickedness abuseth the means of their preservation into occasions of their ruin, even the heathens could observe that this is living contrary to nature; besides, it is obvious, that God has so ordered matters that it a very little that satisfies nature, and when that good end is obtained, desire ceases. Thus it is with hunger and thirst, for instance, when one has taken what is sufficient for health and nourishment. It is otherwise indeed with men, who have contracted evil habits, by being accustomed to excess; but these habits are not natural, but acquired; and we should distinguish between these inclinations implanted in us by God, and those that are contracted by ourselves.

If it be asked, Why these objects are made necessary to us? This question is as much out of the way, as to ask why the world was made, or men made to inhabit it. The prophet Isaiah seems to intimate, that to have made the earth uninhabited, would have been a making of it in vain; Isa. xlv. 18. "Thus saith the Lord God himself, that formed the earth, and made it——he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited;" It is hard to conceive, how it could properly be reckoned inhabited, if no creatures resided in it but pure spirits; surely it is no reflection on the Creator, that he has made such a world as this lower world is, or that having made it so beautiful and glorious as it is, that he has not left it to be a desolate wilderness; and then it is easy to conceive, that ac-

cording to the best order of nature, and the best contrived laws to govern it, such inhabitants, consisting of body as well as spirit, could not subsist without being constantly recruited with the means of life and nourishment. If it were not for that, the visible world would be comparatively useless; if it were no way subservient to the preservation and subsistence of its inhabitants, there would not be that beautiful connection that is now between the visible and invisible world, making things void of life and reason useful to creatures endowed with both.

To this we may add, that our natural necessities, when duly considered, are arguments of God's goodness, because, in their proper tendency, they are antidotes against sin, and helps to duty. Their proper tendency is to give us an impression of our own natural emptiness, God's all-sufficiency, and our dependency upon him, from whom we need so many things, with which he furnisheth us so bountifully; by this means, not leaving himself without witness, as Paul reasoned with the people of Lystra in the forecited place, Acts xiv. 17. Besides, it is useful to reflect here on what was hinted before, that human necessities are an excellent cement of human societies, and the many useful and beautiful relations comprehended in them; they lay also a foundation for the exercise of innumerable virtues and graces, which otherwise could not be exercised in so remarkable a manner, for making men's graces and good works shine before the world, to the glory of God, Matth. v. 16. And since the image of God drawn on the soul of a creature is the noblest workmanship in the creation, it should not be thought improper that it have occasions of shining in all its splendor, for the honour of its Author. Were it not for men's natural necessities, they would not have these excellent opportunities, that now they enjoy, of shewing either their love to God by sacrificing interest to duty, when they happen to interfere; or their love to their neighbours, by acts of charity, pity and compassion, bounty, generosity, and the like; or temperance, sobriety, and other duties that relate more

immediately to the management of themselves. These necessities are also the foundation of all that beautiful variety of stations and employments, which, together with other excellent uses, serve to keep men from idleness and inactivity, than which, experience shews nothing is more hurtful. Men pretend indeed ofttimes, that their labours are hinderances of their duties; but experience shews that generally these who have most time, are not the persons who make the best use of it. So that man's eating his bread with the sweat of his brow, is such a punishment of sin, as is at the same time an excellent restraint upon it.

From all which it appears, that by the desires God hath implanted in us, and the objects he has made necessary to us, he does not tempt us to sin, but excite us to duty; and that these things which are made occasions of evil, are really necessary means of good; and that though they are unnaturally perverted by bad men, yet their natural tendency is the exercise and triumph of many graces and virtues. God's goodness in this matter is the more evident, the more it is inquired into; he has implanted in us desires after things useful and necessary, but none after those things that are useless or hurtful, as was hinted before: no superfluous desires are natural, these are acquired by men themselves, and oftentimes improven to the prejudice of these desires that are just and natural: and, upon the whole, the use we should make of these reflections is certainly an humble acknowledgment of our own emptiness, and of God's all-sufficient goodness.

After what is said about our natural desires, it is easy to answer the objections about God's making laws against them; it is only against excess in them, and that excess is graciously forbidden by God, since it is so hurtful to us; it would be so, whether he had forbid it, or not. Excessive love of earthly objects was shown before to be the chief source of earthly trouble; it is in its nature hurtful to our souls and bodies, and makes us hurtful to others; to our souls, by alienating them from our chief good, and only happiness: to our bodies, by the natural fruit of intemperance, anxiety and

excessive toil; and to our neighbours, by tempting us to injustice, oppression and strife, and by hindering from charity and beneficence.

It is the very nature of wisdom, not to love any object above its real worth: this is what God's law requires of us; and surely nothing can be more necessary, or more reasonable; it is the way to that true enjoyment of the creatures, which is both most for the honour of God and our good; and the allowances, which it was shown his law makes for cases of absolute necessity, prove that there is a perfect harmony betwixt his precepts, as he is the law-giver of the world, and his works, as he is the Author of nature.

As to the next objection, *viz.* That earthly objects continue pleasant, even when abused by sin; it is plain it could not be otherwise, unless God would destroy the nature of his own creatures at every time when men abuse them. It is easy to conceive, that God may have infinitely wise reasons for not taking such measures; for not overturning these laws of his which govern nature, at every time when men violate these laws which should govern their actions, for not breaking the perfect order of his own works, whenever men are guilty of any disorder in theirs. No doubt if we consider God's absolute power, he could (for example) turn the most wholesome food into poison, when it is sinfully procured or enjoyed. But besides the reasons God has for not changing the established order of nature; it is evident that such outward miracles would not prevent inward disorderly inclination, in which sin and corruption chiefly consists; they would not hinder that immoderate love of the creatures, which is not restrained by other motives, but they would hinder indeed the trial and exercise of graces and virtues by which the moderate love of these objects promote the glory of God, and the good of men. It is plain there would not be so much virtue in justice, if there be no advantage by injustice; that is to say, present advantage; for the rest, taking in all considerations, it was shown already, that God has ordered matters so, that the motives of true profits and

pleasure, are on the side of holiness and righteousness; both as to this life and the next. And, in a word, not to insist longer on this objection, it is plain, it cannot be urged without blaming Providence for not working miracles constantly to prevent sin; whereas the design of this discourse is not to shew the reasons why God does not infallibly hinder men from all sin, but to shew that he does not tempt them to any.

As to the last objection, *viz* That we are placed in such circumstances, that we are surrounded with these tempting objects on all hands, and that they make continual impression on our senses. It is true, God has placed us in such circumstances; he has surrounded us with these objects, but he has made these objects all very good; it is we ourselves that make them temptations to evil: any truth that is in the objection amounts only to this, and it is thus it should be expressed, God has surrounded us with necessary and useful objects, displaying his glory, and contributing to our subsistence. He has surrounded us on all hands with the fruits of his bounty, and effects of his power; he has endowed us with senses suitable to these objects to see his glory in them all, and to apply several of them to various good uses, which are motives to love him, and materials for contemplating and adoring him. There is nothing in all this, but what is really ground of praise, and not of censure: It would be the wildest extravagance for men to complain either that these useful objects, are not wholly removed, or that they themselves are not deprived of the senses by which they perceive them, and make use of them. If this objection had any force, is would be against peopling of this world at all; which was considered already. No doubt indeed heaven is an incomparably better place; but that cannot reflect on God, for not making all the rest of the creation a wilderness: if we embraced the terms on which heaven is offered, surely our absence from it is not so long, that we have very much reason to repine at it. The time of our life of faith, and state of trial is not so very tedious. On other occasions men are more ready to complain, their time

among the sensible objects of this lower world is rather too short; they who are of a different disposition, and with submission to God long to be among higher objects, and are weary of earthly things, are the persons who are in least danger of neglecting the former, or abusing the latter; as all are obliged to consider that the true use and tendency of the one, is to lead us up to the other. And since, Rom. i. 20. the invisible things of God may be clearly seen in all the visible creatures, these things sink the deeper into our hearts for this very reason, because the manifestation of them makes continual impression on our senses.

Thus we have considered several arguments, which serve both to confirm the doctrine, and to answer objections against it; and though this doctrine be plainly revealed in scripture, especially in the text, and divine revelation obliges us to believe it, yet these considerations are useful, because, as was shown before, many who profess to believe the scriptures in general, are troubled with hurtful suggestions against this doctrine in particular; and it is good for them if they be troubled for them, and struggle against them. Those who have most of the love of God, may sometimes be perplexed with unsuitable thoughts concerning him, but they will use prayers and endeavours for avoiding them. If there are other objections against this doctrine, which the evidences adduced cannot be applied to, we should consider that there may be perplexing objections raised oftentimes, even against demonstrable truths, that the difficulties of this subject are owing to the darkness of our views of God's works, and that intricacy of providence, which is perfectly consistent with the righteousness of it. God's own testimony of his own holiness, is an infallible evidence for it, which no difficulties should hinder our assent to; and the considerations adduced shew that his works and actions agree with the testimony of his word, That as he cannot be *tempted to evil, so neither tempteth he any man;* this has been shewn at large from the nature of God's works; I shall only add here a few things taken from the nature of sin. Sin is a forsaking of God; it is plain, he

cannot tempt us to forsake himself, unless he give us ground to expect more happiness, by forsaking him, than by being united to him; this is impossible; reason and experience, as well as scripture, shew that it is an exceeding evil and bitter thing to depart from the living God. Sin is the transgression of his law; how can he be thought to propose motives to us to disobey himself? Sin is a preferring his creatures to himself; how can he be thought to put any thing in the creatures, that should make us hope for more good in the effect, than in the cause?

The use that we should make of this doctrine, was hinted already, in shewing the importance of it, and the evidences which prove that these thoughts of God which the text rebukes, though both unreasonable and dangerous, are very common and ordinary. The Spirit of God inculcates this doctrine upon us, to the end we may adore God's spotless purity, and loath ourselves for our inexcusable wickedness. The truths that have been insisted on, have a very proper tendency this way; it is certain we can scarce consider sin in any light that shews more the madness of it, than the affront it does to God, by preferring his creatures to himself: our giving them that preference is not on honouring them, but a monstrous and unnatural abuse of them. Their beauty and glory consists in manifesting that of their Author. This is the chief end, and true use of them These visible things which are void of life and reason themselves are constantly importuning us who are privileged with both to employ them in praising and serving him who is their Creator and ours; they offer themselves as steps by which our thoughts may ascend to him. When, instead of this they are made instruments of rebellion against him, these dumb creatures, to allude to the apostle's expression, Rom. viii. 20, 21, 22. groan under the bondage of our corruption, and travail in pain under the oppression of our vanity, to which they are not willingly made subject; they protest and exclaim against the bad use we make of them, contrary to the end of their being, and upbraid and reproach us for our in-

gratitude to God, our abuse of them, and cruelty to ourselves.

If men could excuse themselves, for not placing their chief happiness in God, they might the more easily excuse all their other sins; for, in effect, that is the source of all; since we have an inbred thirst after happiness, it is impossible, but we must be seeking after it in something or other, if not in God, then certainly in his creatures; and, if so, it is impossible, but that fundamental disorder should put all the powers and affections of our souls into confusion. When a man has fixed his chief affections on creatures, and made them his chief end, it is impossible but he should have an inclination to the means of that end, though contrary to his true interest, and an aversion from things that are opposite to these, his chief desires, though really never so excellent. Thus the love of sin creates a distaste of God's laws, instructions and revelations, because they are against sin; and by this wretched chain, corruption proves a disease, that both leads to death, and begets an aversion to the means of recovery. Thus God's creatures are made occasions and pretences for offending him, though there is nothing in him or them to justify the neglect of the one, or abuse of the other; nothing, on the contrary, but what shews that such a practice is equally destructive and inexcusable.

If we kept our love of outward things within such bounds, as to do no prejudice to the love of God and our neighbour, or even to the true love of ourselves; this would be that true mortification which God requires, and for which the grace of Jesus Christ is offered to us; it is only superstition, and particularly that of the church of Rome that commands men to abstain from things that God made to be received with thanksgiving; the apostle foretold this as one of the errors of the last days. No doubt, abstinence even from things in themselves lawful, has its own use on many occasions: but excessive austerity that way, is the extreme most men are least liable to. In the mean time, we may observe, that he whose life should be the

pattern of ours as to temperance and all other duties, though he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, did not refuse to join with men for their good in the use of the lawful comforts as well as necessaries of life. This indeed exposed his spotless character to the censure of morose hypocrites, because he did not affect that useless austerity, on which they valued themselves so much: but it shews, that spiritual comforts and temporal comforts are far from being inconsistent.—But wretched is their case, who abuse that liberty they have from God into an occasion of bringing themselves under bondage to his creatures. They can give no pleasure or trouble independently of him; whatever pleasure they give, it is him they should make us love; whatever trouble they give, it is him they should make us fear; and our love and fear should not hinder, but help each other; because, as we cannot abuse his goodness, without rendering ourselves obnoxious to his justice, we should consider that perfect goodness and perfect justice are so far from being inconsistent, that they are inseparable.

The truths that have been insisted on, afford various motives for adoring both these glorious attributes. As to God's justice, some of the observations that have been proposed, might be usefully applied by many, for convincing their hearts, through God's grace, both of the righteousness of future punishments, and the certainty of them. *Wickedness* affronts God, and abuses his creatures: it makes men incapable of the enjoyment of the former at all, or of the latter with true satisfaction; and therefore since it both wrongs God, and his creatures, and makes a man incapable of happiness in him, or real contentment in them, it deserves the loss of both, and naturally tends to it; they who entirely neglect God here, surely have no ground to expect or enjoy him hereafter. And as to his creatures, they may find it hard to persuade themselves, if they consider it, that God will be eternally multiplying on them those benefits in the next world, which they so heinously abused in this. Now it is evident, that even supposing God should put no positive punish-

ment on wicked men, but only deprive them for ever of all his favours which they have abused, That itself would be enough to cause such everlasting anguish and melancholy, as cannot well be described or conceived. To be left to our own natural emptiness, to violent desires, without any objects to satisfy them, to suffer the total loss of God, and all his good creatures, is both a loss very terrible in itself, and is so evidently the just demerit and native fruit of final impenitence, that it is a wonder how wicked men can overcome the apprehensions of it.

This may contribute to illustrate the principal use of this doctrine, which (as was hinted formerly) is to help us to a right sense of God's infinite mercy in the work of redemption: this we can never have without a persuasion of his righteousness in the works of providence. While men's hearts blame him for their sins, they can never love him aright for his mercies, particularly for his greatest mercy, which is deliverance from sin, and its fruits; whereas on the other hand, to entertain just thoughts of God, and of ourselves (that is, to take all the blame of our sin and misery to ourselves) and to acknowledge sincerely that he is perfectly free from it, is the way, through God's grace, to such gratitude to him for his unspeakable gift, as makes the most rational and happiest disposition of mind, that redeemed sinners are capable of.

It it worth the observing here, that many who are prejudiced against revealed religion, acknowledge that natural religion is very plain and rational. It is evident the difficulties against the apostle's doctrine are difficulties of natural religion; it is not the Scripture only that tells us we are sinful, guilty, corrupt creatures: experience tells it, and reason teaches us, that an infinitely perfect God must be perfectly free, both from the blame of our sin, and the misery which it tends to; experience and reason teach us, that we are sinners, and deserve punishment; it is the gospel that teaches us the remedy. It is unreasonable to make the difficulties of natural religion prejudices against revealed religion: the subject insisted on serves to give a

right impression of both, by giving a just view of God's actions, and of those of his creatures; if that view of them were familiar to us, through God's grace, the love of his creatures, instead of hindering our love to him, would be a help to it. This would be a happy stratagem for turning these earthly things, which corruption makes our enemies, to be really our friends; all the pleasures in these streams, would make us love the fountain; and all the trouble in them would make us long for him, long for that unmixed, unqualified bliss, where there is no more need of temperance, because there is no possibility of excess; where desire will not be checked, nor enjoyment restrained; where our joys will have none of that alloy that always cleaves to our joys here; where our honour will be without envy, our friendship without strife, our riches without care, our pleasures without mixture, without interruption; and, which crowns all, without end.

SERMON II.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

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GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

IT is an old and useful observation, that many of the most excellent objects in the world, are objects whose excellency does not appear at first view: as, on the other hand, many things of little value appear more excellent at first, than a narrower view discovers them to be. There are some things we admire, because we do not know them, and the more we know them, the less we admire them; there are other things we despise through ignorance, because it requires pains and application, to discover their beauty and excellency.

This holds true in nothing more than in that glorious despised object mentioned in the text. There is nothing in the world is more divided about in its opinion, than this. To the one part it is altogether contemptible, to the other it is altogether glorious; the one part of the world wonders what attractives others find in it: And the other part wonders how the rest of the world are so stupid as not to see them; and are amazed at the blindness of others, and their own former blindness.

It is said of the famous reformer Melancthon, when he first saw the glory of this object at his conversion, he imagined he could easily, by plain persuasion, con-

vince others of it; that the matter being so plain, and the evidence so strong, he did not see how, on a fair representation, any could stand out against it. But upon trial he was forced to express himself with regret, that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon, and that human corruption was too strong for human persuasion, without divine grace.

The true use we should make of this, is certainly to apply for that enlightening grace to ourselves, which the apostle Paul prays for in the behalf of the Ephesians, Eph. i. 17. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ—may give us the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him.* But as here and in other cases, prayers and means should be joined together; so one of the principal means of right knowledge of the principal object of our faith, and ground of our hope, is to meditate on the glory of that object, asserted so strongly in this text, and that by one, who formerly had as diminishing thoughts of it, as any of its enemies can have.

In the verses preceding the text, the apostle tells the Galatians, what some false teachers among them gloried in; here he tells what he gloried in himself. They gloried in the old ceremonies of the Jewish law, which were but shadows; he gloried *in the cross of Christ*, the substance: he knew it was an affront to the substance, to continue these shadows in their former force, after the substance itself appeared, therefore he regrets that practice with zeal, and at the same time confines his own glorying to that blessed object which the shadows were designed to signify. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ*, &c.

Here the apostle sheweth us, both his high esteem of the cross of Christ, and the powerful influence of it upon his mind. The cross of Christ signifies in Scripture, sometimes our sufferings for Christ, sometimes his suffering for us. As the latter is the chief, and most natural sense of the words, so there is reason to think it is the sense of the apostle here: this is the sense of the same expression, in the 12th verse of this

chapter, which speaks of persecution (that is, our suffering) for the cross of Christ, i. e. the doctrine of Christ's cross: besides, it is certain that it is not our sufferings, but Christ's sufferings, which we are chiefly to glory in, to the exclusion of other things; and it is not the former chiefly, but the latter, that mortifies our corruptions, and crucifies the world to us.

The cross of Christ may signify here, not only his death, but the whole of his humiliation, or all the sufferings of his life and death: of which sufferings, the cross was the consummation: the apostle, both here and elsewhere, mentions the cross, to remind us of the manner of his death, and to strengthen in our minds, those impressions which the condescension of that death, had made, or ought to have made in them: that the Author of liberty should suffer the death of a slave; the fountain of honour, the height of disgrace; that the punishments which were wont to be inflicted upon the meanest persons for the highest offences, should be inflicted on the greatest person, that could suffer: this is the object that the apostle gloried in.

There are not two things more opposite, than glory and shame; here the apostle joins them together: the cross in itself is an object full of shame; in this case it appeareth to the apostle full of glory: it had been less remarkable, had he only said, he gloried in his Redeemer's exaltation after he left the world, or in the glory he had with the Father, before he came to it; yea, before the world was: but the object of the apostle's glorying, is the Redeemer, not only considered in the highest state of honour and dignity, but even viewed in the lowest circumstances of disgrace and ignominy, not only as a powerful and exalted, but as a condemned and crucified Saviour.

Glorying signifies the highest degree of esteem; the cross of Christ was an object of which the apostle had the most exalted sentiments, and the most profound veneration; this veneration he took pleasure to avow before the world, and was ready to publish on all occasions; this object so occupied his heart and engrossed his affections, that it left no room for any thing else;

he gloried in nothing else; and, as he telleth us in other places, he counted every thing else but loss and dung, and would know nothing else, and was determined about it. 1 Cor. ii. 2.

The manner of expressing his esteem of this object, has a remarkable force and vehemence in it: *God forbid*, or let it by no means happen; as if he had said, "God forbid, whatever others do, that ever it should be said, that Paul the old persecutor should glory in any thing else, but in the crucified Redeemer; who plucked him as a brand out of the fire, when he was running farther and farther into it; and who pursued him with mercy and kindness, when he was pursuing Him in his members, with fierceness and cruelty. I did it through ignorance (and it is only through ignorance that any despise him;) he has now revealed himself to me, and God forbid that the light that met me near Damascus, should ever go out of my mind; it was a light full of glory, the object it discovered was all glorious, my all in all; and God forbid that I should glory in any thing else."

His esteem of that blessed object was great, and its influence on him proportionable: by it the world was crucified to him, and he was crucified to the world; here is a mutual crucifixion. His esteem of Christ was the cause why the world despised him, and was despised by him; not that the cross made him hate the men of the world, or refuse the lawful enjoyments of it. It allowed him the use of the latter, and obliged him to love the former; but it crucified these corruptions, which are contrary both to the love of our neighbour, and the true enjoyment of the creatures. This is called fighting, warring, wrestling, and killing.—The reason is, because we should look upon sin as our greatest enemy, the greatest enemy of our souls, and of the Saviour of our souls; this was the view the apostle had of sin, and of the corruption that is in the world through lust, (2 Pet. i. 4.) he looked upon it as the murderer of his Redeemer, and this inspired him with a just resentment against it; it filled him with those blessed passions against it mentioned by himself,

2 Cor. vii. 11. as the native fruits of faith, and repentance, zeal, indignation, revenge; that is, such a detestation of sin, as was joined with the most careful watchfulness against it.

This is that crucifying of the world, meant by the apostle: the reason of the expression is, because the inordinate love of worldly things, is one of the chief sources of sin; the cross of Christ gave such a happy turn to the apostle's affections, that the world was no more the same thing to him, that it was to others, and that it had been formerly to himself. His soul was sick of its pomp; and the things he was most fond of before, had now lost their relish with him; its honours appeared now contemptible, its riches poor, its pleasures nauseous; its examples and favours did not allure, nor its hatred terrify him; he considered the love or hatred of men, not chiefly as it affected him, but themselves, by furthering or hindering the success of his doctrine among them; all these things may be included in that *crucifying of the world*, mentioned in the last clause of the verse: but the intended ground of the discourse being the first clause, the doctrine to be insisted on is this.

"That the cross of Christ affords sinners matter of glorying above all other things: yea, that it is in a manner the only thing, they should glory in: the whole humiliation of Christ, and particularly his death, for the sake of sinners, is an object that has such incomparable glory in it, that it becomes us to have the most honourable and exalted thoughts of it." As this is evidently contained in the text, so it is frequently inculcated on us in other scriptures, (2 Cor. iv. 6. 2 Cor. iii. 18. 1 Cor. i. 19. and 24.) it is plain, that when the scriptures speak of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, it is meant chiefly of his glory in the face of Christ crucified; that is, in the work of redemption finished on the cross.

In discoursing on this subject, it will be proper first to consider briefly, what it is to glory in any object; and then, what ground of glorying we have in this blessed object, proposed in the text.

To glory in any object includes these two things; first, a high esteem of it, and then some concern in it. We do not glory in the things we are interested in, unless we esteem them; nor in the things we admire and esteem, unless we are some way interested in them. But although all professing christians are some way concerned to glory in the cross of Christ, because of their outward relation to him, by their baptismal covenant, and because the blessed fruits of his cross are both plainly revealed, and freely offered to them; yet it is those only who have sincerely embraced these offers, that can truly glory in that object. Yet what is their privilege, is the duty of all: all should be exhorted to glory in this object, and to have a high esteem of it; because of its excellency in itself; to fix their hearts on it by faith, because it is offered to them; to shew their esteem of it, by seeking an interest in it; and having a due esteem of it, and obtained an interest in it, to study a frame of habitual triumph in it. But the nature of this happy frame of mind, is best understood, by considering the glory of the object of it.

The ancient prophets, who foretell Christ's coming, appear transported with the view of his glory. Not only the New Testament, but also the Old, represents the Messias as the most remarkable and most honourable person, that ever appeared on the stage of the world: it speaks of him as a glorious governor, a prince, a king, a conqueror; besides other magnificent titles of the greatest dignity; shewing that his government should be extensive and everlasting, and that his glory should fill the whole earth. But, while the prophets foretell his greatness, they foretell also his meanness; they shew indeed he was to be a glorious king, but a king who would be rejected and despised of men; and that after all the great expectation, the world would have of him, he was to pass over the stage of the world, disregarded and unobserved, excepting as to the malicious treatment he was to meet with on it.

About the time of his coming, the Jews were big with hopes of him as the great deliverer, and chief

ornament of their nation. And if history may be credited, even the heathens had a notion about that time, which possibly was derived from the Jewish prophecies, that there was a prince of unparalleled glory, to rise in the east, and even in Judea in particular, who was to found a kind of universal monarchy. But their vain hearts, like that of most men in all ages, were so intoxicated with the admiration of worldly pomp, that that was the only greatness, they had any notion or relish of; this made them form a picture of Him, who was the desire of all nations, very unlike the original.

A king which the world admires, is one of extensive power, with numerous armies, a golden crown and sceptre, a throne of state, magnificent palaces, sumptuous feasts, many attendants of high rank; immense treasures, to enrich them with, and various posts of honour to prefer them to.

Here was the reverse of all this; for a crown of gold, a crown of thorns; for a sceptre, a reed put in his hand, in derision; for a throne, a cross; instead of palaces, not a place to lay his head in; instead of sumptuous feasts to others, ofttimes hungry and thirsty himself; instead of great attendants, a company of poor fishermen, instead of treasures to give them, not money enough to pay tribute, without working a miracle; and the preferment offered them, was to give each of them his cross to bear. In all things, the reverse of worldly greatness from first to last, a manger for a cradle at his birth, not a place to lay his head sometimes in his life, nor a grave of his own at his death.

Here unbelief frets and murmurs, and asks where is all the glory, that is so much extolled? For discovering this, faith needs only look through that thin veil of flesh; and under that low disguise appears the Lord of glory, the king of kings, the Lord of hosts, strong and mighty, (Psalm xxiv. 8.) The Lord mighty in battle; the heavens his throne, the earth his footstool, the light his garments, the clouds his chariots, the thunder his voice, his strength omnipotence, his

riches all-sufficiency, his glory infinite, his retinue the hosts of heaven, and the excellent ones of the earth, on whom he bestows riches unsearchable, an inheritance incorruptible, banquets of everlasting joys, and preferments of immortal honour, making them kings and priests unto God, conquerors, yea and more than conquerors, children of God, and mystically one with himself.

Here appears something incomparably above all worldly glory, though under a mean disguise. But the objection is still against that disguise; yet even that disguise, upon due consideration, will appear to be so glorious, that its very meanness is honourable: it was a glorious disguise, because the designs and effects of it are so; if he suffered shame, poverty, pain, sorrows and death, for a time, it was that we might not suffer these things for ever. That meanness therefore was glorious, because it was subservient unto an infinitely glorious design of love and mercy.

It was subservient more ways than one; it satisfied the penalty of the law, it put unspeakable honour on the commandments of it. It was a part of Christ's design to make holiness, (that is obedience to the law) so honourable, that every thing else should be contemptible in comparison of it; love of worldly greatness, is one of the principal hinderances of it: we did not need the example of Christ to commend earthly grandeur to us, but very much to reconcile us to the contrary, and to make us esteem holiness, though accompanied with meanness; Christ's low state was an excellent mean for this end. There was, therefore, greatness, even in his meanness: other men are honourable by their station, but Christ's station was made honourable by him; he has made poverty and meanness, joined with holiness, to be a state of dignity.

Thus Christ's outward meanness, that disguised his real greatness, was in itself glorious, because of the design of it. Yet that meanness did not wholly becloud it; many beams of glory shone through it.

His birth was mean on earth below: but it was celebrated with Hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air

above; he had a poor lodging, but a star lighted visitants to it from distant countries. Never prince had such visitants so conducted. He had not the magnificent equipage that other kings have, but he was attended with multitudes of patients, seeking, and obtaining healing of soul and body; that was more true greatness, than if he had been attended with crouds of princes: he made the dumb that attended him sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy, the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory: he had no guard of soldiers, nor magnificent retinue of servants; but, as the centurion, that had both, acknowledged, health and sickness, life and death, took orders from him: even the winds and storms, which no earthly power can controul, obeyed him; and death and the grave durst not refuse to deliver up their prey when he demanded it. He did not walk upon tapestry: but when he walked on the sea, the waters supported him: all parts of the creation, excepting sinful men, honoured him as their Creator: he kept no treasure, but when he had occasion for money, the sea sent it to him in the mouth of a fish; he had no barns, nor cornfields, but when he inclined to make a feast, a few loaves covered a sufficient table for many thousands. None of all the monarchs of the world ever gave such entertainment. By these and many such things, the Redeemer's glory shone through his meanness, in the several parts of his life. Nor was it wholly clouded at his death; he had not indeed that fantastic equipage of sorrow, that other great persons have on such occasions. But the frame of nature solemnized the death of its Author; heaven and earth were mourners: the sun was clad in black; and if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth itself trembled under the awful load; there were few to pay the Jewish compliment of rending their garments, but the rocks were not so insensible; they rent their bowels; he had not a grave of his own, but other men's graves opened to him. Death and the grave might be proud of such a tenant in their territories; but he came not there as a subject, but as

an invader, a conqueror ; it was then the king of terrors lost his sting, and on the third day the Prince of life triumphed over him, spoiling death and the grave. But this last particular belongs to Christ's exaltation ; the other instances shew a part of the glory of his humiliation, but it is a small part of it.

The glory of the cross of Christ, which we are chiefly to esteem, is the glory of God's infinite perfections displayed in the work of redemption, as the apostle expresses it, *the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus,* (2 Cor. iv. 6.) *even of Christ crucified,* 1 Cor. ii. 2. It is this which makes any other object glorious, according as it manifests more or less of the perfections of God. This is what makes the works of creation so glorious ; the heavens declare God's glory, and the firmament, his handy-work. And we are inexcusable for not taking more pains to contemplate God's perfections in them ; his almighty power, and incomprehensible wisdom, and particularly his infinite goodness. But the effects of the Divine goodness, in the works of creation are only temporal favours ; the favours purchased to us by the cross of Christ are eternal. Besides, although the works of creation plainly shew that God is in himself good ; yet they also shew that God is just, and that he is displeased with us for our sins ; nor do they point out to us the way how we may be reconciled to him : they publish the Creator's glory : they publish at the same time his laws, and our obligations to obey them. Our consciences tell us we have neglected these obligations, violated these laws, and consequently incurred the lawgiver's displeasure : his works declaring his glory, shew that in his favour is life, and consequently, that in his displeasure is death and ruin ; yea, they lay us in some measure under his displeasure already. Why else do natural causes give so much trouble in life, and pain in death ? From all quarters the works of God revenge the quarrel of his broken law : they give these frail bodies subsistence for a time, but it is a subsistence embittered with many vexations, and at last they crush them, and dissolve them in dust.

The face of nature then is glorious in itself; but it is overcast with a gloom of terror to us; it shews the glory of the judge to the criminal; the glory of the offended sovereign to the guilty rebel: this is not the way to give comfort and relief to a criminal; it is not the way to make him glory and triumph: accordingly, the enemies of the cross of Christ, who refuse to know God, otherwise than by the works of nature, are so far from glorying in the hopes of enjoying God in heaven, that they renounce all those great expectations, and generally deny that there is any such blessedness to be had. Conscience tells us, we are rebels against God: and nature does not shew how such rebels may recover his favour; how in such a well-ordered government, as the divine government must be, the righteous judge and lawgiver may be glorified and the criminal escape; much less how the judge m be glorified, and the criminal obtain glory likewi

The language of nature, though it be plain and in proclaiming the glory of the Creator, yet it is ... and intricate as to his inclination towards guilty creatures: it neither assures peremptorily that we are in a state of despair, nor gives sure footing for our hopes. If we are favourites, whence so many troubles? If we are hopeless criminals, whence so many favours? Nature shews God's glory, and our shame; his law our duty, and consequently, our danger: but about the way of escape, it is silent and dumb: it affords many motives for exciting desires after God; but it shews not the way to get these desires satisfied. Here in the text is an object which gives us better intelligence. It directs us not merely to seek by feeling in the dark, (Acts xvii. 27.) if haply we may find, but to seek him so, as certainly to find him. Unlikely doctrine to a carnal mind: that there should be more of God's glory manifested to us in the face of Christ crucified, than in the face of heaven and earth; the face of Christ, in which sense discovers nothing but marks of pain and disgrace; that bloated, mangled visage, red with gore, covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes, and pale with death, that would be the last object in

which the carnal mind would seek to see the glory of the God of life ; a visage clouded with the horror of death ; it would with more pleasure and admiration, view the same face when transfigured, and shining like the sun in its strength. Divine glory shone indeed then in a bright manner, in that face on the mount ; but not so brightly, as on mount Calvary : this was the more glorious transfiguration of the two. Though all the light in the world, in the sun and stars were collected together, into one stupendous mass of light, it would be but darkness to the glory of this seemingly dark and melancholy object : for it is here, as the apostle expresses it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We all as with open face may behold the glory of God.*

Here shines spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love all at once : none of them darkens or eclipses the other, every one of them gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendor : The just Judge, the merciful Father, and the wise Governor. No other object gives such a display of all these perfections, yea, all the objects we know, give not such a display of any one of them. No where does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound.

By the infinite dignity of Christ's person, his cross gives more honour and glory to the law and justice of God, than all the other sufferings that ever were or will be endured in the world. When the apostle is speaking to the Romans, of the Gospel, he does not tell them only of God's mercy, but also of his justice revealed by it, Rom. i. 18. God's wrath against the unrighteousness of men, is chiefly revealed by the righteousness and sufferings of Christ. The Lord was pleased for his righteousness' sake, Isa. xlii. 21. Both by requiring and appointing that righteousness, he magnified the law and made it honourable : and though that righteousness consists in obedience and sufferings which continue for a time, yet since the remembrance of them will continue for ever, the cross of Christ may be said to give eternal majesty and honour to that law which it satisfied, that awful law, by which the

universe (which is God's kingdom) is governed, to which the principalities and powers of heaven are subject; that law, which in condemning sin banished the devil, and his angels from heaven, our first parents from paradise, and peace from the earth. Considering, therefore, that God is the judge and lawgiver of the world, it is plain that his glory shines with unspeakable brightness in the cross of Christ, as the punishment of sin. But this is the very thing that hinders the lovers of sin from acknowledging the glory of the cross; because it shews so much of God's hatred of what they love It would be useful for removing such prejudices, to consider, that though Christ's sacrifice shews the punishment of sin, yet if we embrace that sacrifice, it only *shews* it to us; it takes it off our hands, it leaves us no more to do with it; and surely the beholding our danger, when we behold it as prevented, serves rather to encrease than lessen our joy; by seeing the greatness of our danger, we see the greatness of our deliverance. The cross of Christ displays the glory of infinite justice, but not of justice only.

Here shines chiefly the glory of infinite mercy. Nothing in the world more lovely, or glorious, than love and goodness itself; and this is the greatest instance of it that can be conceived. God's goodness appears in all his works; this is a principal part of the glory of the creation. We are taught to consider this lower world as a convenient habitation, built for man to dwell in; but, to allude to the apostle's expression, Heb. iii. 3. this gift we are speaking of, should be accounted more worthy of honour than the world, in as much as he who hath built the house, hath more honour than the house.

When God gave us his Son, he gave us an infinitely greater gift than the world; the Creator is infinitely more glorious than the creature, and the Son of God is the Creator of all things. God can make innumerable worlds by the word of his mouth; he has but one only Son, and he spared not his only Son, but gave him to the death of the cross for us all.

God's love to his people is from everlasting to ever-

lasting: but from everlasting to everlasting there is no manifestation of it known, or conceivable by us, that can be compared to this. The light of the sun is always the same, but it shines brightest to us at noon: the cross of Christ was the noon-tide of everlasting love; the meridian splendor of eternal mercy; there were many bright manifestations of the same love before; but they were like the light of the morning, that shines more and more unto the perfect day; and that perfect day was when Christ was on the cross, when darkness covered all the land.

Comparisons can give but a very imperfect view of this love which passeth knowledge: though we should suppose all the love of all the men that ever were, or shall be on the earth, and all the love of the angels in heaven, united in one heart, it would be but a cold heart to that which was pierced with the soldier's spear. The Jews saw but blood and water, but faith can discern a bright ocean of eternal love flowing out of these wounds. We may have some impression of the glory of it, by considering its effects; we should consider all the spiritual and eternal blessings, received by God's people for four thousand years before Christ was crucified, or that have been received since, or that will be received till the consummation of all things; all the deliverances from eternal misery; all the oceans of joy in heaven; the rivers of water of life, to be enjoyed to all eternity, by multitudes as the sand of the sea shore. We should consider all these blessings as flowing from that love, that was displayed in the cross of Christ.

Here shines also the glory of the incomprehensible wisdom of God, which consists in promoting the best ends by the fittest means. The ends of the cross are best in themselves, and the best for us that can be conceived; the glory of God, and the good of man: and the means by which it advances these ends, are so fit and suitable, that the infinite depth of contrivance in them will be the admiration of the universe to eternity.

It is an easy thing to conceive the glory of the

Creator, manifested in the good of an innocent creature; but the glory of the righteous judge manifested in the good of the guilty criminal, is the peculiar mysterious wisdom of the cross. It is easy to conceive God's righteousness declared in the punishment of sins; the cross alone *declares his righteousness in the remission of sins*, (Rom. iii. 25.) It magnifies justice in the way of pardoning sin, and mercy in the way of punishing it. It shews justice more awful than if mercy had been excluded, and mercy more amiable than if justice had been dispensed with; *it magnifies the law, and makes it honourable*, (Isa. xlii. 21.) It magnifies the criminal who broke the law; and the respect put upon the law, makes him honourable likewise, (1 Cor. ii. 7.) yea, this is so contrived, that every honour done to the criminal, is an honour done to the law, and all the respect put upon the law, puts respect also on the criminal; for every blessing the sinner receives, is for the sake of obedience and satisfaction made to the law, not by himself, but by another, who could put infinitely greater dignity on the law: and the satisfaction of that other for the sinner, puts the greatest dignity on him that he is capable of. Both the law and the sinner may *glory in the Cross of Christ*. Both of them receive eternal honour and glory by it.

The glories that are found separately in the other works of God, are found united here. The joys of heaven glorify God's goodness, the pains of hell glorify his justice; the cross of Christ glorifies both of them in a more remarkable manner than heaven or hell glorifies any of them. There is more remarkable honour done to the justice of God by the sufferings of Christ, than by the torments of devils; and there is a more remarkable display of the goodness of God, in the redemption of sinners, than in the joy of angels: so that we can conceive no object, in which we can discover such manifold wisdom, or so deep contrivance for advancing the glory of God.

The like may be said of its contrivance for the good of man. *It heals all his diseases, it pardons all his sins*, (Psa. ciii.) It is the sacrifice that removes the

guilt of sin, it is the motive that removes the love of of sin ; it mortifies sin and expiates it. It atones for disobedience, it excites to obedience ; it purchases strength for obedience, it makes obedience practicable, it makes it delightful, it makes it acceptable, it makes it in a manner unavoidable, it constrains to it, 2 Cor. v. 14. It is not only the motive to obedience, but the pattern of it. It satisfies the curse of the law, and fulfils the commands of it. Love is the fulfilling of the law, the sum of which is the love of God, and of our neighbour. The cross of Christ is the highest instance of both : Christ's sufferings are to be considered as actions : never action gave such glory to God, never action did such good to man : and it is the way to shew our love to God and man, by promoting the glory of the one, and the good of the other.

Thus the sufferings of Christ teach us our duty by that love whence they flowed, and that good for which they were designed : but they teach us, not only by the design of them, but also by the manner of his undergoing them. Submission to God, and forgiveness of our enemies, are two of the most difficult duties ; the former is one of the chief expressions of love to God, and the latter of love to man ; but the highest submission is, when a person submits to suffering, though free of guilt ; and the highest forgiveness is, to forgive our murderers ; especially if the murderers were persons who were obliged to us ; as if a person not only should forgive them who took away his life, even though they owed him their own life, but also desire others to forgive them, pray for them, and as much as possible, excuse them. This was the manner of Christ's bearing his sufferings ; *Father, thy will be done :* and, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Thus we see how fit a mean the cross is for promoting the best ends, for justification and sanctification : It would be too long to insist here in shewing its manifold fitness, for promoting also joy and peace here, and everlasting happiness hereafter : for no doubt, it will be a great part of the future happiness, to remember the way it was purchased, and to see the Lamb

that was slain, at the right hand of him, that gave him for that end. The things already adduced shew that the incomprehensible wisdom of God, is gloriously displayed in the cross of Christ, because it hath such amazing contrivance in it for advancing the good of man, as well as the glory of God: for that is the design of it, to shew the glory of God, and good-will towards man.

But it is not only the glory of divine Wisdom that shines in this blessed object, but also the glory of divine power. This to them who know not Christ is no small paradox: but to them who believe, *Christ crucified, is the wisdom of God and the power of God,* (1 Cor. i. 24.) The Jews thought Christ's crucifixion a demonstration of his want of power: hence they upbraided him, that he, who wrought so many miracles, suffered himself to hang on the cross: but this itself was the greatest miracle of all. They asked, why he, who saved others, saved not himself; they named the reason without taking heed to it; that was the very reason why at that time he saved not himself, because he saved others; because he was willing and able to save others: the motive of his enduring the cross was powerful, divine love, stronger than death; the fruits of it powerful, divine grace, the power of God to salvation, (Rom. i. 16.) making new creatures, raising souls from the dead; these are acts of Omnipotence. We are ready to admire chiefly the power of God in the visible world, but the soul of man is a far nobler creature than it: We justly admire the power of the Creator in the motion of the heavenly bodies, but the motion of souls to God as their centre, is far more glorious; the effects of the same power far more eminent, and far more lasting.

The wounds of Christ seemed effects of weakness; but it is easy to observe incomparable strength appearing in them: we should consider what it was that bruised him; *he was bruised for our iniquities*; the Scripture represents them (Isa. liii.) as a great burden; and describes us all lying helpless under it, as a people laden with iniquity. Christ bore our sins in his own

body on the tree; he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; not these we feel here only, but those we deserved to feel hereafter: we should consider who laid this burden on him; *the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all*, (Isa. liii. 6.) We might well say with Cain, our punishment was more than we were able to bear; this might be said to every one of us apart; but it was not the sins of one that he bore, he bore the sins of many, of multitudes, as the sand on the sea shore, and the sins of every one of them, as numerous. This was the heaviest, and most terrible weight in the world.

The curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world. They who first brought it on themselves found it so: It sunk legions of angels, who excel in strength, when they had abused that strength against the law, from the heaven of heavens, to the bottomless pit. The same weight that had crushed rebel angels, threatened man for joining with them. Before man could bear it; before any person could have his own proportion of it. It behoved, as it were, to be divided into numberless parcels: man, after numberless ages, would have borne but a small part of it; *the wrath to come* would have been always wrath to come, to all eternity; there would have been still infinitely more to bear. Christ only had strength to bear it all, to bear it all, in a manner at once; to bear it all, alone; none of the people were with him; our burden and our help was laid on one who was mighty: And his bearing it, was a glorious manifestation of his might, of the noblest kind of might, that he was *mighty to save*.

It is true, that load bruised him; but we would not be surprised at that, if we considered the dreadfulness of the shock. Could we conceive the weight of eternal justice, ready to fall down, like lightning, with violence upon a world of malefactors, and view that sacred body interposed betwixt the load of wrath from above, and the heirs of wrath below, we would not wonder at these bruises, we would not despise them. We should consider the event, had that wrath fallen lower; had it met with no obstacle, it would

have made havoc of another kind; this world would have been worse than a chaos, and been covered with the dismal effects of vindictive justice and Divine righteous vengeance.

Although his sacred flesh was both mangled and marred with that dismal load, yet we should consider that it sustained it. Here was incomparable strength, that it sustained that shock which would have grinded mankind into powder; and he sustained it (as was said before) alone. He let no part of it fall lower: they who take sanctuary under this blessed covert, are so safe, that they have no more to do with that load of wrath but to look to it, John iii. 14. To allude to the Psalmist's expressions, Psalm xci. 7, 8. *It shall not come nigh them; only with their eyes they shall behold, and see the reward of their wickedness;* but they shall see it given to that righteous One; and all that in effect is left to them in this matter, is by faith to look and behold what a load of vengeance was hovering over their guilty heads, and now that guiltless and spotless body interposed; they'll see it crushed at a sad rate: but it is the end of the conflict, that shews on what side the victory is; in that dreadful struggle, Christ's body was brought as low as the grave; but, though the righteous fall, he rises again. Death was undermost in the struggle, 1 Cor. xv. 27. 'twas Christ that conquered in falling, and completed the conquest in rising. The cause, design, and effects of these wounds, shew incomparable power and strength appearing in them; the same strength appeared in his behaviour under them, and the manner in which he bore them, we see in the history of his death. He bore them with patience, and with pity and compassion towards others. A small part of his sorrow would have crushed the strongest spirit on earth to death.—The constitution of man is not able to bear too great violence of joy or grief; either the one or the other is sufficient to unhinge our frame. Christ's griefs were absolutely incomparable, but his strength was a match for them.

These considerations serve to shew that it is the

greatest stupidity, to have diminishing thoughts of the wounds of the Redeemer! yet, because this has been the stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles, and many professing Christians have not suitable impressions of it, it is proper to consider this subject a little more particularly. It is useful to observe how the Scripture represents the whole of Christ's humiliation as one great action, by which he defeated the enemies of God and man, and founded a glorious, everlasting monarchy; the prophets, and particularly the Psalmist, speak so much of Christ, as a powerful conqueror, whose enemies were to be made his footstool, that the Jews do still contend that their Messiah is to be a powerful temporal prince, and a great fighter of battles, one who is to subdue their enemies by fire and sword, and by whom they themselves are to be raised above all the nations of the world. If pride and the love of earthly things did not blind them, it were easy to see that the descriptions of the prophets are vastly too high, to be capable of so low a meaning: this will be evident by taking a short view of them; which at the same time will shew the glory of that great action just now spoken of, by shewing the greatness of the design, and the effects of it.

The prophets ofttimes speak more expressly of the Messias as a great King, which is a name of the greatest earthly dignity. The hand of Pilate was overruled to cause write that title of honour even on his cross: the glory of the kingdom that he was to found, is represented in very magnificent expressions by the prophet Daniel, chap. ii. 35. 45. and chap. vii. 9, 10, 13, 14. Here are lively representations of unparalleled greatness, an everlasting kingdom to be founded, strong obstacles to be removed, powerful enemies to be defeated.

It is useful to observe the universal importance of this design: No part of the universe was unconcerned in it.

The glory of the Creator was eminently to be displayed, all the divine persons were to be gloriously manifested, the divine attributes to be magnified, the

divine works and ways to be honoured; the earth was to be redeemed, hell conquered, heaven purchased, the law to be magnified and established, Isa. xlii. 21. Its commandments to be fulfilled, its curse to be suffered, the law was to be satisfied, and the criminal that broke it be saved, and his tempter and accuser, to be defeated; the head of the old serpent was to be bruised, his works to be destroyed, and the principalities and powers of darkness to be spoiled, and triumphed over openly, Col. ii. 15. The principalities and powers of heaven were to receive new matter of everlasting Hallelujahs, and new companions to join in them, the fallen angels were to lose their old subjects, and the blessed angels to receive new fellow-citizens: No wonder this is called the making a new heaven, and a new earth; and even the face of hell was to be altered. Surely a more glorious design cannot be contrived; and the more we consider it, the more we may see the greatness of the action, that accomplished it.

As the design was great, the preparations were solemn. The stage of it was to be this earth; it was chiefly concerned in it: it was solemnly prepared for it. This is the view given us of the providences that preceded it; they fitted the stage of the world, for the great event, in the fulness of time. If we saw clearly the whole chain of them, we would see how they pointed towards this as their centre, and how they contributed to honour it, or rather it reflected the greatest honour upon them. The forecited prophecies in Daniel, besides several others, are instances of this: they shew how the great revolutions in the heathen world were subservient to this design, particularly the succession of the four monarchies represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream: their rise and overthrow, were subservient to the rise of this monarchy, never to be overthrown.

We see but a small part of the chain of providence, and even that very darkly: but this perhaps is worth the observing briefly, that universal empire came gradually from the eastern to the western parts of the

world, from the Assyrians and Persians, to the Greeks and Romans; by this means, greater communication and correspondence than formerly was opened up between distant nations of the earth, from the rising to the setting of the sun. The kingdom, represented by the stone cut out of the mountain, was to extend to both: Dan. ii. 34, 35. However we think of this, it is certain, that if we saw the plot of providence unfolded, we would see these and other revolutions, contributing to the fulness of times, and adjusting the world to that state and form of things, that was fittest for the Redeemer's appearance.

These were a part of the preparations for the work in view: but they were but a part of them: for all the sacrifices offered every morning and evening for so many ages, were preparations for it, and shadows of it: the same may be said of other figures and types. The church of God, for four thousand years, waited with longing looks for this salvation of the Lord: they were refreshed with the sacrifices that prefigured it: the Heathens themselves had their sacrifices; they had sinfully lost the tradition of the true religion, and the Messiah, handed down from Noah; yet Providence ordered it so, that they did not wholly lose the rite of sacrificing. There is reason to acknowledge a particular providence preserving tradition in this point; for how otherwise could it enter into men's heads, to serve their gods by sacrificing their beasts? it was useful that the world should not be entirely unacquainted with the notion of a sacrifice: the substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty, all pointed towards this great oblation, which was to make all others to cease. The predictions of the prophets in different ages, from Moses to Malachi, were also preparations for this great event. John the Baptist appeared as the morning-star, the harbinger of the Day-spring from on high: it was his particular office to prepare the way of the Lord before him. The evidence of the prophecies was bright; the Jews saw the time approaching; their expectations were big. Counterfeit Messiah took advantage of it; and not only the

Jews, but even the heathens, probably by report from them, had a notion of an incomparably great person who was to appear about that time: These, besides many other great things, serve to shew what glorious preparations and pomp went before the great work we are speaking of.

Here it may perhaps occur to some, that it is strange, an action that had such great preparations before it happened, was so little observed when it did happen. Strictly speaking, this was not true; it was not much noticed indeed among blind and ignorant men; this was foretold; but it had a noble theatre, the whole universe were, in effect, spectators of it. The scripture teacheth us to reflect on this; particularly, to consider the principalities and powers in heavenly places, as attentive onlookers on this glorious performance: we may infer this (besides other scriptures) from Eph. iii. 10.

These morning-stars shouted for joy, and sang together at the old creation, Job xxxviii. 7. This was a new creation to sing at, a more amazing spectacle than the old; in that, the Son of God acted in the form of God; now, he was to act in the low form of a servant. Nor was that the lowest part of it, he was to suffer in the form of a criminal: the judge in the form of a malefactor; the law-giver in the room of the rebel. The creation was a mean theatre for so great an event, and the noblest creatures unworthy judges of such an incomprehensible performance; its true glory was the approbation of its infinite contriver, and that He, at whose command it was done, was fully well pleased with it.

Yet to us, on whose natures example has so much influence, it may be useful to consider that honourable croud of admirers and spectators that this performance had, and to reflect how heaven beheld with veneration, what was treated on earth with contempt; it was a large theatre, multitudes as sand on the sea-shore, a glorious company. In scripture, angels, in comparison of men, are called gods; we arenot sensible of their glory; which struck prophets almost

dead with fear, and tempted an apostle to idolatry; but these, when the first begotten is brought into the world, (Heb. i. 6. compared with Psalm xcvii. 7.) all these gods are commanded to worship him; the place of scripture where angels are called gods, is the place where they are commanded to worship Christ: and according to the same apostle, Heb. i. 6. it was a special time of his receiving this glory from the hosts of heaven, when his glory was to be veiled among the inhabitants of the earth. It is evident that they were spectators of all that he did in that state, and no doubt they were attentive spectators; they desired to look, as it were, with outstretched necks, into these things, 1 Pet. i. 12. nor could they be unconcerned spectators: they were on divers accounts interested in it; they did not need a redemption themselves; but they delighted in ours: they loved Christ, and they loved his people: their love interested them in the glory of the one and the other. All we know of their work and office, as Luther expresses it, is to sing in heaven, and minister on earth: our *redemption* gave occasion for both; they sang for joy when it began at Christ's birth, Luke ii. 13. they went with gladness on messages of it beforehand, to the prophets, and to the virgin Mary: they fed Christ in the desert, they attended him in his agony, and at his resurrection, and accompanied him, at his ascension; they were concerned to look into these things in time, that were to be remembered to all eternity; and into that performance on earth, that was to be the matter of eternal hallelujahs in heaven.

It should not therefore hinder our esteem of this great work, that the great men on earth took no notice of it; they were but mean, blind, ignorant, vulgar, compared to these powers and thrones just now mentioned, who beheld it with veneration: it is no disparagement to an excellent performance, that it is not admired by ignorant persons, who do not understand it.

The principalities in heaven understood, and therefore admired; nor were the principalities and powers of darkness wholly ignorant of it; Their example

should not be a pattern to us ; but, what they beheld with anguish, we should behold with transport. Their plot was to make the earth, if possible, a province of hell ; they had heard of that glorious counterplot ; they were alarmed at the harbingers of it ; they looked on, and saw their plot step by step defeated, and the projects of eternal mercy going on. All the universe, therefore, were interested onlookers at this blessed undertaking : heaven looked on with joy, and hell with terror, to observe the event of an enterprize that was contrived from everlasting, expected since the fall of man, and that was to be celebrated to all eternity.

Thus we have before us several things that shew the glory of the performance in view : the Design, of universal importance ; the Preparation, incomparably solemn ; a company of the most honourable attentive Spectators. As to the performance itself, 'tis plain it is not a subject for the tongues of men ; the tongues of men are not for a subject above the thoughts of angels : they are but desiring to look into it, they have not seen fully through it ; that is the work of Eternity. Men may speak and write of it, but it is not so properly to describe it, as to tell that it cannot be described : we may write about it, but if all its glory were described, the world would not contain its books, John xxi. 25. we may speak of it, but the most we can say about it, is to say that it is unspeakable : and the most that we know is, that it passes knowledge : it is he that performed this work, that can truly declare it, it is he who contrived, that can describe it. It is he who knows it : none knows the Father but the Son, or he to whom he shall reveal him. It is from him we should seek this knowledge, Eph. i. 17. what of it is to be had here, is but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. but it leads us to the place where it will be perfect. Here we think as children, we speak as children ; yet we are not therefore to neglect thinking or speaking of it ; our thoughts are useless without contemplating it, our speech useless without praising it : The rest of the history of the world, except as it relates to this, is but

a history of trifles or confusions, dreams and vapours of sick-brained men. What we can know of it here, is but little; but that little, incomparably transcends all other knowledge: and all other earthly things, are but loss and dung to it, Phil. iii. 8, 11. The least we can do, is with the angels to desire to look into these things, and we should put up these desires to him, who can satisfy them, that he may shine in our hearts, by the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The true object of this knowledge, is the glory of God; the means of obtaining it, is *light shining* from God; and as to the place into which it shines, it is into our hearts: we are therefore to desire that light from him who is light itself; but our prayers should be joined with other means; particularly that meditation, which Paul recommends to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 15. we ought to meditate on these things so as to give ourselves wholly to them; our meditation should be as lively, and as like to seeing the object before us as possible: but it is not by strength of imagination that the soul is profited in this case, but by having the eyes of the understanding enlightened, Eph. i. 18.

The makers and worshippers of images pretend to help us in this matter, by pictures presented to the eye of the body? but it is not the eye of sense or force of imagination, but the eye of faith, that can give us true notions, and right conceptions of this object, 2 Cor. v. 16. Men may paint Christ's outward sufferings, but not that inward excellency from whence their virtue flowed, *viz.* his glory in himself, and his goodness to us. Men may paint one crucified, but how can that distinguish the Saviour from the criminals on each side of him; we may paint his hands and his feet fixed to the cross, but who can paint how these hands used always to be stretched forth for relieving the afflicted, and curing the diseased; or how these feet went always about doing good; and how they cure more diseases, and do more good now than ever? we may paint the outward appearance of his sufferings, but not the inward bitterness or invisible causes of

them: men can paint the cursed tree, but not the curse of the law that made it so: men can paint Christ bearing the cross to Calvary, but not Christ bearing the sins of many: we may describe the nails piercing his sacred flesh, but who can describe eternal justice piercing both flesh and spirit? we may describe the soldier's spear, but not the arrows of the Almighty; the cup of vinegar which he but tasted, but not the cup of wrath which he drank out to the lowest dregs; the derision of the Jews, but not the desertion of the Almighty forsaking his Son, that he might never forsake us who were his enemies.

These sorrows he suffered, and the benefits he purchased, are equally beyond description. Though we describe his hands and his feet mangled and pierced, who can describe, how in one hand as it were he grasped multitudes of souls ready to sink into ruin, and in the other hand an everlasting inheritance to give them; or how these bruised feet crushed the old Serpent's head, and trampled on Death and Hell, and Sin, the author of both. We may describe the blood issuing from his body, but not the waters of life streaming from the same source, oceans of spiritual and eternal blessings: we may paint how that blood covered his own body, but not how it sprinkles the souls of others, yea, sprinkles many nations: we may paint the crown of thorns he wore, but not the crown of glory he purchased. Happy were it for us if our faith had as lively views of this object, as our imaginations ofttimes have of incomparably less important objects, then would the pale face of our Saviour shew more powerful attractives, than all the brightest objects in nature besides. Notwithstanding of the gloomy aspect of death, it would discover such transcendent majesty, as would make all the glory in the world lose its relish with us; we would see then indeed the awful frowns of justice, but these frowns are not at us, but at our enemies, our murderers, that is, our sins. The cross shews Christ pitying his own murderers, but shews no pity to our murderers; therefore, we may see the majesty of eternal justice, tempered with the mildness of infinite

compassion ; infinite pity is an object worth looking to, especially by creatures in distress and danger ; there Death doth appear in state, as the executioner of the law, but there he appears also deprived of his sting with regard to us ; there we may hear also the sweetest melody in the world to the awakened sinner : that peace-speaking blood, that speaks better things than that of Abel ; the sweetest and loudest voice in the world, louder than the thunder on Sinai : its voice reacheth heaven and earth, pleading with God, in behalf of men, and beseeching men, to be reconciled to God ; speaking the most comfortable and the most seasonable things in the world, to objects in distress and danger, that is, *salvation* and *deliverance.*

Of the various views we can take of this blessed work, this is the most suitable, to consider it as the most glorious deliverance that ever was or will be.—Other remarkable deliverances of God's people are considered as shadows and figures of this : Moses, Joshua, David, and Zerubabel, were types of this great Joshua ; according to his name, so is he JESUS, a deliverer. The number of the persons delivered, shew the glory of this deliverance, to be unparalleled ; it was but one single nation that Moses delivered, though indeed it was a glorious deliverance, relieving sixty thousand at once, and a great deal more ; but this was incomparably more extensive ; the apostle John calls the multitude of the redeemed, a multitude that no man could number, (Rev. vii. 9.) of all nations, kindreds, people and tongues. The unparalleled glory of this deliverance appears not only in the number of the delivered, but also in the Nature of the deliverance. It was not men's bodies only that it delivered, but immortal souls, more valuable than the world, Matth. xvi. 26. it was not from such a bondage as that of Egypt, but one as far beyond it, as eternal misery is worse than temporal bodily toil : so that nothing can equal the wretchedness of the state from which they are delivered, but the blessedness of that to which they are brought.

But here we should not forget the Opposition made

against this deliverance: it was the greatest that can withstand any good design. The apostle (Eph. vi. 12.) teaches to consider the opposition of flesh and blood, as far inferior to that of principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places: the devil is called the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. and himself and his angels, the rulers of the darkness of this world, Eph. vi. 12. They had obtained a dominion over the world, (excepting that small corner Judea,) for many ages, by the consent of the inhabitants: they found them not only pliable, but fond of their chains, and in love with their bondage. But they had heard of this intended enterprise of supreme power and mercy, this invasion and descent upon their dominions: they had heard of the design of bruising their head, overturning their government, making their slaves to revolt. Long experience had made them expert in the black art of perdition: long success made them confident, and their malice still pushed them on to opposition, whatever be the success. As they were no doubt apprized of this designed deliverance, and alarmed at the signs of its approach; they made all preparations to oppose it, mustered all their forces, employed all their skill, and, as all was at stake, made their last efforts for a kind of decisive engagement; they armed every proper instrument, and set every engine of spiritual destruction a working; temptations, persecutions, violence, slander, treachery, counterfeit Messiahs, and the like.

Their Adversary appeared in a form that did not seem terrible; not only as a man, but as one despised of the people, Psal. xxii. 6. accounted as a worm, and no man: but this made the event more glorious; it was a spectacle worth the admiration of the universe, to see the despised Galilean turn all the artillery of hell back upon itself: to see one in the likeness of the Son of man, wresting the keys of hell and death out of the hands of the devil: to see him entangling the rulers of darkness in their own nets, and making them ruin their designs with their own stratagems. They made one disciple betray him, and another deny him; they made the Jews accuse him, and the Romans crucify him; but the wonderful Counsellor was more

than match for the old serpent; and the Lion of the tribe of Judah too hard for the roaring lion. The devices of these powers of darkness, were in the event made means of spoiling and triumphing over themselves, Col. ii. 15. The greatest cruelty of devils, and their instruments, was made subservient to the designs of the infinite mercy of God; and that hideous sin of the sons of men, over-ruled in a perfectly holy manner, for making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness, Dan. ix. 24. The opposition made to this deliverance, did but advance its glory, particularly the opposition it met with from these, for whose good it was intended; that is, sinners themselves: this served to enhance the glory of mysterious long-suffering and mercy.

It would take a long time to insist on all the opposition he met with, both from the enemy of sinners, and from sinners themselves; but at last he weathered the storm, surmounted difficulties, led captivity captive, obtained a perfect conquest, purchased an everlasting inheritance, founded an everlasting kingdom, triumphed on the cross, died with the publishing his victory in his mouth, That it was finished.

The world is represented as silent before the Lord, when he rose up to work this great deliverance. And, as was shown before, no part of the world was unconcerned in it: the expectation was great, but the performance could not but surpass it: every part of it was perfect, and every circumstance graceful; nothing deficient, nothing superfluous, nothing but what became the dignity of the person, and the eternal wisdom of the contrivance. Every thing was suited to the glorious design, and all the means proportioned to the end: the foundation of the everlasting kingdom was laid, before it was observed by the men that opposed it, and so laid that it was impossible for the gates of hell to prevail against it; all things adjusted for completing the deliverance, and for securing it against all endeavours and attempts to overturn it. The great Deliverer in that low disguise, wrought through his design, so as none could oppose it without advancing it, to the full satisfaction of that infinite wisdom that devised it,

and the eternal admiration of the creatures that beheld it.

The Father was well pleased; heaven and earth rejoiced, and was astonished: the powers of hell fell down like lightning: in heaven, loud acclamations and applauses, and new songs of praises began that are not ended yet, and never will; they will still increase; still new redeemed criminals from earth, saved from the gates of hell, and entering the gates of heaven, with a new song of praises in their mouths, add to the ever-growing melody, of which they shall never weary; for that is their rest, their labour of love, never to rest, day nor night, giving praise and glory to him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb at his right hand, who redeemed them from all nations and tongues, washing them in his own blood, and making them kings and priests unto God.

But still an objection may be made concerning the little honour and respect this work met with on earth, where it was performed. This, duly considered, instead of being an objection, is a commendation of it. Sin had so corrupted the taste of mankind, that it had been a kind of reflection on this work, if it had suited it: herein the beauty of it appears, that it was above that depraved, wretched taste which it was designed to cure; and that it did actually work that change on innumerable multitudes of nations.

If the cross of Christ met with much contempt on earth, it met also with incomparable honour: it made the greatest revolution in the world that ever happened since the creation, or that ever will happen till Shiloh come again: a more glorious, a more lasting change than ever was produced, by all the princes and conquerors in the world: it conquered multitudes of souls, and established a sovereignty over mens' thoughts, wills, and affections: this was a conquest to which human power hath no proportion. Persecutors turned apostles: and vast numbers of Pagans, after knowing the cross of Christ, suffered death and torments cheerfully to honour it. The growing light shone from East to West; and opposition was not only useless, but subservient to it. The changes it produced, are some-

times described by the prophets in the most magnificent expressions; thus, for instance, Isa. xxxv. 7. *It turned the parched ground into pools of waters, made the habitations of dragons to become places of grass, and reeds, and rushes; made wildernesses to bud and blossom as the rose.* It wrought this change among us, in the utmost isles of the Gentiles: we ought to compare our present privileges with the state of our forefathers, before they knew this blessed object; and we will find it owing to the glory of the cross of Christ, that we who are met here to day, to worship the living God, in order to the eternal enjoyment of him, are not worshipping sun, moon, and stars, or sacrificing to idols.

But the chief effects of the cross of Christ, and which shew most of its glory, are its inward effects on the souls of men. There, (as was before hinted) it makes a new creation; Christ is formed in them, the source and the hope of glory: this is a glorious workmanship; the image of God on the soul of man: but since these effects of the cross of Christ are secret, and the shame put upon it ofttimes too public, and since human nature is so much influenced by example; it will be useful to take such a view of the honour done to this object, as may arm us against the bad example of stupid unbelievers.

The cross of Christ is an object of such incomparable brightness, that it spread a glory round it to all the nations of the earth, all the corners of the universe, all the generations of time, and all the ages of eternity. The greatest actions or events that ever happened on earth, filled, with their splendor and influence, but a moment of time, and a point of space: the splendor of this great object fills immensity, and eternity. If we take a right view of its glory, we will see it contemplated with attention, spreading influence and attracting looks from times past, present, and to come; heaven, earth, and hell, angels, saints, devils. We will see it to be both the object of the deepest admiration of the creatures, and the perfect approbation of the infinite Creator; we will see the best part of mankind, the church of God for four thousand years, looking forward to it before it happened; new generations

yet unborn rising up to admire and honour it, in continual successions, till time shall be no more: innumerable multitudes of angels and saints looking back to it with holy transport, to the remotest ages of eternity. Other glories decay by length of time: if the splendor of this object change, it will be only by increasing. The visible sun would spend his beams in process of time, and as it were, grow dim with age; this object hath a rich stock of beams, which eternity cannot exhaust: If saints and angels grow in knowledge, the splendor of this object will be still increasing; 'tis unbelief that intercepts its beams; unbelief takes place only on earth, there is no such thing in heaven or in hell. It will be a great part of future blessedness, to remember the object that purchased it; and of future punishment, to remember the object that offered deliverance from it: It will add life to the beams of love in heaven, and make the flames of hell burn fiercer; its beams will not only adorn the regions of light, but pierce the regions of darkness: it will be the desire of the saints in light, and the great eye-sore of the Prince of darkness and his subjects.

Its glory produces powerful effects wherever it shines; they who behold this glory are transformed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. An Ethiopian may look long enough to the visible sun before it change his black colour; but this does it; it melts cold and frozen hearts, it breaks stony hearts, it pierces adamants, it penetrates through thick darkness How justly is it called marvellous light? 1 Pet. ii. 9. It gives eyes to the blind to look to itself, and not only to the blind, but to the dead: it is the light of life, a powerful light, its energy is beyond the force of thunder; and it is more mild than the dew on the tender grass.

But it is impossible fully to describe all its effects, unless we could fully reckon up all the spiritual and eternal evils it prevents, all the riches of grace and glory it purchases, and all the divine perfections it displays. It has this peculiar to it, that as it is full of glory itself, it communicates glory to all that behold it aright: it gives them a glorious robe of righteousness; their God is their glory; it calls them to glory and

virtue; it gives them the spirit of God and of glory; it gives them joy unspeakable, and full of glory here, and an exceeeding great and eternal weight of glory hereafter.

It communicates a glory to all other objects, according as they have any relation to it: it adorns the universe; it gives a lustre to nature, and to providence; it is the greatest glory of this lower world, that its Creator was for a while its inhabitant: a poor landlord thinks it a lasting honour to his cottage, that he has once lodged a Prince or Emperor; with how much more reason may our poor cottage, this earth, be proud of it that the Lord of glory was its tenant from his birth to his death; yea, that he rejoiced in the habitable parts of it, before it had a beginning, even from everlasting, Prov. viii. 31.

It is the glory of the world that he who formed it, dwelt on it; of the air, that he breathed in it; of the sun, that it shone on him; of the ground, that it bore him; of the sea, that he walked on it; of the elements, that they nourished him; of the waters, that they refreshed him; of us men, that he lived and died among us; yea, that he lived and died for us; that he assumed our flesh and blood, and carried it to the highest heavens, where it shines as the eternal ornament and wonder of the creation of God. It gives also a lustre to providence; it is the chief event that adorns the records of time, and enlivens the history of the universe: it is the glory of the various great lines of providence, that they point at this as their centre; that they prepared the way for its coming; that after its coming they are subservient to the ends of it; though in a way indeed to us at present mysterious, and unsearchable: thus we know that they either fulfil the promises of the crucified Jesus, or his threatenings: and shew either the happiness of receiving him, or the misery of rejecting him.

SERMON III.

GOD'S CHIEF MERCY.

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ROM. viii. 32.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?

IT is certainly no small defect in our meditations on the work of redemption, and perhaps too common, to think we do justice to it, by considering it merely as a very great mercy. Every mercy, from the sovereign Law-giver of the world to such transgressors of his laws, even the least mercy, is a great mercy. To put this in the same rank with others, with any temporal mercy, with any other spiritual or other eternal mercies, to put it on a level with them in our meditations, our prayers, our praises, on pretence of honouring it is a real indignity to it. It is evident from scripture, we are always in the wrong to it, unless we consider it, not only as a very great mercy, but, as absolutely the *greatest* of all mercies; not only as a high manifestation of love, but as the highest; not only as an excellent gift, but as the *chief gift*: and if this be God's chief gift, it follows plainly, That gratitude for it is our chief duty, ingratitude for it our chief sin; itself should be our chief joy and delight, the chief object of our thoughts and affections, our esteem and desire, that in all things it may have the *pre-eminence*, be chief in all, and all in all.

As the due contemplation of it is in a special manner our principal work at this occasion, so its transcen-

dency over all other mercies is one of the most suitable views we can have of it, and the text before us one of the fittest scriptures to give us that view of it.

The prospect the apostle takes of it in the context is very large and comprehensive; he looks back as far as the first blessed design and purpose of it before the foundation of the world, even from everlasting, and pursues the bright and joyful prospect in its consequences beyond the end of the world, even to everlasting; no wonder such a view of such an object makes him in a manner pause and stop, as overwhelmed with the greatness of the prospect, and as at a loss for words, verse 31. *What shall we say to these things?* He speaks inspired by the Spirit of God, but he is speaking of the love of God, and he is speaking in the language of men. The same apostle, when he is praying for the Ephesians (Eph. iii. 16, 19.) that they might be strengthened by the Spirit to know the love of Christ, after all the Spirit's strengthening of them, says, it passes knowledge: not that any thing can surpass the strength of the Spirit, which is infinite, but the capacity of the creature, which is necessarily finite; and what passes knowledge must needs surpass all expression. All great objects naturally cause difficulty of expression, and perplex the speaker. The apostle Peter in the mount of transfiguration was under such a blessed perplexity of joy and wonder at the view of Christ's glory, that he knew not what he said. This other apostle at the view of Christ's love and its fruits, has at least as much cause to be at a loss what to say to that love and those blessings contained in it; his expression is like that of the author of these blessings, at the view of the sufferings that purchased them, John xii. 27. *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?* No wonder then all the world be troubled what to say, when he who spoke as never man spoke, is so; and no wonder the greatest saints so oft express their gratitude for God's goodness, by acknowledging they cannot express it; What shall we render to the Lord? and what can David say more? We can render nothing, and we can say or think but very little; yet are we

not therefore to say or think nothing; our hearts and tongues would then be useless. We may turn the expression to, What shall we not say? or what shall we not think? There is no want of matter for language, but want of language enough for the matter. It is our duty to say all we can, to say our utmost. This is what the apostle does in our text, *he spared not his own Son*, &c. And then indeed might the apostle say as David did, What can Paul say more? He had before broke out in admiration at the number and greatness of God's blessings; but now, as it were recollecting himself, he shews that though believers receive all things from God, yet in some sense they have but one thing to wonder at, and that after receiving the gift of his Son, they need not doubt nor wonder at any thing else: yea the wonder would be, if, after that, any thing else would be withheld.

In the words we have therefore; First, An account of God's chief gift; Secondly, The connexion between that gift and all others. *First*, an account of God's chief gift, "*he spared not his own Son*, &c."—The word *sparing* has such a double signification in the original, as well as in our language, that the meaning of the apostle's expression may be either, that God did not withhold so great sufferings from Christ, or so great a benefit from us: but it is not very needful to make a distinction here, since his sufferings were for our benefit, and he was given to us when he was delivered up to justice. As to the meaning of his being delivered up for us all, what we are chiefly concerned to consider here is, that the free offer of that gift extends to all to whom it is revealed, and the saving virtue of it to all by whom that offer is embraced; and there is nothing more just than that they who reject it should get no saving benefit by it.

Secondly, The connexion between this gift and all others. Where we may consider separately, 1*st*, The vast extent of the privileges of believers; 2*dly*, The manner they receive them; 3*dly*, The ground of the connexion between the chief gift and all others.

(1.) The vast extent of the privileges of believers.

all things. We have the like expression in several other scriptures, Rev. xxi. 7. 1 Cor. iii. 22. Every thing that contributes to our good, we may in some sense call ours: and this the apostle tells us, (a little before the text, v. 28.) is what the believer may say of all things. On this account necessary afflictions and fatherly chastisements are none of the least privileges, and accordingly are contained in the covenant as promises, though we are very ready, absurdly enough, to understand them for threatenings.

Some of these pretended wise men among the Heathens, whom the apostle elsewhere speaks of, (Rom. i. 22. 1 Cor. i. 20.) and who opposed Christianity, Acts xvii. 18. taught that it was impossible their virtuous man should be a poor man, because, placing virtue in renouncing all desires, he who desired nothing, would want nothing: But this was the language of pride, and the most wilful delusion.

(2.) The words of the text teach us the manner how all things are given to believers, *viz. Freely.* God gives all things with Christ, and therefore gives all things freely. We are told, Psalm lxviii. 18. how Christ received gifts, but it is not said he received them freely. Never gifts were purchased at a dearer rate, or more freely given to others. Believers are bought with a price: but both price and purchase are freely given to them. The meaning is not merely that they give no equivalent, meritorious of the benefits they receive. Adam could not have done that, though he had continued in obedience. The obedient angels did it not, but they gave perfect obedience. What they gave, we are taught the believer receives, perfect obedience, Rom. v. 17, 19. the gift of righteousness. He is indispensibly obliged to personal sincere obedience, but it is not merely a duty; it is a gift, the gift of the Spirit. No gift can be more freely offered than when it is offered to as many as will receive it.—This is the case here, John i. 12. Faith is called a receiving Christ, it receives his righteousness and strength or Spirit, Isa. xlv. 22. yet this receiving itself, this faith, is expressly called the gift of God. So

that these three gifts, the gift of righteousness, of the Spirit, and of faith, prove abundantly, that all things are given freely.

(3.) We are to consider, in the next place, the ground of the connexion between that great gift of the Son of God, and all others. The connexion is supposed to be so evident, that (as is usual in the like cases) the apostle chuses rather to express it by a question, than a positive assertion. There seems to be a twofold connexion in this case taught in the Scripture, the one relating to God's justice and faithfulness, the other to his goodness; Thus as to the first, we are told that God is just to justify the sinner who believes in Christ, Rom. iii 26. The promise of all things is made to faith. There is an intrinsic value in the pearl of price, or the object of faith, to purchase all things. But it is plain, the apostle is not speaking of the connexion between our believing in Christ, and our receiving all things, but between God's giving so great a gift, and his giving all others: so that the connexion here meant relates to goodness, and is the connexion between a great favour or act of goodness, and a less, which, though it lays no obligation on the giver, gives reasonable ground of hope to the receiver. Thus, if a man expose his life for us, we may be sure of any less favour which we need, and which he can spare. There is a great and obvious difference between the bounty of God and that of man: if a man give all things, he will have nothing himself; but God, who gives all things, can receive nothing, and can lose nothing. So that after he hath given the greatest favour, we may expect any other that we need, or that he can spare, and he can spare all that we need. After giving up his Son to justice, he may justly give us all things. And the apostle's meaning is, that after that gift, the believer who has an interest in it, may freely indulge the greatest and largest hopes, and may expect every other gift from God, till he happen to think of a greater gift than his Son.

The connexion therefore between this favour and all others is founded on its transcendency above all

other; so that we may observe these two doctrines in the text. First, That the Son of God is his chief gift. Secondly, That this gift may give a believer assurance of all others. As to the first (which is to be the subject of the ensuing discourse, and most suitable to the present occasion) it is not needful to insist much in shewing how evidently it is contained in the text and other scriptures, when it is plain from the whole tenor of the scriptures that there is a transcendency and pre-eminence of mercy in this manifestation of God's glory beyond all others. Only we may observe, that this transcendency is necessarily supposed in the connexion between giving Christ, and giving all things, whether that connexion be thought to relate to divine justice, or goodness. For as to justice, if there be an intrinsic value in Christ's merit, the gift of righteousness mentioned, Rom. v. 17. that gift itself must be the greatest of all; and as to goodness, it is plain a less favour does not assure us of a greater; but a greater does of a less. And if there were any mercy or any gift greater or equal to Christ, then, instead of the apostle's question, it would be natural and reasonable to form this other question. Though God has given his Son, shall we be sure of such and such other favours? The transcendency therefore of this gift above all others, is as evident as the connexion between it and them; or if there is any difference, it is the more evident of the two, the latter being an inference from the former. Now the apostle supposes that connexion not only to be certain in itself, but so evident and manifest to any believer who considers it, that as it would be the greatest absurdity to deny or doubt of it, so he mentions it as a truth which in a manner it would be superfluous to affirm.

But the transcendency which founds the connexion, however certain and evident in itself, is not so evident, or at least does not make such an impression on the greater part of professing Christians *now*, as to make it superfluous either to assert or inculcate it with all arguments possible; otherwise there would not be such a bias against it, as may be frequently observed

in men's discourse, and their writings on religion, where, if any other objects of spiritual meditation, any other motives to obey God, and to hate sin, can be thought of, they are sure to have the pre-eminence: and this great object, this chief motive, is either treated as if not worth mentioning at all, or at least only by the by.

In discoursing on this doctrine, of the transcendency of the work of redemption above all other mercies, it will be proper to consider, first, some of the principal and most edifying truths included in it; and then, secondly, to shew wherein the transcendency consists.

First. One remarkable truth included in the doctrine, is, the necessity of Christ's sacrifice for our salvation. This is included both in the transcendency of the gift, and the relation of the gift to the giver. 1. As to its transcendency, it is plain, it would not be the greatest gift were it an unnecessary one, and might be wanted. And as to the relation between the giver and the gift, we may be sure a good father always spares his own son, (except where there is some necessity for doing otherwise,) and will not deliver him up to death needlessly. We are not so to understand this necessity, as if God had been obliged to deliver up his Son, either as to his justice, or for the glory of his goodness. It would be a strange government where the sovereign would be obliged either in justice, or even for the honour and reputation of his mercy, to *deliver* every malefactor. If God had been obliged in justice to deliver us from our sin and its punishment, there would have been no necessity of a sacrifice to his justice for our sins. When we read, therefore, the Redeemer's expression in his agony, if it was possible the cup should pass from him, we are not to understand it as if there was any appearance of impossibility in its passing from him, absolutely considered; it was very possible and very easy that it should wholly pass from him. The meaning seems to be, if it was possible it might pass from him without passing to us, which he had a still greater aversion to, than to drinking of it himself.

The necessity therefore to be understood in this case is not the necessity of that sacrifice, absolutely to the glory of God's justice or goodness, but to our relief, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins, Rom. iii. 25. So that as Caiaphas expressed it without understanding it, it was needful one should die, that the whole people might not be destroyed, though it was not in itself necessary that one person should shew so much mercy to prevent that destruction.

It would be too long to consider here all the objections made against our need of that sacrifice. An impartial consideration of them might easily shew, that they flow from ignorance of the nature of God's justice, and our sin. When such an objection occurs to any of us, how can my sin have so much evil in it as to require mine own personal punishment, or so great an atonement for me? we should reflect, that to let disobedience pass unpunished, is to dispense with the law that governs God's universal, everlasting kingdom, and that the same reason that would hold for dispensing with it in favour of any one of us, would hold good for dispensing with it as to any other, or all God's other subjects, and consequently (since time and place can make no difference here) for tolerating universal eternal wickedness, confusion and disorder; and then where would be the use or end of the world or the law?

2. But not to insist on this, in the next place, another important truth included in the doctrine, is, that the chief mercy in the work of redemption was not merely Christ's coming to teach us our duty, which he could do by others, but to purge our sins, which could be done only by himself, Heb. i. 3.

3. That in considering the love of Christ, we are obliged to consider the love of the Father, the first original of all good: and surely it is one design of our baptism, in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, to bind and oblige us to a devout acknowledgment of what each of these adorable persons, does in our redemption; to bless the Father who spared not the Son, and the Son who spared not himself, and the Spirit

who applies the purchase: so it is no small encouragement in appproaching God by Christ, to reflect, that we approach him by a Mediator of his own sending and anointing, one chosen of God and precious.

4. But the truth contained in the doctrine, which especially deserves our careful attention, is this, that the Redeemer is not a mere creature, but a divine person. For surely the way the scriptures, and particularly this text speaks of the Redeemer's peculiar relation to God the Father as being his own Son, and of the transcendency of this gift above all others, is such, as the more it were considered would appear the more unintelligible, if the Redeemer were supposed to be a mere creature. And this is at least a very strong additional evidence to the full and complete proofs of Christ's divinity, drawn from the divine names, attributes, works, and worship, which the scriptures so plainly and so frequently ascribe to him; particularly the transcendency of God's mercy in redemption, is an argument that has a peculiar suitableness to affect our hearts with a rational and lively impression of that great truth; of which there are abundance of other arguments, to convince our judgments.

But before we consider that transcendency, it is useful to observe the name given Christ in the text, *God's own* or proper Son. If that name signified his being produced by God the Father, it would agree to all creatures; if it signified only some imperfect likeness to the nature of the Father, it would agree to all living, and especially all rational creatures; if it signified only the highest resemblance or likeness to God that any creature has, it might agree to many, since no mere creature can have so much of God, but another might be raised to have as much or more; if it signified his being created immediately by the Father, whereas other beings are immediately created by the Son, all other rational creatures might have had the same relation to the Father, and would however have the same relation to Christ, that He hath to God. The name of God's *own Son*, therefore, as it is ascribed to Christ, cannot agree to any mere creature.

But in the next place, as to the transcendency of the gift, which founds the connexion between it and all other gifts; let us consider whether there would be such evidence and force in the apostle's reasoning, supposing the Redeemer a mere creature; as thus: if God delivered up one mere creature to death, how will he not much more deliver numberless multitudes from it? If he delivered up one to temporal sufferings, how will he not deliver so many multitudes from eternal sufferings? If he gave a mere creature, that is, a person infinitely below himself, to temporal pain for us, how will he not give the enjoyment of himself, who is infinitely above all creatures, for our everlasting happiness?

If we observe carefully the way the apostle speaks of *God's own Son*, and *us all*, we may see he supposes that it is evident there is no proportion between him and us, even all of us put together: now as to the distance of any superior mere creature above us, as reason shews it can be but finite, so the scriptures do not make it evident that it is very considerable. All the name or notion the scriptures give us of superior creatures, is, that of angels: man is indeed said to be lower than the angels, but it is only said a little lower, Psal. viii. (the soul of man, being, as some express it, and not altogether without ground, a sort of incarnate angel itself, though alas a fallen one!) The Bible, therefore, does not make it evident to us, that there is such a distance and disproportion between any mere creature and man, as either would make the sacrifice of that mere creature a sufficient atonement for us all, or the chief gift that can be bestowed on us, or greater than all things; whereas, the apostle supposes such a distance between the Son of God, and us all, to be evident and manifest.

When it is not at all called a mystery, that all created spirits should minister to God's people, (Heb. i. and last ver.) how could the incarnation and death of one of them, though the highest, be reckoned such a mystery, as all created spirits should desire with outstretched necks to look into? the mystery of Godli-

ness, the great mystery of it, such a mystery of love as eclipses all others, the heighth and depth of it passing knowledge, as if therein divine mercy and condescension went to the uttermost: and such a favour is absolutely incomparable: whereas, no mere creature can be absolutely incomparable.

These things may naturally make us call to mind, how evidently the scriptures distinguish the nature of the Son of God, from the nature of angels, which is the only created nature superior to our own, that the scripture gives us any notion of. And if no created spirit can possibly be conceived, assuming the nature of another created spirit, (whereas it is supposed Christ could have assumed the nature of angels) this is by the by no small confirmation of that great truth we are speaking of. But not to digress farther from the present argument, *viz.* the transcendency of mercy in redemption; for a clearer view of it, we may distinguish in the whole of that blessed work, these two things, the price, and the purchase; that is, on the one hand, Christ's sacrifice and righteousness: and, on the other, all the spiritual and eternal blessings which flow from it. Nothing is more evident, than that the scriptures lay the stress of the benefits (so to speak) not on the latter, but on the former; whereas, if the Redeemer were a mere creature, it would plainly be otherwise. On that supposition, men could not avoid saying, *herein is love*, that for so small a price there is so great a purchase, for so cheap a ransom, such a wonderful deliverance, for such unequal merit, so rich an inheritance, &c. The way to command God's love, would not be by considering he gave one mere creature, though the highest, to die for multitudes, but by reflecting, that for so small a consideration, so great blessings are bestowed. The style of the scriptures is the reverse of this. God himself knows best how to commend his love to us, and according to the apostle, Rom. v. 8. *God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*: after which he adds over and over again, *much more we shall be saved*. The scripture style is, *God so loved the world;*

and, *herein is love, that he gave us Christ;* and after that, he *is just and faithful to forgive us our sins*, to hear our prayers, to give us all things; as if all the mercy were confined, or rather comprehended in the gift of Christ; and after that, all the rest were in justice due; all the rest is mercy and free gift likewise, being virtually contained in the first mercy, or chief gift, whose transcendency above all things is plainly supposed in this, that it virtually contains all things.

Secondly. This leads to the next and principal thing to be considered: that is, wherein that transcendency consists. But it is not improper to premise, that the belief of it has no tendency to disparage or to lessen our esteem of any other gift of God, but rather to heighten it. It is the greatness of the price that shews the value of the purchase; and in this case, not only shews it, but as much as possible increases it. We know little of the Redeemer, if we do not see that every spiritual or eternal, or even temporal blessing, receives an additional value and sweetness, by coming through such hands, carrying along with it a tincture of that precious blood, and the relish and saviour of that infinite friendship.

In shewing wherein the transcendency consists, it is not enough to consider only the dignity of the person given, but also the manner in which he is given, and the value of the gift; that is, of the gift of righteousness, Rom. v. 17.

(1.) The dignity of the person (which, as was shewn before, is supposed in this transcendency) is one of the chief things that shews wherein it consists.—Other gifts are creatures, this is the Creator; other gifts are the works of God, this is the Son of God who is God; he is man likewise, but that does not lessen the gift. The greatness of it consists in his being made man, and in what followed. The scripture style is not, that God gave the human nature of his Son, but gave his own Son, and gave him to be made man. It is not that God (Christ, who is God) redeemed the church by the blood of his human nature, but by his own blood, Acts xx. 28. And he who made the world

purged our sins by himself, Heb. xiii. These and other scriptures shew, that, as Christ is but one person, so that one person is the Redeemer, the Saviour, the gift. It is the Lord Jehovah, who is our righteousness. This gift, therefore, must transcend all others: but how far? As far as the Creator transcends the creature; and that none knows; for none perfectly know the Father but the Son, or the Son but the Father; and there is not a better answer to that question.

(2.) But to strengthen this consideration, we must at the same time observe the manner in which he is given. For it may be objected, that in the work of grace the Spirit is given who is God, and in the state of glory the Father gives himself to be his people's portion and happiness: Yea, Christ, the Son of God, is given in the work of grace, and in glory, as well as in the work of redemption. But let us observe the difference as to the manner; and to show that the transcendency of one divine work is no disparagement to another, we may consider, that though God's attributes be all infinite and equal, yet the manifestations of them are not so. The perfection of God's works consists partly in a variety, by which some of them far excel others. The least pile of grass is an effect of infinite power, but not the highest effect of it: so the least degree of grace or glory is a manifestation of infinite love, but not the highest manifestation; and that the gift of Christ in the work of redemption, transcends any gift of grace or glory, may be made evident from the account we have of the peculiar manner in which Christ, who is God, is given in that work.

In the work of grace, Christ makes us to be born of God, and to be sons of God, (John i. 12.) In the work of redemption he is born of a Virgin, and becomes the son of man. In the former, he gives us the likeness of the holy God: In the latter, he takes on him the likeness of sinful flesh. In the one, he gives us his strength; in the other, he bears our infirmities. But this is not all. In the one, he heals us; in the other, he is wounded for us. In the one, he enables

us to our duty ; in the other, he bears our sins. In the one, he makes us obey the commandments of the law ; in the other, he bears the curse for us. In the one, he gives us life, health, honour, joy ; in the other, he suffers shame, pain, sorrow, death, for us.

When he gives us heaven, he raises us to his high and holy place, and his royal palace. In redemption, he descended to our low polluted cottage ; there he manifests his glory for our happiness, here he veiled it for our relief. There he receives us to a place of many mansions, here he had no place where to lay his head. There he gives unsearchable riches, here he condescended to ignominious poverty : there he brings us to the greatest honour ; here he suffered the lowest disgrace for us. There he gives the waters of life, here he drank the cup of wrath for us. There he makes us see God face to face, here he was forsaken of God for us. There he shews us his own face, shining in glory more than the sun in his strength ; here he shewed his visage, pale and mangled, and marred, more than any man, Isa. lii. 14. There he gives us crowns of glory, here he wore a crown of thorns for us. There he incorporates us in the company of holy angels, here he was numbered with transgressors. There he makes us sit on thrones, here he died on the cursed cross for us. These instances (which might easily be multiplied) are sufficient to shew, that though the gift of Christ, in his incarnation and sacrifice, and the gifts of grace and glory be bright manifestations of the same love, yet the first is the chief gift ; yea, it is in the first, that in the most proper sense, a divine person can be said to be given to us.

In these other inestimable favours of sanctification, and the heavenly blessedness, it is as if a king's son, with his father's consent, should take a forlorn wounded rebel, heal him with his own hands, receive him into his family, and give him an estate : in that other great work, it is as if that prince should lay his head on the block to be sacrificed for that rebel. It is plain, that in this case, the prince would be said more properly to give himself, or to be given by his father,

than in the first case, merely by giving to that criminal, life, wealth, and riches, without such a sacrifice.

It is proper to observe here, that it would be unreasonable in the highest degree, to have the less esteem of Christ's sacrifice, because the divine nature did not suffer, but only the human. For in considering any act of love or favour, nothing can be more unreasonable than to have the less esteem of it, because it does not contain absolute impossibilities and contradictions. It was impossible the divine nature should suffer, but the nature which suffered, was the human nature of a divine person. Both natures contributed to the sacrifice, the one bore the pain, the other gave the value; but there is but one mediator, one Christ, God's only Son, who redeemed his people by his own blood, and purged their sins by himself. This was not impossible, but if it was the uttermost that can possibly be conceived; or, (if the singularity of the subject may allow unusual expressions) it went to the utmost verge of possibility, then surely this is more than a sufficient confirmation of the doctrine, and shews the transcendency of the gift, in the manner it was given.

But in order to set this in a better light, it is useful to take a more particular view of the various steps of divine condescension in this work. There is this obvious difference between the manifestations of God's power, and of his condescension; that the former, rises in proportion to the greatness of the object; the other, in proportion to the meanness of it. On this account, it is easier to conceive incomparably greater transcendency in the one, than in the other. There is no effect of power so great, but we may possibly conceive a greater. But there may be objects, and acts of condescension so low, that we can conceive none lower, and that is only in the present case.

This deserves careful meditation, for there is no act of goodness more amiable than condescension; and there is no condescension in any other being, but what is infinitely below that which is in God. His condescension to the highest creatures is infinite, because the distance between him and them is such. But

the lower the object of divine love is, the greater is the condescension: man is the lowest object of divine love. The creatures below man are not objects capable of it in the sense here understood. And man was made a little lower than the angels; therefore, the greatest acts of divine condescension that we can conceive, are in general his acts of condescension to men. Yet here we may make a difference; God made man a little lower than the angels, but man has made himself a great deal lower. The sinner is vastly below the man. God's greatest acts of condescension to man, therefore, are his acts of love and favour to us in our low state. Common observation may teach us, what a mean or rather dismal figure a condemned criminal of the lowest station makes, even in the eyes of those who are otherwise his equals. If here we make any difference, the lowest criminal would be one who had been always a transgressor, and as proud and insensible, as guilty, without pitying himself, or seeking pity from others. This was sinful man's case, and such was the object of the Redeemer's love: it is plain we must stop here, as to the meanness of the object of condescension; for how can we conceive a lower object; or, *2dly*, a higher favour than what is given to that object? In the 8th Psalm, the Psalmist admires God's condescension in giving the inferior creatures to man; he gives what is incomparably above all creatures to the sinner, a title to the enjoyment of himself. *3dly*. There is mysterious condescension, in the way that this blessedness is offered to us by the Son of God, it being with such tenderness, such entreaty, such reasoning, expostulating, and beseeching. But to offer mercy to rebels or criminals, on any terms, in any manner, is an act of sovereignty. In the offer of salvation, Christ acts with great condescension, but acts in the form of God. It is in the purchase, he acts in a very different form, the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 7. But there are various forms of servants.

It would have been condescension, capable to astonish the highest creatures, if their Creator had assumed their nature; but he took not on him the nature of an-

gels, but was made flesh. It was not when all flesh was innocent, but when it was fallen and sunk in sin, the likeness of sinful flesh. This was manifold condescension, though he had assumed our nature in the form the Jews expected him, as visible conqueror of the world. But he was not only made lower than the angels, but lower than man, and counted as no man. Men of the least station have ofttimes the least troubles; here was the reverse; the reverse of the grandeur of princes, and of the tranquillity of the vulgar; eminence, in sorrow; and distinction, in the highest rank of trouble. Yet a man of a low station, and low under trouble, may have a high character, at least an untainted one; but he descended below this; and made himself of no reputation. By the very perfection of holiness and goodness, he brought himself to that mean character before men, that man had before God; that of a criminal: and here we are landed at that low step, mentioned before, concerning the object of love. These two extremities, the meanness of man's state, and the height of Christ's condescension, how well do they meet together! How could man make himself lower, than to be a real malefactor in the sight of God? Or Christ make himself lower than to be a reputed criminal in the sight of man?

But there was something beyond this still. He would have died as a reputed criminal, had he died only as a martyr, and only by the sentence of an unjust persecutor. But there was more than Pilate's sentence here. Let us consider the Saviour, as cited before the tribunal of the just Judge of the universe, and under His sentence. He laid on him the iniquities of us all, and therefore put him to grief, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him. Other condemned persons at other courts, are charged but with the crime of one person, that is their own, and but with a few of these. A right view of this great Sufferer, will discover him to us charged and burdened with all the innumerable, abominable crimes of innumerable multitudes: None but himself could descend so low, or come under such a burden.

If farther, in the lowest character in the world of

criminals condemned, we distinguish as to their treatment: if any disgrace is lower than another, the Redeemer condescended to the lowest; that, which was the punishment of the meanest of men, for the greatest offences, even to the ignominious death of the cross. To the lowness of his sufferings, we may add the meanness of the instruments. It was this thing made Abimelech lament his death. The sorrows of this great Sufferer, came not all from the honourable hands of God or angels, he suffered in the room of men, and from the hands of man (who is but a worm) from sinners, from the worst, the meanest sinners, in the vilest manner, made a compliment of by the complaisance of his judge to the fury of a mob.

Yet, as the power of man cannot throw a sufferer so low as God can put him, what completed all was, that, amidst so various sufferings from men, he was forsaken of God. It was then indeed, he was at the lowest; none could fall so low, none could fall from such a height of divine communications. In 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. even Saul makes a heavy moan, and tells he was sore distressed, for God was departed from him: but Saul was too like ourselves, and knew little of God's presence; he did not say, my God is departed from me. Let us consider David, who knew God better. David never knows himself in the wilderness, while he has God's presence with him; while he has that, he tells he fears no evil, not even in the valley of the shadow of death; but when that is gone, there is nothing but desert, and dry, parched land, and for all the company of his army, all is wilderness, within and without; there is nothing but crying out of flesh and soul after the living God, and thirsting, panting after him, like a hart after waters. It was into a far more dismal wilderness, the blessed antitype of the scape-goat, was driven with all the sins of the people upon him, each of them sitting heavier upon his innocent soul, than the cursed tree on his body; and if this was the change that befell him, instead of the bright face of God, grievous looks of those black viziers, by the right of imputation staring him in the

face, who was the greatest hater of sin in the world; it could not but cause a painful thirst of soul, incomparably beyond that of David, or any other deserted saint, or beyond his own bodily thirst, which he expressed before: but, in expressing both, there is nothing but vinegar and gall for him at all hands, from man, and from God. The first was but scanty and sweet to the last: he but tasted it; but this ocean must be drunk out till he can say, It is finished. There was never a request for pity till now; he sought none from Pilate, he would have none from the sympathizing daughters of Jerusalem; telling them not to weep for or pity him, but themselves; but now He who was like a sheep, dumb before the shearers, is dumb no more; and the Lamb being brought to this dreadful slaughter, must open his mouth, and Pity itself cries for pity. It was the upbraiding language of his murderers, what was become of his God? No wonder the world grew dark, and the rocks rent, to hear the blessed Jesus forced in appearance to join with them, to hear any thing like the language of his murderers coming from his own mouth, That his God had forsaken him. When we consider how much a son will suffer from a father, or even from a friend whom he loves, before he divulge it to others, especially before enemies, it may make us reflect how much Christ suffered from God, when he who loved him so much, expressed his suffering from him in such a manner, before such company.

It is with a great deal of reason, all this condescension is frequently illustrated by Jacob's Ladder: and it is our duty to be admiring its heighth and depth, though we cannot measure any of them; though we cannot measure the distance between the Throne of Glory and the cursed tree, between the heaven of heavens and mount Calvary, the Father's bosom and Joseph's Sepulchre, yet our thoughts should be employed, like Jacob's angels, ascending and descending as far as we can, considering the various steps of that condescension, how low the objects of it are, how low the acts of it, and how glorious the effects of it; and

we should not forget, that the humiliation of the Saviour, and the exaltation of the sinner, (if we may speak so) are but, in effect, different views of it; it is the same power of mysterious love and condescension, by which the sinner is raised from the brink of hell to the highest heaven, and by which the Saviour was brought from the highest heavens, to the lowest parts of the earth, (as the apostle expresses it:) but though they be only different acts or effects of the same love, the latter has still the pre-eminence: and the humiliation of the Redeemer is a far higher display of love, than the glory of his people, which follows it; or rather this humiliation is their highest glory.

After considering the greatness of the Redeemer's condescension in his satisfaction, we are to consider next the value of that satisfaction: and it is evident, that whatever shews the value of Christ's satisfaction to the justice of God, shews the value of God's gift to sinners. It is a just and usual expression, That Christ's satisfaction is of infinite value: it were a happy thing if it were as usual for us to have a suitable impression of it. Infinite value, is what we cannot affirm of any other manifestation of God that can be conceived, not of the highest degrees of grace or of glory, or of all the created glory in the world put together. The divine perfections are infinite in their nature, and their infinite value imports more than merely a transcendency in the object above others. For one object may transcend another in value, though the difference be but finite. Infinite value is such, that the value of other things is nothing to it. No wonder Paul counts all other things comparatively but loss, Phil. iii. 8. as Isaiah counts all nations before God as less than nothing, Isaiah xl. 17.

A satisfaction of infinite value, is something more than merely an execution of infinite justice. That justice is put into execution in hell, but there is no satisfaction or ransom, properly, till the uttermost farthing is paid; whereas, in that place, there will never be but a part paid, and scarce a part, since the remainder is still infinite. But when Justice found this ransom,

not one tittle passed from the law, but all was fulfilled; therefore, he is able to save to the uttermost, having satisfied to the uttermost, because he was God's own Son, and because he was not spared. It was just now hinted, that, when we are speaking of Christ's satisfaction to justice, we are speaking of God's gift to sinners. But there is scarce a word to express such a manifestation of mercy, as satisfaction of justice.—Satisfaction is a full and complete manifestation of justice; in this case, it is a full and complete and consummate manifestation of mercy and goodness. We may more than allude to that remarkable passage, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. where Moses seeks to see God's glory; and God promises to make all his goodness pass before him; we may justly admire that expression, *all his goodness;* for God's goodness is infinite. Moses saw many types of Christ, and may we not look on this as a kind of emblem of what passed before us on mount Calvary, where more than ever glory was veiled, that goodness might be manifested; when He, who is all goodness, the tender-hearted Samaritan, passing by us while lying in our blood, even in our polluted blood, and no eye to pity us, washed us in his blood, poured out wine and oil into our wounds, poured out blood and soul and all, to heal us, and to make us live.

But to return to the value of this gift; as it is called in scripture a pearl of great price, we should consider its value in what it purchases. Ancient and modern histories tell us of some pearls counted, worth a considerable part of a kingdom; but we express but a part of the value of this pearl, when we say it is worth the everlasting kingdom of heaven; for it not only purchases that eternal inheritance, but also pays an eternal debt. Though a poor man, who has nothing himself, but is free of debt, should get the gift of an estate, it would not be so great a gift, as if another, who is drowned in debt, should get the gift of a pearl that would both pay all his debt, and purchase an estate over and above. We may consider the former as the case of angels, and the latter is the case of redeemed sinners.

It is evident then that the value of the object we are speaking of, is greater when considered as a gift of mercy, than when it is considered only as a satisfaction to justice; that is, redeeming us from the curse of the law. The gift is greater than the satisfaction; justice is justified when deliverance from it is purchased. But that deliverance is but a part of the purchase of this pearl of price, there is at least as much happiness in the inheritance acquired to the sinner, as there is misery in the punishment from which he is delivered.

Thus, when we consider the whole value of this unspeakable gift, it transcends the value of a satisfaction to infinite vindictive justice, and also that of the eternal inheritance, because it contains both. This shews more than a simple transcendency in it, above all other gifts bestowed on men; yea, we cannot conceive any other gift greater or equal to it, that can be bestowed on any creature whatever. No wonder the angels desire to look into these things. They and the believer receive the same inheritance, but not in the same way; and, as was just now hinted, the sinner owed a kind of infinite debt to justice, the angels were always free. This may naturally bring to our minds, Christ's parable about the debtor, to whom most was forgiven. And we may conceive the deliverance and the inheritance together, as making in a manner, a double heaven. And the joy of the deliverance cannot but greatly enhance the joy of the inheritance. To human kind, deliverance from great danger doubles the pleasure of ensuing prosperity; and surely what doubles the believer's eternal prosperity and joy, must double his obligations, and consequently his love, and what increases his love must increase his joy.

But in considering the fruits of God's chief gift, we should take care not to lose sight of the gift itself. If the inheritance and the deliverance make a double heaven, the price that purchased both, is still the heaven of that heaven. If we should suppose God had given that purchase without this price; as there would have been no satisfaction to justice, so there would not have been by far so great manifestation of mercy.—

When an earthly prince gives a condemned criminal, both a remission and an estate, he shews, indeed, very great kindness, though at the expense of justice. But if the nature of human justice allowed it, and human pity could go so far, that that prince should sacrifice his Son for the criminal, it is plain this act of love to him would be far greater than giving him both life and fortune without such an expense.

Thus we have seen wherein the transcendency of God's unspeakable gift consists ; in the dignity of the Redeemer's person ; the manner in which he is given; particularly, the mysterious condescension of it ; and the value of his satisfaction. We have ground from express scripture, Rom. v. 9, 10. to consider further a particular transcendency in this gift with relation to the persons to whom it is given : they are indeed the same persons who receive Christ and who receive heaven ; but in a spiritual sense they were not the same men or the same creatures when Christ was given that they are when heaven is given them. The sinner, after receiving Christ, is a *new man*, or a *new creature* : there is therefore a plain difference in the case. Heaven is given to the perfect saint, the faithful servant, the child of God. Christ himself was given to the sinner, the stranger, the enemy.

Heaven is a blessing that fully satisfies the highest desires of a rational creature ; but this other favour is a favour above the highest desires. We can conceive a sinner seeking heaven from God, before God signify his design to give it ; but we cannot conceive all the sinners in the world could have ventured to seek Christ, unless he himself had revealed the design of giving him. This gift was found of them who sought it not. How could all the world have presumed to desire the Son of God to come down and die on a cross for them ; to redeem them by his own blood ? The apostle speaks of God's giving his people above all they can ask or think : We may suppose he does not mean that one who has received Christ may not ask any other needful blessing he can think of. After Christ, no blessing can be above the believer's asking,

but because it is above his thought. But there is a singularity in that first blessing itself. Christ's incarnation and sacrifice, sinners could not have asked it; nay, it is scarce possible they could have thought of it. Even among men, no criminal ever seriously desired the judge to bear the sentence himself; especially a sentence for crimes committed against the judge himself; and yet among men, how small is the distance between judge and criminal, either as to station or guilt? Here the distance is infinite. When we praise God, therefore, for his mercy, we praise him for what we could not have prayed for, yea, for what we could not have thought. It is the chief thing God prepared for his people, which eye had not seen nor ear heard, nor could enter into the heart of man, nor (may we add) into the thought of any creature, or any mind below infinite wisdom. The scripture expressions about angels looking into these things seem to denote surprise: none can pretend that the principalities and powers of heaven ever knew so much before of God's love, or of God, who is love. Before this was revealed, they knew and felt God's goodness to be infinite; but it is no reflection on them that their knowledge is finite, and that they knew not before how much God could love, especially such unlovely objects; how far his pity, and how low his condescension could go.

In the last place, as to the application of this doctrine, it is plain we ought to apply it in our meditations to every other doctrine of Christianity, for it is the centre of, and serves to give light to them all.—But the bounds of this discourse will allow but the mentioning of a few inferences from it.

1. It shews, that for any of us to pretend to faith in Christ without God's works, to pretend to have an impression of God's chief mercy without loving and obeying him, and of the chief manifestation of the evil of sin, without warring against it, is to be really monsters of ingratitude and stupidity.

2. On the other hand, as to such as neglect this gift of righteousness, and place their own good works in its room, the doctrine insisted on concerning that gift,

that pearl of price, may shew them, they had need to be good works indeed that are preferred to it, and that must atone for rejecting it.

3. But in a particular manner, we should carefully apply the doctrine, with dependence on God's grace, to the holy exercise of divine worship relating to the work of redemption, which is our proper work at this sacrament. The doctrine insisted on, shews that exercise is the noblest and highest we are capable of. We may raise our minds to some impression of this by comparing them with any of our other works.

Man is a creature endowed with various faculties, all useful, but some higher and some lower than others. As the soul is of a nature superior to that of the body, so also are its faculties and exercises. These are the highest exercises of the soul, that relate to the highest and most excellent objects. That, therefore, by which the mind is employed about an infinitely excellent object, is the highest of all, that is, divine worship. But in the various exercises of it, we may justly make a difference. It was observed that God's works and manifestations are not all equal. We are taught that his mercies are over all his other works. Worshipping him therefore should be above all our other works. Christ is above all other mercies; and therefore worshipping God for Christ should be absolutely above all other worship. It is not only of the highest kind of spiritual exercises, but the highest of the kind we are capable of, or that we can conceive any even the most exalted creature capable of. The Scriptures represent the angels transported with it, Rev. v. they have incomparably better skill of it, but surely we are more concerned in, and more obliged to it. They glorify and praise God for that work; but as the apostle distinguishes between glorifying God, and being thankful to him, Rom. i. 21. we should glorify God for all his works, even towards others. Thankfulness is the debt we owe for his favours to ourselves. How vast a sum is due here? But instead of grudging at it as a burthen, we should triumph in it as an inestimable privilege. To be obliged to a high degree of thank-

fulness and love, is to be obliged to a high degree of happiness and joy. If we cannot venture to give thanks for an actual interest in that chief gift, we are obliged at least (here as well as in all other cases) to give thanks for the offer of it. And the doctrine insisted on shews, that always, till we have a sure interest in it, our chief ground of thankfulness and joy is the offer of it, that the chief gift of God is offered to the chief of sinners.

This directs us to apply the doctrine to another exercise suitable to this occasion: for praise and thankfulness is not all our work. Praise is the work common to us with angels, praise and thanksgiving are common to us with the saints made perfect. It is all we know of their work. But it is not all our own work: we have that incumbent on us, and something besides; not only praise, but prayer, not only thanksgiving, but supplication, seeking what they have obtained, and desiring what they enjoy. The angels are admiring spectators, looking into these things. But there is a difference between mere looking into these things and receiving them. It is not desirable to be a mere spectator at the communion; but to be a mere onlooker and spectator at that which is represented in it, is in a sinner, who continues such, the worst work he is capable of; for a forlorn destitute wretch to see such danger without desiring relief, to see such relief without embracing it, to see such a pearl, such a gift of infinite value, to see it offered to him without grasping at it, is the greatest affront to God, and cruelty to himself he is capable of.

The doctrine insisted on, shews that we should use, through divine grace, transcendent earnestness, so to speak, like Jacob's holy and humble wrestling in the prayer of faith, and taking the kingdom of heaven, or that pearl of price, in whose value it is contained, with a spiritual reverential violence. For it is then we shew the greatest reverence and fear of God, when we are most earnest to be delivered from his just displeasure, and from those sins that procure it. The doctrine shews how justly faith is called precious faith, since it

is a receiving of that pearl of price, after which the believer will be but receiving a part of its worth in the kingdom of heaven to all eternity.

This should excite us to cheerfulness in renewing our consent to the covenant, and in receiving the seal of it, to rejoice in the tenor of it, since the promise of it contains all things; and what is required of us, in order to a title to all things, is to receive what is more than all things.

In the next place, we should apply the doctrine in eating our passover with the bitter herbs of repentance and sorrow for sin; since that transcendency of mercy that has been insisted on proves a transcendency of guilt in our ingratitude for it, which is at the same time our greatest sin, and the greatest aggravation of our other sins. And as all of us are less or more chargeable with it, so the believer's guilt this way has a peculiar aggravation in it, being not only against the offer, but the actual application of this mercy. It is no wonder then that of all men in the world, the most eminent saints, are the men who have the greatest sorrow for sin, as well as the greatest delight in duty, and the former one of the chief means of the latter.

The evil of the sin against the Holy Ghost is no objection against this assertion, That ingratitude for Christ is the chief sin, but rather a confirmation of it, because that sin is but a particular kind of this ingratitude, and shews the evil of all such ingratitude, since the worst act of it is unpardonable. That sin against the spirit of Christ is a peculiar indignity to that gift of Christ, which applies all his other gifts, and shews the danger of abusing any of them. Without inquiring here particularly into the nature of it, it is sufficient unto our present purpose to observe in general that it is called a trampling under foot the Son of God and crucifying him afresh, Heb. vi. 6. which shews that it is the greatest abuse of God's greatest gift, and since that can never be forgiven or repented of, it should excite us chiefly to repent of every abuse of that gift while it may be forgiven.

We should reflect, that despising redemption has a peculiar guilt in it beyond other sins which make us

need a redemption; and that the folly which poisoned our souls, and brought our persons under the sentence of death, is wisdom when compared to the folly of refusing the antidote, and rejecting the remission, especially when the antidote or cure is prepared with such kindness that it is the physician's own heart's blood, or rather the blood of his soul who offers it; when it is offered so freely, that the best blessings that can be desired are ours if we sincerely desire them: and not only so freely, but with such tenderness, that the sovereign, by his inspired ambassadors, beseeches the criminal, (2 Cor. v. 20.) and the remission is joined with the offer of an endless inheritance, and the gift that purchased both, of infinite value. As it is this that shews how far divine mercy could go, so the sin of rejecting it shews how far human wickedness can go, and the greatness of this gift of God compared with men's treatment of it, may be said to shew his condescension, and our ingratitude at its uttermost. Nor need we wonder that other guilt compared to this is reckoned as innocency. If I had not come, says Christ, they had had no sin; and that is the sin that will make at last the case of a very Capernaum more intolerable than that of Sodom, since it is the sin that has no parallel on earth, nor, we may add, even in hell, since it is sin the devils know only by speculation, by seeing it in us, having no experience of it themselves. When the devil tempts to many other sins, he set a pattern before he lays the snare; when he tempts to lying or murder, he is a liar and a murderer himself from the beginning. But when he tempts to despise redemption, he tempts to a sin of which himself is innocent. Whatever example the devils give in other cases, the despiser of redemption sets a pattern which these forlorn angels are incapable of following; yea though redemption had been offered to them and despised by them, they could not have despised so great condescension: For though we know not their first sin, yet as to their nature, we have ground from scripture to say that it would not have been quite so great condescension to have assumed their nature, as to have assumed ours. They are angels, though fallen ones, and we should

consider, that though they opposed the work of redemption, it was not their redemption, but ours. They shewed their wickedness in opposing the work of redemption, but never in rejecting an offer of redemption.

These and the like considerations should excite sorrow not only in them who never embraced this chief mercy, and in effect renounce all benefit by it, but even in sincere believers, who have embraced it, but have not been careful enough about due gratitude for it. And that is an accusation from which none can free themselves; not to speak of our manifold neglects of praise and thanksgiving for it, in immediate addresses to God, our very acts of praise and thanksgiving themselves are among the chief things that shew our ingratitude for it, that is, on the account of the manner of performing them. And if there were no other argument for the corruption of our nature, the cold and indifferent way that we praise God for Christ is a demonstration of it.

Repentance for this ingratitude and unbelief, is one of the best exercises of faith and love, and one of the best helps to prayer, and other spiritual exercises mentioned before, so suitable for this occasion. But it is not at this occasion only they are suitable, but before and after it, and at all times. Our communicating supposes them to be our habitual practice, and is designed for promoting it, yet there should be a transcendency, if I may speak so, in the performance of them at this occasion beyond all others. Communicating is beyond prayer, praise, meditation, because it joins these together and adds more to them. It is beyond mere spiritual exercises of worship, because of the singular way that it employs not only the soul but the body. It is liker heaven than secret communion with God, because it is an enjoyment of it in the visible communion of saints. It is beyond private duties, because it is a public ordinance, and beyond other public ordinances, because it has the use of them joined to it as subservient to it, and adds something to it. It is not merely a commemoration of God's chief gift, but a solemn receiving of it, and what it especially communicates is

the very consummation of that blessed work, the Redeemer's death. It is an honourable distinction put upon it by the circumstances of its appointment, being immediately by the Redeemer himself, and at that remarkable time when he was entering upon these last sufferings which it chiefly commemorates. It is therefore the most solemn and the chief performance of the chief exercises we are capable of.

But that should not make it seem a burthen but a delight. It is more the Lord's work than it is ours. His generous work at his own table is to give, ours is to take and to receive.

Could we make ourselves in a manner spectators, but not mere spectators of our own work, it would be easy to see we cannot form an idea of any work upon earth so great or so honourable. The chief sight indeed that ever the world saw was the King of Kings dying on a cross for guilty subjects. That was a spectacle beyond all comparison. But next to that, can there be a greater than to see a croud of such subjects, once condemned criminals, now invited and assembled at their reconciled sovereign's table, at a feast of reconciliation to receive a sealed remission of all their guilt, an infeftment into an everlasting inheritance, yea to receive the foretastes and first-fruits of it, having, as it were, the pearl of price among their hands, jointly doing honour to God's greatest mercy and chief gift, and jointly employed about the noblest spiritual exercises we can conceive human nature or any creature in earth or in heaven capable of?

The greatness and excellency of the work shews the awfulness of it, the importance of right performance, and the danger of the contrary. To conclude therefore: considering our work as a receiving of Christ, we should seriously reflect that when we receive him, we can never receive any gift equal or like him to all eternity. And when we come to receive him at his table, we make the most solemn appearance before him that ever we can make on earth till he come again.

To his name be glory, honour, and immortal praise, for ever and ever.

ON PREJUDICES AGAINST THE GOSPEL:

ON CHRISTIAN PIETY:

ON THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE:

THREE ESSAYS,

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN M'LAURIN.

AN

ESSAY

ON

PREJUDICES AGAINST THE GOSPEL.

ONE principal prejudice that the corruption of the heart raises against the doctrine of the gospel, is, that it represents the evil demerit of sin too great, when so costly a sacrifice was requisite to expiate it.—It is one of the hardest tasks in the world, to bring the heart to a sincere persuasion, that sin is indeed as vile as God's word represents it; and that it deserves all that his law threatens against it. Hence, a great many are not properly so sorry for their sins against God's law, as for the severity of God's law against their sins. While many do not regret their sins at all, some regret them rather as misfortunes than faults, and as worthy of pity and compassion, rather than hatred and punishment.

These favourable impressions of sin, naturally create prejudices not only against the awful threatenings of the law, but also even against the glad tidings of the gospel; because the latter as necessarily suppose the former, as a recovery or a remedy supposes a disease, or as deliverance supposes danger. When the apostle Paul represents the scope of the gospel, he says, that "therein is revealed the righteousness of God, and the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 17, 18. And nothing

is more certain than that this is one of the chief prejudices men entertain against it.

If one were to compose a formal confutation of this prejudice, it were needful to meet with some pretended demonstration that sin does not deserve the punishment above-mentioned, that so the foundations and grounds of such an argument might be impartially inquired into. But in effect, this prejudice does not usually form itself into any thing like a clear chain of reasoning, but expresses itself in confused and indistinct complaints against the opposite doctrine, as too severe and rigid: and therefore, perhaps, it will not be an improper way of examining of it, to propose some miscellany considerations, that may serve to shew whether this prejudice be founded on reason or not.

If any man undertook to prove that sin cannot deserve hell, there are two things absolutely necessary, in order to make that proof good. First, that he know all the ends and designs, all the reasons that God can possibly have for punishing sin: and then, that he demonstrate, that all those ends and designs may be obtained as well, and in a manner as agreeable to the infinite perfections of God, and the most perfect way of governing the world, without inflicting the above-mentioned punishment, and without any propitiation to declare his righteousness in the remission of it. Now, it is certain, that no man can pretend, with any tolerable shadow of reason, to so vast an undertaking. All that a man can pretend for lessening the evil demerit of sin, is nothing but appearances, suspicions, and shadows of probability: Whereas the evidence for the contrary, is infallible divine revelation.

The threatening of everlasting punishment is as plain in scripture, as the promise of everlasting life.—Matth. xxv. last verse. And though infinite goodness bestow undeserved favours; yet, it is certain, infinite justice will never inflict the least degrees of undeserved punishment. And therefore, when God threatens so dreadful a punishment against sin, it is to us a sufficient evidence that sin deserves it.

Though some pretended philosophers have denied

all difference between moral good and evil, and consequently the evil demerit of sinful actions, (as it has been [illegible] since observed, that there is scarce any opinion so absurd, but some philosopher has espoused it;) yet when men are left to the dictates of common sense, the evil deserving that is in some actions, is one of the plainest and most evident notions in the world. The rudest of the vulgar know very well what they say, (though they never learned any thing of moral philosophy) when they aver that such an action deserves to be punished, and such another action deserves greater punishment: which shews, that all endowed with the exercise of reason, have a plain notion of the evil demerit in evil actions, and of a proportion that should be observed between various degrees of guilt, and various degrees of punishment.

Even they who argue or write against the morality of actions, and who therefore should think no action deserves hatred or punishment, will notwithstanding be heartily angry at those that contradict them, and hate those that injure them. Hobbes and Spinoza would have inveighed bitterly against those they reckoned to be deceivers and impostors, which supposes a natural sense of the odious nature and evil demerit of imposture.

The passion of anger and revenge, if duly reflected on, might convince men of an evil demerit in actions. Some, who can talk and dispute speculatively against moral deservings, will find their own hearts of a different sentiment, when they meet with extraordinary injustice from others; when they are affronted and injured; when they meet with black ingratitude, treachery, barbarous cruelty, disdainful contempt, pride, or the like.

Example. Let us suppose a courtier, in his principles a first-rate Libertine, using his utmost influence to raise one of his meanest servants to the highest preferments, and shewing him as much friendship as ever great man did to his client, or father to his son; and let us suppose that all the return that servant makes, is to supplant his old master, to raise himself upon his

ruins, to reduce him to poverty, disgrace, banishment, or even to a cruel death : it is natural for any body to imagine, that in such a case, the disgraced Libertine would learn a new way of thinking, and acknowledge there is something worthy of hatred, detestation, and punishment in sin, that is, in injustice, treachery, and ingratitude, &c. and would even perhaps be strongly inclined to wish for a day of judgment. In effect, all men seem to be in some measure, sensible of the odious nature, and evil demerit of sin : but the misery is, that it is chiefly of the sins of others, and especially of the sins of others against themselves. If men hated sin as much in themselves as in others, humility would be a very easy common thing.

If it were duly reflected on, it might bring us to a just sense of the nature and demerit of sin, to observe, that they who hug and caress it most in themselves, cannot help abhorring it in others. A man will hate the image of his own sin, when he sees it in his friend, or the child of his bosom. What is most unaccountable in this matter, is, that men should be so shamefully partial, and unequal in their way of judging about it.

When the question is about a man's own sin, his heart devises a thousand artifices to excuse or extenuate it, which artifices are ofttimes such as are applicable to all sin, in general, as well as his sin. But when a man is under the influence of passion, against the sins of others, it quite alters the case He finds no end in exaggerating the guilt of an injury or affront, and his passion will find means to make pretended excuses appear heavy aggravations. The common excuses of human frailty, strength of temptation, and the like, will appear to him too refined and metaphysical, to have any effectual influence for moderating his passion. The vehemence of such passions against sin, would do very little prejudice to charity, if these passions were as equal and impartial, when directed homewards, as they are vehement against others. If men could hate themselves, as they do their neighbours, it would be a good help towards loving their neighbours as themselves.

These miscellany considerations, are perhaps a[illegible] to prove the odious nature, and evil demerit of sin in general. But if it be urged, as frequently it is, that though sin should be granted, to have some evil demerit in it; yet that it seems strange that it should deserve so very great a punishment, as is usually alleged. In answer to this, let it be observed, that, besides the self-evident principle laid down before, *viz.* that no colours or appearances of probability (which ofttimes may be on the side of error) should be put in the balance with plain divine revelation, there are several other observations from reason and experience, that may help to make this matter more plain and easy.

One thing that may give no small light to this subject, is, the influence which mens' affections have naturally over their judgments. If this were carefully noticed, and if men were earnestly inclined to judge truly, that is impartially, of things, there is nothing in the world they would see more reason to be jealous and suspicious of, than the suggestions of their hearts in favour of sin; they would find that it is but just caution to suspect every appearance of reasoning, that tends to give favourable impressions of sin, or to impair our fear, and abhorrence of it, to be sophistry and delusion. Nothing is more generally acknowledged, than that it is natural for our affections to bias our judgment, and bribe our reason: and therefore, when sin has polluted the one, no wonder it should proportionally pervert the other. It is a natural concomitant of the dominion of sin in the heart, that it hinders a just sense of its own nature, and evil demerit. We should be so far from wondering at this, that indeed it would be the greatest wonder, and truly incomprehensible, if it should be otherwise. In order to have a perfectly just and lively sense of the evil of sin, a man behoved to be perfectly free, not only from the dominion, but even from any measure of the love and practice of it.

It is useful to observe how corrupt passions, not only beget a strong inclination to extenuate or defend themselves, but also how ingenious they are in their

effects that way. A very little insight into human nature, may satisfy a man, that the passions of the heart, are the most cunning sophisters in the world, in their own defence; and they have, in a manner, an inexhaustible invention in contriving artifices and plausible colours for their own vindication, as well as in devising stratagems for obtaining their objects, and compassing their ends. A dull stupid fellow, who perhaps is scarce capable of comprehending a chain of abstract reasoning, will ofttimes shew almost as good a genius in defending or excusing his faults, as an experienced philosopher. Besides many other instances, this may be easily observed in ordinary quarrels, where commonly each party accuses the other of injustice, and insists upon his own innocence with so much artifice, that he who hears only one party, will scarce be able to resist the evidence of his pleadings, and will incline to think his accusations unanswerable. In such cases, an unbiassed person finds it ofttimes the hardest task in the world, to convince the injurious party, that he is in the wrong, and to make him view his own conduct in the same light that disinterested persons see it in.

This powerful influence of corrupt passions, in biasing our judgment in their favours, may receive further light, by considering the different views and sentiments of the demerit of sin that accompany different degrees of wickedness on the one hand, or different degrees of holiness and purity on the other. It was observed already, that we ourselves, guilty and corrupt as we are, can see a great deal of evil in the sins of others, when passion or self-interest gives us no bias in their favours; but that, where self-love influences us, our views change, though the objects be the same. Besides this, it is useful to observe, how some extraordinary outrageous sinners (as the most cruel murderers, and the like) can make the most atrocious crimes, so familiar to them by custom, that they seem scarce sensible of any evil demerit in these monstrous actions, which other ordinary men (though guilty and corrupt likewise, but in an inferior degree) can scarce think of, without horror and detestation. An ordinary un-

converted person has very indifferent thoughts of daily sinful omisssons, which a converted person (though he be not perfectly free from sin himself) would regret with the bitterest remorse. The farther any man advanceth in holiness and purity, the clearer is his view, and the quicker his sense of the evil of sin: with parity of reason, it may be conceived, that the greatest saint on earth does not see the evil of sin so clearly as an angel: and if this reasoning be carried higher, an infinitely holy and excellent Being will discern incomparably more evil in sin, and hate it more (and that with the most perfect reason and justice) than the holiest man on earth, or the most glorious angel in heaven. It is plain, God, by being the purest and most holy of all rational beings, is the fittest to judge of the evil of sin.

Nothing is more reasonable, than that all these considerations should, on the one hand, make us believe that sin deserves indeed what God threatens, because God is infinitely just and holy; and, on the other hand, if our hearts murmur against these threatenings, we should look upon that, not as the native result of sound reason, but of unreasonable corruption. We should believe, that if our sense of the evil of sin is not suitable to God's threatenings against it, it is because our hearts are not yet free from the stain and infection of it. Let men talk what they please, when they are in an humour for speculation, yet there is no man, when his mind is under a lively impression of some atrocious crime, that he has seen or heard of, but will be convinced of a high degree of evil demerit in sin. All men are sensible of this in high degrees of wickedness; the reason why it is otherwise in ordinary sins, is, because men have made these familiar to themselves by custom.

One of the most ingenious libertines, that I have read, objects against the doctrine of vindictive justice in God, as if it could not be maintained, without clothing the Deity with human frailties and passions, anger, provocation, revenge, and the like; of which, he says, we might be so well acquainted with our own nature,

as to reflect that these are human infirmities, and not Divine perfections.

If this objection prove any thing, it proves by far too much; if it has any force at all, it confutes experience; for experience shews that sinners suffer a great many pains and troubles in this life, beside the pains of death. Almighty power could hinder these pains: infinite goodness would hinder them, if they were not merited by the sins of men, and agreeable to the justice of God.

If God can, and does inflict manifold pains for sin in this life, without any thing like human frailty, or passion, surely there is no reason why the same may not be done in as perfect a manner in the next world.

It is the observation of the wisest of men, that because sentence is not speedily executed on an evil work, therefore mens' hearts are hardened with false hopes of impunity. These are the flattering thoughts of sinners at ease. But the heavy and dismal disasters of life, and the exquisite pains of sickness, give them generally a new light. While the minds of men are intoxicate with prosperity, they may make a shift to delude themselves with such false notions of God's goodness, as may banish for a time all dread of his justice. But surely arguing against experience, is the most extravagant arguing in the world. These speculations will not argue away all the public and private calamities, with which the world is overspread, and from which no age, no rank, or condition of men is exempted. It is vain to object, that these troubles flow from natural causes; justice can use natural causes in punishing sin. God is the author of nature, and ruler of the world. And surely it is not the way to extol his goodness, to say, that though his creatures suffer various pains or troubles, yet that they do not deserve it, or that it is not on the account of their sins.

They that maintain vindictive justice, zealously assert (according to the scriptures) that there is nothing of passion, of anger, or revenge in it, in the proper sense, but on the contrary, that it is perfectly serene,

and exercised, so to speak, with infinite calmness.—The chief abettors of this doctrine (perhaps all of them) affirm, that in the matter of vindictive justice, God is to be considered not merely as a private person, or offended party, but as a public person, or supreme magistrate, who himself alone is capable of judging what are these measures in the punishment of sin, that are absolutely best in order to the most perfect, and most excellent way of governing the world. It is goodness as well as justice in a supreme magistrate, to make laws that are for his own honour, and the good of his subjects. It is goodness to give force to these laws, by a suitable sanction or penalty annexed to them; and it is plain, the same goodness that requires such laws should be made, requires the authority of them should be maintained, which is done by putting them in execution. Every body knows that the honour of the magistrate, and the interest of society suffers by it, when excellent laws are neglected, and their authority destroyed. These and the like considerations, satisfy men as to human government, that true justice, and true goodness are so far from being inconsistent, that they are inseparable, and there is no reason why the same may not be acknowledged in the divine government.

It is evident that none can be consistent with themselves, in acknowledging that there is such a thing as a law of nature, without acknowledging at the same time, vindictive justice to punish the violations of it; a law without a penalty annexed to it, is not a law, but an advice: and a sanction or penalty that is no way put in execution, is not a sanction, but a bugbear. All which, if duly considered, might satisfy men that God's vindictive justice may be conceived, without any the least resemblance of human passions.

But not to insist on this further; another consideration, that may be of use, on this subject, is, that whereas, men may pass by, and neglect a criminal, so as neither to do good nor ill to him, neither to reward nor punish him, neither to bestow favours, nor to inflict deserved punishment on him; yet, with respect to God,

it is otherwise. There is no medium between his heaping very great favours on a criminal, and leaving him in very great misery, (unless he be supposed to annihilate him.) For, though God should inflict no positive punishment on a sinner, but only withdraw from him all the benefits and favours he has abused, and leave him to his own natural emptiness, to outrageous desires, and a vehement thirst after happiness, without any kind of enjoyment to gratify that thirst in the least, that alone would cause such a direful eternal melancholy, as cannot well be conceived. Death separates a sinner from all the outward earthly benefits which he had from God; and an impenitent sinner, who can expect after death, new benefits and favours to abuse in the next life, as he did in this, must have very strange ideas of God, and of the end for which he created rational creatures.

To this, we may add, that sin and wickedness, by its very nature, incapacitates a man for the only true happiness of his soul, which consists in union with God, and enjoyment of him; and that is what cannot be had without conformity to him.

Sin, therefore, in its very nature, is poison to the soul, tending to eternal death, separating it from God, who is its only life. This shews that the natural consequence of sin and ungodliness is itself a very dreadful punishment: and whatever further penalty God threatens against sin, besides its own natural dismal consequences; the justice of these threatenings, is evident from the venomous nature of it; because, the more hateful and pernicious any crime is in its own nature, and natural effects, the more severe is the punishment it deserves.

But what deserves most serious consideration is, the heinous injury sin does to God. Though none of the actions of his creatures, can either increase or impair his happiness (which is infinite, and consequently unalterable) yet inferiors may honour or injure superiors, whom they can neither profit nor hurt. Every act of disobedience to God's law, is the height of injustice. Justice requires, we give every one his own; our

souls and our bodies are God's; the faculties of the one, and the members of the other, should be employed in his service. Sin robs him of his due, and turns, as it were, his workmanship, his own benefits, against himself. Every sin is an act of the blackest ingratitude to God, because he is our chief, yea, our only benefactor; (other benefactors and means of good, being but instruments in his hand.) Sin has outrageous boldness and presumption in it, because it is an affronting of God to his face, for he is every where present: sin affronts his power, by shewing how regardless the sinner is of his favour, how fearless of his displeasure: his all-sufficiency, when the sinner prefers the creature to the Creator, and seeks happiness rather in the stream, than in the fountain: his wisdom, when the sinner prefers his own vain imaginations to the dictates and directions of Him, whose understanding is infinite. It would be easy to enumerate several other divine perfections, which sin affronts. Men usually measure the heinousness of an injury or affront, by the dignity of the party offended. In this is founded that ordinary and obvious reasoning, that because the party offended by sin is infinite, an injury against him in a manner infinitely surpasses other injuries.

If, together with the destructive nature of sin in itself, the dignity of the party offended and injured by it, and the vast complication of affronts against him involved in it, we consider, in the next place, the vast extent, the purity and endless duration of the divine government, it may farther enliven our impressions of the evil of sin, and the justice of the threatenings against it. It is not needful to insist much in proving that the purer any government is, the more will sin be discouraged, the severer will the penalty against it be; and it is certain that God's government excels in purity all other governments whatsoever.

It is no less evident, that the greater the extent and duration of a government is, it is of so much the greater importance that order be preserved, and rebellion, disobedience, and disorder be suppressed; because, in such a case, the contagion of vice, if it prevail, (and

sin is found by experience to be naturally infectious, and spreading when unsuppressed and unpunished) is of the more extensive and durable influence : the more reason there is therefore for discouraging it : and motives of reward and punishment, are very proper means for that end, and suitable to the nature of rational agents. Besides, the larger a government or dominion is, the greater is the danger by impunity of vice, and the less considerable is the loss, by the strictest punishment of it. If we should suppose the bulk of a small city involved in rebellion, or some other capital crime, the particular governors of that place might be backward to punish the criminals, for fear of emptying their little dominion of inhabitants, and they cannot create new ones in their room ; but if that city be considered as a part of a vast empire, in comparison of which that city is as nothing ; it is easy to conceive that it might be for the honour and interest of the whole empire, to put the laws in strict execution against that guilty corner, if no other salvo could be found to maintain the honour of the government, and the force and authority of the laws. It is easy to make an application of this to the divine government. God's kingdom is over all, and his dominion is from everlasting to everlasting.

Some make an objection against the everlasting punishment of sin in the next life, from the shortness of the time in which it is committed in this. But surely when other objections against that doctrine are refuted, this will appear to have but very little weight.—In other cases, men never think it reasonable to measure the demerit of any sin, by the length of the time in which it is committed. Besides, this objection would have the same force, though our state of trial were a thousand times longer than it is. The longest time that can be imagined, would still be nothing to eternity. Those who imagine men would have an easier way to heaven, if they had a longer life on earth, should see how that can be reconciled with experience, particularly with the history of the Antidiluvian world.

In effect, if we consider this matter impartially, the shortness of our state of trial, as it gives many great advantages to religion, so it rather aggravates than extenuates the evil demerit of sin. If men were to live some hundreds of years in this world, it is plain they would have a much stronger temptation, to look on so long a tract of a spiritual warfare, of a life of faith, as burdensome and tedious: the length of that race (as a course of obedience is called in scripture) might dispirit and discourage them; the length of life would make the fatigue of duty, and the pleasure of sin appear of greater importance: besides the reward being at so vast a distance, might contribute very much to render their impressions of it faint and languid. I can scarce consider a holy soul in such a state of trial, but as one oppressed with melancholy, to think that he behoved to be for so great a part of eternity (so to speak) out of heaven; that he behoved to languish so many centuries, in absence from the object of his chief affections, and most vehement desires.

On the other hand, according to the present state of things, the encouragements to duty are far stronger, and the allurements to sin, far more insignificant. As to the eternal reward of grace, its distance is so short and uncertain, that if men were not infatuated, it is a wonder that it is not constantly observant to their minds, and that its glorious brightness does not dazzle their eyes. A good man is never sure that heaven is at an hour's distance from him. Then the pleasures of sin, and troubles of duty, are so fleeting and short-lived, that they are scarce felt, when they are presently vanished. It looks like a wilful contempt of happiness, for one not to make the utmost efforts towards a life of faith and holiness, when one is under so strong obligations, has so vast encouragements, and but such insignificant hinderances; when the assistance offered is so powerful, the present pleasure so great, the labour so short, so little, the reward so near, so certain, so glorious, so lasting, yea everlasting. It looks like a choosing of misery, when one takes the course that leads to it, though he is sure eternity is not

far off at the farthest he can possibly expect; when he knows not, but the next moment may land him on that unknown shore, and plunge him in an abyss of wretchedness, when he runs that risk for pleasures, which he is not sure whether he shall ever attain to, and which he is sure will vanish away like shadows. It were easy to multiply arguments, to shew that the shortness of life, instead of extenuating the demerit of sin, is a very high aggravation of it. And in effect, that man must have a very extravagant way of thinking, who imagines, that though it be difficult to serve God, and watch against sin for a few scores of years, yet that it would be easy to do so for many thousands.

II. Another prejudice some entertain against the gospel is, that they think it strange, that repentance and amendment should not be sufficient, in order to pardon, without any sacrifice or propitiation. But surely it is unreasonable, to think this strange in the divine government, when in human governments it is so very ordinary: even among men, a criminal's repentance does not absolve him from the penalty of the law: though the criminal action itself be short and transient, yet the guilt or obligation to punishment contracted by it, is permanent and durable, and survives not only the criminal action, but ofttimes even the evil disposition whence it flowed: thus we see a murderer for instance, is ofttimes punished with death, though he should be so penitent as to make a voluntary confession of his crime himself, and profess the utmost detestation of it.

The more we consider the ends of punishment, even among men, the more we may be satisfied, that repentance alone is not sufficient to obtain them. If repentance alone were made sufficient, in order to impunity, this would be in effect granting a liberty for all manner of transgression, upon condition the criminals would sometimes forbear and amend; which would so manifestly unhinge government, and the authority of laws, that such a condition of absolution from guilt was never heard of in any nation in the world.

If a man pretend, that such a condition of absolution from guilt, is sufficient in the divine government, it would seem he behoved first to know all the reasons and ends, that infinite justice and wisdom can possibly have for the punishment of sin; and then, that all these ends may be as well obtained, merely by repentance, without a propitiation: and surely that is too hard a task for any human or finite understanding.

Though repentance be not supposed sufficient for absolution from guilt, that does not hinder it from being very useful, both in human and divine government, especially in the latter. For although repentance do not merit pardon of sin, yet it makes a man's sins fewer, and consequently the punishment deserved by him, less than if he had continued impenitent, heaping guilt upon guilt; and, as Paul expreses it, *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.* In perfect justice, there is an exact proportion observed between the sins committed, and the penalty incurred: repentance, therefore, prevents the increase of guilt, though it cannot expiate what is already contracted. And surely if we consider repentance truly, the justest notion we can have of its proper effect, is, that by this means, a man's guilt is less than it would have been otherwise, though it is not expiated by it.

III. The principal thing in the doctrine of the gospel, which its adversaries endeavour to undermine and expose is, that *substitution* and *imputation* so plainly taught in it, which they pretend to be unreasonable, if not unintelligible: that is, the substitution of the Redeemer in the room of sinners, and the imputation of his merits to them.

But surely it is a very intelligible thing, that all the ends of justice, and designs of punishment, whatever they be, are as well obtained by the sufferings of the Redeemer, as if the guilty had suffered themselves.—No man can prove the contrary, without a perfect knowledge of all the reasons and ends of punishment, that infinite wisdom can have in view, which it would be very extravagant arrogance in any man to pretend to.

It is a very intelligible thing, that the propitiation appointed by God, declares his righteousness in the remission of sin, which without that propitiation, would have been declared in the punishment of it. It is plain, that by this means, the honour of divine justice is more brightly displayed, the authority and dignity of the law better secured, the evil and danger of sin better manifested, than if no punishment at all were inflicted, either on the criminals themselves, or on one substitute in their room. No injury is done to the substitute, since it is his own inclination and choice, rather to suffer for the guilty, than that they should be destroyed. No liberty is given to despise the law, since none are justified by the Redeemer, but such as are also sanctified by him, since none have an interest in his sufferings, but such as are made sincerely to submit to his precepts, and joined to him by such an union, as separates them from their sins.

If such instances of substitution in criminal cases, be rare in human government, yet they are not entirely wanting: and the famous story of the lawgiver, who having made a law, that adultery should be punished with the loss of both eyes, when his own son became obnoxious to that law, caused pull out only one of his son's eyes, and another of his own: though this is not perfectly parallel to the case in view, yet it has a great deal in it, to illustrate it.

It is well worth the observing also, what wonderful care Providence took to make the notion of *substitution*, and *a sacrifice* familiar to all the world, before the Redeemer came to it; chiefly indeed to the Jews, (the only people in the world, that had just sentiments of God, and his perfections, in those times;) but in some measure also to the rest of mankind: it is observed that generally they applied to whatever invisible power they adored, as if they acknowledged themselves guilty creatures, and that some atonement was requisite on that account; expiatory sacrifices were a considerable part of their religion; and it is scarce to be comprehended, how such a way of adoring a deity should have entered into their heads, unless it be sup-

posed to have been handed down to them from Adam and Noah, though they corrupted it, as to the manner, and forgot the true original, and true use and end of it; however, by this, probably, as well as other means, it fell out, that though false philosophy and sophistry can find artifices, both to make the grossest absurdities seem plausible, and the most reasonable things seem absurd: yet, to the sober vulgar, whose sense was not adulterated and perverted by sophistry, and who were well disposed, by a sense of their guilt, the notion of a sacrifice and atonement, seemed a very intelligible and reasonable thing, and does so still: while others industriously stupify themselves, and acquire such an ignorance of their guilt, that they do not see their need of the atonement, and therefore deny the reality of it.

There are some who pretend, that whatever be said of Christ's death and sufferings, yet that the imputation of his active righteousness or obedience, is shocking to human reason, and cannot easily be made intelligible.

But surely there is scarce any thing more ordinary, even among men, than that persons, who perhaps have no merit themselves, receive a great deal of kindness for the sake of others, which they could never expect for their own; that is, for the sake of others, who are persons of merit, (I mean meriting at the hands of men) and in whom these unworthy persons are nearly interested and concerned. Some illustrate this very well, I think, by the story of the two famous brothers in Greece, Amyntas and Aeschylus; one of them was a hero, who had lost his hand in the service of his country; the other, a criminal, who was arraigned before the court of justice, for some capital crime against it. The hero spoke nothing for his brother, but only lifted up his arm, wanting the hand, which had been lost in his country's defence; and that silent eloquence pleaded so effectually, that the criminal was preserved by the merits of the hero, to whom he was so nearly related.

Nothing is thought more reasonable among men,

than that a hero, or one who has merited eminently at the hands of a society, or any particular members of it, should be rewarded, not only in his own person, but also in the persons of others related and united to him, and nearly concerned in him ; and in such cases, the reward is looked upon, as given to the hero himself. Nothing more usual than that a child, spouse, servant, or friend, meet with a great deal of kindness, for the sake of a father, husband, master, or other friend.

To accommodate these instances to the present case, it is useful to observe how much the scripture insists on the intimate union between the Redeemer and redeemed sinners. It is a great pity that many persons, otherwise ingenious, and who make deep inquiries into other dark and intricate subjects, should not think it worth while to be at pains to consider this union, which surely upon inquiry would be found to be the greatest dignity of our nature, and the highest promotion a sinner can be ambitious of. There is, perhaps, nothing in the world more proper to remove men's prejudices against the imputation of the Saviour's merits to believing penitent sinners, than the consideration of this union between them : and though it be mysterious (as Paul calls it expressly a mystery, and it is usually called a mystical union) yet that is no more an objection against the union betwixt Christ and believers, than against the union betwixt the soul and the body ; in both cases, the effects of the union are manifest, the nature and manner of it is mysterious. The scripture represents it more intimate than any union in nature among creatures : though the chief instances of union and near conjunction among creatures and natural objects are made use of as images to illustrate it : as when the Saviour is called the head, the vine, the husband, the foundation, &c. and believers the members, branches, the spouse, superstructure, &c. But the image most insisted on in scripture, and which seems best to illustrate it is that *vital union* that is between the head and the members of one and the same living body, where that one spirit which is

conceived to be in the head, is at the time present, in a manner, in a great variety of members, animating them all with natural life, and governing their several motions. So the scripture says expressly, "that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; that he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit; that all believers are baptized by one spirit into one body." From which it appears how truly and properly believers are represented as making up one body, of which Christ is the head, because his spirit dwells in them all, as a principle of spiritual life.

This, therefore, if duly considered, makes it less strange, that his righteousness should be imputed to them, and that they should receive all manner of benefits for his sake. It might indeed seem strange, if the merits of one should be imputed to another, who is entirely a stranger, and no way united or interested in him; but seeing, in the present case, the union of the two is so near, that they are said to be one, John xvii. 21. why should it seem so strange, that the merits of the head should be imputed to the members?

Concerning Christ's active righteousness, it may be farther observed, that Christ's actions may be looked upon as the actions of his divine, as well as human nature; whereas his sufferings are only the sufferings of his human nature; so that it is full as easy to conceive infinite merit in the former, as in the latter.

Besides, it may be useful to observe, that it is far more ordinary to see one receiving favours for the good actions, than for the sufferings of another. These and other considerations, might, perhaps, be useful to some, who think it easier to conceive the imputation of Christ's sufferings, than of his active righteousness. In effect, a sinner has little concern to argue against any of them: and if the question is proposed, whether Christ's righteousness, and incomparably excellent actions, had any merit in them to deserve blessings to his people (as his sufferings had merit to save from misery) it is difficult to imagine how any Christian can answer in the negative.

The direct effect of Christ's sacrifice is the expiation

of sin: but it is not only pardon of sin, but all blessings in general that we are commanded to ask in his name, that is, for his sake; and if we are commanded to ask them for his sake, it supposes that it is for his sake they are given, and by his merit they are purchased, which is a farther confirmation of the imputation of Christ's active, as well as passive righteousness.

If it be objected, that Christ was under an obligation to give perfect obedience to the law for himself, and that it is strange, that what he behoved to do for himself, should be imputed to others: it is easy to answer, that even among men, acts of obedience to lawful authority, are meritorious at the hands of men; and men merit rewards to themselves and others by excellent actions, which, notwithstanding, are actions which they ought to have done, and were obliged to do. Again, this objection might, perhaps, be made against the merit of his sufferings as well as his actions, since his giving himself to death, was an act of obedience to God. Besides, we should consider that the Son of God's being made flesh, and his dwelling among us, were not things that he was obliged to in that manner that mere creatures are obliged, to avoid sin, and obey the law: that glorious person's assuming our nature, and living among us for such a space of time, a life full of the most perfect and excellent actions, though in a mean condition; these were not things that he was obliged to; but voluntary actions of infinite condescension. Further, though the Redeemer's innocence was necessary to make his sacrifice acceptable; yet no man can prove but it was possible that blessed sacrifice might have been offered without his glorifying the Creator, magnifying the law, and adorning the creation, by living a life of so many years among creatures on earth in such a way and manner.

IV. Another branch of the doctrine of the gospel, which many are prejudiced against, is, the doctrine of divine grace, as requisite to renew and purify our nature. Many treat this doctrine as a chimera; and, which is not easy to account for, it meets with that

treatment from some persons who profess some kind of religion.

In the mean time; nothing is more plain than that denying the reality of grace is an undermining all true devotion. It destroys the use of prayer; for if there be no divine operation on the soul, to make men truly good and virtuous, what is it but a mocking of God, to apply to him for that end? Now this is contrary to the universal sense of mankind; not only Jews and Christians, but Mahometans and Pagans themselves acknowledge that prayer and thanksgiving is a principal part of the service due by creatures to the Creator; that one of the chief things they should pray for is, good and virtuous inclinations, and a pure disposition of mind: that they who have attained to these excellent things, should thank God for them, that is, acknowledge him as the source of them; whereas he who denies divine grace, in order to be consistent with himself; must maintain that a man must neither petition God to make him good and virtuous, nor thank him for his being so, that he should neither seek his assistance in order to perform duty, or in order to avoid sin.

It is objected against this doctrine, that it interferes with the liberty of man's will, that a man is not free in doing good, or avoiding evil, if he be thus influenced to it by any external cause. But surely our fellow creatures are external causes, as well as the Creator, men are free in doing good, though influenced by other men; why should the case alter about the more powerful influence of God? Besides, without any prejudice to free will, men are (almost continually) passive in receiving impressions of bodily objects; why may it not be the same as to impressions of spiritual objects? Though men are passive in receiving impressions of visible things, yet they are free in their inclination to, or aversion from them, and in pursuing or avoiding them, and in all their actions relating to them. It is easy to apply this to spiritual impressions. Both flow from one cause: the Author of grace, and the Author of nature is one and the same: it is from

God that men receive invisible light and bodily strength; it is he that continues as well as gives them; men are passive in receiving both, yet free and active in making use of both; there is no reason why spiritual light and spiritual strength may not be conceived as derived from God, and consistent with the liberty of man in the same manner.

There is a necessity for acknowledging a divine influence in giving and continuing the common exercise of reason, and soundness of mind; without that favourable influence, reason could not subsist. A few grains of matter misplaced in the brain, are sufficient to make the greatest wisdom on earth sicken into raving and distraction. If liberty is not hindered by that influence that preserves the exercise of reason in general, why should it be thought to be hindered by that stronger influence that inclines and enables to the due exercise of reason about things invisible and eternal. To judge truly of the matter, it is certain the liberty of man is not hindered by the Grace of God, but enlarged and perfected by it.

Sometimes the doctrine of grace is charged with *enthusiasm* by persons, who, it would seem, do not know what *enthusiasm* is. It is indeed enthusiam to pretend to grace for revelation of new doctrines: the grace offered in the gospel is only in order to a right impression and improvement of the doctrines already revealed in the scriptures. A man may be charged with enthusiasm when he pretends to be acted by divine grace, while he is really destitute of it. But to argue against the reality of grace, because there are some counterfeits of it, (as there are almost of all good things,) is a way of reasoning, which no man will directly avow, and all ridicule founded on it (as there is a great deal that has no other foundation) should be looked on as weakness and extravagance.

It is no less unreasonable to charge this doctrine with favouring sloth and indolence: as if it encouraged men to neglect activity in duty, because they are passive in receiving grace. The gospel teaches men to be active in seeking grace, and in using it. And it

is plain that such powerful assistance is the greatest encouragement in the world to diligence and application. He that would effectually disprove the necessity of grace, must prove one of these two things, either that the ends for which grace is offered, are useless; or that these ends may be obtained without grace: he that considers these two things, will hardly undertake to prove either of them. A man must have a very odd way of thinking, that imagines the ends, for which grace is offered are useless. How will a man pretend to prove, that it is no way requisite to the perfection and happiness of our souls, to be far more deeply affected with the eternal objects of faith, than with the short-lived objects of sense: to have the heart more enamoured with the infinitely amiable excellency of the Creator, than with any faint shadows to be found in the creatures: to have the affections more strongly bent on the enjoyment of the all-sufficient source of good, that boundless ocean of blessedness and perfection, than on the enjoyment of empty fleeting vanities? not to insist on the other various ingredients of solid devotion, and of holiness, and integrity of heart and life. To disprove the use and necessity of these things, a man must prove that God is not the chief happiness of our souls; or that the enjoyment of God does not require the love of God, or his image, and conformity to him; or that holiness is not his image. As to the necessity of grace in order to holiness, let us but compare the disposition of mind just now mentioned, with the temper of those that despise grace; the one is just the reverse of the other: It is true, they may know spiritual objects, they may hear, and read, and speak a great deal of them; for example, of God's infinite perfections: but then it is in such a manner, that their hearts are less affected with them ofttimes, than with the most insignificant trifles: they themselves must confess it ought to be otherwise, and that their minds ought to be more deeply penetrated, and more strongly affected with these incomparable objects, than with any thing else in the world: and in effect, one would think it should be sufficient to con-

vince men of the necessity of grace, to compare what they must acknowledge they *ought* to be with what they *are*: to compare that cold, jejune, lifeless frame, with which generally men think of the most excellent, and most important objects, with that vivacity of soul, that ardour of love, vehemence of desire, and these transports of joy, with which it is reasonable such meditations should be accompanied.

On the other hand experience shews, that these persons who have been reformed from a life of scandalous immorality, or of stupid carelessness about eternity, to a life of strict integrity and serious devotion, are persons, whose constant practice it has been, since that happy change, to apply by prayer for divine grace: this may be said to be evident from experience, if mutual faith and trust be allowed among men, and the testimony of multitudes of the best in the world be reckoned an argument of any weight. Never any yet refuted them by contrary experiences: A devout man, praying only for happiness, without praying for holiness, is a character yet unheard of.

There have been many persons, who while they neglected the doctrine of grace, have spoke and wrote excellent things about virtue. There are such pretended reformers of mankind, perhaps, in all ages.—The virtues they recommend, are, many of them at least, the same with the duties the gospel enjoins: So that these persons extol God's precepts, without acknowledging his grace, as if they could attain to his image, without his assistance. And indeed many of them speak a thousand excellent things. But speaking and practising are two different things. Their practice is the reverse of their own precepts. Their conduct shews that their morality consists chiefly in fruitless speculations, and that their schemes are contrived and made use of for amusement, more than any thing else.

They may have the same effect with many other arts and sciences, to gratify mens' curiosity, and perhaps their vanity. But the art of making men truly virtuous and happy by their own skill and strength, is not

yet invented. The result of all efforts that way, is exposing the weakness and vanity of the undertakers, and the confirmation of the truth of the gospel, and the necessity of the grace offered in it. The more we consider the success of such reformers, the more we may be convinced that their systems are fitter for tickling the ear, than mending the heart. Human corruption proves always too hard for human eloquence: it is ever found to have strong enough footing in the heart, to stand it out against all the golden sayings of the tongue. No doubt it is good to use all kind of helps against corruption, and to neglect no assistance against so dangerous an enemy. But to think these natural helps sufficient, without the assistance of grace, to pretend to bear down sin and vice, merely by eloquence and philosophy, to jest it away merely by witty satire and lampoon, to convert men by elegant phrases and delicate turns of the thought, is such a chimerical project, and which has so constantly failed in the experiment, that it is a wonder any body should seriously think it practicable. History sheweth the weak and contemptible efficacy, of the sublimest philosophy of the Heathens, when it encountered with inveterate corruptions, or violent temptations; how many of them that spake of virtue like angels, yet lived in a manner like brutes. Whereas, in all ages, poor Christian plebeians, unpolished by learning, but earnest in prayer, and depending upon grace, have, in comparison of these others, lived rather like angels than men; and shown such an invincible steadfastness in the practice of virtue, as shameth all the philosophy in the world. Many of these ancient philosophers, who reasoned admirably in favour of virtue, and particularly of truth, honesty, and sincerity, are believed to have maintained one eternal Deity in private, and yet most disingenuously complied with the abominable idolatry of the multitude in public: while those who depended on the grace of Jesus Christ, shewed an integrity in their zeal for the one true God, which death and tortures could not overcome; they forced their way through all the cruelties that malice could inflict, till they spread

the knowledge of the true God, and his laws, through the known world : whereas, for all the speculations of the philosophers, the world might have been lying as it was, to this day.

V. Having insisted so much on the doctrine of divine grace in general, it is not requisite to insist long on the way the gospel teacheth it is communicated to us, and should be sought after by us, that is, out of the fulness that is in the Son of God, by the application of his Spirit. This paper is not designed for considering objections against the Trinity, but against the doctrine of the gospel, about the way to pardon of sin, and grace to perform duty. In the mean time, supposing the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, there are several considerations, that might be of use to them, who wonder why it should not be sufficient in general to seek grace from God, without asking his Spirit, out of the fulness that is in the Mediator.

And here it may be useful to consider first, the beautiful harmony that may be found, between the several parts of the doctrine of the scriptures, about these adorable divine persons. If they are represented cooperating in the work of *redemption*, they are represented so likewise, in the other divine works of creation and providence ; and as there are different operations more immediately ascribed to each of them, so what is ascribed to the Spirit, in the work of our salvation, has a beautiful resemblance to the part attributed to him, in the other divine works. In effect, it is very observable, that the Holy Ghost is represented as more immediately concerned, in completing the divine works. It seems to be his particular office, to stamp the lovely image of the Creator on the creatures, according to their several capacities, whether *visible* or *invisible*, adorning the former with all that beauty, light, order and perfection they are capable of ; and adorning the latter, with the beauty of holiness, producing that light, order, and regular disposition, in which the perfection of created spirits consisteth. His operation, on visible as well as invisible creatures, is (according to a way of speaking of some of the an-

cients) a work of sanctification. At the beginning of the Bible we are told, after the mass of the world was produced, the earth was void, and without form, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the first account we have of bringing all things to order, is the *Spirit's* moving on the face of the deep. His operations to this day, are a continuation of his ancient work, a bringing light out of darkness, and order out of confusion; bringing the new creation, as he did the old, to order and perfection gradually, through several days' works, till at last, all terminate in an everlasting sabbath. In Psalm civ. it is said, that God sends forth his Spirit, to restore the decayed face of nature, and to revive it with fresh lustre and beauty, which is a very proper work for him who is the Comforter: he is represented also, as the immediate cause of all spiritual impressions, ordinary and extraordinary, of prophetical inspiration, gifts of miracles, and languages, as well as the ordinary graces, necessary to all sorts of persons. It is observable, that though the Son of God, while on earth, gave many excellent instructions to his disciples himself, their gifts and graces were never completed, till he sent them his Spirit, as he promised. His name, the *Holy Spirit*, and other names given him, have a manifest suitableness to his office; and the several parts of the doctrine of the scriptures concerning him, both in the Old Testament, and the New, have such an uniformity and harmony in them, as well deserveth our special observation; and, if duly considered, helps to illustrate the subject in hand.

Since it is so, that it is by the Holy Ghost always, that God sanctifieth his creatures; surely nothing is more just than a devout acknowledgment of this in divine worship, in prayers, and praises for grace, by asking of God his spirit, and blessing him for such an inestimable gift. It is a most reasonable acknowledgment, because it is an acknowledgment of the truth, of a very important truth. It is a part of devotion and godliness, because he is not a creature, (as appears plainly from scripture,) but a person in the Godhead.

And in effect, (not to insist on all the proofs of his divinity) one would think it were easy to see, that the *omnipresence*, and vast sufficiency of power, necessarily supposed in the Spirit's operations, are absolutely incompatible with the finite nature of a creature: considering that the highest creature, must be at an infinite distance below the Creator; and withal, that the efficacy of grace in the soul, (which is of a far more noble nature than the *visible world*) is one of the most glorious operations, in which *Omnipotence* exerteth itself.

It is observable, that God in all his works, taketh pleasure to use a subordination of various means and instruments, though he could produce them immediately by himself, without such means; yet God does not make it a part of worship and devotion, to acknowledge the efficacy of created instruments, (such as, for instance, the ministry of angels) but only the efficacy of the Holy Ghost sent by himself and his Son: and this is made so requisite, that in the solemn Rite, by which members are received into the church, they must be baptized in his name; which surely, if considered aright, sheweth of how great importance it is in worship and devotion, and what strong ties baptized persons are under, to acknowledge carefully the efficacy of the adorable Spirit, in the work of their salvation.

VI. They that object against the necessity of applying for grace in such a manner, as explicitly to acknowledge the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, will probably be much more against the other thing mentioned before; that is, that we should seek the grace of the Spirit, out of the fulness that is in the Redeemer.—They will look upon this as a strange multiplying of our views in devotion, without any necessity, or use.

But upon a little consideration, supposing once the doctrine of the Trinity, (which it is better not to enter upon here, than to treat it superficially) and supposing the doctrine of Christ's *sacrifice* and *merits*, which was vindicated before, it is easy to shew that the doctrine, just now mentioned, is the most reasonable in the world.

For what more just, than that a person of merit, who has deserved blessings for others, who are unworthy of them, should have his purchase put into his own hands, to dispense it to his favourites? The scripture sheweth, that the graces of the Spirit are the fruits of Christ's merits: and on that, and perhaps several other accounts, the Holy Ghost, when he is said to be given to sinners, is called the Spirit of Christ; and we are expressly told, John xvi. 14. *he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it to you*, that is (as the word really signifies there) shall *give* it unto you: it is evident therefore, that, being the purchaser of all grace, and having the disposal of it, he should be acknowledged as the source of it.

It may not be improper to reflect here on the observation made before about God's ordinary way of working by a subordination of various means.

This is evident in nothing more than in his way of bestowing many of his favours on us. Though he could bestow them immediately himself, yet he makes even men in many cases instruments of good to one another. Infinite wisdom may have many good reasons for such a way of acting, unknown to us: one remarkable good effect of it we know is this, that it is an excellent foundation, and cement of love and friendship among mankind: (and what is there among men more precious or amiable than that is?) Now supposing there were no other reason or necessity for it, yet what more just than that he who shewed such incomparable friendship for sinners, as to give himself a sacrifice for their sins, should have the dispensing of grace for them, for performance of duty, and be entrusted with the whole management of their souls? which surely cannot be in more friendly hands. His receiving gifts for men (as the scripture expresseth it) and having all fulness and treasures of wisdom to communicate to them by his Spirit, serveth as an additional mean of cementing that incomparable friendship betwixt him and them: Surely to compare the two contrary suppositions that may be made about this point; that which the gospel teacheth is far more reasonable than to

think that Christ, after having died for his people, never mindeth them more, and never doth any more for them.

To be perpetually employed in giving spiritual light, life, and strength, and joy to his people, we may easily conceive is an office very agreeable to his kind and bountiful nature. When he received gifts for them, and all power was given him as our Mediator; he received the portion and spoil Isaiah speaks of, which was due to him for vanquishing hell and death: when he giveth these gifts, and seeth them flourish in the souls of redeemed sinners, he sees the travel of his soul, and is satisfied. And they must have very little faith or gratitude, who do not think spiritual blessings have the better relish for coming to sinners from such a kindly source, and through such friendly hands: certainly every man that sincerely believes in Christ, findeth additional consolation in spiritual blessings, by reflecting on the way they are derived to him, that they carry along with them the favour of his merits, and the relish of his friendship. In other cases, it is evident, that, besides the intrinsic value of a benefit, the pleasure of it is enhanced, if it come from the hands of a friend, of one to whom we are under strong obligations of love and gratitude otherways: and surely it ought to be so in this case, above all others.

Besides, this way of seeking and receiving grace has a powerful influence on humility and gratitude, than which there are not two ornaments more becoming a sinful redeemed creature: for by this means, the way of *seeking grace* doth naturally remind us of our sins, and also of God's mercy, by fixing our view on that great sacrifice, which gives the liveliest impression of both these great objects: And surely to take frequent clear views of these two objects, our guilt that needed such a sacrifice, and God's infinite love that provided it, is the way to promote that humility and gratitude, which have such a necessary connexion with repentance, faith in Christ, and the love of God, and all other graces whatsoever.

VII. But a chief thing that illustrates this way of

deriving grace, is that union between the Redeemer and his people, which the apostle calls a mystery. It was observed before, that the Scripture representeth all believers as making up one body intimately united together, of which Christ is the head, animating the whole body by his Spirit, as a principle of new life. The scriptures insist very largely and frequently on this union: that is an evidence of the great importance of this doctrine. The most serious abettors of the gospel lay a great stress upon it. In the mean time, some that profess the gospel, seem to look upon it as little better than mere cant and enthusiasm. It may not therefore be improper to add here some other considerations, besides what was formerly observed, in order to remove those prejudices that hinder men's esteem of it.

Men undervalue it probably for one of these two reasons, either that they disbelieve the reality of these things in which that *union* is said to consist; or else that, supposing the reality of these things, they do not think them sufficient to make up such an intimate union, an union of such *importance* and excellency, as it is represented, an union worthy to employ our thoughts and affections so much. As to the reality of these things in which it is said to consist, that is, that as believers dwell in Christ by faith, so he dwells in them by his Spirit, which is the one principle of spiritual life in them all, there have been several things advanced for the vindication of it already. What remains is to shew with how much reason these things when supposed do make up such a proper union so intimate, and of so great importance.

If it be objected, that these things seem rather to unite men to the Spirit, than to the Son of God: we should consider, that when the Holy Ghost is given to believers, he is called the Spirit of Christ, for which there may be very great reason unknown to us: but what we know is sufficient to justify the propriety of the expression, not only because of the mysterious union between the Spirit and the Son in his divine nature, (the former proceeding from the latter; the

Son's receiving the Spirit in his human nature without measure ;) but chiefly because he is to believers the fruit of Christ's merits, and what he gives them he derives to them out of the fulness that is in their head, and unites them to him, by fixing the chief affections and faculties of their souls upon him.

If there are some things dark in this union, and the way of derivation of spiritual life, there are many things very dark likewise in the common instances of natural union, and the natural life of animals and vegetables, by which the union in view is frequently illustrated ; for instance, the union of soul and body ; and the way that the vegetative life, (so to speak) or nourishment is derived from the root with most exact uniformity, to every the least part of a branch, and every the least extremity of the fruit that groweth on it : in effect, every kind of vital union has something dark and intricate in its nature, though the effects of it be manifest.

Now the more we consider this mystical union, the more we may see that the state into which it brings a man is properly *new spiritual* life. For as by the natural life the soul has lively perceptions of earthly objects, various natural desires after them, various enjoyments of them, and actions concerning them : so by this union, the soul has new impressions, new desires, enjoyments and actions about objects of a far superior nature, objects divine and eternal.

What deserves our particular consideration on this subject, is, that the capacities and faculties of the soul concerned in its spiritual union with the Redeemer, are vastly above those concerned in its union with the body. Now what more reasonable than to think that the soul's union to any object is the more intimate, the more noble and excellent these faculties are that are interested in it. There is doubtless a vast inequality in the powers of the soul, according to the various objects that may be apprehended or enjoyed by them ; Some of its faculties have a relation to the infinite abyss of good, the Creator ; some to rational creatures : and others to bodily objects : the first is by far the

highest, and the last the lowest. Certainly to take a right view of human nature, the chief thing in it worth the noticing, is, that it was created with a capacity of enjoying an all-sufficient God, in whom there is such an ocean, such an infinite fulness of bliss, that all the pleasure now enjoyed by all the creatures in the universe, or that ever was, or will be enjoyed by them, though it were put together (so to speak) into one mass of joy, would, in comparison of that bright and boundless abyss, be nothing at all, or, comparatively speaking, nothing but pain and trouble. Now the capacity the soul has of knowing, seeing, loving, and enjoying this object, is undeniably its chief capacity; this is what is inmost in the soul, (so to speak;) what lies nearest its essence, what chiefly concerns the end of its being, and in which its happiness is most concerned; all the other powers and capacities of the soul are subordinate to this, and designed to be subservient to it: the soul may be conceived happy, though these lower powers were dormant and their objects removed, which may be imagined possible at least in the state of a happy disembodied spirit: whereas these lower powers of themselves can give but fleeting shadows of joy. Now these highest and noblest capacities of the soul are the capacities concerned in this union: The Redeemer's own expressions on this subject are strong, to the amazement of any thinking reader, John xvii. 21. ("That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.") These noblest powers of the soul, before this union commence, lie as it were dead, and these large capacities remain empty in a soul sunk in guilt and vanity; but when the second Adam, who is called a quickening spirit, enters into it, it receives a new and blessed life, which is called in Scripture, the life of God. Though indeed the impressions received by this union, the desires, enjoyments and activity resulting from this new spiritual life, are but very imperfect, while the natural life continues.

For farther illustration of this subject, it may be useful to reflect on the chief thing we know of the

natural union between the soul and the body, and that is, their reciprocal action on one another: It is plain, one would think, that the body being void of all thought and perception, cannot be the proper efficient cause of these things in the mind, however it may be the occasion of them: whereas the Son of God can by a proper efficiency produce in the soul what effects he pleases, of a nature far transcending those occasioned by the body: This may help to shew how many advantages the spiritual union has above the natural. And as to the actions of the soul on the body and bodily objects; what are bodily motions considered in themselves, to the actions of the spiritual life, the most excellent the rational nature is capable of?

If it be objected, that good men do not feel this quickening union, and are not conscious of it, it is certain, that, as to some, this is not always true. Besides, men do not feel that general influence that preserves to them health and strength of body, and soundness of mind. Men, when they perform bodily actions, do not feel the motions of the muscles, and other internal motions that are absolutely necessary to these actions; no wonder therefore they should not be always conscious in a clear and distinct manner of the grace that strengthens them in spiritual actions.

If distance of place be made an objection against this union, it should be considered it does not hinder vital union in other cases; the remotest members or branches partake of the same spirit or life that is in the head or root as really as these that are nearest. Local distance is not sufficient to hinder vital union, and local conjunction is not sufficient to constitute it. Thus, in the human body, when a member putrifies, so that the spirit in a man withdraws its influence from it, (having neither any feeling of it, nor giving any life or motion to it) it remains as if it were no more a part of the body, though locally joined to the other members. The same may be said of a withered branch. But what chiefly refutes the objection mentioned, is the omnipresence of the divine nature: though it is useful to observe likewise, that it is not

nearness of place, but the participation of one quickening principle that constitutes vital union even in natural objects. Before concluding this subject, perhaps, it may not be amiss to consider, whether this union does not illustrate the uniformity of God's works, and whether it be not very agreeable to the other discoveries we have of divine wisdom in the order and symmetry of the universe : It seems to be no small part of that order and beauty, that the various works of God, greater and lesser, are united together into so many different systems, harmoniously joined, and variously related to one another, so as each part contributes to the perfection of the whole. In effect, the great system of the world seems to be almost entirely made up of other subordinate systems of various sorts and sizes. When such sorts of union in visible things contribute so much to the perfection of the corporeal system, it is strange any should be so prejudiced against that intimate union in the intellectual system that the gospel insists on so much. When there are so many kinds of intimate union among the inferior works of God, should it appear to be unlikely that there is any among his more excellent works ? Surely men would have other thoughts, if they took care to consider the majesty and grace that is in the great ideas the scripture gives of that august fabric, that temple of living stones, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Eph. ii. 20. (of which the Redemer is the chief corner stone) compactly built together for offering sacrifices of eternal praise to the adorable architect of the world : that blessed family of purified souls in heaven and earth, Eph. iii. 15. that assembly of the first-born, Heb. xii. 23. that body which is so fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love, Eph. iv. 16.

It is easy to see how agreeable this doctrine of the mystical union is to the goodness of God, since it is so conducive to the comfort of them that love him. For what can be more so, than that the meanest redeem-

ed sinner can look upon himself as invested with these noble characters of being a child of God, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost ?

Man naturally loves honour and dignity ; and, indeed, ambition to be great, if it were directed to right objects, would, instead of being a vice, be a cardinal virtue. Man is naturally a sociable, as well as an aspiring creature : these joint inclinations make men love to be incorporated in societies that have dignity annexed to them. The subject we are treating contains all the attractives that can reasonably affect one that loves society ; it is made up of the choice of all other societies, contains all the true heroes that ever were, and comprehends the flower of the universe. The meanest member is promoted at the same time to a near relation to the infinite Creator, and to all the best of his creatures : allied to the spirits made perfect in heaven, Heb. xii. 23. and to the excellent ones of the earth ; Psalm xvi. 3. he can claim kindred to the patriarchs, Heb. xi. and prophets, and martyrs, and apostles, and all the other excellent persons, who adorned this world, and of whom it was not worthy, Heb. xi. 38. though they be in heaven and he on earth, one spirit animates them both. Surely it is industrious stupidity, if one contemplate such a society, without being enamoured with it ; and all other society, or solitude is only so far valuable as it is subservient to it : a society headed by infinite perfection, cemented by eternal love, adorned with undecaying grace, supplied out of all-sufficient bliss, entitled to the inheritance of all things, Rev. xxi. 7. and guarded by omnipotence : a society as ancient as the world, but more durable ; and to whose interest the world and all that is in it are subservient : a society joined together by the strictest bands, where there is no interfering of interests, but one common interest, and where at last there will be no opposition of tempers or sentiments ; when its members, now many of them scattered far and near, but still united to their head, shall one day, have a glad universal meeting in an eternal temple never to part, and where they shall celebrate a jubilee of inconceiv-

able extacy and transport, without mixture, without interruption, and, which crowns all without end.

VIII. The Redeemer's union with his people, illustrates his intercession for them: for what more agreeable to the most perfect order than that the petitions of the members should be strengthened by the pleading of their head? Since their holy desires are excited by his grace, put up in his name, and granted for his sake; whether is it more reasonable to think, that, being at God's right hand, he stands by without concerning himself in his people's desires that come up before the throne, or that he seconds them and procures acceptance?

If it be objected, that his intercession is superfluous, because the Father can bestow all blessings without it, and is of himself inclined to bestow them: it should be observed, that if the objection had any force in it, it would infer that God makes use of no intermediate causes or means, for effects that he can produce immediately himself; and that it is not agreeable to his will, that blessings should be asked from him, which he is before-hand inclined to grant. The reverse of this is clear from experience and reason, as well as from scripture. The scripture says, that Job's friends were commanded of God, to cause Job pray for them, for favours which he was before-hand resolved to grant. Surely this way of acting is agreeable to the best order of things, though we should not know all the reasons of it. There is a vast difference no doubt between Christ's intercession and men's prayers; yet the one illustrates the other, if it were carefully considered.

Christ's sacrifice and obedience on earth were transient things: their effects are permanent and lasting to all ages: they continue still to be the meritorious cause of all spiritual blessings; if I may so speak, they are still contemplated as such by the Father, and why should it seem strange that they are still represented as such by the Son, in a way of pleading suitable to his interest in God, to his care for his people, and to the virtue of his merits?

Let us consider what may be certainly inferred from Christ's affection for his people, and his knowledge of their wants. Since he loves them constantly, he continually desires that God should grant them these blessings they stand in need of, and apply for. Since he sees all their wants, and knows all their petitions, these desires in him are not merely general but particular. Since it is for his merits that blessings are granted, it is on that account he continually desires them : and is not this intercession, unless it should be supposed that he does not represent these desires to the Father, though he be at his right hand, and though he hear him always ?

AN

ESSAY

ON

CHRISTIAN PIETY.

BESIDES the duties that are incumbent on us, as we are rational creatures, and as we are sinners; it is needful to consider the duties which we are obliged to, as we are sinners to whom the salvation revealed in the gospel is freely and graciously offered. It is sufficient for the design of this essay, to take such a short comprehensive view of the Christian doctrines, as is requisite for explaining the chief parts and characters of Christian piety. The chief peculiar doctrines of the gospel relate to the divine promises of salvation and happiness; the principal causes of that salvation, particularly the mercy and power of God in the mediation of his Son, and the effectual grace of his Spirit; the divine nature and glory of both: the means of that salvation on our part, namely, the means of an interest in the divine promises, and the means of obtaining the accomplishment of them; and particularly the constant improvement that ought to be made of all the grounds of our hope and joy as motives to love and obedience.

I. Suitable acknowledgment of the mercy of God in our redemption by Christ is a principal branch of Christian piety. The same scripture instructions which prove the necessity and importance of such ac-

knowledgment, serve also to explain the nature and characters of it.

The doctrine of redemption itself, is evidently contained in the many scriptures, which treat of the causes and effects of Christ's death; and is mixed and interwoven with all the other most important doctrines and instructions of holy scripture. The scriptures which treat most directly of Christ's death shew that it was a real and complete satisfaction to divine justice for our sins, and that it is the meritorious cause of all the parts of our salvation. It is called a sacrifice, a ransom, a propitiation, an atonement for our sins. The meaning of these and the like scripture expressions is abundantly evident from the obvious import of the words themselves, and from a great variety of equivalent expressions made use of on the same important subject. Thus we are told that Christ died for our sins, was delivered for our offences, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: that the iniquities of us all were laid on him, that he bare the sins of many, that he bare our sins on his own body on the tree, that he who knew no sin was made sin for us; that he suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. It is impossible to devise stronger and clearer assertions of Christ's substitution in the room of sinners. As the scriptures which have been hinted at, treat more directly of the causes of Christ's death; the doctrine of redemption is contained, with equal evidence, in the scriptures which treat more directly of the effects of his death. Thus we are taught "that we have redemption in Christ's blood, the remission of sins; that his blood was shed for the remission of the sins of many; that thereby he reconciles us to God by the blood of his cross; that his blood cleanses from all sin; that it purges the consciences of sinners from dead works, and gives them boldness to draw near to God." Whereas some of these scriptures ascribe our redemption to Christ's death, and others of them ascribe it to his sufferings in general; there are various scriptures which shew that the merits of his obedience are included in his satisfaction taken in its full extent.

Thus we are told that by his obedience we are made righteous, Rom. v. 19. and that by his righteousness we receive the justification of life. But these things may be more fully proved in another section, designed for vindicating the grounds of Christian piety from objections.

II. As to the means of an interest in Christ's redemption; whereas the scripture gives various warnings concerning the inefficacy of a dead faith, or of that faith which is without works, it teaches us also that there is a sincere holy faith, which works by love, and which has a necessary and sure connexion with salvation. Thus we are taught that "by grace we are saved, through faith; that being justified by faith we have peace with God: that God sent his Son to the world, that whoever believes in him may not perish, but have life everlasting; that he who believes has past from death to life; that to as many as receive Christ, even to them that believe in his name, it is given to be the Sons of God; that through faith in him sinners receive the remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified." It is evident from these and many other scriptures, that that faith which has a connexion with salvation, includes the belief and acknowledgment of the things revealed concerning Christ. Though the scripture sometimes speaks of that faith which is a principal means of salvation, without speaking expressly of the object of it; yet where the object is mentioned, there is mention made of Christ, or of some of the most important truths concerning him. Whereas a great many different things are revealed in scripture, concerning Christ; it is generally owned that they are not all of equal importance. Thus for instance the various truths relating only to the outward instruments and circumstances of his death, are not of equal importance with the truths above-mentioned, concerning the chief causes and effects of his death; that is to say, the truths necessarily included in the doctrine of redemption. But whereas some people speak of that faith in Christ, which the scripture makes so necessary, as if it did not

imply an acknowledgment of redemption itself, but only a general acknowledgment of Christ's being the promised Messiah, or of his divine mission, and the proof of it by his resurrection; it is of importance to shew how far such notions of faith in Christ deviate from the scripture account of it.

III. The same arguments which prove the truth and reality of redemption do, in effect prove the importance and necessity of acknowledging it; and that suitable acknowledgment of it is implied in that faith in Christ which the scripture so much insists on. That faith which is so great a means of salvation, if it include any thing, must include the acknowledgment of the meritorious cause of salvation. If a man only acknowledge, in general, Christ's divine mission, he acknowledges nothing concerning Christ, but what is common to him with all the prophets and apostles.—Due acknowledgment of Christ as the promised Messiah, includes an acknowledgment of the principal thing promised concerning him, which is his purchasing our redemption. Suitable acknowledgment of Christ's mission must imply an acknowledgment of redemption as the principal end of his mission.

The apostle Paul tells us that "God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins." Rom. iii. 25. This plainly implies that that faith by which we seek and obtain the remission of sins is faith in Christ's blood: or that that faith which is the means of pardon has, for its object, the blood of Christ as the meritorious cause of pardon. When Christ's satisfaction is called "the righteousness which is of God by faith;" Phil iii. 9. this plainly supposes that true faith must fix our hope on that righteousness as the cause of our salvation. According to scripture style, to be justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in his Son, and to be justified by faith, are but different ways of expressing the same doctrine. This supposes that that faith which is the means of our justification, includes our applying to God's mercy through redemption, and our building our hope and pleading upon it.

Faith in Christ must include the acknowledgment of these things concerning him that are of the greatest importance. Nothing can be of greater importance to sinners, than redemption from sin. Whatever proves the importance of God's moral law, proves the importance of deliverance from its penal sanction, and of conformity to its holy precepts. The scriptures above cited prove that redemption is the cause of both.

Faith in Christ must include acknowledgment of the things that are peculiar to him, and that distinguish him from others who have been sent from God. Others who were sent from God have revealed his will, given a pattern of our duty by their example, and confirmed the truth by their sufferings. It is peculiar to Christ that he has made atonement for our sins.

The various principal ends and uses of faith in Christ shew that redemption must be the object of it. As our justification through Christ's redemption is a principal end of faith; this shews that acknowledgment of that redemption belongs to the nature of faith. As it is also a principal end of faith, that it may work by love, it must include an acknowledgment of these things concerning Christ that are the chief motives of love: when the apostle Paul says that the love of Christ constrains us, 2 Cor. v. 14. he gives this as the reason of it, because *we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.* The plain meaning of this is, that the love of Christ constrains us, because we believe and acknowledge our redemption by him. The whole strain of the New Testament represents redemption as the highest manifestation of divine love and mercy. If redemption be God's chief gift, due acknowledgment of it must be a redeemed sinner's chief duty. But of this more fully afterwards.

Another end of faith in Christ is to exclude boasting, Rom. iii. 27. to hinder glorying in ourselves, that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord; 1 Cor. i. 31. and that we may give due honour to God's sovereign free mercy in our salvation. The scripture tells us that salvation "is of faith that it may be by grace, and that the law of faith excludes boasting." These

and the like scripture instructions plainly import that by true faith we ascribe our salvation to the true meritorious cause of it. We are told that they who sought justification otherwise than by faith, made Christ's death to have been in vain, and made his cross of none effect. This implies that true faith in Christ acknowledges the efficacy of his death or of his cross, while unbelief denies or lessens it. This may also be proved from the scripture account, not only of the ends, but also of the causes and means of faith.

When we are directed to seek the Spirit of God to make us know the love of Christ that passes knowledge; it implies that just impressions of divine love in our redemption is a chief end of the operations of the Spirit of God. When we are told that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and that the law leads to him; it is evident from such scriptures, especially when compared with other scriptures, that suitable impression of our need of redemption and of the glory of it, is a main design of divine instructions concerning the law of God. When preaching the gospel is called preaching Christ's cross, or preaching Christ crucified; 1 Cor. i. 18, 23. when it is mentioned to the Galatians, as the great privilege they had by gospel instructions and institutions, that Christ crucified had been evidently set forth before them, Gal. iii. 1. when both the sacraments are described as representing and applying the efficacy of Christ's death; Rom. vi. 3. 1 Cor. 11. all these things shew that our honouring the love and mercy of God in our redemption, is a main design of all divine ordinances and institutions. Seeing therefore that due acknowledgment of redemption, is a main design of the work of the Spirit of God, of the doctrine of his law, of all the instructions of his word, and of all the ordinances of his worship; it is evident that such acknowledgment not only is included in that faith in Christ which the gospel requires, but even that it is the very main and principal thing included in it.

The scriptures which treat of access to God in his worship, and of a spiritual fulness of peace and joy

in God, speak of these privileges as the effects both of Christ's blood, and of faith, in such a way as shews that that faith which is the means of these privileges, has for its object that blood, or redemption in Christ's blood, which is the meritorious cause of them. Thus, as to the efficacy of faith, we are told that it is by faith we draw near to God and have access to him, Eph. ii. 13. that they who trust in God according to his word are filled with joy and peace in believing, Rom. xv. 13. and that believing in Christ they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. On the other part, as to the efficacy of Christ's blood, we are told that it is the new and living way by which we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, Heb. x. 19. that it is that blood that purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. and that we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, having received the atonement, Rom. v. 11. These and the like scriptures shew that that faith by which men attain to spiritual joy and peace, and access to God, has for its object Christ's blood and atonement or redemption.

The great law of prayer, that we should ask all things in Christ's name, proves that our faith in him must imply an acknowledgment of his having purchased all things for us. It is the doctrine of redemption that explains God's bestowing all blessings on us, and his accepting all our sincere services, for Christ's sake. Our obligation to apply to God in his name, might be justly inferred from that doctrine, though it were not otherwise expressly enjoined. But we are not left to learn that important practice, merely by inference and deduction. It is inculcated upon us in the most express manner, and very frequently. We are required in all our addresses to the throne of God, and in all our endeavours to serve him acceptably, to ask all things for Christ's sake, and to do all things in his name, 1 John xiv. 13. Col. iii. 17.

IV. The various arguments that have been adduced, are sufficient to prove, that acknowledgment of redemption is necessarily included in that faith in Christ, which the scripture so much insists on. They shew also

the great importance of such acknowledgment: how much it should habitually occupy the mind and hearts of Christians; and how justly it may be considered as the life and soul of practical christianity. But this deserves more particular confirmation on various accounts.

The transcendent importance of acknowledging divine mercy in redemption, ought by no means to be understood so, as to interfere with habitual particular consideration of the other doctrines and precepts of religion. This is contrary to the nature and ends of true faith in Christ, and is a very dangerous extreme. But it is also a very dangerous thing to acknowledge redemption only in a superficial way.

How much the mystery of redemption and salvation by the mercy of God in Christ should occupy the minds and hearts of Christians, may appear from the consideration of the following things: *viz.* The nature and properties of redemption itself; various express assertions in scripture, concerning the place it should have in our thoughts and affections; the style of scripture concerning it, by which the whole of Christianity receives its denomination from that important doctrine; the manner in which the apostles inculcate it, mixing it with all other divine instructions, improving it as the chief motive for enforcing all Christian precepts; the warnings given concerning those who opposed it, or perverted it; the account given of the operations of the Spirit of God, enabling men to just apprehensions and impressions of it; the commendations given of distinguishing privileges of the New Testament dispensation, as arising from a clearer discovery of it; together with the descriptions given of the Christian life as the life of faith on the Son of God.

As to the nature of redemption itself, its trancendent importance has been in some measure explained and proved already, and will be more fully considered afterwards. It is obvious, that seeing it is an incomparable display of the perfections of God, and especially of his mercy to sinners, a propensity to suit-

able acknowledgment of it, is a thing to which hearers of the gospel are under the highest obligations, in point of justice and gratitude, as well as interest. As was observed before, if redemption is God's chief gift, suitable acknowledgment of it is the redeemed sinner's chief duty Neglect of such acknowledgment is the highest contempt of divine mercy and of divine authority. They who deny redemption, such as the unbelieving Jews and others, are far less inconsistent with themselves, than they who own the reality of it, but satisfy themselves with mere superficial acknowledgments of it.

It is the doctrine of our redemption and salvation by Christ that the apostle has in view, when he says, that he was determined to know nothing else, among those to whom he preached, but Christ and him crucified; 1 Cor. ii. 2. that he gloried in nothing else but in the cross of Christ; Gal. vi. 14. that he counted all things else as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; Phil. iii. 8. Such expressions plainly import something more than merely that the doctine of Christ's redemption and mediation is a part, or a necessary part, of the Christian revelation; they plainly import, that it is of peculiar and transcendent importance; and that as other doctrines which may be distinguished from it, and which by no means should be neglected, have a manifold connexion with it, or a manifold relation to it, so it is in that view that they should be habitually considered.

It is evident, that no doctrine can properly be denominated from any of the least important branches of it, but from its main scope and design. The whole of Christianity receives its denomination from the mystery of redemption. When teaching Christianity is called preaching Christ, the preaching of the cross, or of Christ crucified, and preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, and when the whole Christian revelation is called the word of grace, the word of reconciliation, the word of salvation, the word of life, and the gospel of the grace of God; the force of this argument from these names of the word of God, is

founded on this, that they are names given to it by the Spirit of God.

In considering how the apostles inculcate the doctrine in view, it is of use to distinguish betwixt the doctrinal and the practical parts of their writings; understanding these words in the strictest sense, in so far as there is a difference betwixt the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, though all its doctrines are of a practical nature and tendency.

As to the doctrinal parts of the writings in view, it is proper to observe these two things; First, that some branch or other, of the mystery of redemption, is to be met with in the doctrinal instructions of the apostles every where: and, secondly, that all other doctrines are considered in their relation to it. As to the first, the divine perfections manifested in redemption, the divine law established by it, the blessings purchased by it, our need of it, the manner of obtaining an interest in it, and the fruits of it; the sufficiency, the excellency, the completeness of it; and in a special manner, the incomprehensible mercy and kindness of God displayed in it; the Divine nature and glory of the Son of God, who purchased redemption, and of his Spirit, who applies it; with various other things which shew its glory and importance, are to be met with every where in these parts of the apostolical writings that may, in the strictest sense, be called doctrinal.

As to the other point, namely, that the doctrines which may be distinguished from the mystery of redemption, are considered in their relation to it; this is evident both as to the other peculiar doctrines of revelation, and as to the doctrines of natural religion, which they necessarily presuppose. When the apostle says that Christ is the end of the law, Rom. x. 4. which law is a main branch of natural religion, though more fully discovered in scripture; this implies, as was hinted before, that it is a principal end and use of the law, to guilty transgressors, to shew them their need of that salvation through Christ, which the gospel reveals. As to the other truths of natural religion,

which may be some way distinguished from the doctrine of the divine law; such as the truths, relating to God's being, attributes and works; the apostle Paul, considers these things in their relation to the divine law, and the discovery it gives of our need of the grace of the gospel. When he is proving our need of that justification and salvation, which the gospel reveals, he uses a chain of reasoning much to this purpose; that the visible works of God, clearly manifest his invisible glory, or his eternal power and Godhead; that this founds an obligation, to obey his moral law, or to glorify him, and to be thankful to him; that it renders transgression inexcusable; that all, being guilty before God, have need to seek that justification, which is given freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in his Son, Rom. i. 20, 21. and iii. 23, 24. Thus, the chief doctrines of natural religion, concerning God's being, attributes, works and law; are considered as subservient to the great doctrines of revelation, concerning God's mercy and grace.

As to these parts of the writings of the apostles, which may be more strictly called practical, or which treat more directly of the divine precepts; the doctrine of salvation through Christ, is almost every where intermixed with them, and improved for enforcing them. The duties of faith, love, hope, and joy, relating to Christ's mediation, and the mercy manifested in it, are represented, both as a chief part of Christian practice, and as having the most powerful influence on all the other parts of it. Thus, redemption has a manifold influence on sanctification. It purchases sanctifying grace, and affords the most powerful motives to holiness. It is from that rich source, the inspired writers draw the chief motives to every duty, and against every sin. But of this, more fully afterwards in considering the manifold influence of faith on universal holiness.

Besides these practical parts, of the apostolical writings, which treat chiefly on duties incumbent on Christians of all sorts, in all conditions; there are some parts, which relate to particular emergencies and oc-

currences, and which may be called occasional parts. It is observable, that in these passages, whatever be the subject treated of, the apostles did not think it contrary to the rules of just composure, to mix with it some instructions, relating to the doctrine of salvation. Thus, for instance, when the apostle is speaking to the Corinthians, about the incestuous person, whom he requires them to put out from among them; he puts them in mind that Christ, their passover, had been sacrificed for them; and that, therefore, in keeping the spiritual passover, they ought to purge out the old leaven, 1 Cor. v. 7. and when he is vindicating himself to the same Corinthians, from the imputation of unsteadiness in his purposes, he brings in the consideration of God's unchangeableness in his promises, which are in Christ, yea, and amen, 2 Cor. i. 20. These, and the like instances, shew how much the doctrine of the grace of Christ, occupied the hearts of the apostles. Every thing puts them in mind of it; they did not allow themselves to have it long out of their view; nor did any other branch of spiritual instruction, make them lose sight of it. It is evident, that in this, as in other things, their example should be a pattern to others; and that not only to Christian teachers, though they indeed have a special concern in such examples, but all Christians in general. All are under the same obligations, in the main, to honour the mercy of God in our salvation.

The importance of suitable acknowledgment of redemption, may appear farther from the manner in which the apostles speak of those who opposed that doctrine, or who perverted it. As to the unbelieving Jews who opposed it, the manner in which Paul expresses his sorrow, on account of their blindness, has astonished his readers in all ages, Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3.— Though some things, in the apostle's discourse on that head are obscure, one thing is very plain, *viz.* that he looked on that blindness of his countrymen, which he so much bewails, as very dismal. Let us consider what that blindness was. It is certain, that these unbelieving Jews were far from being atheists. They

owned the being of God, his attributes, his providence, and his law. They even pretended to be zealous for the law. It was their rejecting Christ's mediation and redemption, that filled the apostle's heart with such displeasure and sorrow. This is evident from the end of the ninth, and beginning of the tenth chapter of the epistle above cited; and it shews what impressions the apostle had of the importance of that doctrine, which these people rejected.

But it is useful to consider, not only how the apostles speak of the unbelieving Jews, who opposed the doctrine in view, but of the Judaizing Christians who perverted it, and particularly the false apostles, so often mentioned or hinted at in the epistles of Paul, Gal. i. ii. ch. &c. Whereas, these men not only owned the doctrine of God's being, attributes and law; but owned also Christ's divine mission; the main thing blamed in their scheme of doctrine, is, its tendency to frustrate the grace of God, and to make the death of Christ to have been in vain, with respect to our justification before God, Gal. ii. at the end; that is to say, their doctrine derogated greatly from the glory of God's sovereign mercy, in our justification and salvation through Christ. Though that party is blamed also for their false zeal for the ceremonial law; yet as that is but a part of the charge against them, so the evil of it is represented, as consisting mainly in its being injurious to the efficacy of Christ's death. For, where people went no farther than a scrupulous adherence to the ceremonial precepts; though the apostle speaks of such Christians, as weak brethren, Rom. xiv. 1. he is far from speaking of them, as he does of the false apostles. It is that sort of men he had in view, in the strong and uncommon expressions, in which he warns the Galatians against whoever should preach another gospel to them, than what they had heard before, though it were an angel from heaven, Gal. i 8.

The scriptures, which treat of the enlightening grace of the Spirit of God, shew that a main design of it, is to give us right views of the mystery of our redemption by the Son of God. Thus Paul prays, in behalf

of the Ephesians, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of his inheritance in the saints;" and also "that God would strengthen them with might by his spirit, in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, that they might be rooted and grounded in love; and that they might know what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." He tells the Corinthians, "that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into mens' hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." It is observable, that as several of the most remarkable prayers in the writings of the apostles, are prayers for divine light; so the principal thing mentioned in them is, that light that gives right views of the mystery of our salvation.

The scriptures which mention the reason why God honours the gospel, to be the instrument of his power in the salvation of sinners, shew that one main reason of it is, because the gospel reveals the mystery of our redemption. When the apostle Paul affirms, that the gospel is the power of God to salvation, and adds this as the reason of it, "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith;" it is our justification and salvation through Christ that he has in view, as appears both from the context, and from other scriptures, where the righteousness which is of God by faith is insisted on. When our Saviour tells Nicodemus, that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, "so must the Son of man be lifted up;" that comparison plainly tells how sinners are to seek that divine power, that heals the diseases of the soul; that it is by believing contemplation of Christ crucified, held up to view, in gospel ordinances, for that end.

When the apostles commend the distinguishing advantages and privileges of the New Testament dispensation; they inculcate, that one of the chief of these

privileges, is a clearer and fuller discovery of the causes, and of the way and means of reconciliation with God through the Mediator, 2 Cor. iii. This is represented as a main thing, that exalts the New Testament Church state, to a nearer resemblance of the heavenly blessedness, as being a principal means of higher degrees of holiness and happiness. But of this elsewhere.

The descriptions given in scripture of the Christian life, as a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us, Gal. ii. 20. the precepts which require us not only to come to him, and to receive him, but also to abide in him, to walk in him, being rooted and built up in him; established in the faith, and abounding therein with thanksgiving, Col. ii. 7. the comparisons which represent Christ's sacrifice as our spiritual meat and drink; with various other scripture instructions of the like import and tendency, shew very clearly of what importance it is to abound in suitable acknowledgment of redemption. They shew in effect, that it is of the like importance to the spiritual life of the soul, as natural feeding is to the life of the body.

V. Several things that have been taken notice of, in proving the importance of habitual acknowledgment of Christ's mediation, serve in part to explain the nature and properties of it. In order to farther explication of it; it is useful to consider some of the principal ends of it: which may be gathered, not only from those scriptures which treat more directly of faith itself; but also from the scriptures, which treat of the ends of Christ's mediation, and of the doctrine of the gospel which reveals it. It is of importance to consider this subject, because it is evident that true faith in Christ, must have such characters, as render it fit for answering the ends, for which it is designed.

It is common to faith in Christ, with all other holy duties, that the glory of God is the chief and highest end of it. But as it is incumbent on reasonable creatures, to honour the divine perfections, suitably to the manifestations that are made to them of these perfections; it is evidently a main thing incumbent on re-

deemed sinners, and a principal end of faith in the Redeemer, to honour the mercy and grace, and other divine perfections of God, as manifested in redemption. Thus, when the apostle Paul is speaking of God's gracious purposes concerning our salvation, he says that the end of these things is, that we may be to the praise of his glory, who trust in Christ, Eph. i. 6, 12, xi. 7, particularly the praise of the glory of his grace (or free undeserved mercy) and the shewing forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness in Christ: and that God fulfils all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, 2 Thess. i. 12. As it is the end of believing the great truths of natural religion, that we may honour God's perfections, manifested in the works of creation and providence; so it is evident from the scriptures now cited, and many others, that the end of knowing and believing the gospel, is our honouring God's perfections, manifested in the work of our redemption and salvation. A rooted disposition, and propensity to comply with that excellent end, must be a chief character of that faith, which the scripture calls faith unfeigned. Such faith must, in a special manner, incline a sinner's heart to honour the grace, or undeserved mercy of God. This is plainly implied, both in the scriptures above cited, and in other scriptures, which shew that it is a principal end of faith, that boasting may be excluded, that no flesh may glory in God's sight, but that he that glorieth, may glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. i. 13.

The scriptures formerly adduced, to prove that there is a sincere holy faith, which has a sure connexion with salvation, shew that it is a chief end of faith in Christ, that, having an interest in Christ's redemption, we may be thereby justified before God. The same scriptures prove also, that a state of justification, includes not only freedom from condemnation, but an actual right to life eternal, and to all the blessings of the covenant of grace; and that true faith in Christ, is the means not only of bringing us into that state, but also

of our continuance in it. Hence it would be exceeding unreasonable, to imagine that acknowledgment of Christ's mediation is necessary, only at a sinner's first conversion to God; it is equally necessary ever after. The Christian life, as was already observed from scripture, is a life of faith on the Son of God. It will be fully proved afterwards, that the peculiar influence of faith in Christ, on our justification through him, does not derogate from the necessity of repentance, as it includes not only sincere sorrow for sin, but also a returning from sin to God and universal holiness. These things are inseparable from true faith; they are of equal necessity with it, though not of the same influence on our interest in Christ's mediation, of which due acknowledgment of that mediation, is the immediate effectual means: as in other cases, entering into certain endearing relations, (as by marriage or adoption) is that, by which one receives a right to the benefits belonging to these relations: having an interest in a new inheritance by virtue of such relation, to the first purchaser and proprietor of it.

The whole tenor of scripture doctrine concerning faith and its objects, shews that a principal end of it is sanctification, or universal holiness. This is, in effect, included in what was proved before, about our active glorifying God as the end of our faith. The holy scripture shews, that true holiness is the end of our redemption, by the Son of God, Tit. ii. 14. of the gracious operations of the Spirit of God, and of the promises, 2 Pet. i. 4. of God's covenant, as well as of the precepts of his law.

It is needful to observe, that it is the end of faith in Christ, and of scripture instructions concerning it, not only to direct us in seeking all the parts of salvation, for Christ's sake in prayer and other duties of worship; but also to direct us in all other endeavours, Rom. ix. 32. in what the scripture calls the work of our salvation, and particularly of our sanctification: and that it is by faith we are to seek after, not only an interest in Christ's mediation, but also a well founded abundant hope, Rom. xv. 13. of that interest, though other means of hope must, by no means, be excluded.

VI. As it is of great importance to have just conceptions of the way of attaining to an interest in Christ's mediation; so it is a very useful illustration of it that the scripture gives us, in comparing it to the way of giving and acquiring a right to any thing among men, by free gift or donation: in which case, two things concur to make up a right or title; namely, an offer or free promise on the part of the giver, and acceptance on the part of the receiver. Thus, in holy scripture, as Christ is called the gift of God, John iv. 10. and the free gift, Rom. v. 15. and we are said to be justified freely, through the redemption that is in him, Rom. iii. 24. so faith is described by our receiving Christ, John i. 12. our taking the waters of life freely, Rev. xxi. 6. without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. our giving suitable acceptation to the true and faithful saying, that Christ came to save sinners, Tim. i. 15. and we are told that salvation is of faith, that it might be by grace, Rom. iv. 6. The scripture descriptions of the object of faith, of the nature and of the ends of it, shew that an interest in the Mediator, is given by way of free and gratuitous donation. To avoid wrong apprehensions of this important subject, it is needful to guard against two opposite hurtful errors; one is, that God offers happiness without holiness; the other is, that the free offers of the gospel, only import a connexion between sincere holiness and happiness: as if we were to be beholden to ourselves for holiness, and to Christ only for its connexion with a reward. The scriptures above cited, and compared with other scriptures, shew that God offers holiness and happiness, (of which holiness is a chief part) and all the blessings of the covenant of grace, freely through the Mediator of it. The sanctifying grace of the Spirit of God, the efficient cause of holiness; and faith itself, which is a principal means of it, are both of them the fruits of Christ's redemption, and both are called the gift of God, Gal. iii. 14. Eph. ii. 8. Acts x. 45.

It may be objected, that there is a considerable disparity betwixt free donation among men, and the manner in which God confers salvation, or a right to

it; because, among men verbal acceptance is sufficient; whereas, the acceptance required, in the concerns of salvation, is an acceptance with the whole heart; and consequently, with such penitential and holy dispositions as are not easily attained to: and it may be said that this makes it exceeding difficult, to attain to any considerable measure of hope, as to a man's interest in that salvation, even where there may be a sincere concern and cordial acceptance of it.

In answer to this objection, though the things mentioned in it, prove some disparity betwixt free donation in other cases, and in the concerns of salvation; yet, notwithstanding that disparity, the free mercy and bounty of God, in the way of conferring justification and salvation, is incomparably above what takes place in any other donation whatever. Among men, verbal acceptance must give a right to what is offered as a gift; because, men cannot see into the heart, or judge of it. But if they could, a benefactor might be said to offer a gift freely, though he promised it only to those who should accept of it cordially, and not to those who in their hearts undervalue and despise it. If it is difficult to bring up the hearts of sinners, to suitable acceptance of the offers of the gospel; this serves farther to commend the freeness of God's mercy, that he makes so gracious proposals to creatures, who are so unworthy of them, and so hardly brought to esteem and embrace them. But besides this, as the gospel promises salvation through sincere acceptance of Christ with the whole heart; so it contains gracious promises of God's Spirit, to enable sinners to such acceptance. All hearers of the gospel are warranted, encouraged and required to seek the accomplishment of these promises on themselves; it being indeed for this end that they are proposed, Ezek. xxxvi 26, 27. Sinners are encouraged to seek this with their whole heart, and to seek it with humble and joyful hope, Psal. cxix. They are allowed, and even required to improve all the declarations of God's mercy, in his word, as encouragements to such hope. These declarations of God's free, incomparable, and incomprehensible mercy, are of

such a nature, that they have a powerful tendency, when duly improved, to dispel the discouraging fear and perplexity, that is the native effect of guilt, in an awakened conscience. Without taking in these manifold encouragements of hope, we cannot have just and adequate views of the free offers of the gospel. And whatever difficulty there may be, as to attaining abundant hope, even where there is cordial acceptance, it is evident that the cause of that difficulty, is not any defect in the free offers of the gospel, and the gospel encouragements of hope; but a culpable defect in men's own apprehensions, and practical improvement of these things. No humble Christian will fully acquit himself of all culpable defects of that kind.

VII. The two things that were mentioned as concurring in free donation; namely, an offer or promise on the part of the giver, and acceptance on the part of the receiver, shew that there are two principal things, which belong to the nature of true faith in Christ, *viz.* on the one part, sincere persuasion of the divine offers and promises, with suitable dependence on them; and on the other part, cordial esteem of the things offered and promised. This last is, perhaps, sometimes called acceptance of the offers of the gospel, being indeed a principal thing included in it. But whereas, people may esteem and desire what is no way in their offer; it is evident, that to receive or accept of a thing, supposes not only that we esteem it, but that it is offered to us, that we know and believe that it is offered, and that we hope for it, by accepting of it, in the manner required of us.

Belief of the offers of the gospel, must be a principal branch of true faith, because these offers are a principal part of the gospel. When we are taught to consider God's covenant, as a covenant of promises, and to consider the Mediator of it as one, in whom these promises are yea and amen; and when it is represented as the character of those, who have an interest in God's covenant, that they take hold of it, Isa. lvi. 4. that they are persuaded of God's promises, and embrace them, Heb. xi. 13. that they receive the

testimony or record of God, concerning his giving life eternal through his Son; that they hope in God according to his word; and, which is represented as a very essential act of faith, that they not only believe that God is, but that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and that they take the waters of life freely: these, and the like scriptures, plainly imply that just persuasion and impression of the divine promises and offers, is a principal branch of true practical faith. And seeing it is the promise of God that gives a right to salvation, that true faith, the end of which is the salvation of the soul, must fix the heart on that which gives a right and title to salvation. Though there are various other ways of acquiring rights among men, yet seeing God cannot be under such obligations to us, as we are under to one another, we cannot acquire a right to any thing from God, but by virtue of his promise. And it is also evident, that without believing and relying on the offers and promises of the gospel, the doctrines of it cannot administer that relief and consolation, which is necessary to an awakened conscience; or to a sinner deeply sensible of sin, and concerned about salvation. For though the doctrine of redemption and grace be in itself a joyful doctrine; yet, what comfort could it give to know, that there is a Redeemer, a Saviour provided for others, but not offered to us?

The end of assenting to the offers of the gospel, is cordial acceptance of them. As a man may esteem and desire what is not in his offer; so, what a man knows to be in his offer, may be the object of his indifference or aversion. Cordial acceptance of the offers of the gospel, must include not only a persuasion of the reality of them, but also a high esteem of the things contained in them. That esteem must extend not only to all the parts, but also to all the causes of salvation, and particularly to Christ's mediation. Our esteem of that mediation must, according to scripture, imply a disclaiming of the self-confidence formerly explained, a hearty willingness to be indebted to divine free mercy in Christ's redemption, as the source of our salva-

tion; a holy propensity to honour the love and grace, and other perfections of God, manifested in the Mediator of the covenant of grace, and in the promises of it; with a careful improvement of these things as our relief, from the fears that are the effects of sin, and as the grounds of our hope and pleading before God, for remission and for all other blessings. All this is partly evident from the scriptures formerly mentioned, in speaking of the objects and ends of faith, particularly the scriptures about excluding boasting, about our glorifying God's grace, our glorifying only in the Lord, our counting all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; and farther proofs of this matter will occur afterwards, in considering the means and grounds of that esteem, which we ought to have of Christ's Mediation.

Sincere belief of the offers of the gospel, and due esteem of the things contained in them, ought to be joined together in our acknowledgment of Christ's Mediation; but it is needful to treat of them separately, in order to explain the scripture directions relating to this important subject. It is of use to divide these directions into two sorts, as they are more directly subservient to the one or the other of these valuable attainments: between which, however, there is so near a relation, that in treating of the one, we ought not to lose sight of the other. In considering the excellency of the blessings of God's covenant, we should remember that they are blessings graciously offered to us: and in endeavouring, after abundant persuasion of the offers of these things, we should still remember the worth and excellency of them.

VIII. It is of importance, as to all the attainments belonging to faith in Christ, to have just apprehensions of the ultimate object of it. Though in acknowledging Christ's redemption, Christ is to be considered, not only in his highest capacity of divine nature, but as manifested in the flesh, and clothed with his Mediatory offices; yet, all our acknowledgments and desires, all our hope and trust must ultimately terminate on the divine perfections and authority of God the

Father, and of the Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the signification and scope of the Christian baptism.—This is, in effect, included in the nature of Christ's office as Mediator, between God and man; and is evident from the whole tenor of gospel instructions on that subject. It is evident, more particularly from the scriptures formerly cited, to prove that the glory of God's perfections, is the end of Christ's Mediation, and of our faith in him; and from other scriptures, which shew, that by Christ we believe in God, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God, 1 Pet. i. 21. that Christ is the way to the Father, John xiv. 6. that by him we draw near, and have access to the Father through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 18. iii. 12. and that we are to do all things, and to ask all things in his name, that the Father may be glorified in him, John xiv. 13. Col. iii. 17. There are some scriptures which have a particular fitness, to give us just conceptions of it, by giving us comprehensive views, both of the ultimate and of the more immediate object of faith: such as the scriptures, which teach us to consider God as setting forth his Son, to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins, Rom. iii. 25. as God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses, 2 Cor. v. 19. and to consider Christ as made of God, to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. These, and the like scriptures teach us, in acknowledging Christ's Mediation, to consider jointly, the love and grace of the Father in sending, revealing, offering, and giving his Son, and with him all things; and in a special manner, the divine authority giving efficacy to his satisfaction, and to all the parts of his Mediatory undertaking.

The instructions which the gospel gives us concerning the characters and the means of true faith in Christ, are useful not only for directing our first endeavours after that attainment, but also our endeavours after continuance and progress in it, and abundant lively exercise of it. It is a general direction

common to these with all other religious endeavours, that we should depend on the grace of the Spirit of God, who is called both the Spirit of Christ and of faith, in the diligent use of the means appointed by God. And as in all other cases, the great mean of inclining the heart to accept of any offer, is due consideration and impression of the necessity and of the worth and excellency of what is offered; so it is by impressions of that kind that cordial acceptance of the offers of the gospel is both produced and promoted.

IX. As to just impression of our need of the salvation revealed in the gospel: a principal mean of it is that just apprehension of the hatefulness and danger of sin, which was explained at some length formerly.—Though various things which shew the evil of sin, are in some measure, evident from the light of nature; yet the scripture gives far more abundant discoveries of these things; and the chief discovery it gives of the evil of sin, is in that same redemption by which we are delivered from it

All the things that were formerly mentioned as the just grounds of a sinner's sorrow and fears are represented in scripture in that strong light that has the greatest energy in awakening the sinner's conscience, and in penetrating it with the deepest concern about deliverance from sin, Isa. i. 2. 3 Rom. viii. 22. Jer. ii. 12, 13. Isa. xxiv. 19. 20. Instructions of such a tendency are evidently suitable to the holiness and goodness of God, when he is making a revelation of mercy and grace to transgressors. When the great sovereign and lawgiver of the world, offers to disobedient sinners, the greatest blessings that could have rewarded the most perfect obedience, it is suitable to the majesty and purity of his administration to make them sensible of their unworthiness of such blessings. It is suitable also to his goodness to sinners. It is a considerable part of the happiness of sinners to be duly sensible of their unworthiness of it. We are not truly delivered from sin and its worst effects till we are delivered from pride and self-confidence. But the scripture-instructions which are designed for awaken-

ing and alarming the sinner's conscience, are not designed for overwhelming him with sorrow or fear.—They are designed to make him take sanctuary in that redemption which gives a sufficient relief from all fears and sorrows, and is a satisfying foundation for the greatest hopes. Thus we are taught that as by the law is the knowledge of sin, and as the law worketh wrath, or declares the danger of sin; so Christ is the end of the law for righteousness: the divine law shews our need of the redemption and grace revealed in the gospel; as on the other hand it is the end of the gospel to bring sinners to conformity to the precepts of God's law, which is conformity to God himself.

X. Though just impression of the evil of sin, be one principal means of due esteem and cordial acceptance of the blessings offered in the gospel: yet it is needful to take various other views of the worth and excellency of these blessings. The gospel not only promises deliverance from sin, and from all evil, but the enjoyment of God the chief good, and of all true good in subserviency to that highest enjoyment. In order to due esteem of these promises, it is needful to have just impressions of the evil of sin and also of the vanity of the world; between which things there is a near connexion: seeing a main thing that shews the evil of alienation from God is the vanity of the things that are preferred to him.

The doctrine formerly insisted on concerning man's chief good or true happiness, viz. that God is both the author and the object of it, is a doctrine of natural religion; but it is proposed in revelation with peculiar advantages: and that in subserviency to a due esteem of the blessings of the covenant of grace. Thus when the holy scripture describes true blessedness, it tells us that the man is blessed whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, Psalm xxxii. 1. that God blesses sinners by turning them from their iniquities, Acts iii. 25. that he is blessed whom God chooses, and causes to approach to him, Psalm lxv. 4. and satisfies with the goodness of his house; and that it is good for us to draw near to God, Psalm lxxiii. 28. As to the

causes of this abundant blessedness, the scripture teaches us that God blesses us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, or things in Christ Jesus; Eph. i. 4. that the gospel was preached to Abraham when it was told him that in his seed, that is in Christ, should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Gal. ii. 8, 16. Psalm lxxii.

It is a mean of producing due esteem of the blessedness in view, to abound in extensive meditation on the manifold benefits included in it, and particularly the benefits implied in the remission of sins, the justification of life, the adoption of children, the sanctification of our natures, access to God, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, the conduct of God's Spirit, the special care of his providence, and other benefits that are connected with these, and are promised in this life itself, together with the blessings promised in the life to come; at death perfection in holiness, passing immediately to glory: at the resurrection the most complete glory and blessedness of soul and body to all eternity.

Whereas it is usual to distinguish betwixt the love of God himself and of his benefits, and sometimes the distinction is carried too far; it is proper to observe that the principal benefits of God's covenant are the favour, the image, and the enjoyment of God himself. Hence it follows that due esteem of God himself is the source of due esteem of the salvation which the gospel offers to us, and which Christ has purchased for us. We cannot have just conceptions of the benefits of God's covenant, without considering them with relation to our glorifying and enjoying God himself. This is the view the scripture gives of them. It represents this as the sum of the blessings of that covenant, that God, who is in himself so infinitely great and glorious, promises to be our God, and to make us his people. This implies such a happy interest in God's attributes and perfections, as the causes and objects of the soul's felicity and highest complacency, such a title to his everlasting favour, such an interest in his works and providences, in the mediatory offices

of his Son, and the operations of his gracious Spirit; that the present joy and peace arising from the well-grounded hope of that interest in God, are most justly called joy unspeakable, and peace that passes all understanding.

It was observed formerly, that the favour of an infinite Being and the blessedness connected with it, may be said to be grounds of infinite joy, if a finite soul were capable of it; and that whereas these things cannot have a full and adequate effect on a finite subject, the proper effect of them is what is so excellently expressed, in scripture style, by filling the soul. When the holy scripture teaches us that in Christ all fulness dwells, and that sinners receive out of his fulness grace for grace; that it is the end of the gospel that our joy may be full; that God fills mens' hearts with joy and peace in believing, that he fills the longing soul with good things; that he fills mens' souls, by the knowledge of the love of Christ, with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19. the design of such scriptures is not only to describe the fulness of joy and contentment that flows from an interest in Christ's mediation; but also to fill our souls with suitable esteem of it, and with that cordial acceptance of the offers and promises of the gospel which leads to an abundant hope of our interest in them.

Besides more general and comprehensive commendations of God's covenant and salvation, in the instructions of holy scriptures relating to particular promises, there is a peculiar excellency, in them, both in style and sentiment, and a peculiar efficacy for raising due esteem of these inestimable blessings. Thus, for instance, in the promises of pardon; our gracious God vouchsafes to declare that he will blot out our sins as clouds, and as a thick cloud our transgressions; that he will separate betwixt us and them as far as East is from West; that he will cast them behind his back, that he will cast them into the depths of the sea; that he will wash and cleanse us from them, so as to make us white as the snow; yea, whiter than the snow; and that he will remember our sins no more; importing

plainly that redeemed sinners are brought into a state of as perfect peace and reconciliation with God, as though it were possible to forget that ever they had been sinners. The more any soul loves God, the more it must esteem such gracious promises; not only as they give relief from the just penal sanction of the divine law, but as they are transcendently amiable declarations of divine mercy and love.

But in considering the esteem we ought to have of the salvation offered in the gospel; it is needful to consider more particularly the importance of endeavouring after due esteem of holiness and sanctification; it is evident from scripture that we should esteem that great benefit, not merely as a means of salvation, or merely as a part of it, but as that part of it to which all the other parts are subservient. This, as was formerly hinted, is necessarily included in the subserviency of all our enjoyments and comforts to our active glorifying of God. The worst of men may have some desire of deliverance from the punishment of sin, and some desire of the favour of God as necessary to happiness. But it is the character of that faith which works by love, that it fixes mens' hearts on deliverance not only from the punishment of sin but from sin itself; and excites not merely a general desire of the favour of God as a means of happiness, but of the enjoyment of God himself, the image of God, and our active glorifying of God, as the principal effects of the favour of God, and the most valuable objects of desire.

As to the means of due esteem of holiness, a great part of the instructions of holy Scripture are subservient to that important attainment; this is the design of the amiable views which the scripture gives of holiness as the image of God, the objects of his approbation and complacency, the very thing by which we honour him, and the necessary and chief part of the blessedness that consists in enjoying him: as also of the scripture commendations of the righteousness and manifold excellencies of the law of God, and of the ways of obedience as the ways of wisdom and liberty, of

pleasantness and peace, and of everlasting joy and consolation.

High esteem of holiness, and of the other parts of the salvation which the gospel offers to us, has a necessary connexion with the things formerly explained as included in divine love and in true repentance. The benefits of the covenant of grace are the principal objects of the desires included in the very nature of these holy dispositions. The favour, the image, the enjoyment of God are the objects of the chief desires included in divine love: deliverance from sin is the object of the chief desires which belong to the nature of repentance. All these desires meet with full satisfaction in the promises of the covenant of grace. It is therefore on good grounds that the Scripture teaches us that that covenant is all our salvation, and should be all our desire.

XI. Cordial acceptance of the salvation offered in the gospel includes due esteem of the excellency, not only of the various parts, but also of the causes of that salvation: and particularly of Christ's redemption.—If we should suppose a man to have a considerable esteem of the benefits of God's covenant, but at the same time to be unwilling to be indebted to divine mercy through the Mediator of that covenant; it is evident that he could not be said to receive that Mediator or to believe in him with his whole heart. He could not be said to give due acceptation to the true and faithful saying, that is worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners; or to receive the love of the truth. It is evident from the whole tenor of the scripture doctrine of faith in Christ, that a main character of it is, a transcendent esteem and complacency of soul in Christ's redemption and mediation, as an amiable manifestation of the perfections of God in the salvation of sinners. As this esteem of redemption, is of peculiar importance in christian piety; it is proper to take a view of some of the chief proofs of the necessity of it, and of the chief grounds and properties of it. The necessity of it is evident from the scripture account of the objects, the ends, and effects of faith, and from various other considerations.

As to the scriptures which treat of the objects of faith, it was proved before from these scriptures, that the faith in Christ, which the gospel makes so necessary, includes acknowledgment of redemption. The same arguments prove the necessity of acknowledging the reality of redemption, and of due acknowledgment and impression of the excellency of it. There may be some speculative assent to the one, without suitable persuasion and esteem of the other: as with respect to the belief of providence, where there is secret murmuring against it; it proves at once some belief of the reality of providence, and want of due persuasion of the perfect righteousness of it. We do not honour God by acknowledging merely the reality of any divine works or actions, whether in providence or redemption, without acknowledging also the excellency of them. Disesteem of any divine work or action, implies a disesteem of God himself.

Without acknowledging the glory of redemption, we do not acknowledge the chief things the gospel reveals concerning it: yea, we neglect a chief end of the gospel. All the scripture commendations of that way of salvation, may justly be considered as so many precepts, requiring us to endeavour due esteem and just impressions of it. As these commendations are of various sorts, the design of them all, is to promote due esteem of what they so much extol. While some scriptures commend redemption, as an amiable display of the divine perfections in general; other scriptures condescend on the particular perfections that shine in it with peculiar lustre. Of the first sort, are the scriptures which speak of our beholding the glory of God, of God in the light of New Testament revelation, 2 Cor. iii. 18. of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. of the gospel's being sent to make known the riches of the glory of the mystery of salvation; with respect to which, it is said of such as have due impressions of it, that Christ is in them the hope of glory, Col. i. 27.

Of the second sort are the scriptures, which commend redemption, as manifesting the glory of

God's justice, power, and wisdom; but especially of his infinite mercy and love. Thus, we are taught, that by the propitiation in Christ's blood, God declares his righteousness in the remission of sins; so that he may be just, and the justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26, 31. that thus the divine law, instead of being made void, is established, that to them who are called, Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 14. that it is in this God commends his love to us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, Rom. v. 8. that it is in his kindness in Christ, that he shews forth the exceeding riches of his grace; that this is that rich mercy and that great love wherewith he loved us, Eph. ii. 4. that it is love, whose height, depth, length, and breadth, surpass our knowledge, Eph. iii. 18, 19.

As to the scriptures which treat of the ends of faith, it was proved before from these scriptures, that the end of our acknowledging redemption, is our glorifying God's perfections manifested in it, which necessarily implies sincere and cordial esteem of it. The scriptures which give the characters of such as have true faith in Christ; teach us, that though Christ crucified is to many others a stone of stumbling, to them he is precious or honourable, 1 Pet. ii. 7. and, as in the passage above cited, to them he is the power and the wisdom of God. The scriptures which shew the superlative esteem the apostles had of redemption, should be considered not only as descriptions of their faith and love, but also as containing the patterns of ours. The apostle Paul says, in scriptures formerly cited, that he gloried in nothing else, save in the cross of Christ: that he was determined to know nothing else; that he counted all things else as loss for the excellency of that knowledge.

It is one of the most remarkable short descriptions, that we have in all the scriptures of the christian life, when the apostle Paul tells us, in a scripture cited under a former head, *We all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the*

same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. As it is evident from the context, that it is the glory of God in redemption that the apostle has in view; so his expressions plainly import, that that glory should be the object of a christian's transcendent esteem, and habitual contemplation: and that this is a main thing belonging to a life of faith in the Son of God. It is indeed one of the best views we can take of a life of faith working by love; that is, faith first working love to God, and thereby producing conformity to him, in his moral and inimitable excellencies. It shews the affinity between the life of faith here, and the heavenly life hereafter; which the apostle John describes, by attaining to likeness to the Lord, in seeing him as he is. When the apostle says, that they who truly believe in Christ, behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed, as by the Spirit of the Lord; it implies, that it is a main design of the work of the Spirit of God, to produce just esteem of our redemption by the Son of God.

The same thing is implied in various scriptures, concerning divine enlightening grace, the principal cause of true faith; which Scriptures shew, that it is the great design of such operations of grace, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and to enlighten the eyes of our understanding in the knowledge of him. To all which we may add a farther proof of the point in view, from the account which the Old Testament prophets give of the chief causes of the joy, and gladness of the gospel church. When these prophets are describing the flourishing condition of the converted Gentiles; they say, that nations, which were once as a wilderness, shall bud and blossom as the rose, and shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even with joy and singing, Isa. xxxv. 2. and sing in the ways of the Lord, Psal. cxxxviii. 5. What they assign as the cause of all this joy is, that these people shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God: and that they would sing in God's ways, because great is the glory of the Lord. Seeing these Scriptures speak of the joy,

that would be the effect of the gospel, they must be understood as meant of the glory of God in that divine work, which is the chief subject of the gospel: without excluding the discoveries of God's glory in his other works.

The Scriptures which shew the necessity of high esteem of redemption, explain the grounds of that esteem. They shew that we ought to esteem it as an amiable manifestation of God's perfections, and particularly of his justice and mercy.

XII. It requires particular consideration, that the discovery which redemption gives of God's holiness and justice; and which is, with many a ground of prejudice against it, is in reality a principal ground of holy esteem of it, and should be improved for that end. Due regard to the authority of a just law, is an amiable quality in a governor or judge. The mercy of a judge, when exercised at the expense of his justice, must indeed be the object of a transgressor's joy, because it gives deliverance from punishment: yet, this cannot make it the object of his just esteem. In order to such esteem, it is needful that mercy be exercised consistently with justice. Such a consistency, gives to a heart that loves justice, a noble delight, different from what arises merely from escaping just punishment. This is evidently the case in remission through redemption. That divine work gives a discovery of God's justice, in the cause of remission of sins, beyond what could have resulted from the punishment of sinners themselves. Had God given a revelation of mercy, without revealing an atonement, we would have been obliged in that case, to believe God's righteousness, in that and in all his other administrations.—But then they who love God and his law, would have wanted the noble enjoyment, that results from so bright a display of these divine attributes, which support the authority of the divine law. That discovery of the glory of God and of his law, heightens the enjoyments of the conscience in the remission of sins.—It has the like effect on all the other parts of salvation and happiness. Gifts, that are ever so desirable in

themselves, receive an additional worth, by being bestowed in such a way, as manifests the moral excellencies of the benefactor.

High esteem of redemption, as it honours God's law and justice, has an evident connexion with the good dispositions which were formerly explained, as belonging to the nature of divine love, and of true repentance for sin. It was observed, as to the nature of divine love, that it includes sincere complacency in all manifestations of God's perfections, and particularly of his moral perfections, in his moral law and government: and as to the nature of repentance, that though God's law and justice, are the grounds of a sinner's fear, they must be the objects of a penitent's esteem. It is indeed obvious, that without a revelation of mercy, this would be attended with difficulty. It would be difficult for a sinner, heartily to love and esteem the things that seem to oppose his safety, and to make his punishment necessary. Yet it cannot be denied, but that a transgressor of God's righteous law would be obliged to this. A sinner is not obliged to true repentance, if he is not obliged to love God and his law; which cannot be done, without honouring that righteousness of God's administration, which supports the authority of his law. Redemption dispels the perplexities, which such obligations might produce in the mind of a penitent. As it reconciles divine mercy and justice in our salvation, it reconciles the penitent's regard to the authority of God's law, and his regard to his own safety and impunity. All the things which convince the penitent, that the authority of God's moral law is of the greatest importance, convince him likewise that Christ's mediation is unspeakably glorious; and there is a strong connexion between due regard to the one, and profound esteem of the other.

In explaining repentance, it was observed, that a sinner is not a true penitent, unless he both hate sin, and love repentance. True repentance, inclines a sinner powerfully, to due humiliation of soul for sin, before God. It makes him love the proper means of so just self-abasement. Redemption contains the most

powerful motives to so happy a disposition. Acknowledgment of redemption, implies the actual exercise of it. It contains the most effectual inducements, for reconciling the heart to it. For what can more effectually reconcile the heart of a sinner to due humiliation for sin, than to remember habitually, how the Lord of glory humbled himself to the death, to bear the desert of sin: leaving us nothing that relates to that punishment, but such acknowledgment of our deserving it, as is needful to make us prize the undeserved mercy that delivers us from it. Thus, when we compare together the excellent properties of redemption, and the characters of repentance; it is evident, that repentance makes a sinner esteem redemption, for the same reasons for which the impenitent are so unjustly prejudiced against it: namely, because it honours the law, and justice of God, and humbles the sinner; excluding boasting, and allowing no flesh to glory in God's sight. Repentance produces that situation of mind, in which a sinner discerns a complicated excellency, not only in redemption itself, but also in the appointed means of partaking of it: and particularly, in the way of access to God, by habitual acknowledgment of it. By that way of access to God, a sinner draws near to the throne of the Most High, with deep self-abasement, without discouragement; and with what the holy scripture calls boldness, and confidence without presumption: the same things that are grounds of the sinner's hope, and confidence being the chief motives of his self-abasement; as being the chief discoveries of the evil of sin, and of God's just hatred of sin, as well as of his mercy to sinners. These things shew in part, how redemption, while it humbles the sinner in respect of self-abasement, which is so desirable, and even so honourable a disposition in a sinner; in other respects exalts him to inestimable dignity and promotion.

What has been said shews the necessity of honouring redemption, as it manifests God's justice. But this cannot be done aright without considering the effects of justice are subservient to the designs of mercy.—

Justice manifested in redemption, is justice or righteousness is a propitiation designed for the remission of sins, Rom. iii. 25. it is justice inflicting the punishment due to sin, in order to the salvation and happiness of sinners. The divine perfection therefore that shines, with distinguished and supereminent lustre, in redemption, is infinite mercy. It is on that amiable perfection that faith in Christ must fix the sinner's highest esteem, his hope and his joy.

The scripture-commendations of the love of God to sinners, lay more stress on God's giving his Son, than on his giving heaven. "God commends his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life: Rom. v. 8, 10.—He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. It was observed above that there is an incomprehensible greatness, in the blessings of God's covenant, the fruits and purchase of redemption, which must fill the heart of an attentive penitent with wonder and admiration. Such scriptures as these now cited shew that our admiration of the fruits of redemption should be, as it were, swallowed up in superior admiration of redemption itself: that this is so transcendent a mystery or wonder of mercy as eclipses all other wonders: that as God's mercies are above all his other works, this is above all his other mercies: that after God's giving his Son, comparatively speaking, it is not so great a wonder that he should give all things: that it would rather be a wonder if he should withhold any thing. "How will he not with him also freely give all things? Much more shall we be saved by his life." Abstracting from redemption, we cannot conceive any effect of infinite goodness, but what might possibly be surpassed, by some other effect of the same amiable attribute. It could not have entered into the heart of man to conceive any thing that could manifest divine mercy, as it were, to the uttermost. Such is the manifestation

given of it in redemption. No wonder therefore that it is commended as a mystery of love, whose height and depth, length, and breadth passes knowledge: and that in order to just impressions of it, we are directed to seek the spirit of God to strengthen us with might in the inner man, and to shine into our hearts.

It is evident, from what has been said, that in order to due esteem of redemption, we should consider it not only as an excellent discovery of the divine perfections: particularly of those above mentioned, but also transcending all other known or conceivable discoveries of them. To set this in its true light, it is proper to observe that though God's attributes are always the same, the manifestations and effects of them are not equally glorious. It is suitable to the nature and excellency of these attributes, that there should be a variety of orders and degrees of perfection in the effects of them. The least pile of grass gives some discovery of the same boundless power and wisdom that are manifested in the stupendous frame of the whole universe. But there is a vast disparity and inequality betwixt the manifestations which so unequal effects give of the same perfections of the same cause. In like manner God's infinite goodness is manifested in every gift he bestows; and his justice in every punishment he inflicts. But there is a great disparity in different effects of the same supreme goodness and justice. Redemption is the highest conceivable effect and manifestation of both. It is the chief punishment ever justice inflicted, the chief gift ever mercy bestowed.

In this complicated display of divine glory, mercy has the ascendant, and pre-eminence; justice is subservient to it; and supreme wisdom is glorified in the joint display of both these perfections, in the same divine work. The same wisdom appears in the manifold subserviency of redemption to a variety of noble purposes, its efficacy and influence on all the parts of holiness and happiness; and particularly its efficacy on the consciences of sinners, as a satisfying relief from the greatest fears, and strong foundation of the greatest hopes.

XIII. The efficacy of redemption in giving relief from the sorrows and fears, that are the effects of guilt, is a thing much insisted on in holy scripture; and due improvement of it is a chief branch of the practical acknowledgment of Christ's mediation. This relieving efficacy of redemption, as it may justly be called, is a main thing intended in the scriptures concerning the virtue of Christ's blood in sprinkling mens' hearts from an evil conscience; Heb. x. 22. in purging their consciences from dead works, Heb. ix. 14. in making the souls of them who believe to enter into rest, Heb. iv. 3. and in the scriptures which speak of the Redeemer as a sanctuary, Isa. viii. 14. and a hope set before us to which we are to fly for refuge, Heb. vi. 18.

For explaining this branch of the efficacy of redemption, it is needful to have in view the principles formerly laid down concerning the grounds of a sinner's fear and the impression they must make on the heart of a penitent. All the things that shew the hatefulness and danger of sin are the just grounds of a sinner's sorrow and fear: such as all the grounds of obedience to the divine law, all the obligations to it, all the evidences of the excellency of that law, and of the importance of its authority and of the reality of its penal sanction, all the aggravations of sin, and declarations of God's just hatred of it, with various other things which were formerly mentioned. As these things are exceeding evident from the clearest principles of natural conscience, and level to the meanest capacities; so all the calamities of life and bitter fruits of sin, tend to put sinners in mind of these things, and, as it were, to force attention to them.

But what we are particularly to consider is, that it is a main thing that belongs to the nature of true repentance, to remember these things, and to be suitably affected with them. Though others may sometimes find an easy relief from these grounds of fear, by the various artifices that are means of stupifying the conscience; such relief is inconsistent with the character and dispositions of a true penitent. Sincere repen-

tance must incline the penitent to consider all the things which shew the hatefulness of sin, which are at the same time all of them evidences of the danger of it, and must be considered by him in that view: otherwise he does not consider himself, as he ought, as a subject of the divine government, a transgressor of the divine law, and consequently of himself obnoxious to its righteous penal sanction. When a sinner's conscience is duly awakened, these grounds of sorrow and fear will not be the objects of his mere speculative belief, or superficial consideration; but the awful greatness and importance of them must make the deepest impression on his soul.

It is evident that to a conscience thus penetrated with the most just grounds of the greatest sorrow and fear; nothing can be more desirable than a suitable and satisfying relief. Such is the relief which redemption affords. It is, as was proved before, a manifestation of the justice of God, in the remission of sins, beyond what could have resulted from the punishment of sinners themselves. When therefore a sinner's conscience finds sufficient ground for believing and relying on that redemption, it is enabled to triumph over all its fears. The divine law and justice are grounds of terror no more: *Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died:* yea, things that were the grounds of fear become now arguments of hope. Even justice and righteousness are grounds of hope and pleading for the remission of sin, when a sinner takes sanctuary in the redemption destined and appointed for that end.

It may be objected that the relief arising from faith in redemption is superfluous; because the relief arising from promises of pardon, though without any revelation of an atonement, would be sufficient. In answering this objection, it must be owned that such promises would found an indispensable obligation to assent, joined with implicit acknowledgment of the consistency of God's mercy and justice, in bestowing the thing promised. But all this does not make the above-mentioned relief arising from redemption superfluous.—

In order to make this evident, it is useful to consider some important truths, concerning the nature and properties of guilt, which are evident both from scripture and experience, and shew the manifold suitableness of the gospel mystery of salvation to the exigencies of a sinner's conscience.

Guilt is the most perplexing thing in the world.—The native effect of it is, dread of punishment from the Sovereign of the world. That dread is far from being groundless. The above-mentioned principles of natural conscience, concerning the grounds of a sinner's fear, are principles the evidence of which is exceeding strong and efficacious, where it is duly attended to. It is attended to by the awakened conscience so as to make deep impression.

It is therefore a source of perplexing objections against any offer of mercy and happiness to transgressors of God's law, which does not appear evidently suitable to the authority of that law, and the glorious regard that God has to it. This shews that it is the native tendency of the guilt of sin, to produce perplexities which need the most abundant and most satisfying evidence to dispel them. In this, as well as in other cases, that is the most satisfying evidence, which not only contains positive proof, but directly saves perplexing difficulties. Even in matters of mere speculation, perplexing difficulties hinder the efficacy of positive evidence. But there is a great disparity betwixt the efficacy of evidence in mere speculations and in things in which mens' greatest hopes or fears are deeply interested. The greater the difficulties are that appear opposite to our hopes in any thing of importance, the greater is the anxiety of the soul to get them removed, or to get a satisfying answer to them. Nothing is more suitable to the exigencies of an awakened conscience, than a satisfying answer to the difficulties that oppose the hope of remission and salvation. Redemption gives a satisfying answer to them all.

If guilt is a fruitful source of perplexity, in the awakened conscience, redemption is still a more fruitful source of satisfying relief and refreshing consola-

tion. It is from this rich source the awakened sinner draws sufficient answers to the accusations of the divine righteous law and of his own conscience. It is here that he finds abundant arguments of hope and pleading, in addressing the tribunal of God, for remission and for all other blessings. Through Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel, we come, with humble hope and confidence, to God the judge of all, Heb. xii. 23, 24.

The relieving efficacy of redemption, in its influence on the hope and comfort of pardon, will be made farther evident afterwards, in considering the means of just impression of the divine promises. It was needful to take some view of it here, in considering the grounds of esteem of Christ's mediation. In order to just views of these grounds, it is useful to consider the influence of redemption, not only on the hope of pardon, but also on the other branches of the christian hope. The hope of pardon, or mere impunity, is but a part of that hope: it is but a part of the hope that is needful, in order to abundant peace of conscience, and the full contentment of the heart that loves God. Such contentment requires the well-founded hope, not only of remission, but of the heavenly blessedness, and all the other above-mentioned blessings of the covenant of grace. There is an incomprehensible greatness in these objects of hope, which strengthens the difficulties that arise from the sinner's grounds of sorrow and fear. When he considers duly the infinite greatness and majesty of the true and living God, the unspeakable blessedness, and high dignity of an interest in that God as his God, and of the full and perpetual enjoyment of him; he must see that so great a superstructure of hope, requires a great foundation of proportionable strength to support it. A sinner is not a true penitent, if he imagine such a foundation in himself. A sinner blinded by self-flattery, and swelled with the pride of impenitence, may more easily hope for any thing; because in effect he imagines every thing due to him: however little such a one considers

the obligations he is under to God; he scarcely sets bounds to his secret pretensions about what he imagines God is obliged to do for him. The very reverse of all this is the view of things that occupies the mind of a sinner whose conscience is duly awakened. While the hatefulness and guilt of sin discourages him; while God's law and justice alarm him: and even God's goodness to him, justly appears to him as an unspeakable aggravation of his guilt; the incomprehensible greatness of the blessings of God's covenant, and particularly of the heavenly blessedness, astonishes and amazes him: the more glorious that blessedness appears in itself, the more it appears contrary to his deserving: and the greater difficulty he finds to reconcile the hope of it with just impressions of God's greatness and holiness, and of his own meanness and guilt. The more he loves God, the more he must desire that blessedness, and abundant well-founded hope of it: the more he desires that hope, the deeper must his concern be about the things that seem to stand in the way of it. Nothing can be more desirable to a conscience in such a situation, than a suitable relief from such difficulties and a satisfying foundation of so great hopes. Redemption affords such a relief from fears, and such a foundation of hope, as the conscience of a sinner wants. It affords arguments for hope, of far superior efficacy, to all the grounds for discouragement and hinderances of hope, that can perplex the most anxious mind. This it does not only as it is a full satisfaction to divine justice, but also as it is an incomparable gift of divine mercy. This is evident from the scripture commendations of divine love in redemption, in the passages formerly cited. It was observed that these passages commend redemption, not only as a very great display and effect of divine love; but as surpassing all other effects of it, that can possibly be conceived: and that there is more stress laid on God's love in giving his Son, than in giving heaven itself.—Were it suitable to the rules of human justice and government, that a sovereign should rescue rebels from the sanction of his law by the death of his Son; his

giving his Son to die for such people while enemies, would be a more wonderful act of mercy, than his receiving them into his palace, when returned to their allegiance. It is by reasonings of this kind, that the scriptures inculcate the pre-eminence of redemption, Rom. v. 7, 8, 9. Nor are these reasonings insisted on, merely as inducements to divine love, though that indeed is a chief end and use of them; but also, as encouragements of Christian hope. The incomprehensible greatness of the blessings of God's covenant, produces an admiration that tends, of itself, to hinder hope. The mysterious mercy manifested in the Mediator of the covenant, produces superior admiration of a different kind; that tends to strengthen hope, and to make difficulties vanish. In relying on redemption, a sinner finds the strongest encouragement, to hope for the greatest blessings he can ask or think of; because, he finds God has given abundantly, above all we can ask or think already, Eph. iii. 20.

XIV. In considering the grounds of due esteem of redemption, it is fit to observe, that as it is a satisfying foundation for supporting the hope of the greatest happiness; so the transcendent manifestation it gives of the glory of God, is a new additional ingredient of happiness of inestimable value and importance. This is evident from scriptures formerly cited, to prove that the glory of God in Christ's mediation, is a source of abundant joy to redeemed sinners. It was observed before, that the manifestations of the perfections of God, are the objective causes of the happiness of his creatures: as also, that though these perfections are always the same; the manifestations of them are not all equally glorious: and that the manifestations of them in redemption, is of eminent excellency. Hence it follows, that it must be an eminent objective cause of the happiness of all who love God. No wonder the scriptures speak of it as attracting the attention and admiration of the most exalted intelligences. It tell us, that the things relating to our redemption, are things which the angels desire to look into, 1 Peter i. 12. and by which the manifold wisdom of God is made

known to principalities and powers in heavenly places, Eph. iii. 10. They are things, which have a peculiar fitness to inspire the universe, with the purest and most delightful admiration of God's moral perfections, and especially of his infinite mercy and love.—But they must chiefly be additional ingredients of happiness, to those who are chiefly concerned in them, that is, to redeemed sinners. Redemption must give a peculiar, eternal enjoyment to them, not only because it is so eminent a manifestation of the glory of that God, whom they love with their whole hearts; but because it is a manifestation of his glory, in the effects of his love to themselves.

The discovery given of God's glory in that divine work, is not only a considerable additional part of the happiness of the redeemed; but has a manifold tendency to heighten the enjoyment of all the other parts of it. All the parts of our salvation are in themselves unspeakably desirable. They have an intrinsic worth and excellency in them, to which our esteem never bears a full proportion. But notwithstanding of this, the manner in which they are purchased and bestowed, gives an additional lustre; or, as it were, an additional sweetness to their intrinsic worth. This is evident from the excellencies of redemption that were considered above. It was observed, that it heightens the enjoyment of the conscience, in the comforts of pardon, that it is purchased and bestowed in so glorious a way; a way that equally honours God's justice and mercy, and equally secures the authority of the divine law, and the safety of the transgressor; and that the most valuable gifts, have an additional dignity in them, when given in such a way, as honours the moral excellence of the benefactor. The Redeemer's sacrifice, which, in scripture style, is called a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, does, as it were, perfume his purchase, with the incense of infinite merit and love; and the favour of eternal mercy heightens the soul's complacency in all the parts of it.

XV. In considering the nature and grounds of due esteem of redemption; it is needful to consider, not

only Christ's oblation, by which redemption is purchased; but also his intercession, which is a principal cause of the application of it. Though our knowledge of this, as well as of other mysteries, whether of nature or grace, is very imperfect, in our present state: yet what may be known of it, shews its manifold suitableness to the exigencies of our consciences, and ought to attract our highest esteem.

This branch of Christ's mediation, is variously expressed in scripture; particularly by his appearing before God for us, Heb. ix. 24. his being our advocate with the Father, 1 John ii. 1. his standing at the golden altar, before the throne of God to offer up, with much incense, the prayers, Rev. viii. 3. of those who come to God by him, Heb. vii. 25. as also by the efficacious pleading of his blood, as the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel, Heb. xii. 24. and by his praying to the Father for us, John xiv. 16. John xvii. though we must still remember the great disparity betwixt this and all other addresses that are called prayer. These, and the like scriptures, give that knowledge of the nature of Christ's intercession that is needful, in order to practical acknowledgment, and improvement of it. They shew that Christ's intercession, is founded graciously on his oblation, and that as in his oblation, he willed the expiation of our sins, by his bearing the punishment of them, and atoning divine justice for them; so in his intercession, he continually wills the application of that atonement, and the actual communication of the fruits of it to sinners: it is evident also, that his willing these things, does not resemble the petition of a supplicant, but the address of one who claims his right; and that this interposition of the Mediator in heaven, in the right and virtue of his oblation on earth, is an appointed intermediate cause of our access, and acceptance with God, and of the whole of our salvation.

The necessity of practical acknowledgment of Christ's intercession, is implied in the scriptures which describe the nature and ends of it, and is much insisted on in other scriptures, particularly in the scriptures

which teach us that we should improve Christ's intercesssion, as a ground of humble triumph over the fears of condemnation, Rom. viii. 34. that we should consider Christ as the high priest of our profession, Heb. iii. 1. that we should consider him as the high priest over the house of God, Heb. x. 21. as our great, faithful, merciful, and compassionate high priest, Heb. iv. 14. whose sufferings, in expiating our sins, fitted his human nature for the most perfect; that is, experimental sympathy with us in our distresses, Heb. ii. 17, 18.

As to the ends of considering and acknowledging Christ's intercession, these scriptures shew that thereby we come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16. which must be meant, as is evident, of an abundant hope that should be joined with the deepest reverence and humility, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in a time of need: that our hope may be as an anchor of the soul. sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil, Heb. vi. 19. that we may have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; that we may draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, Heb. x. 19, &c. It is a principal design of the whole epistle to the Hebrews, to commend the distinguishing excellencies of New Testament ordinances and privileges, as resulting from the distinguishing excellencies of Christ's priesthood, both as to his sacrifice and continual intercession.

In order to due esteem of Christ's intercession, it is needful to guard against unreasonable mistakes concerning it, as if it were unsuitable to the glory of Christ's person, or of his exalted state. Though men, when exalted to high dignity, ofttimes forget their inferiors, who were formerly the objects of their affection and friendship; we should not harbour such apprehensions concerning him, who is exalted in being gracious, and whose loving kindness is everlasting.—As it is not inconsistent with the glory of the Creator,

to be employed in acts of goodness and power, respecting the lowest order of animals, Psal. cxlv. 15. it would be unreasonable, to think it unsuitable to the glory of the Mediator, to be employed in acts of mercy and condescension, relating to the highest concerns of immortal souls. In treating on Christ's exalted state, some have distinguished two things belonging to it, abstracting from what they term Christ's divine life, or the life of his divine nature: namely, his life of glory, and his mediatory life: the one, consisting in the peculiar felicity of his human nature, flowing from the personal union, and the fullest fruition of God: the other, consisting in the most excellent acts of condescension for the salvation of men. It is evident that these things are perfectly consistent, and the second of them no way interferes with the first; it is the nature of the most perfect goodness, to take the greatest delight in the most perfect beneficence.

As Christ's intercession should not be imagined to be unsuitable to his exalted state; neither should it be reckoned superfluous, as to the salvation of sinners, because it cannot be designed to work any change on God. That argument, were it good, would hold equally against all other subordinate causes or means of salvation, as well as Christ's intercession, as superfluous; seeing the production of a change on God is not the design of any of them. Christ's intercession is not the cause of God's love, or good will to sinners; it is the effect of it: but so also is Christ's sacrifice: what vindicates the one, vindicates also the other, from the imputation of being superfluous. Both these parts of Christ's mediation, though they are not the causes of God's love, yet are causes of our salvation. They are intermediate and subordinate causes, by which the love of God produces its effects on transgressors of his law, suitably to the glory of his justice and holiness.

Both Christ's sacrifice and intercession are manifestations of these adorable perfections. Though his intercession is not that which satisfies the justice of God, it is a most real, eminent, and continual declaration of it. For next to Christ's sacrifice, what could give a

greater declaration of God's just hatred of sin, than so holy a constitution, that none of the blessings of God's covenant are bestowed on sinners, but by the actual interposition of him who made atonement for their sins? It may perhaps give some light to this subject, to consider the distinction, mentioned by some, betwixt real and verbal declarations of the divine perfections. Though God had not displayed the greatness of his power, by so real and amazing an effect of it, as the creation of the universe; but had only created a few rational creatures; he could have given them a verbal declaration, or revelation of the greatness of his power, which would have been an indispensible obligation to believe it. But this is far from proving the real declaration of the greatness of God's power and other attributes, to be superfluous. It is suitable to the honour of God, and the good of his rational creatures, that they should have something else than mere evidences of the reality of his perfections. Declarations of the greatness of them, by real effects or divine works, are worthy of God; as they are not only means of belief of his attributes, but of producing the strongest impressions of them, and as they afford abundant and most desirable materials of contemplation, in adoring them. Though there were no such thing as Christ's intercession, we would be obliged to believe the holiness and justice of God; and that our salvation was the purchase of Christ's blood. We would be obliged to believe these things, because of the declarations made of them in God's word. But Christ's intercession is a transcendent, real, durable declaration of them; highly subservient to the ends of his sacrifice; fit to produce the strongest impressions; and to inspire God's immense kingdom, with the highest thoughts of the righteousness of his government, and of the purity of his administration, as well as of the riches of his grace. It is a lasting declaration, that the blessings which the sovereign Ruler of the world bestows on transgressors of his law, is through that propitition that magnifies his law to the uttermost. It promotes the honour of divine justice,

and of the atonement that satisfied it; that that satisfaction is for ever pleaded on by the Redeemer himself in heaven, and by the whole company of the redeemed on earth, through all ages. Whereas, the declaration of the righteousness and holiness of God, in Christ's oblation, behoved to be transient: a durable and continual declaration of these things in Christ's intercession, is suitable to the continual need of pardoning mercy, in order to friendly intercourse between heaven and earth, through all the ages of the imperfect state of the church.

What has been said for removing prejudices against Christ's intercession, shews the grounds of due esteem and honourable acknowledgment of it. The same principles and motives, dispose the heart to esteem his sacrifice, and his intercession founded on it. Both are eminent manifestations of the same divine perfections; and both are subservient to the same excellent purposes. Love and gratitude to the Redeemer, should produce holy complacency in his intercession, as that puts eternal honour on his oblation; being a continual representation and remembrance of it, for the most noble purposes, in the place where God gives the brightest displays of his glory. It should also be the object of our complacency, as it is a continual effect of the same love of Christ, that he manifested in bearing our sins on the cursed tree. On all these accounts it has a powerful influence, on all the good dispositions formerly mentioned, as effects of Christ's oblation; and particularly in the duties of gospel worship; which, when done in sincerity, have so great efficacy on the other parts of the Christian life.

As the highest heaven, the seat of the blest, is the place where the mediatory administration in view is performed; so it is of great importance in practical religion, to remember habitually, not only God's essential presence, which fills the universe; but also his glorious special presence, which fills that high and holy place; on account of which it is called his holy temple, and the habitation of his holiness, and of his glory. It is evident from scripture and reason, that it is ex-

ceeding useful to us, to have our hearts, our affections, and our conversation in heaven: to have our eye on that blessedness as the purchase of redemption, as a great effect of divine love, and as the object of our highest hopes; and particularly, that it is of importance in our immediate addresses to God, to elevate our minds and hearts, to the place which his word calls his habitation, and his throne; where he gives the greatest displays of his authority, of his glory, and of his favour.

Christ's intercession has powerful attractions to engage sinners, to delight in lifting up their hearts heaven-wards, to God's throne of grace, in the duties of his worship. If a sinner have a due concern about access to God; it tends to inspire his soul with ineffable cheerfulness, when, in lifting up his guilty face to the throne of God, he fixes the eye of faith on the glorious things that are a doing there in the behalf of sinners; and that for this very end, that even they may have boldness to draw near to God. As these things tend to incline and encourage the heart to immediate worship; so they have a powerful influence on all the good dispositions, that are suitable to it; such as humility and reverence; divine love, hope and joy. Christ's intercession promotes that humility, that results from a true sense of sin; because, it is a representation of that costly atonement, by which it was expiated. It promotes reverence and veneration of God's greatness, because it is an eminent display of his authority and majesty, in the moral government of the world. It tends to heighten that reverential frame of soul, when a sinner considers that he is to offer up addresses which he expects will be seconded by so glorious an intercession. But it is needful, that veneration of God's majesty be mixed with humble confidence in his mercy. It is also needful, that deep self-abasement for sin, do not degenerate into servile terror and that mistrust of God, which alienates the heart from from, and dishonours his mercy. It is needful, that due self-annihilation, be tempered with the hope of mercy and acceptance, founded on the grounds of hope

which God has laid before us; and with that divine love and joy, to which hope is so subservient. Christ's intercession has a peculiar fitness to produce so happy a temperament. It qualifies profound reverence and self-abasement, with triumphant hope and confidence, and with abundant love and joy. Its influence on so desirable effects, is evident from the scriptures formerly cited, to shew the nature and the ends of it.—They shew that Christ's intercession, in conjunction with his oblation on which it is founded, is the ground of humble triumph over the fears of condemnation; the ground of access to God with holy confidence and boldness; the encouragement to draw near to God, and to enter into the holiest of all, with full assurance of faith; that it is the support of the soul against the fears arising from former guilt, or the imperfections of present duties; and that it is the sure hold on which the anchor of hope fixes with steadiness, entering into that within the veil. It tends to replenish the soul that loves God, with the most useful elevated affections, and the purest consolations, in looking upwards to the throne of God; to look to it as a throne of grace, a mercy seat, where we have so great and so merciful a high Priest, administering for us in the tabernacle, not made with hands; with the names of his people on his breast plate, even on his heart; his efficacious blood continually speaking and pleading for the communication of its purchase to sinners. ******

AN

ESSAY

ON

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE.*

SECTION I.

Concerning the Scripture Evidences of the Doctrine of Grace.

BY the doctrine of grace, is here meant the doctrine concerning Divine operations, restoring the divine image in the hearts of sinners, and carrying it on gradually towards perfection. Prayer to God for holiness, is founded on the belief of such operations.—The doctrine of grace is, therefore, far from being a mere speculation: our belief concerning it must regulate our practice in matters of the highest importance. In considering this doctrine, it is needful to remember, that it is justly represented in scripture, as a doctrine that contains the most powerful motives and encouragements, not only to prayer, but to the diligent use of all other appointed means of holiness.†

The sanctification of the holy Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, are joined together by the

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* Written about the year 1732.

† Though holiness is often distinguished from faith, it is sometimes used in this discourse in a large sense, as comprehending conformity to the whole revealed will of God.

apostle Peter, 1 Peter i. 2. as the two great causes of our salvation and happiness. And indeed, these two important doctrines: namely, that of redemption by the Son of God, and sanctification by his Spirit, applying that redemption to us, are frequently joined together, though in various expressions, as the main peculiar principles of revelation. The other most essential doctrines, that may be some way distinguished from them, are either evidently included in them, or have a necessary connexion with them.

The change wrought on the heart of a sinner, when he turns from sin to God, is represented in scripture as the greatest, the most desirable and most important change in the world. It is called regeneration, or a new birth. They, whose hearts are thus changed, are said to become new creatures: old things are done away, and all things are become new. They are said to have their hearts of stone taken away, and hearts of flesh given them, and to have their hearts circumcised to love the Lord their God, with all their heart and soul. They are said to put off the old man, and to put on the new man; to be quickened, and as it were, raised from the dead. There are people who cannot relish the scripture style, concerning this important change: yet, some noted Deistical authors have thought fit to adopt some of these strong expressions, in speaking of those who attain to solid virtue, according to their notion of it. They say that such men are truly new creatures.

The scriptures which express the change in view, in the manner just now mentioned, affirm it to be the effect of an internal divine operation. Some scriptures mention the power and operation of God in more general expressions; other scriptures make particular mention of the Holy Ghost. It is reasonable to explain the former sort of scriptures by the latter; and scripture testimonies of both sorts are proofs of the doctrine of grace. A great number of the scriptures which contain that doctrine, may be reduced to the following classes. Some of them treat of the beginning of holiness, or of spiritual life; others of its continuance

and progress. Again, some scriptures ascribe to the Spirit of God, the work of sanctification, or of the new creation in general; others make particular mention of the chief parts of it.

Thus, as to the beginning of spiritual life, we are taught that sinners are saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which God sheds abroad abundantly through Jesus Christ, Titus iii. and that except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John iii. To the same purpose, are the following expressions, relating to the same subject. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures, James i. 18. To as many as received him (*viz.* Christ) gave he power to become the sons of God; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. And when the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, describe the great blessings of the new covenant, the divine promises run thus: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, Jer. xxxi. 33. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes: and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

These, and the like scriptures, ascribe to the Spirit of God the beginning of holiness, and some of them plainly enough ascribe to him also, the continuance of it. But this second point is asserted more directly in various other places. Real Christians are said "to be kept by the power of God through faith to salvation." He who "begins the good work, carries it on to the day of the Lord." Our Saviour, speaking of every branch in him that brings forth fruit, says, that "his Father will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit." When Paul is praying in behalf of the Ephesians, who had already begun a course of sincere holiness, he prays "they might be made to know the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them

that believe." The same apostle tells us that sincere Christians, "beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." These expressions evidently ascribe to the Spirit of God, that faith by which we behold his glory, and that holiness which consists in conformity to him: and our perseverance and progress in it.

There are various scriptures which ascribe to the Spirit of God the work of sanctification, or of the new creation, in general terms, which prove that both the beginning and continuance of holiness, are the effects of his power. To this purpose are the following testimonies. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth." Here God's word is affirmed to be the means of holiness; but God himself is plainly said to be the cause of it. We are exhorted to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. We have expressions very like these, in the Psalms, where we are told that the Lord's people shall be willing in the day of his power. The Spirit of God is supposed to be the cause of all the parts of holiness, where God promises to write his laws on our hearts, and to cause us to walk in his statutes. Accordingly a holy life, and a holy walk, are called in scripture style, living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit. The efficacy of God's Spirit on the Christian's walk is explained by the scriptures, which treat of his efficacy on the Christian's heart. The apostle tells the pious Corinthians, that they were manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. Hence, sincere Christians are called the temples of the Holy Ghost, and he is said to dwell and abide in them. The apostle tells the Romans, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. No words

could give a more peremptory decision, concerning the necessity of divine grace.

These, and the like scriptures, speak of the Spirit of God as the cause and author of holiness in general.—There are other scriptures, which make particular mention of some chief parts of it, and ascribe them to the energy of the Grace or Spirit of God. When the apostle Paul is exhorting the Galatians to the study of holiness, he makes particular mention of various holy dispositions, and expressly calls them the fruits of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

The grace of God is in many scriptures, represented as the cause of faith: Paul prays for the Thessalonians, that God would fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. He prays for the Ephesians, that God would strengthen them with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; he prays for the Romans, that God would fill them with joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. This is a plain warrant to seek the grace of God, to fill our hearts with faith, in order to a fulness of solid joy and peace. Christ is called the Author and finisher of our faith. And when God is said to keep us by his power through faith to salvation; this plainly implies, that as his power is the cause of our salvation, it is also the cause of that faith which is a principal means of it. Farther evidences of this particular point will occur afterwards, in considering the doctrine of divine enlightening grace, or of these divine operations which are needful, in order to right views and apprehensions of the objects of faith.

As to repentance, which is inseparable from true faith, Christ is said to be a Prince, exalted to give repentance, as well as remission of sins. Some pretend that this only implies, that Christ gives great encouragement to repentance, by promises of pardon. But though giving such encouragement to repentance be a great act of mercy, it is evident from many scriptures,

that Christ is the Author of repentance on other accounts, than merely by his proposing motives to it.—When God promises to take away the heart of stone, or the hard heart, this implies a promise of giving a heart on which the motives and encouragements to repentance shall make a due impression. It implies a promise of working in the hearts of sinners suitable sorrow for sin, and hatred of it. When God promises that the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem would mourn, as one mourns for a first-born, this is ascribed to the pouring down the Spirit of Grace and supplication for that end.

That divine grace is the cause of divine love, is evident from all the scriptures, which teach that the Spirit of God is the author of holiness, and that the love of God is the chief part of it. But there are various scriptures which speak more particularly of this important subject. Thus, we are taught that "it is the Lord that circumcises mens' hearts to love the Lord their God, that he directs men to the love of God, that his Spirit strengthens men in the inner man, that they may be rooted and grounded in love, and that he sheds abroad the love of God in men's hearts."

Various scriptures shew, that we are warranted to seek the grace of God, in order to that love which we owe to our neighbours, as well as that love we owe to God. In the passage above cited, where the apostle mentions to the Galatians a good many of the fruits of the Spirit, he mentions various good dispositions, which are included in that charity which we owe to our fellow-creatures, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness. The apostle Peter tells the Christians he writes to, that they had purified their souls, in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren. These expressions suppose that the persons spoken of, were active and diligent in the study of brotherly love, and in purifying their souls from the evils that are opposite to it. But at the same time it is plainly supposed, that they were active in dependence on God's Spirit, to whom their activity and success are ascribed. The grace of God is still repre-

sented in scripture as the source of true wisdom; we are expressly and particularly directed to apply to God for it; and hence, true wisdom is called the wisdom that is from above. This wisdom is described by the apostle James as first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, without partiality, and full of good fruits. This plainly supposes, that we are to seek from above not only suitable affections towards God, but also all manner of suitable good dispositions towards our fellow-creatures, and fellow-Christians.

The scripture warrants us to seek the Spirit of God, to assist us in every duty, and against every sin. It teaches us, that He helps our infirmities in prayer, and that this help is very necessary to us: hence, he is called the Spirit of grace and supplication, and we are commanded to pray in the Holy Ghost. This plainly implies, that as in prayer we must seek his sanctifying grace, in order to all other duties; so we must acknowledge and depend on his assistance, for the right discharge of the duty of prayer itself. This is evidently implied in the scripture account of access to God. It teaches us that all true Christians have access to the Father, through the Mediator, by one Spirit, Eph. ii. 18. Then again, as to the duty of praise, when Christians are exhorted to be much employed in the praises of God, they are exhorted to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Their being filled with the Holy Ghost is not spoken of, merely as a privilege which God promises, but as a duty which he requires. This implies, that it is their duty to seek the assistance of the Holy Ghost by earnest supplication, and by the diligent use of all appointed means.

All the good dispositions which are included in sincere love to God and our neighbours, are active principles and sources of good works, 2 Thess. ii. 17. Accordingly, we are warranted to seek the grace of God, to establish us in every good word and work, Titus xi. that Christ may purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Titus ii. and that we may be God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath before ordained that we should

walk in them, Eph. ii. Thus are we directed to acknowledge a creating power, uniting sinners to the Redeemer, and thereby implanting and cherishing these good dispositions, which are the sources of good works. We are taught in like manner, that it is through the Spirit of God that Christians maintain a conflict against these remainders of sin, which have always a tendency to the contrary evil works. *If ye walk after the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. If ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

There are various other evidences of the reality and necessity of divine grace, in the scriptures which treat of our sinful weakness and insufficiency of ourselves, for what is spiritually good. Our Saviour tells his disciples, that without him they could do nothing. It is owned that external good actions may be performed by the worst of men. But an action cannot be truly conform to the divine law, unless the inward principles whence it proceeds be conform to it. That divine standard should regulate the principles and ends of our actions, and consequently the prevalent habitual dispositions of the soul. This is not only evident from scripture, but from the chief practical principles of natural religion. It is a principle of natural religion that the law of God reaches the heart.

The scriptures which have been adduced, and many others, prove that holiness is the effect of divine operation. They prove also that that operation is inward and effectual; or, that it is an energy exerted immediately upon the heart, and of such power as to triumph over oppositions. These points are denied by many who own the divine authority of the scriptures. They advance various exceptions against the arguments drawn from the scriptures above-mentioned, or other scriptures of the like import, for internal efficacious grace. They pretend that these scriptures only prove in general, that God is the Author of holiness; but not that he produces it by any such internal operation as others affirm to be necessary. In order to prevent mistakes about this matter, it may be proper to observe the following things.

They who maintain inward and effectual grace, own the necessity of means. It is evident from scripture, that as the Spirit of God is the cause of holiness, his word is the mean of it. Yea, not only the word of God, but also the various dispensations of his providence are subservient to the operations of his grace; his word contains necessary instructions and motives, and his providence frequently awakens men to a careful consideration of these things. This is owned on all hands. But they who assert internal operations of grace maintain, that the necessity and manifold usefulness of means does not give them a sufficiency to change and sanctify the heart. They maintain that the power of sin makes men stand in need of the power of inward divine operation to subdue it: and that it is such divine operation that makes outward instructions and providences have a due effect on the heart.

On the other hand, they who oppose not only all *effectual* but all *inward* operations of grace, make God the Author of holiness, only because he is the Author of all the outward instructions and providences that are means of it. Many of their explications and arguments for their scheme seem to amount to this. If there are any other divine operations, which contribute to our sanctification, different from all inward energy on the heart, then it follows that without admitting any such energy, God may be acknowledged to be the Author of all holiness; and the scriptures which ascribe it to him sufficiently accounted for, without allowing any immediate divine interposition in restoring the divine image. Now as we are said to be sanctified by God's word, it is evident that, as God is the Author of his own word, he is, on that account, the Author of all the good effects of it. By his Spirit he taught and inspired the penmen of the scriptures, and the first teachers of the gospel; and by his Spirit he confirmed their divine mission. Then again, by his providence he brings his word to our door, and puts us in circumstances fit to excite us to the serious considerations of it. These are gracious or merciful divine operations, and they are divine operations which con-

tribute to the sanctification of the hearts and lives of sinners, and to which the honour of all the good effects of God's word is chiefly to be ascribed. These are sanctifying operations, by which God instructs us, reasons with us, and persuades us to repent, and to believe and turn holy; and therefore, according to the men whose sentiments we are now considering, there is no need for supposing any other sanctifying operation as an ordinary and necessary work of the Holy Ghost.

In considering these objections, it is proper for avoiding mistakes and prejudices, to consider the concessions made by those who assert internal operations of grace. They own that the external operations just now mentioned, are real acts of grace, as that word imports free favour, and undeserved goodness. It is great goodness in God to make such offers and proposals as he makes in the gospel, and to enforce them with such persuasives. These outward instructions and motives have ofttimes many good and desirable effects even where they have not all the effect they ought to have. Ofttimes where they do not prevail with men to turn from sin to God, with their whole heart, yet they restrain them from many sins and excite them to do many good things. Thus they bring men such a length, that, according to the scripture style on this subject, they are not far from the kingdom of heaven. These inferior good effects of outward instructions have a tendency to mens' real conversion to God. If the law of nature as written on mens' hearts have many good effects in human society; the clear repromulgation of that law in scripture, with all the additional motives of the gospel revelation inforcing it, has far superior effects even on many of those who do not comply with the call of the gospel with their whole heart. It ought to be owned also, that all the good effects, both of the light of nature, and of the light of the gospel should be ascribed to the goodness of God. He is the author of all the good effects of the outward instructions of his word, and of the various dispensations of his providence.

But it must be still owned, that all the efficacy of

these external means consists in explications and evidences of our duty, and the proposal of proper motives to it. The motives proposed by the word and providences of God, are in themselves unspeakably powerful. They are incomparably stronger than all motives that can be proposed to the contrary. But the more powerful these motives are in themselves, the more powerful must that depravity or hardness of heart be which is proof against them. Experience proves that the obstinacy of mens' hearts is found too strong for them every day. This is a good argument that though external divine operations propose powerful motives, we need internal operation to dispose the heart to yield to them, and comply with them. It is true that though such favour is necessary for our good, this does not prove that it is necessary for God to bestow it. God is not obliged to bestow, on creatures deserving punishment, all that is necessary for their happiness. But if such divine operation is indeed necessary for us, and unspeakably desireable; it is our duty to consider whether God, of his rich mercy, has given us sufficient warrant to seek after it, and encouragement to hope for it. They who deny this, pretend that the divine operations to which the scriptures ascribe our sanctification, are only the outward operations above mentioned. Whether this be a just interpretation of the scriptures above adduced, and of the like scriptures, or not, may appear from the following considerations.

The manner of expression made use of in the scriptures in view evidently denotes an inward energy exerted on the hearts and souls of men, different from all outward operation whatever. In these Scriptures God is said to strengthen men with might by his Spirit in the inner man, to write his law on their hearts, and to put it in their inward parts, to circumcise their hearts, to take away the hard or stony heart, and to give a heart of flesh, to open the heart, to shine into the heart, to purify the heart, and to give a new heart and right spirit.—They who are sanctified are said to be the epistle

of Christ written with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. The Spirit of God is said to be given them, to be poured on them, to be put within them, to dwell in them, to abide in them, to make intercession for them, and to shed abroad the love of God in their hearts. They are called the temples of the Holy Ghost, they are said to live by him, and to be led by him.

These and the like scripture expressions contain a variety of strong arguments for internal sanctifying operations. If the scripture had only affirmed in general that God was the author of all spiritual good or of all holiness, there might have been more colour for pretending that he is the author of holiness only because he is the author of all the outward means of it. But the expressions just now cited, and others of the like import, contain as clear and strong assertions of inward operations of the divine Spirit as any words that can be devised for that purpose. It is impossible, consistently with any just rules of interpretation of words, to understand the above expressions about inward operations of God's Spirit on the heart or the inner man, as meant only of the outward operations of God's providence, favouring us with the gospel or circumstances fit to excite our attention to it. It is no less unreasonable to understand these expressions as meant only of the operations of God's Spirit on the heart of the first teachers of the gospel who were inspired. It is true indeed that all who are sanctified by God's word reap the benefit of that inspiration. But the scriptures in view plainly assert an operation of God's Spirit, not merely on the hearts of the first teachers of the gospel, but of all who are afterwards sanctified by it.

The divine operations to which the scriptures ascribe mens' sanctification, are frequently spoken of as blessings which they who enjoy the gospel may be destitute of, but which they ought earnestly to seek after. The apostle speaks of people who enjoyed the gospel, but were sensual, not having the Spirit. To

have the Spirit of God does not therefore signify the same thing as to have the gospel, or the scriptures which the Spirit of God dictated and confirmed. Sanctifying operations are very frequently spoken of as blessings which they who have the gospel already, and which even real Christians, should seek from God by earnest prayer and supplication. A great many of the prayers contained in scripture are prayers of this kind. When the apostle Paul is praying in behalf of the Ephesians that God would strengthen them with might, in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that they might be rooted and grounded in love; he is not praying merely that God would bless them with the outward instructions of the gospel, which contain so powerful motives to faith and love. These are inestimable blessings, but they were blessings which the Ephesians enjoyed already. The apostle is there praying for people who did not want the outward revelation of the gospel, and he is not praying for any new outward revelation to them. The like may be said of other prayers for sanctifying grace mentioned in the scriptures above adduced, and in many other scriptures. Thus when the apostle prays for those to whom he writes, that God would sanctify them wholly in soul, body, and spirit, that he would work in them the work of faith with power, and that he would direct their hearts to the love of God; and when the Psalmist prays that God would create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him; these and the like prayers cannot be understood as petitions for outward revelation and instruction, but for that inward operation of grace, that makes all instruction effectual. Nor can these prayers be understood only as petitions for external operations of providence putting us in the most advantageous circumstances. It is true indeed that in praying for holiness, we are warranted and required to pray not only for inward operations of God's Spirit, but also that God in his providence may graciously deal with us in that manner that is most subservient to his glory and our highest interest. But if prayers for

sanctification were only prayers for advantageous outward circumstances, a man could not seek to obtain any sanctifying grace from God while he continues in the circumstances he is in at present: besides that the expressions in the prayers in view, as was observed before, evidently carry a meaning very different from petitions relating merely to any outward circumstances whatever.

The prayers in scripture for the sanctification of the Holy Ghost cannot be applied to his operations in inspiring the first publishers of the gospel, and confirming their mission. These operations are very suitable matter of praise and thanksgiving, but not of prayer. These are things long ago past, where as prayer must relate to things to come; that is to say, either to blessings which we want, or the continuance and increase of those we have.

The sanctifying operations mentioned in the scriptures in view, are represented as *peculiar* to sincere Christians, and as having a *certain connexion* with true faith and holiness; which cannot be said of the outward divine operations to which some people restrict the grace of God. When Paul speaks of the power of God's sanctifying grace he calls it the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them that believe: Eph. i. 19. Whereas these external operations of God's power are common to them who believe, with others who do not believe. In the scripture style, when men are said to have or to want the Spirit of God, it implies that they have or want his sanctifying grace. The apostle John says, that they who have the Spirit of Christ given them may thereby know that he dwells in them, which evidently implies that they may thereby know their interest in him. This evidently proves that to have the Spirit of Christ is a very different thing from mens' having the best outward instructions, or being in the most favourable outward circumstances. Many who have enjoyed these outward advantages have notwithstanding continued in their impenitence. The sanctifying operations of God's Spirit must therefore be very different from these outward

operations by which some people explain them. That sanctifying grace has a certain connexion with salvation and holiness is evident, from the whole tenor of scripture-doctrine concerning it: but that these external operations have not such a connexion with it is evident both from scripture and from the experience of all ages.

In the next place sanctifying operations are in scripture expressly distinguished from the external proposals of the gospel. When it is said that Paul planted, and Apollos watered, it is implied that the outward instructions of the gospel were proposed and inculcated by them. It is added, that neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. This plainly distinguishes the outward operations of providence, which blessed the Corinthians with the instructions of the gospel from the inward operations of his grace, which made them effectual. The apostle does not merely affirm that God was the author of the gospel, but that he was the cause of its success. The preaching of the cross is said to be to them who are saved by the power of God, and the gospel is called the power of God to salvation, to every one who believes. These and the like scriptures cannot be understood merely of the power which wrought miracles to confirm the gospel. These indeed were valuable blessings; but they were common to them who believed and who were saved, with others. These scriptures therefore plainly denote a divine power accompanying the gospel in a peculiar manner in the hearts of these who complied with the design of it.—But such scriptures concerning the power of God towards them that believe, do not imply that sanctifying grace is only the consequence of faith. It is frequently affirmed to be the cause of it. Thus, as was observed before, Paul prays for the Thessalonians, that God would work the work of faith with power. Various other proofs of this point were mentioned before, and more of them will come under consideration afterwards.

The scriptures, just now mentioned and illustrated,

give light to various others which treat of a divine power making the gospel successful. They shew that such scriptures are not to be understood only of external miraculous operations, excepting where the words made use of import such a limitation. Thus when Paul tells the Thessalonians that the gospel came to them not only in word, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost; it is not reasonable to restrict this to the power exerted in working of miracles. Seeing various scriptures contain particular assertions of an inward operation of divine power accompanying the gospel, the scriptures which speak of the gospel coming in power, in more general terms, ought to be explained by these other scriptures which are more particular.—This is agreeable to the most uncontested rules of interpretation. Indeed the scripture last cited contains intrinsic proofs of its being meant of inward divine operation. When it is said that the gospel came to that people in power, and in the Holy Ghost, what is added imports that they were brought to conformity to God in holiness. It is said they became followers of the Lord. This is an effect not to be accounted for merely from their seeing miracles.

It deserves particular consideration that the effects of sanctifying grace are frequently represented as effects of a peculiar and distinguished exercise of divine power. This is evident from the scriptures already mentioned and illustrated. The efficacy of sanctifying grace is called the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them that believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. Here and in other scriptures it is compared to raising from the dead; and it is compared also to creation. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. *Create in me a clean heart*, Psalm li. *We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, Eph. ii.—*The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. iv. *Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.* Col. i. and Phil. iii. 21.

These, and the like expressions, plainly import that the effects of sanctifying grace are effects for which mere natural causes have not sufficient efficacy. In the mean time, if we set aside all inward divine operation, there can remain no other efficacy in the work of sanctification, but that of second causes, acting according to the established laws of nature, only with that dependence on the first Cause, which is essential to all the operations of second causes in all cases whatsoever. That they who publish the gospel, and who inculcate the important instructions of it, must depend on the powerful and all sustaining providence of God in these actions as much as in other actions whatsoever, is a certain truth, and a truth evident from natural religion. But it is easy for an impartial inquirer to observe whether this can be all that is meant by the strong and significant expressions above-mentioned: such as, the exceeding greatness of God's power, the working of his mighty power, strengthening with all might by his glorious power, and the like. Several arguments above adduced prove also that these expressions are not meant of the power exerted in inspiring the apostles and others, or in confirming their mission. They treat evidently of a power exerted not merely on these extraordinary persons, but on the hearts of all who believe, of all who are saved, of all who are renewed after the image of God, and who become followers of the Lord.

From what is said, it is evident that the scriptures adduced to prove sanctifying grace, contain a great many intrinsic proofs of an inward divine operation on mens' hearts and souls. The external divine operations, to which we are beholden for instructions concerning our duty, and the most powerful persuasives to it, together with the most advantageous outward circumstances, are great effects of divine goodness, and have a manifold influence in restoring and promoting the divine image; but it is from inward divine operation, they have their efficacy and success. The external means are great and valuable benefits: but these divine operations to which holiness is chiefly as-

cribed, and which alone in the properest sense can be called sanctifying operations, are distinguished in scripture from all these outward benefits by many evident characters. The scripture style concerning these sanctifying operations, is so clear and strong in asserting an energy exerted inwardly on mens' hearts, that we cannot give another meaning to the scriptures on that subject, without manifest violence to the plainest expressions. These operations are blessings which they who enjoy all outward advantages may be destitute of; but which not only they but all others, even they who are in some measure sanctified already, should habitually seek after by earnest prayer and supplication, and the use of the other means. They are blessings peculiar to sincere Christians; and blessings which have a sure connexion with holiness and salvation. They are expressly distinguished from the outward instructions and persuasives of the gospel, and affirmed to be the cause of its success. The scripture expressions concerning them, plainly denote a peculiar exercise of divine power, different from what is supposed in the constant dependence of all second causes on the first, in all their ordinary operations. These expressions evidently imply a divine interposition, producing excellent effects, for which the outward means that are made use of, or the persons on whom these things are wrought, have not of themselves a sufficient efficacy.

As the scriptures which treat of the causes of holiness, affirm sanctification to be an *inward work*; so they also affirm it to be an ordinary work of the Spirit of God. The arguments above adduced, which prove and vindicate the first of these points prove also the other. But as this is a matter of very considerable importance, and is called in question by some who confine the inward operations of the Holy Ghost to the first age of Christianity, it is proper to consider it with particular application.

Here it is evident in the first place, that the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost is not spoken of in scripture, as a blessing peculiar to a few whom God dealt with in an extraordinary manner, but as a bles-

sing belonging to all real Christians, though in different degrees. Thus, we are told, that "there is one body and one spirit, as well as one Lord and one baptism. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Here it is evidently affirmed, that the Spirit of God is necessary to all. The scripture always speaks of those who have not the Spirit of God as people who have not his image.

The word of God shews, that the sanctifying grace of his Spirit is offered to all hearers of the gospel, and that all are required and encouraged to seek after it. When the apostle prays for the churches he writes to, that they might be blessed with the graces of God's Spirit, he prays not merely for some extraordinary persons in these churches, but for all of them without exception. We have much need of God's grace, in order to seek God with our whole heart. But this does not hinder its being a very gracious offer and promise that our Saviour makes; when he tells us, that if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children; how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13.

These things shew that the sanctifying grace of the Spirit of God, ought not to be considered as one of these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God, which the body of Christians have no concern in. The scriptures now hinted at, and many others, shew that this is a blessing *necessary to all, offered to all, and of which all real Christians* are in some measure actually *partakers.*

For farther illustration of this subject, let us reflect on the reasons, which, according to scripture make sanctifying grace needful; and on the effects for which it is designed. It is evident, from the tenor of scripture doctrine on this head, that that which makes the power of divine grace needful to us, is the power of depravity and corruption in our hearts, and our sinful weakness and insufficiency for what is spiritually good. This is a reason for the necessity of grace, which, according to scripture, evidently takes place in all hear-

ers of the gospel, and in all ages as well as in the first age of Christianity. The effects themselves, which are ascribed to sanctifying grace, are things equally necessary to all, and in all ages. In all ages, it is necessary for men to have the image of God, without which they are incapable of the enjoyment of him.—In all ages, it is necessary for men to have the heart of stone taken away, and to have a new heart given them: to have Christ dwelling in their hearts, the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, and the law of God written on them.

It is of use, in considering this subject, to observe the great difference between the effects ascribed to sanctifying grace, and these gifts which are justly called the extraordinary gifts of the divine Spirit, such as the gift of prophecy, of tongues, and other miracles. They have not a necessary connexion with one another. As men may have true holiness without miraculous gifts; so it is evident from scripture, men have had these gifts without having true holiness. Balaam prophesied, and several other scriptures suppose, that other bad men may have wrought miracles. Thus, at the close of our Saviour's sermon on the Mount. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye, that work iniquity,* Matt. vii. 22. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, supposes some men might work miracles, which because they wanted charity, would profit them nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. These extraordinary gifts were great effects of God's goodness and power. They were designed to confirm the gospel. But the scriptures adduced above, shew that it was the inward sanctifying work of the Spirit of God that made it effectual. The former sort of operations are more fit to beget astonishment: but the other are more necessary and more precious. The image of God is the most excellent effect of his power.

As the extraordinary gifts of God's Spirit were necessary in the first age, so it was necessary the scrip-

ture should make frequent mention of them. Hence, some take occasion to oppose the doctrine of grace, by general insinuations, that the scriptures which treat of the work of the Holy Ghost, are meant of these extraordinary gifts. General objections, or bare assertions of that kind, too oft dazzle the mind of the inconsiderate. But when men consider particularly and impartially the scriptures adduced to prove internal sanctifying grace, as an ordinary work of the divine Spirit, ocular inspection into these passages may suggest irrefragable arguments against the interpretation in view.

It is a considerable difference in the circumstances of Christians in the first age, and in the following ages of Christianity; that the first age enjoyed these miraculous gifts, which after ages want. If it were reasonable to suppose that in some ages, there were less need of the inward operations of God's grace than in others; one would think it should be in the first age, which enjoyed so many peculiar outward advantages. So much the more unreasonable it is to suppose, that though sanctifying grace was necessary, when miraculous gifts subsisted, when these ceased, sanctifying grace was superfluous.

There is no imaginable pretence, for restricting the promises concerning inward sanctifying grace, to Christians of the apostolical age, but that it was to them the apostolical writings were first directed. For the same reason, men might restrict to the same age the other promises, precepts, and various instructions contained in the same writings. These writings do not always annex to every instruction, a particular declaration concerning its universal and perpetual use in the church. This is for the most part understood, and there are good plain rules for distinguishing between a few things that were extraordinary and temporary, and things in which all ages of the church are equally interested. The promises, the precepts, and directions relating to sanctifying grace, the means and effects of it, are evidently of this last sort: and they who assert the contrary, may with equal reason extend their assertion to

the other scripture instructions, concerning the chief parts and causes of salvation.

But besides these general considerations, it is proper to observe, that in the scriptures which treat of the sanctifying work of God's Spirit, there are evident assertions concerning the continuance of it in all ages. There is a remarkable divine promise to this purpose, in the fifty-ninth of Isaiah, which treats of God's covenant. *As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.* As the foregoing context speaks of Zion or God's church, and of the Redeemer's coming to Zion, so it is evident the text itself promises that both God's Spirit and his word, shall continue in his true church for ever. And as this promise is called God's covenant, it is plainly implied, that the blessing promised is a very essential part of it. In like manner, the description of the new covenant in Jeremiah, begins with the promise of God's sanctifying grace, putting his law in mens' inward parts, and writing it in their hearts: and nothing is more strongly inculcated concerning that covenant in other scriptures, than that it is everlasting, and will never depart. Thus, both the Old and New Testament shew, that sanctifying grace is the ordinary work of the Spirit of God in all ages. It deserves particular consideration, that both these parts of the word of God, speak of more abundant measures of the Holy Ghost, as one of the chief distinguishing privileges of the New Testament dispensation. This is one main reason why it is called the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. This makes it more surprizing, that any learned men should imagine, that setting aside the primitive times, this inestimable privilege should be denied to all ages of the New Testament church.

Some who own an inward and ordinary work of sanctifying grace, deny that it has any infallible efficacy for producing the good effects for which it is de-

signed; or for restoring and preserving the divine image. They own a divine operation, giving men a power to turn to God: they own that the grace of God works good impressions and good motions, which have a tendency that way. But they maintain, that divine grace always leaves men so far to themselves, that after all that the Spirit of God works on their hearts, they may continue as void of faith and holiness as before; or they may resist the calls of God's mercy in the gospel, as obstinately as ever. This is the meaning of many writers, who assert that all sanctifying grace is resistible. If there are some who give that term a better meaning, the following arguments are not designed against them. When men are said to resist the grace of God, it cannot be understood as if any creatures could, properly speaking, resist God's Almighty power. To suppose divine power Almighty, and yet resistible, is a manifest inconsistency. The meaning, therefore, of resisting the Grace or Spirit of God is, that men refuse to comply with the revealed will of God, notwithstanding good motions and impressions produced by his grace, tending to incline them to a compliance.

If there are questions about divine grace that are but mere speculations, and of no importance in practice, it is certain that the question about the efficacy of grace, is not of that number. It is of consequence to know, whether we are warranted to seek that grace, that shall effectually take away all that resistance, which the depravity of man's heart makes to the revealed will of God. In the gospel, God calls us to partake of eternal redemption and salvation by faith in his Son, and to turn from sin to God with our whole hearts. To resist and reject this divine call, is, according to scripture, the highest contempt of divine goodness, and of divine authority; to comply with it, is our chief duty and interest. It is certainly of great importance to know, whether we are warranted to seek from God the greatest, the most necessary blessings we can seek from him.

It is agreed on all hands, that there are divine opera-

tions producing good motions and impressions, which may be, and which too oft are resisted. It is agreed, that many good impressions which are not effectual for mens' actual conversion to God, may be subservient to it, and may prepare men for it. Yea, where divine grace effectually inclines mens' hearts to comply with the divine call, the compliance with the will of God is not absolutely perfect; otherwise men would be perfect in faith and holiness. Some of the most zealous asserters of efficacious grace own, that where resistance to the divine will, is hindered or removed, it may be said in some sense that the power of resisting is not removed. There is in the faculties of a sinner's soul, a power of doing many bad things, which the restraints of God's providence, or grace of his Spirit, effectually hinder. The most eminent saints cannot pretend, that even after their conversion, they always fully comply with the good motions of God's Spirit. Where there is a defect of compliance, it may be said there is some sort of resistance. It is, therefore, on good grounds, that they who assert the real efficacy of grace, for restoring and promoting the divine image, instead of affecting to use the ambiguous term *irresistible*, chuse rather to call divine sanctifying grace *insuperable* or *invincible*. To assert the efficacy of grace, is to assert that we are warranted, in scripture, to seek not only such grace as shall produce impressions of a good tendency, or a mere power of turning holy, but such grace as shall produce holiness itself; taking away the aversion or resistance of the heart to the divine will, and determining it to a sincere compliance. What ground there is for this branch of the doctrine of grace, in the scriptures which treat of that subject, may appear in some measure from the following observations.

In the first place, it is proper to reflect here on what was hinted before, about the meaning of resisting divine grace, as it is explained by the people who refuse to ascribe to it an insuperable efficacy. It is to resist the call of God in the gospel, which requires faith, repentance and universal holiness. To resist divine

grace, is, according to this explication, to continue in impenitence and alienation from the life of God. Now the effect of converting and sanctifying grace, is, to take away these evils. To resist the call of the gospel, is, according to scripture, to have a heart of stone. The scripture teaches us, that the grace of God takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. This proves that there are operations of the divine Spirit, which take away the resistance of the heart to the will of God.

They who oppose the doctrine of effectual grace, own, as was observed before, divine operations giving the soul power and ability to turn to God. Their main objections are against operations, determining the will or governing principles and inclinations of the soul. But the prevalent inclinations and dispositions of the soul, are the very things which the scripture calls the heart: and the scriptures above adduced shew, that the heart is the main thing on which the efficacy of grace is exerted. To give a new heart, is to give prevalent holy inclinations and dispositions to comply with the will of God. Accordingly, we are told that God Almighty works to will and to do, and that his people are a willing people in the day of his power. These, and the like expressions, plainly denote the removal of unwillingness or resistance; and a sufficiency of power and intrinsic efficacy in the operations of divine grace for that effect.

It may give farther light to this subject, to consider the nature of that holiness, which, according to scripture, is the effect of the grace of the Holy Ghost. It does not consist merely in a power to obey God, without real prevalent inclination to it. According to scripture and reason, holiness consists chiefly in the rooted prevalent inclinations and affections of the heart.—Love is the fulfilling of the law, and the end of the commandment. The scriptures do not ascribe to the grace of God merely a power to believe, to repent, to love and obey God: they ascribe to it, these excellent effects themselves. They do not leave room for sinners to boast, that they are only beholden to God for good

abilities, and that they are beholden for their good inclinations to themselves. The operations of God's grace are represented in scripture, as *inclining* mens' hearts to God's testimonies, and *causing* them to walk in his statutes. Such expressions plainly denote, that the divine operations, to which men are beholden for conversion and spiritual life, are of such efficacy as to have an infallible connexion with the effects ascribed to them. This may be farther confirmed from the scripture account of the greatness of the power exerted in them. The observations formerly made on this subject, shew that the energy of grace is sufficient to overpower the obstinate resistance the sinner's heart made formerly to the divine call; and that it must triumph over all opposition.

Whereas, the view that has been taken hitherto of the scripture doctrine of grace, is somewhat general; there are some special branches of it which require more particular consideration, because of the particular prejudices entertained against them. Of this number, is the doctrine concerning an ordinary work of the Spirit of God enlightening mens' minds. Some of the scriptures which contain that doctrine have been already mentioned. But various objections are advanced against deducing such a doctrine from these scriptures, or any others that are brought for the proof of it. Sometimes it is pretended, that these scriptures are only meant of the external revelation of the gospel, common to the body of Christians; sometimes that they are meant of extraordinary operations of the Spirit of God, in which the body, even of real Christians is not concerned. It is on such grounds that the doctrine of an ordinary inward work of enlightening grace is opposed. What force there is in such objections against that doctrine, will appear by a few remarks on some of the chief scripture testimonies on which it is founded.

When our Saviour says, that all who should come to him would be taught of God: it is evident that he speaks of a divine teaching, that is ordinary and common to all real Christians. The teaching he speaks

of, can be no more extraordinary than coming to him, or believing on him. It is no less evident, that the teaching he speaks of, must be something else than the external teaching of God's word: for he adds, that all who should be thus taught, would come to him. It is manifest, therefore, that he speaks of a teaching, which has a certain connexion with true faith, which cannot be said of outward instruction; and he speaks of a teaching that is necessary in order to faith, which cannot be said of any of these extraordinary privileges or gifts, which are peculiar to a few, and in which the body of Christians is not concerned.

When Christ exhorts the Laodiceans to accept of eye-salve to anoint their eyes, that they might see, Rev. iii. 18. he speaks to a people who enjoyed the outward light of the gospel already; and therefore, he does not mean merely outward instruction: and seeing he makes this kind offer to all that people, this proves that the blessing he offers. is not to be reckoned among the extraordinary gifts of the divine Spirit.—The like observations are evidently applicable to various other scriptures which treat of the same subject. Thus, Paul prays in behalf of the Ephesians, notwithstanding of their enjoying the outward revelation of the gospel already; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of his inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe, Eph i. 19. and iii. 16, 18. as also that God would strengthen them with might, by his Spirit in the inner man; that they might comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and the depth and heighth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. To the same purpose are the scriptures, which speak of God's shining into the heart to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. of his opening mens' eyes, to behold wonderful things out of his law, Psal. cxix. and of an anointing from above, which teacheth all things, 1 John ii. 27.

When our Saviour promises to all who love him and keep his commandments, that he will come unto them and *manifest* himself to them, John xiv. 21. it is plain that it is not merely the external manifestation of himself in the gospel that is meant. It is evident, that he speaks of a privilege that is peculiar to them who love and obey him; and the context shews he manifests himself otherwise to those than to the rest of the world. It is no less evident that the privilege he speaks of, cannot be reckoned among the extraordinary gifts peculiar to a few, and which the body of sincere Christians are not concerned in. His words import that inward manifestations of the Redeemer, can no more be restricted to a few extraordinary persons, than love and obedience to him: though no doubt all these things admit of very different degrees.

SECTION II.

Of the differences between the work of the Holy Ghost, and false appearances of it.

THE consideration of the differences between true and false pretences to the Spirit of God, is of manifold use, both for vindicating the doctrine of grace, and for directing us to a just improvement of it. Because, so many people in all ages have so grossly imposed on themselves and others, in their pretences to divine communications; this is a main thing which some people make a handle of for justifying their prejudices against all such pretences in general. A due consideration of the differences between the work of the divine Spirit, and the things falsely ascribed to him, will make it evident that these prejudices are without just foundation. To argue that there are no real operations of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of sinners, because many people deceive themselves, in pretending to such things; is as unreasonable, as to affirm that there is no true and sincere holiness in the world, because there are so many hypocrites.

In treating of false pretences to the Spirit of God,

it is needful first, and chiefly, to consider false pretences to his sanctifying grace. Pretences to his extraordinary gifts: such as prophecy, miracles, and immediate inspiration, are more rare and uncommon. It is proper to observe that without pretending, either to the extraordinary gifts o. God's Spirit, or to his sanctifying grace, a man may pretend to these things which are very fitly called common operations; that is, to such good motions and impressions from the Spirit of God, as may be found in the hearts of bad men, and which are of an excellent tendency, but are not duly complied with. As for those who own internal, but not insuperable and effectual grace, they are, of all people in the world, most obliged to allow, that men void of true holiness, may truly pretend to inward operations of the Holy Ghost. According to them, there are no ordinary operations of the Spirit of God, but what men may resist and defeat: that is, there are none but a man may be favoured with, and yet continue in his impenitence and impiety.

If a man carry his pretences no higher than these common operations, it is evident that supposing him to be in a mistake, it is not of the most dangerous kind. A man who justly accuses himself of resisting good motions, which he has felt in his heart and conscience, may be supposed to be mistaken in ascribing these motions to divine operation. But his error is far from being so dangerous, as that of a man, who, without pretending to the Holy Ghost, falsely pretends to holiness itself; and imagines he has attained to the image of God, without his grace. There is the more need of considering this, because of the manner in which some people treat of the delusions of self-love in religion. They speak on that subject, as if the only most dangerous self-deceit, was false pretence to the Holy Ghost; whereas, indeed, the most dangerous delusion is false pretence to holiness itself, whether people ascribe their attainments to the Holy Ghost or not.—If a man falsely pretend to the image of God, his error cannot be the less sinful, or less hurtful, because he does not ascribe his having the divine image, to the

divine Spirit. The grossest Pelagianism, by which a man renounces all pretence to the inward efficacy of God's Spirit, and disclaims all dependence and obligations to it, cannot make his self-deceit, either innocent or less dangerous. It is rather the more dangerous, because there is the more self-confidence and presumption in it: self-confidence is acknowledged by all judicious moral writers, to have a great tendency to self-deceit in all cases; but in none more than in the concerns of religion.

They who deny all inward operations of the grace of God, must accuse even those who are endued with true holiness, if they ascribe it to the Holy Ghost as chargeable with false pretences to divine communications. But they ought in all reason to acknowledge, that such mens' mistake is far from being pernicious. The grossest Pelagian ought to own, that if mens' pretence to the divine image be just and true, though their pretence to the divine Spirit as the cause of it be false; these men cannot be supposed to be excluded from the favour of God, merely because they are guilty of ascribing too much to his grace.

In considering the differences between true and false pretences to sanctifying grace, it is not needful to confine our view to the scriptures above adduced, to prove that holiness, in all its parts, is the effect of it. When once it is proved, that the grace of God is the cause of true holiness, all the scriptures which explain the nature and characters of true holiness, may be justly considered as explications of the work of the Holy Ghost.

It is evident from scripture, and the experience of all ages, that many people who are void of true holiness, may have some resemblances of the several parts of it, by which they may not only impose on others, but also on themselves. They may have resemblances, not only of the outward parts of it, or of external obedience, as it is said of Herod, that he did many good things, but also of the inward good dispositions whence it proceeds. They may have some sorrow for sin, some kind of faith or belief, concerning the great

truths of the gospel; some sort of delightful affections in the contemplation and worship of God, and kind affections towards men. By this means, people who want true holiness, may have some appearances or resemblances of faith and repentance, and of the love we owe to God and our neighbours.

In the first place, there are various instances in scripture, of appearances and resemblances of repentance, in the hearts of the impenitent. Cain and Judas felt bitter remorse; Saul wept aloud; Ahab was in heaviness, when rebuked for his wickedness, and Felix trembled. The Pharisees who lived in our Saviour's time, kept frequent fasts; and so did their predecessors, the hypocritical Jews, Isaiah lviii. whom Isaiah describes as a people, who pretended to afflict their souls for their sins, and yet continued in the practice of them; particularly in the sins contrary to righteousness, charity, and mercy. Thus, men may have fear and trembling, heaviness, and sorrow, with weeping in considering their sins, and yet neglect that sincere repentance, which the scripture calls repentance unto life. In order to a right view of the sources of these, and the like resemblances of repentance, and of the differences between them and the good things they resemble, it is proper to consider the following things.

The affections which may be found in mens' hearts, in considering or confessing their sins, or in devout exercises in general, may be divided into three sorts. First, there are some affections which are in their own nature evil and corrupt; such as all affections, contrary to the love we owe to God and our neighbours. Secondly, there are others, which may be called common good affections, which are in their own nature good, and even necessary, though not sufficient in order to true holiness: such as a general desire of escaping future punishment, and of obtaining eternal happiness, and of the Divine favour, as the means of that happiness, which desire may be found in different degrees, in hearts void of true divine love. Thirdly, sincere holy affections, such as all the affections included

in love to God with our whole heart, and love to our neighbours as ourselves; and the affections, which, though they may be distinguished from divine love, have a necessary connexion with it; such as sincere prevalent hatred of all sin, and suitable desire of deliverance from it.

It is obvious that the second sort of affections may produce various degrees of sorrow for sin, in hearts void of sincere love to God. But there are various characters which distinguish such sorrows from true repentance. There is a great difference between that sorrow for sin, which flows merely from fear of punishment, and that sorrow which flows from love to God and holiness. A deep concern to escape the punishment of sin, is in itself good and necessary. The fault in mens' concern that way is in the defect, and not in the excess. But as such concern, and that fear which proceeds from it, may be found in hearts void of love to God and his laws, it is evident, that such fear without love, is not sufficient to true holiness. Where a man's sorrow for his sin does not proceed from a love to God and his law, his sorrow for sin is without suitable hatred of it. A man may have strong prevalent inclinations to sin, while mere self makes him dread its consequences; and that dread may affect him in a very sensible manner. It is necessary to distinguish between mere fear and sorrow for sin, and prevalent hatred of it; between hatred of sin itself, and mere hatred of the consequences of it; and between the sorrow for sin that flows from the love of God and holiness, and that which flows only from some inferior principle.

It is proper also to observe, that there is a great difference between that dejection of spirit, and remorse of conscience which is involuntary, and in which mens' minds are, as it were, merely passive; and that voluntary self-abasement for sin, which equally implies a sincere desire of deliverance from it, and of suitable contrition of spirit on the account of it. Some of the scripture instances above adduced, serve to illustrate this. It is evident, that the heart of Felix was pierced,

with a sense of the evil of his sins, against his will.—Accordingly, he desired the person, whose discourse had alarmed his conscience, to go away for that time; and though he spoke of calling for him at a more convenient time, it does not appear he was in good earnest. He did not want to be delivered from his sins, but from his convictions. On the other hand, the self-abasement of a sincere penitent is voluntary. For the same reason that he hates his sin, he loves repentance. Not only his heart is reconciled to it, but he is desirous of more and more of it. Thus the Psalmist, Psalm xxxii. Psalm li. *I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord? I acknowledge my transgression; and my sin is ever before me.* And in Job, *That which I know not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.*

Though a man be voluntary in his sorrow and self-abasement for sin, he may be so partial as to neglect some essential parts of it. There is a great difference between sorrow, or even hatred of some particular transgressions, and sincere prevalent grief and hatred of all our sins. Ahab was in heaviness for his cruelty to Naboth, Saul for his cruel ingratitude to David, and Judas for his horrid treachery. But these men were not at pains to get their hearts penetrated with a due sense of the evil of all their sins. It may be objected that even the most eminent penitents, do not attain to a perfect knowledge and remembrance of all their sins, without exception. But in answer to this, it is certain that true penitents are deeply affected with the several chief parts of their depravity and corruption. They have broken hearts, and contrite spirits, or sincere grief and hatred of all the evils that hinder suitable love to God and men, of all their corrupt passions, and inordinate affections.

The hypocritical Jews, who are described by Isaiah as a people who pretended to afflict their souls for their sins, probably did not wholly neglect all manner of confession and sorrow for sin: but since they continued in the sins that are contrary to righteousness and mercy, either they did not mourn for these sins at all,

or at least they wanted that sorrow for sin that determines the heart to forsake it. It is possible they might be so blinded, by covetousness and self-flattery, that they were not sensible of these particular evils. It is probable this may have been also the case with the hypocritical Pharisees. Seeing they kept frequent fasts, it is likely they mourned for some sins. But seeing they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God, it is likely they were not in any tolerable measure affected with the sins contrary to these duties.

Partial views of the law of God, and of the evils of our own hearts and lives, in comparing them with that divine standard, are a principal source of self-deceit in religion. The influence of such partiality is so noxious, and so extensive, that it will be needful frequently to reflect upon it in the present inquiry. False pretence to the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, supposes false pretence to holiness itself. This necessarily implies that men have false or defective notions of the rules of holiness of their own hearts and lives, or of both. Though mens' notions of the general rules of holiness, be in the main, just and right, self-flattery may make them commit very essential errors in the application of them; or in trying themselves by them. They may mistake a partial reformation for universal holiness. When men rest satisfied with a reformation that labours under essential defects, this evidently supposes proportionable defects in their acknowledgments and convictions of sin. Partial convictions of sin spread their bad influence through all other endeavours and atainments in religion. They make men partial in their applications for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, and in their purposes and endeavours after obedience. It is evident, that gross partiality in religion is a main thing in the scripture-characters of hypocrisy. It is a chief part of the charge against the hypocritical Pharisees. While they, in what they did well, were very exact about some things enjoined by the divine law, they left other things undone, that were even of greater importance.

If partial views of sin and duty be a main cause of false pretences to the several parts of holiness; they have in a special manner, a great influence on false pretences to repentance. Men may ofttimes mourn for some sins, which they can hardly avoid being in some measure sensible of; while pride and self-love render them inexcusably blind and insensible as to other sins no less dangerous. It is a very useful division the apostle makes of all depravity, into filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. There is good ground to interpret the first expression as meant of the various branches of sensuality, and the second of all the evils that may be distinguished from it; such as pride, malice, covetousness, and the like. Some have justly observed that men who have any manner of concern about religion are ofttimes more easily made sensible of the evils of the first sort now mentioned, than of the second. The observation is founded on the scripture account of the hypocritical Pharisees. It is evident that pride, malice, and covetousness were their predominant sins. At the same time they seem to have kept at distance from gross sensuality, and to have affected an uncommon austerity. It seems to have been owing to this artifice that they acquired the character of the strictest sect of the Jews: while they imposed not only on others, but on themselves. Such instances of self-deceit are too frequent in all ages. This may partly be accounted for by considering some of the most obvious differences between the various branches of sensuality, and the other sins above-mentioned.—The former are less capable of escaping observation; or of disguising themselves under any good appearance; whereas the latter are more subtile, more blinding, and less easily discerned, where self-love is predominant. The more dangerously stupid must they be, whose consciences charge them with gross sensuality, and yet are not alarmed at it. Yet notwithstanding of this, it is evident that the other evils, called the sins of the spirit, where they are predominant, are no less inconsistent with true holiness than sensuality itself.

Though a man who has been very partial and defec-

tive in his acknowledgments of sin, come to have more extensive views, and more extensive sorrow for sin; yet if all this does not produce some sincere prevalent inclinations to forsake his sins, his pretences to repentance are ill-founded. Though confession of sin be exceeding necessary; yet the scripture, on good grounds, directs us to distinguish between confession of sin, and forsaking of it. All the good affections and dispositions included in repentance, that can be distinguished from a prevalent inclination to turn from sin to God, must conspire to strengthen that inclination, and to oppose whatever clashes with it. It will be afterwards considered how impenitent sinners may excite in themselves several passions, in various devout exercises, and particularly in confessing of sin: it is sufficient to observe at present, that whatever these passions be, or however they are raised, while men want love to God and holiness, with their whole hearts, and that prevalent hatred of sin, which is connected with it, their pretences to repentance are false and ill-grounded.

The differences between true repentance and false appearances of it, will be farther illustrated, in considering divine faith and love, with which true repentance has a necessary connexion. From what is said, it appears that these differences are far from being inconsiderable or indiscernible. The sincere penitent has in the main just views of God's law, and of his own sins in heart and life. He has a real propensity to habitual self-abasement for them: they are the objects, not only of his sorrow, but also of his chief hatred, and his hatred of sin flows from sincere love to God.

In the next place, it is evident from scripture and experience, that people void of true holiness, may have some resemblances of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is still needful to remember, that, according to scriptures, true and sincere faith has a connexion with holiness and salvation. Thus, the scripture speaking of Christ, tell us, that *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,*

even to them that believe on his name, John. i. 12. and that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish; but have everlasting life*, John. iii. 16. Notwithstanding of this, the scripture speaks sometimes of a sort of faith, that is found in the hearts of the impenitent.—Thus the apostle James treats at some length, of some self-deceivers, who valued themselves on a faith without works, which, according to the apostle, is dead, being alone, James ii. 17, 26. We read of many in Jerusalem who believed in the name of Christ, when they saw his miracles, to whom notwithstanding Christ would not commit himself, because he knew all men, John ii. 24. We are told that even Simon Magus believed when he saw the miracles performed by Philip. The parable of the sower in Luke viii. 13. carries this matter still somewhat farther. There it is said, that *they on the rock, are they, who, when they hear, receive the word with joy*; but it is added, *and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.* The scripture teaches us that a main thing belonging to the nature of faith is trust in God, founded on his word. The prophet Isaiah speaks of some hypocritical Israelites, who had some resemblances of this trust. He says, *they called themselves of the holy city, and stayed themselves upon the God of Israel*, Isaiah xlviii. 2.

These and other scriptures shew that men may have several resemblances of faith, by which they may impose on themselves. But there are various characters which distinguish true faith from these false appearances. Men may give some assent to the gospel, and their faith in the mean time labour under essential defects, as to its extent, as to the root it has in the soul, the ends proposed by the various actings of it, and the impressions which the objects of faith make upon the heart.

In the first place, it is evident that a man may entertain some belief of Christ's divine mission, without owning the principal ends of it; and particularly without acknowledging the sovereign and incomprehensible

love, mercy, and grace of God, in redemption, by Christ's blood. And yet the whole tenor of scripture-doctrine on this head shews, that it is on this redemption that sincere faith must fix the Christian's heart, his trust and confidence ; as being the only solid relief from all his fears, and foundation of his hopes : not only a very great, but absolutely the greatest manifestation of God's glory, and chief gift of his mercy: and consequently a rich source of the strongest motives to love, and obedience. Notwithstanding of this, the apostle in writing to the Galatians, plainly intimates to them, that there were Judaizing Christians among them, who, though they owned Christ's mission, made his death to be in vain, and frustrated the grace of God. And there is too much ground to believe that these Judaizing Christians have had their successors in all ages.

In the next place, it is evident that a sinner may acknowledge redemption, and apply to the mercy of God in the blood of his Son, for the remission of sins, without applying sincerely for the sanctification of heart and life. This was the defect of the Solifidians, as they are called, whom the apostle James speaks of, as a people who had a sort of faith which, being without works, was dead. It is evident that this is not the faith by which, according to Scripture, sinners believe to the saving of their souls, Heb. x. 39. True faith must give due acceptation to the true and faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners ; and it is an excellent description we have of that salvation, when we are told that he saves his people from their sins. Sincere faith must embrace the gracious offers of the gospel, where the Redeemer is proposed to us, as made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. The sinner who continues in his sins, rejects these offers : and while he does so, he neglects that which is called the end of our faith, the salvation of the soul. Sanctification is not merely a principal part of salvation and happiness ; but that to which all the other parts are subservient. Sanctifying grace, as well as pardoning mercy, is an

essential part of the Redeemer's purchase; and as both these blessings are the ends of Christ's blood; so both of them must be the ends of the various actings of that faith, which the apostle calls faith in Christ's blood — Sincere faith in acknowledging redemption, and embracing Christ's mediation, must dispose the heart to aim habitually at the great ends of it. And seeing the ends of Christ's giving himself for us, and of his whole mediation, is to redeem us from our iniquities, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works: in reinstating us in God's favour, to restore in us his image, which is a chief effect of it; to bring us to conformity to God and holiness, and true happiness in the enjoyment of him; or, as this whole matter is briefly expressed in scripture style, to save us from sin, and to bring us to God; unless these great ends of Christ's mediation be the ends of our acting of faith in him, we have not that faith, concerning which it is said that he who believes has passed from death to life.

In the mean time, it is fit to observe, that the self-deceiver, who continues in his sins, and yet pretends to faith in the Redeemer, may indeed imagine that he receives the Redeemer, by faith, not only for remission, but also for sanctification. Perhaps there are not very many, who have any tolerable knowledge of Christianity, who do not own that these things are really inseparable. But, as was observed before, through the delusions of pride and self-flattery people may lose the benefit of general truths, by a wrong and partial application of them. The self-deceiver imagines that he receives Christ for sanctification, because he is at some pains to apply for his grace, and to have some kind of dependence on it for holiness of heart and life, according to his false and partial apprehensions of it. But since his apprehensions of it labour under so essential defects, his faith is not that faith which works by love, and purifies the heart; and therefore it is not what the scripture calls faith unfeigned.

In considering these characters of sincere faith, which relate to the ends of it; it is not sufficient to

consider sanctification in general. It is needful to remember that it is a chief part of sanctification, to have hearts disposed to glorify the divine perfections, suitably to the various manifestations of them, in which we have access to acknowledge or contemplate them. But though our praises should extend to all God's works, and to his favours to other creatures, it is evident we are chiefly obliged to acknowledge the divine excellencies as displayed in these divine works, in which we ourselves are more immediately concerned. As therefore it is a main end of knowing and believing the truths of natural religion, that we may honour God's perfections shining in creation and providence; so the design of knowing and believing the peculiar truths of the gospel, is to honour his perfections shining in the works of redemption and grace. If our hearts are not sincerely disposed to comply with this design of the gospel, our faith is not that faith which receives the love of the truth. The evil of atheism consists in mens' denying, or not acknowledging their obligations to the First Cause, as the author of our being, and of all the good we enjoy or expect. The evil of unbelief in rejecting the gospel, is mens' not acknowledging and honouring aright the sovereign mercy and grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ as the source of the salvation and happiness of sinners.

It is obvious, that men may give some assent to the gospel, while their hearts do not thus comply with the design of it: they may have some speculative belief of the reality of the things revealed in the gospel, without just views of the glory and excellency of them.—They may even have some concern about the various parts of salvation which Christ has purchased: without due complacency and esteem of his mediation itself. Yet it is evident from the whole tenor of scripture doctrine on that head, that a main character of sincere faith is, a transcendent esteem, and complacency of soul in Christ's mediation, as a most amiable manifestation of the glory and grace of God in the salvation of sinners. As this is a point of considerable, of very great importance, it is proper to hint at some

of the proofs of it. It may be proved from the scripture account of the ends of faith itself, and its principal objects, as also the chief cause and chief actings of it. When the apostle Paul speaks to the Ephesians, of God's gracious purposes concerning the salvation of sinners by his Son, and of that faith which is the great means of salvation, he teaches that the end of these things is, that we may be to the praise of the glory of God by trusting in Christ, Eph. i. 12, particularly that we may be to the praise of the glory of his grace, or that he may shew forth and consequently that we may acknowledge, the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness in Christ. The same apostle speaks of the work of faith wrought with power, and says that the end of it is that the name of the Lord Christ may be glorified in us.

There are several scriptures wherein the apostles describe the superlative esteem which they had themselves of Christ's mediation. It is evident that such scriptures ought not to be considered as containing merely descriptions of their faith and love, but also as containing patterns of ours. Paul tells us he was determined to know nothing else but Christ, and him crucified, that he gloried in nothing else, and that he counted all things else loss. Though other sincere Christians come far short of this apostle, yet all are under the same obligations in the main, to honour the mediation of Christ with their whole hearts. Accordingly we are told in general that to them who believe, he is precious, or, as the word so rendered imports, honourable; that to them he is the power and wisdom of God; and that in glorying they glory only in the Lord, 1 Pet. ii. 7. 1 Cor. i. 31.

These and the like scriptures shew the necessity of a transcendent esteem of the mediation of Christ as a bright display of God's glory in our salvation. This may be farther confirmed and explained from some of the scripture commendations of it. Unless these commendations or declarations of its excellency, make, in some measure, a due impression on our hearts, we neglect a main part and main design of the gospel.—

Some scriptures commend the work of redemption as a transcendent manifestation of the Divine perfections in general: it is of that blessed work the apostle is writing to the Colossians, when he speaks of the glory of that mystery which was manifested to them, and which he says, was Christ in them the hope of glory. Other scriptures make particular mention of several divine perfections, shining in that divine work with peculiar lustre; such as divine justice, power, and wisdom, but especially mysterious love, mercy, and condescension to sinners. Thus, we are taught, that by the propitiation in Christ's blood, God declares his righteousness in the remission of sins; that he may be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus; that to them who are called (as in the scripture above-mentioned) Christ is the power and wisdom of God; that herein is love, herein is the love of God manifested; in this God commends his love, and shews forth the exceeding riches of his grace, his rich mercy and great love, wherewith he loved us, even love whose height, depth, length, and breadth, surpass our knowledge.

It is evident, that our esteem of Christ's mediation, should be in some measure, suitable to the gospel declarations of its excellency. This is plainly implied in the scripture account of the cause of faith, and of its chief actings and influence. When God, the author of faith, shines into the heart, we are told that he gives the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 4. We are more particularly directed to seek God's Spirit to strengthen us in the inner man, that we may know the love of Christ, Eph. iii. 18, 19. As to the chief actings and influence of faith, a life of faith working by love, is described by beholding the glory of the Lord, so as to be changed into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18.—These words are meant of that glory of the Lord, which is more clearly revealed under the New Testament; that is to say, the glory of the Lord in redemption. *****

The scriptures, which explain the nature of holiness,

and the work of the Holy Ghost, shew that divine love is the chief part of the divine image. To love God with all our heart and soul, is to obey the first and great commandment of his law. And therefore, when it is said that the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, 1 Tim. i. 5. though love to our neighbours is by no means to be excluded, it is to the love of God that this is chiefly applicable. Yet it is certain, that men void of divine love, may impose upon themselves by various resemblances of that holy disposition of soul. Without love to God with the whole heart, men may have some delight in devout contemplation of him, some desires after his favour and approbation, with various hopes and fears, joys, and sorrows, which result from such desires.

That without sincere love to God, men may have some delight in contemplating him, is evident from this, that, besides a principle of love, there are other affections, from which some such delight may naturally proceed: and particularly it is obvious, that where God is not the object of mens' love, he may be the object of their admiration. The prophet Isaiah speaks of some very bad men, who he says, had some sort of delight in approaching to God; that is, in worshipping him. His words are, "*They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways; as a nation that did righteousness, they delight in approaching to God*, Isa. lviii. 2. *It is said of Ezekiel's hearers, that with their mouth they shewed much love; but their heart went after their covetousness.* It is added, *and lo thou art unto them as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words, but they do them not*," Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. It was observed before, that in the parable of the sower, they who are compared to the stony ground, are not only said to receive the gospel, but to receive it with joy. Joy in receiving the gospel, which contains so many motives to divine love, bears a resemblance to that holy affection. Many of Christ's hearers are said to have been astonished at his doctrine, while they were far from

complying with the design of it. It is probable their astonishment was not without some sort of pleasure and delight. No doubt, the discourses, both of our Saviour and of the prophet Ezekiel, contained powerful motives to divine love. But they did not produce that important effect, on the people above-mentioned, though they produced some delight of another kind.—As to Ezekiel's hearers, the comparison made use of to illustrate these mens' attendance on religious exercises, seems to import, that they took some pleasure in them, only as a sort of agreeable amusement for a time. 'He was to them as a very lovely song. But while the prophet's discourse only affected their imagination, covetousness had the possession of their hearts.

In considering the delight which men may have in some contemplations of God, without sincere love to him, it is proper to take a view of the sources of such delight. The natural love of knowledge, which, though of a good tendency, may be separated from the love of God, and abused to many bad purposes, may produce manifold pleasure, both in the contemplation of God and his works. The distinguishing faculties of rational creatures, make them capable of various considerable enjoyments, in contemplating things wonderful and extraordinary; in contemplating whatever has in it admirable order and symmetry, or manifold evidence of deep contrivance; and in a special manner, in viewing the connexion between causes and their effects. People of all sorts seem capable, though not equally, of such enjoyment. As all these, and the like causes of pleasure in contemplation, admit of great variety of degrees, so the highest degree of them is to be found in contemplating the works and attributes of God. all

Some have observed, that even the atheistical Epicurean poet, sometimes discovers a sort of transport, in contemplating the divine works, while he did not acknowledge divine wisdom. It is no wonder that the contemplation of God's works, when joined with the acknowledgment of his perfections, should afford a considerable additional pleasure. It is an effect of God's

goodness, that as we were at first created capable of such enjoyments, our apostacy has not wholly deprived us of them. They have a manifold good tendency.—They tend to make a reasonable soul bethink itself what it is capable of, and what its noble faculties were designed for. But notwithstanding of all this; seeing they are enjoyments, of which very bad men may really have some taste, they are attainments very different from divine love, and the enjoyments which have a connexion with it. The characters, which distinguish these different attainments from one another, will be considered afterwards.

It is proper to consider, in the next place, how, without love to God with the whole heart, men may have not only some delight in contemplating him, but also some considerable desire after his approbation and favour. We read in scripture of people inquiring what they should do to obtain eternal life, and seeking to enter in at the strait gate, without complying sincerely with the method God has appointed for that purpose. If a considerable desire of eternal happiness, may be found in the hearts of bad men; seeing the love of the end naturally carries men to a desire of the means; it is no wonder that such desire may excite men void of divine love, to various good endeavours, suitable to their apprehensions of their duty, however defective. We are told that Herod was induced, by the doctrine of John the baptist, not only to do some good things, but many good things; these good things seemed to prove some inward good purposes; but they did not extend to his parting with Herodias.

It is a common and just argument, concerning the noxious influence of Atheism on the interest of society, that it takes off the most powerful restraints of secret crimes. This plainly supposes, that some secret concern about escaping future punishment, and of obtaining future happiness, may be found in the hearts of the most abandoned; and may have, in some cases, some effect on them. It is no wonder, therefore, that the like concern should exert itself, with far superior efficacy, in men who are not entirely dissolute, though they come short of true holiness.

Both scripture and experience shew, that natural conscience is a thing which perverse affections may stupify, but cannot quite root out. That principle implies a power of discerning the difference between moral good and evil, or rather it puts it out of mens' power entirely, to extinguish a secret sense of that difference. It is evident, that natural conscience, together with that general desire of happiness, and forethought about futurity, which are inlaid in our frame, have a tendency to excite a desire of the favour of that Being, on whom we have an absolute dependence. It is plain, that when men have such desire after the divine favour, while they are void of divine love, it is not their having such desire, but their wanting that love, that is blameable. As the fault of such desires does not lie in excess, but in defect, so true holiness does not exclude, but strengthen and direct them.—And if these desires had all the effect on mens' hearts, which they ought to have, and to which they have a tendency, they would determine them to far more suitable endeavours after sincerity; they would determine them to lay aside their false and partial views of God, of his law, and of themselves. They would excite them to repent of all their sins, to apply sincerely to the mercy of God in Christ, for all that sanctification which he has purchased, and dispose them to habitual consideration of all the principal motives and obligations to love God, and hate sin with their whole heart.

But it is too certain that men may have a considerable degree of concern about future happiness, without its producing such effects. In the mean time, it is evident, that, as such concern admits of very different degrees, it must, like all other desires, beget a proportionable degree of fear, upon apprehension of disappointment, and of joyful hope in prospect of success. And seeing it strengthens and increases our delight in any means of good, when it gratifies at once different desires, or answers various desirable ends; a general desire of future happiness may increase that delight in contemplating God, which proceeds from admiration, or some other principle different from divine love.

It is evident, that such delight and desires as have been described, bear some resemblance to the holy affections and desires included in the love of God, and the one may be mistaken for the other. These different principles may ofttimes employ mens' thoughts about the same objects, and may excite men to the same devout exercises, and other good actions. But all this resemblance is still consistent with a very essential unlikeness.

A man who is really disaffected to his sovereign in his heart, so that were it in his power he would not have him to reign over him, may yet desire his favour for his own ends, and seek gifts and preferments from him. In like manner, men whose hearts are prejudiced against the holiness of God, and pre-possessed with enmity against his law, Rom. viii. 7. considered in its true import and extent, may have such a persuasion of their dependence on him, as shall have a considerable effect on them. It is not to be wondered at, that bad men should prefer a future state of happiness to a state of punishment, and have some considerable desires after heaven, while they cannot sincerely say, as the Psalmist does, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, O Lord?* Men may have some love of heaven, without loving God, while their desire of heaven excites some desire of God's favour, and of what they apprehend to be the way to it.

It is evident also, that men may have some desire of God's favour, that they may obtain heaven hereafter, while they have superior and stronger desires to retain some favourite lusts and corrupt practices here: while self-flattery makes them ingenious, in reconciling their worst defects with the greatest hopes. Sometimes mens' desires after heaven, and after the favour of God, and the impressions of these things on their minds, may appear considerable for a short space of time; but are found to have no root in the soul, seeing they are worn off by the first impressions, from any remarkable new temptation. And even where such impressions are more lasting, there is a great difference between general desire of God's favour, flowing

merely from a sense of dependence on him, and that which flows from a due affectionate esteem of his excellencies, particularly of his moral excellencies, which, in scripture style, are comprehended under the name of holiness. Men may have considerable desires after God's favour, without sincere desire of conformity to him in holiness; especially, without a desire of universal holiness, directed by right views of the essential rules of it, and a just application of them. Predominant sins may retain their sovereignty in the heart, while they do not exclude all desire of heaven, and while they do not hinder men from doing many good things with that view. But if in such cases, men entertain the hope of heaven, it is evident they impose on themselves, by partial views of their duty; and that, in imagining they study true holiness, they mistake, very inexcuseably, a part for the whole.

As that desire of God's favour, which may be found in the hearts of the impenitent, is a thing very different from divine love; so also is their delight in contemplating him. Some account was given of this before, but it deserves to be inquired into more particularly. It is useful to divide the delights attained unto, in divine contemplation into two different sorts, according as they are founded on true or false schemes of religion. Even where mens' contemplations are founded on true principles in the main, their delight may proceed, as was observed before, from mere admiration, and other inferior principles, very different from love to God with the whole heart. It is well known there may be a good deal of pleasure in mere speculation. Yet the very name of mere speculation, though attended with pleasure, imports something very different from that enjoyment, which results from affection. People may take pleasure in a speculation, without any love to the object of it, but merely to the speculation itself. Thus, several sciences afford delightful contemplation, while their objects are far from being the objects of affection. Men are capable of delight, even in contemplating things that are the objects of their aversion: as, for instance, in contem-

plating things that may be known concerning the fallen angels.

The apostle Paul observes, that men may excel in the knowledge of all mysteries, and yet want charity or love. Notwithstanding that essential defect, such mens' knowledge, and the contemplations with which it furnished them, might be attended with considerable enjoyment. Oftentimes, men who take pleasure in some other contemplations of God, take little or none in contemplating his moral perfections; particularly as they are manifested in his law, and moral government of the world. Yet, even these excellencies may be the objects of speculative delight; and men may take some sort of pleasure, in contemplating God's moral attributes and laws, without sincere prevalent desire of conformity to them. It is said of Nero, that sometimes he took pleasure in hearing declamations on moral virtue, though few will suppose he took pleasure in the thing itself. The same principles which gave Nero some pleasure in speculations on such subjects, may make other bad men take some sort of speculative pleasure, in various parts of religion in general. Men may take some pleasure in contemplating God's laws, his moral attributes, and some effects of them, without considering these things as motives to obedience, and aggravations of transgression: and consequently without improving those, as means of suitable love to God and holiness, and suitable hatred and sorrow for sin.

If there may be so important defects in these divine contemplations, which may be in the main regulated by true schemes of religion, founded on scripture; much more must this take place in contemplations, which deviate from that standard. The scripture foretells, that in the last days men would heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, according to their own lusts: that seducers would inveigle incautious persons, and impose upon them by swelling words of vanity, 2 Tim iv. 3. 2 Pet. ii. 17, 18. Jude 12. And it seems to be on account of the inefficacy of their notions to sanctify heart and life, that they are compared to

wells without water, and clouds carried about with winds, which do not water and fructify the earth.—These predictions have been verified in several ages, by various schemes of religion, whose principal tendency seems to be, to gratify vain curiosity, to intoxicate the imagination, and to puff up men with an over-weening conceit of profound knowledge.

It is true, that perhaps there was scarcely any scheme of religion so made up of mistakes and absurdities, as to exclude all mixture of truth, and every branch of the divine and moral law. And so far as any branches of truth and moral precepts enter into mens' schemes, so far may they produce some good effects, however defective and partial. But as to the deluding parts of fictitious schemes of religion, whatever emotions they produce in mens' hearts, or rather, in their imaginations, it is evident that these things must be as different from divine love, as falsehood is from truth.

What has been said concerning the attainments which bear some resemblance to divine love, or may be mistaken for it, will receive farther light by considering the scripture account of the nature and chief characters of that holy disposition of soul.

Seeing we are required to love God with all our heart and soul, and strength; this plainly implies, that all the ingredients of the most perfect love should concur, in the highest degree, in that holy affection. It must include the highest esteem, gratitude and desire: a due esteem of God's perfections, a grateful sense of his benefits, a propensity to suitable acknowledgment of his perfections, in the various manifestations of them; and in a special manner, to suitable acknowledgments of all the effects of his goodness to us; a suitable desire of his favour, proceeding from a just esteem of his excellencies, together with suitable desire of his approbation; of conformity to him in his moral excellencies, and of the enjoyment of him as our chief good; and a due concern for, and complacency in, his declarative glory. It deserves particular consideration, that, according to the scripture account

of divine love, a prevalent inclination to universal conformity and obedience to him, is so important an ingredient of it, that all other holy affections, which may be distinguished from that inclination, must conspire to strengthen it. But it is no less evident, that this inclination to obedience to God, must proceed from a due esteem of his excellencies, gratitude for his goodness, and desire of his approbation, and the enjoyment of him.

It is not needful to insist much on particular proofs of these things. They are evident from the whole strain of scripture doctrine on this important subject. As the whole of religion and of scripture instruction, is ofttimes comprehended under the knowledge of God, all the parts of divine knowledge are designed to produce and excite divine love. All the scripture instructions which treat at large of God's various perfections; of the manifold displays of them in his several works, in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; of the various relations we stand in to him, and our absolute dependence on him; of the happiness to be had in drawing near to him with our whole hearts, and of the misery of departing from him; the necessity of glorifying him as God, and of being thankful to him; of giving him the glory due to his name, of fixing our desires on him above all things in heaven and earth, of glorifying him in all things, and of praising him, because his name alone is excellent; all these, and the like scripture instructions, contain evident proofs of those ingredients of divine love, which have been already mentioned.

It is no less evident, that love to God with our whole heart, must not only exclude all affections that are more directly contrary to it, but also that it must so moderate all our affections which are different from it, that they shall become duly subordinate and subservient to it. It is necessary that the tenor of our thoughts and actions, be suited to that just and noble affection; that it have the sovereignty in our hearts, and that it be the governing principle of our lives. To honour and obey God must be purposed by us, not merely as

a means of some other end, which would imply that there is something else which our hearts are more intent upon, but as itself our highest end. The difference between loving or desiring an object merely as a means of something else, and desiring it as an end, or, for itself, is a very considerable difference. What we love or desire only as a means, is what would be the object of our indifference, or perhaps of our aversion, were it not for its connexion with some other thing.—It is evident, that if we love God with all our heart, we must love him as our chief good and chief end. Whereas, mens' hearts may sometimes be warmed with fictitious affections, or affections relating to things which they do not believe; it is evident, that the holy affections included in divine love, must be founded on a well informed judgment and sincere faith, or belief of the proper motives of it. And whereas, sometimes men may feel *transient* and superficial emotions about objects, to which they have no habitual inclination or affection, it is evident that love to God with the whole heart, must be a strong habit, deeply rooted in the soul. Thus, the scripture teaches us that love must proceed from faith unfeigned, and that we must be rooted and grounded in love, 1 Tim. i. 5. Eph. iii. 17.

Though these various characters of divine love be of manifold use for explaining the true nature of it, considered more abstractly; yet, in order to a right view of divine love, as implanted in the hearts of redeemed sinners, it is necessary to consider more particularly the chief grounds and motives of it, and the impressions they must make on their hearts. A just impression of the chief motives and obligations to the love of God, is a main thing included in the nature of it. These obligations may be usefully divided into two sorts; namely, these that are known by the light of nature, and these that are peculiar to the gospel. We are under infinite obligations to love and honour God, on account of his infinite excellencies, as manifested in creation and providence; but we are also under new additional obligations on the account of God's incomprehensible mercy in our redemption. It was proved

above, that this divine mercy in our redemption from sin, is that which should habitually occupy the hearts of redeemed sinners. It is not sufficient for us to consider in general, that we should have a high esteem of God's perfections, and a grateful sense of his benefits; it is needful to consider more particularly what esteem we should have of the divine glory displayed in our salvation, and what grateful sense we ought to have of that love, whose height, and depth, are incomprehensible. It is not sufficient to consider in general, that the love of God includes transcendent desires after God; that is, after the favour, the image, and enjoyment of God. It is needful to consider in what manner we are to desire, and seek from God so inestimable blessings, of which we are so utterly unworthy.

SECTION III.

Arguments, from experience, for the necessity of Divine Grace.

IN considering the arguments from experience, for the necessity of sanctifying grace, in order to true holiness, it is necessary to join together the consideration of the following things; namely, of the nature of true holiness itself; the insufficiency of external causes to produce it: and the power of human depravity or corruption, which is so opposite to it. It is necessary to have in view the nature of true holiness itself, to prevent mistakes about the ends and effects, for which sanctifying grace is affirmed to be necessary: this being a subject in which misrepresentations are very ordinary. They who assert the necessity and efficacy of sanctifying grace, do not deny that, without such grace, men may avoid enormities or perform any external good actions: yet, sometimes men seem to charge that doctrine with such consequences. That, for which sanctifying grace is affirmed to be necessary, is the restoring of the divine image or true holiness, in the heart of a sinner. Though true holiness necessarily includes a prevalent inclination to all acts of obe-

dience in the practice, yet its nature consists chiefly in the inward rooted dispositions of the soul. This is evident, both from the scriptures which treat of the nature of holiness, and those which treat more expressly of the operations of the Holy Ghost. The great design of these operations is, according to scripture, to give sinners new hearts and right spirits; hearts of flesh, so as Christ shall dwell in their hearts by faith; hearts, in which the love of God is shed abroad, and on which the law of God is written. Newness of life and holiness, in all manner of conversation are absolutely necessary; but it is needful to remember that the chief part of the new creature is the new heart.

In considering the necessity or efficacy of sanctifying grace, in relation to good actions, it should be observed, that actions may be called good in two very different meanings; either merely in regard to the matter and the effects of them; or in regard to their inward principle and end, which is always suitable to the inward prevailing dispositions of the heart whence they proceed. In the first large meaning of the word, bad men are so far from being incapable of performing any good actions, that there is indeed no sort of good actions, whether of piety, righteousness, or mercy, which may not sometimes be performed by them; though it is of great importance, in this matter, to distinguish between particular good actions, and the habitual tenor of mens' conduct. The good actions of bad men may flow from two very different principles, that were considered in the former section. Sometimes they flow from these affections, which are evil and corrupt, either in their own nature, or on account of their excess; as many Pharisees are said to have performed acts of devotion and charity, from a principle of pride and ostentation; and Paul speaks of some people, who even preached the gospel out of envy. Sometimes the good actions of bad men flow from better principles; namely, from those common good affections, whose fault lies not in the excess, but in the defect; such as the general desire of perpetual happiness, and escaping misery, which desires, how-

ever good in themselves, may be found in hearts, void of true love to God and his law. When men void of true holiness, do good actions, in so far they do their duty: and their good actions are so far from being absolutely useless or indifferent, that they may be of very considerable advantage on many accounts.—Thus, they who are as yet void of true holiness, are very usefully employed, when they are considering their want of it, and the means of obtaining it; when they apply to God for it: and when, with the use of the means of grace, they join endeavours against new offences, that they may not provoke God to leave them wholly to themselves. If it were of no importance, as to the concerns of salvation, for people, void of holiness, to be employed in good actions; it would be of no importance to instruct them, concerning any part of religion in general; and particularly, it would be of no use to persuade them of their need of divine grace, and to excite them to seek after it. It is proper to observe these things, for preventing misrepresentations and mistakes, in a matter of such importance in practice. It should always be remembered, that a main design of insisting on the necessity of divine grace, is to excite those who are careless about so inestimable a blessing, to seek after it, by earnest supplication, and all other proper endeavours. The doctrine of grace is, according to scripture, so far from founding any just objections against such endeavours; that it gives the greatest encouragement to them. It requires men to use all means in their power; but shews that a principal mean is the acknowledgment of that superior power, that can effectually bear down all opposition.

What has been said concerning good actions, in the large meaning above explained, is not only applicable to external performances; but also to inward acts of the mind, such as secret meditation and reasoning on the most useful subjects, and mental prayer performed by persons, void of love to God and his laws. Mens' sufficiency to perform such good actions, is no proof of their sufficiency of themselves, for attaining to the

divine image without divine grace. However the name of good actions be given, in a large sense, to actions performed without good principles; yet this is evidently a vicious defect, that implies a very essential disconformity, to the law of God, and the dictates of a well-informed conscience. The most evident principles, concerning moral good and evil, shew that it is our duty, not only to do good actions; but also to have prevalent good dispositions: and to be habitually under the influence of them: and consequently to do good things from right principles, and from right ends.

It is not needful to enlarge here on the scripture account of the nature and characters of true holiness.—The account given of this matter before, shews that when a sinner returns to God with his whole heart, the change wrought on the inward rooted dispositions of his soul is a very great change; and consequently must be the effect of a proportionably great power and efficacy. This alone shews that it is not so easy to disprove the necessity of divine grace, as some people seem to image. It appears, from what was said above, that it is not sufficient for that end, to disprove the necessity of sanctifying grace, in order to various good actions, or such common good affections as were formerly described. In order to disprove the necessity of the grace of God, it is needful to prove, that it is not necessary to the love of God with the whole heart, soul and strength. That it is not necessary to such divine love as shall render all the other affections of the heart duly subordinate and subservient to it, as being the governing principle of mens' hearts and lives, habitually disposing them to the glorifying and enjoying of God as their chief end, and chief good. It is proper to reflect, that the affections included in divine love, are very different from all ineffectual, fictitious, or mere transient emotions in devout exercises: that these holy affections must be transcendant, supreme, immediate, that is to say, directing mens' hearts aright, as to their chief end, deeply rooted in the soul, founded on a real belief of

divine truths, habitually resisting and overpowering opposite depravity, and habitually determining men to all the parts of universal holiness. These things are of such importance, and there is so great a disparity between them and all other good affections in mens' hearts, or good actions in the practice; that the sufficiency of natural powers, or any natural causes to produce the one, is no proof of their sufficiency in order to the other.

So far as any regard is due to the most credible human testimony, it is certain, that the arguments from experience, for the necessity of divine grace, have a considerable influence on the best defenders of that doctrine; that is to say, on those who are most careful to regulate their practice by it. Such have always owned that their attachment to that doctrine, is very much owing to an inward conviction of their own unjustifiable weakness, as to the chief parts of true holiness; and that the scripture account of holiness or of the divine law contributes very much to that inward conviction. It is unquestionable, on the other hand, that many people's different sentiments, about the necessity of divine grace, flow from diversity of sentiments about the nature of holiness. But whatever differences there may be about that important point, there are some remarkable truths, about which, all should be agreed who place holiness chiefly in the inward rooted dispositions of the soul. Experience shews that such inward dispositions are not changed, by single acts, or even several repeated acts of the will, designed for that purpose. It is a great effort that is requisite to make any considerable alteration in the prevalent temper of the mind. Several such alterations are owing to the inward conflicts of interfering passions, in which ofttimes a new particular corrupt affection gets the better of others that clash with it, and becomes predominant in the heart. But though several changes of a better sort, and better tendency, may result from the common good affections formerly described, particularly from a general concern about eternity exerting itself with more than ordinary vigour; yet there is so

great a disparity between sanctification, and all other changes in the heart of man, that there is no just arguing from the one to the other, as to the causes sufficient to account for them.

The things that have been adduced concerning the nature of true holiness, have a tendency to direct us to the true source of it. But these things have not their full force, unless they are considered jointly with various proofs, from experience, of the inefficacy of natural causes to produce holiness, and of the power of that depravity in man's heart which is so opposite to it. While men disclaim dependence on God's grace in order to his image, all the natural courses or means, to which they can ascribe so great an effect or which they can trust to for it, may be usefully divided into these two sorts; First, external causes or means; such as the intrinsic force of proper motives to holiness, the most advantageous proposal of them, and such circumstances, as have the greatest tendency to make proper persuasives effectual and successful. Secondly, internal means; such as attentive consideration of the best persuasives, reasonings upon them, together with good purposes and resolutions founded on these things. All these means of holiness may be considered as so many natural causes which have a good tendency towards it; and which would indeed determine men to a compliance with the divine will, were it not for an inward depravity or perverseness, which mars and defeats the good tendency of the most promising means. Though the names of perverseness and depravity are applied by some people only to higher degrees of viciousness, in temper and practice which distinguish some sinners from others; yet in the strictest propriety of speech, these names are very applicable to all those evils in the hearts of men, which hinder sincere hearty compliance with the will of God.

It is a comprehensive argument for the necessity of divine grace, that human depravity is found, on experience, to be proof against the most powerful persuasives, and all the natural causes or means just now mentioned, even when conspiring together in the most

promising manner. The power of depravity is found too strong for the most powerful motives, proposed in the most advantageous manner, in the most favourable circumstances: and that not only in the case of thoughtlessness and inconsiderateness; but even where the mind applies to these things with some considerable measure of attention, and is brought the length of good purposes and resolutions.

It is of importance to explain these things somewhat more particularly. But it is needful first to obviate the main objection against the subserviency of such considerations to the purpose in view. The main objection of this kind is; that whatever be said of the inefficacy of all the means of holiness, to determine a man to a hearty compliance with the will of God; yet a man himself may have sufficient power to determine himself to such a compliance, by virtue of the natural liberty and freedom of his will: that there is a difference between the power or efficacy of means, which may be insufficient to overcome depravity, and the intrinsic power of the soul itself, as an intelligent free agent: that as men have a power, by virtue of the freedom of the will, to resist the divine call, however strongly enforced, of which power they give too many proofs, so they have also a power of complying with it with their whole heart.

In considering this and the like objections, we may safely abstract from philosophical speculations about free will. The most important truths, on this subject, may be cleared by removing the ambiguity of words. Man's will may be said to be free in very different meanings. It is owned that, in actions that are morally good or evil, men must be free from force, or compulsion and necessity. But it does not follow that they must be free from strong depravity. In order to render mens' bad actions blameable, it is not needful that their bad inclinations or dispositions be weak and inconsiderable. But of this more afterwards.

When we speak of mens' power or willingness to turn holy; there are various ambiguities in such expressions which it is of importance to remove. Pow-

er ordinarily denotes the connexion of a thing with our will. But both the acts of the will, and their connexion with the effects intended by them, are things which admit of very great diversity. There are some effects which may be said to be more immediately in our power; because they are produced by single acts of the will: such as various motions of the body and thoughts of the mind. There are other things which are said to be in our power; because though they cannot be produced by single acts of the will, yet they are the natural effects of repeated endeavours, which require various acts of the will determining us to them. It is thus, for instance, that ignorant men have a power of acquiring sciences: and our power in reference to such effects is, properly enough, called a remote power. It is evident, that remote power admits of very different degrees according both to the number and the nature of the endeavours which are requisite in order to the effect intended: and of the difficulties or hinderances which must be surmounted. The more numerous and powerful these necessary endeavours and opposite hinderances are, the less is the effect intended in our power: and when these things are exceeding considerable, an effect is said, in a moral sense, to be out of our power; though it be not absolutely impossible for us to reach it.

They who own that holiness consists chiefly in the rooted dispositions of the soul, must own that, if sinners have a sufficient power of producing in themselves that effect, without divine grace; it is a remote power; and that it is not one or a few single acts of the will that are sufficient to effectuate so important a change. They must own that it must be the result of multiplied good endeavours, of many repeated good acts of the will, repeated desires after holiness, frequent consideration of the motives to it; joined with careful avoiding of the hinderances of it, and careful controuling of the corrupt passions or affections that are opposite to it. There are some evident deductions from this observation, which are of considerable importance in the present inquiry.

It is evident that such a *course or train of good endeavours*, as was just now hinted at, requires a good deal of steadiness in the pursuit of holiness, and a considerable degree of strong and durable willingness, or inclination towards it. Hence it follows, that in order to disprove the necessity of divine grace, it is not sufficient, to prove a connexion between such a course of good endeavours and holiness itself. It is necessary to prove also that there is no need of divine grace in order to such strong and steady inclinations towards holiness as such a course of good endeavours necessarily presupposes. It is vain to allege that if men were as willing, and as strongly inclined as they ought to be, to comply with the will of God with their whole heart, they would not resist it. Where there is a duly qualified willingness and inclination towards holiness, true holiness itself is already begun. A main thing in which it consists, is the rectitude or right disposition of the will or heart: and accordingly the scriptures formerly adduced, concerning the efficacy of grace, direct us to apply for it, in order to make us duly willing; to work in us to will as well as to do; and to incline our hearts to God's statutes.

To illustrate this matter farther, it is proper to consider the diversity that may be found in acts of the will or desires and purposes after holiness. Desires after holiness may be of very different sorts, according to the different views of holiness included in them, the different rooted affections in the heart whence such particular desires may proceed, and according to the different degrees of strength, extent and permanency, in these desires themselves. Sometimes men may think they desire true holiness, while they entertain very false, or very partial and defective notions of it, sometimes men may have only a general confused notion of it, and only desire it, in a very general way, as what they apprehend to be a mean of happiness; while at the same time holiness itself, in the true notion of it, is the object of a prevalent rooted aversion in their hearts. It is evident that men may desire holiness only as a mean of happiness, and not as a part

of it, and as a thing highly desirable in itself. And, as was observed before, what is only as a mean, may be the object not of indifference but even of aversion, though some way desired on the account of its connexion with some other thing. While mens' hearts are void of true holiness, their desires after it proceed from some other principle that is different from the love of God, and is consistent with a secret disaffection and alienation of heart from God and his laws. Sometimes mens' desires after holiness are so feeble, that, as happens often in other cases, there may be a superior opposite inclination exerting its influence in the heart at the same time. This may be illustrated by considering what happens in the conflict of inclinations as to external actions, though these things be different from desires after holiness. Thus it is evident that Pilate had a real inclination to have set Christ at liberty, but his inclination to gratify his enemies was more powerful, and carried it. It is proper to observe farther, that even where mens' good desires may appear in the mean time to have some sort of vigour, they may be so transient and short-lived as to have no durable effect: ofttenimes very promising good impressions are extinguished by the first remarkable temptation that occurs.

They who deny our need of divine grace in order to true holiness, must own that it is not every sort of good desires and endeavours, that have a sufficient efficacy to produce it. They must own that our desires after holiness, ought not to be such partial, blind, weak or transient desires as these above hinted at; but that they should be endowed with a considerable measure of the contrary good qualities; that is, with a considerable measure of vigour and steadiness, and regulated by true and just apprehensions of the nature of holiness, and of the evils of our own hearts and lives that are opposite to it.

These things are of manifold use for illustrating the arguments from experience, for the necessity of divine grace; and for vindicating them from general objections relating to free will. Though a sinner be a free

agent, there is no proof that he is free from powerful depravity in the rooted dispositions of his heart or will itself. If sinners have a sufficient power to attain to God's image without his grace; it must be by such a course of good endeavours as was above described; which necessarily suppose a considerable degree of strength, vigour and steadiness in mens' inclinations towards it. As all the corrupt and inordinate affections of the heart, and all the branches of depravity, are active and operative principles; they have, all of them, a strong tendency to oppose and weaken good inclinations, to defeat good endeavours, and to marr due steadiness and vigour in them. They are also of such a nature, as to make almost all sorts of external objects and circumstances temptations to evil of one sort or other. The apostle observes that sin takes occasion to fortify itself even from the good and holy law of God, the scope and tendency of which is to oppose and hinder it, Rom. vii.

When a sinner has some concern about salvation and holiness, before he disclaim all hope and confidence, but what he has in himself; he ought to compare the grounds of his hope, with the grounds of his fear and self-diffidence. The grounds of self-diffidence are proportionable to the power and efficacy of depravity.—And if a sinner, in comparing his good desires and purposes with the opposite evils in his heart, has good cause to fear, that if left to himself, the latter will be too strong for the former: if he has good cause to apprehend effectual hinderances of holiness from himself, that is, from the corrupt disposition of his own heart: his need of divine grace is as real as though the hinderances to be surmounted were not from himself but from some other cause. Holiness indeed is not a thing of such a nature, that though men had such inclinations to it as they ought to have that is so strong, so vigorous and steady, it would still be out of their power. But prevalent depravity and corruption are in their nature contrary to good inclinations so qualified; and in their habitual influence and acting, powerful hinderances of weaker good desires and purposes which have a tendency to them.

There are two general plain principles concerning the power of human depravity, which it is needful frequently to reflect upon, in treating this subject. The first is, that the more powerful this depravity is found to be, the greater and more evident is our need of divine grace to subdue it. The second is, that it is reasonable to judge of the power of this depravity by the power of the motives to holiness which it resists; and the greatness of the above-mentioned advantages, which are so subservient to the intrinsic force of motives.—Whereas the proofs of the power of depravity, were formerly hinted at in general; it is needful, after what has been said, to consider them more particularly. And if the consideration of them make it appear, that sinners are far from having good ground to trust in their own seemingly good desires and purposes, so as to renounce all dependence on the grace of God; if it appear that, instead of this, they have the greatest ground to avoid and disclaim such self-confidence: this will be a considerable confirmation from experience, of the doctrine of grace; and such a confirmation as directs to a right improvement of it.

The first proof of the power of human depravity, above hinted at, was its powerful and effectual resistance to the most powerful motives. This seems to be a main thing intended by the scripture expressions concerning the impenitent heart, as a hard heart, a heart of stone or of adamant. There cannot be fitter or more significant words, to express insensibility of infinite obligations. The obligations which reasonable creatures are under to love God and holiness are a very important subject of meditation; and the subject is inexhaustible; but it is not needful to enlarge much upon it here; a general view of it being sufficient to the present purpose.

All the perfections of God; all the manifestations of them in the works of creation, providence, and salvation; our absolute dependence on God as the God in whom we live, move, and have our being: all the endearing relations he stands in to us as our creator, the father of our spirits, our preserver, our sovereign

Lord, our Saviour ; all the effects and excellencies of his goodness which is so free, undeserved, and disinterested ; so constant, so extensive and abundant ; in a special manner, the mysterious incomprehensible mercy and love of God in redemption on the one hand, and the eternal rewards and punishments on the other hand, which are so clearly proposed to the consideration of sinners in the holy scriptures ; these are all designed, and have of themselves a powerful tendency to procure compliance with the will of God, and to persuade sinners to return to him with their whole hearts. These obligations and motives are of various sorts, and have a manifest tendency to work on all the inward principles and springs of action. But in order to a more clear view of their intrinsic power and force, were they not defeated by an obstinacy, superior to the power of motives and persuasion, it is fit to consider briefly the following properties of them.

It is evident, that the motives to love God and holiness, are in themselves incomparably greater than any motives to love any other object whatever. Indeed, all the just grounds of love to other objects, are just grounds of love to God, because he is the source of all that is amiable and desirable in his creatures.—The motives to love God and holiness, are infinitely stronger, than all motives and inducements whatever to the contrary. Any valuable present enjoyments, by which men are induced to wickedness, are not peculiar to it ; but may be had ordinarily much better in the ways of holiness ; and any troubles that attend a life of true holiness, may be as incident also to those who neglect it, without any solid consolation to mitigate them ; besides, the many intrinsic evils that make prevalent depravity so great a punishment to itself.—As God's benefits, which are so strong motives to love him and his laws, are innumerable ; so they are always multiplying. They are new every morning, Lam. iii. Our obligations to love and honour God, are, in a manner, always observant to our view, and continually before our eyes ; which is a farther proof of the power of that obstinate depravity and insensibility,

which defeats their good influence. Others who deserve our love and affectionate esteem, may be at a great distance; they may be persons with whom we have nothing to do, or with whom we have no intercourse; they may be worthy of our love and esteem, but there may be no valuable consideration, why our affections or our thoughts should be occupied about them; or even though they be our benefactors, all our obligations to them may be of an old date It is the very reverse of all this in the case in view. God is not far from any of us, he fills heaven and earth, and is every where present; he is a God with whom we have to do; he is continually loading us with benefits, and, which is itself an inestimable benefit, he is always manifesting his glory to us, having blessed us with faculties capable of contemplating it. The heavens are always declaring his glory, and the firmament his handy work; day unto day uttering speech, and night unto night teaching knowledge. All the divine works are continually proclaiming the divine perfections. The earth is full of his riches. All his works praise him and excite us to bless him; to love, to honour, and obey him. All the good in the world should convince us how good it is to draw near to God; and all the evil in the world, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from him, Psal. lxxiii. Jer. ii.

These things may give us some view of the greatness of the motives to divine love, and universal holiness; and, consequently, of the great power of that inward depravity that resists them, and hinders the sinner's heart from yielding to them. They prove a strong and obstinate insensibility, with respect to infinite obligations, in point of justice and gratitude, to love God with the whole heart. They prove a powerful and inexcusable stupidity, about the chief ingredients of true felicity, in the favour and enjoyment of God, which are incomparably more desirable, than the things to which the impenitent heart gives the preference. When things that are in themselves the most absolutely necessary, infinitely desirable and glorious, are either the objects of the heart's indifference, or

only of weak, confused, and transient desires; while other things, which bear no proportion to them, and which are comparatively less than nothing and vanity, inflame the heart with ardent desires; and are the objects of its most vigorous and its most steady affections; this proves such an enormous disproportion between mens' affections, and the worth of their objects, and so powerful a perverseness of disposition, as is a very proper object of amazement as well as the deepest regret.

This method of proving the power of human depravity, from the power of the motives to holiness which it resists, is not only founded on scripture, but agreeable to the plainest principles of reason. Thus, in scripture, the Lord takes heaven and earth to witness against sinners; especially, those whom he had favoured with distinguishing privileges, that he had nourished and brought them up, though they rebelled against him: it is added, *the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* These, and the like scripture passages, charge the disaffection of the impenitent, and their alienation from God and his law, with a stupidity which is in some respect worse than brutish. The ordinary way of reasoning, in other cases, about the power of any natural cause, is by considering the power or force of any opposite cause, which it is able to resist and defeat. It is thus men reason in natural philosophy, on speculative subjects. In moral subjects we judge of the strength of mens' inclinations to any thing, by considering the motives and inducements to the contrary, which are found insufficient to overpower them. If a man reject the most advantageous proposal in the world, as to his temporal concerns; the more advantageous the proposal is, the greater is the man's inward aversion, and the unsuitableness of the proposal to his prevalent inclinations, which is discovered by his refusal. If innumerable good offices do not kindle grateful sentiments; the greater these good offices are, the stronger is that insensibility, or alienation of heart, which such ingratitude discovers. If a

man refuse to part with some trifles, notwithstanding great danger in retaining them, and great advantages that are inconsistent with them; the greater these dangers and advantages are, the stronger is the attachment to these trifles, to which so valuable interests are sacrificed. The application of these things to the subject of our present inquiry is obvious. They shew what we ought to think of that insensibility, of God's infinite excellencies and benefits; that indifference about the highest blessedness in the enjoyment of him, and that obstinate propensity to vanity, which hinders sincere compliance with the proposals of the grace of God in the gospel.

As the power of depravity appears in its resisting the most powerful motives, it is a farther proof of its power that it resists them, when proposed in the most advantageous manner. The defects which may frequently attend the proposal of the motives to holiness, are not sufficient to account for their inefficacy and want of success. Experience proves, that they are ineffectual, when proposed not only by men of ordinary endowments: but even by men of the greatest abilities, and of the greatest dexterity in persuasion. The hardness of the impenitent heart, resisted the strongest motives to repentance and holiness, when proposed by inspired men, such as prophets and apostles, and by the Redeemer himself, who spake as never man spake. As to the external circumstances of proposing instructions and persuasives, nothing could appear more proper to beget deep and lasting impressions, of the necessity of conformity to the divine law, than the awful manner in which it was delivered at Mount Sinai, to the ancient Israelites. Yet the history of that people shews how far it was from having a due effect on them.

It is a farther proof of the power of that depravity which we are considering, that it makes men resist the strongest motives and persuasives, even when they are in such circumstances, as seem most favourable to the good influence of these things, and most subservient to their good tendency. There are indeed no exter-

nal circumstances, which inward perverseness does not misimprove to bad purposes. Prosperous circumstances seem fittest to work on mens' ingenuity; but it is generally owned, that they are found less favourable to the interests of piety and holiness, than affliction. It is a proof of great perverseness, that men should be most apt to forget God, when his providence is most kind and bountiful to them. Afflictions seem to be, in their native tendency, preservatives against inconsiderateness and thoughtlessness. But experience shews how many people are less or more like Ahaz, who in his affliction, transgressed more and more. Where affliction produces good impressions and good purposes; oftentimes these things do not survive the distress or danger that occasioned them: and oftentimes where they are somewhat more durable, they issue only in a very partial reformation, or gradually vanish and disappear. As depravity abuses prosperity into an occasion of inconsiderateness, it abuses affliction into an occasion of murmuring. It is remarkable, that many people seem scarcely to acknowledge any providence in their prosperity, in order to thankfulness; and seem to acknowledge a providence in their distresses, only to murmur against it. Both they, whose circumstances make them taste more of outward prosperity than others; and they, who are more frequently exposed to greater dangers than others, are far from being found the most susceptible of good impressions. There is that in the perverseness of the impenitent heart, that makes it the more insensible, to things of the best tendency, in proportion as they become familiar to it.

In the next place, it is a very strong proof of the power of depravity, that it resists the strongest motives, even when the mind applies to them with a considerable measure of attention. It is indeed a weak objection, against the arguments already adduced, that the inefficacy of motives, and the advantages subservient to them, is owing to inconsiderateness about them, or important defects in the manner of considering them. Obstinate inconsiderateness about infinite obligations, and certainly such are our obligations to

love God and his laws, is itself a very inexcuseable perverseness. All the motives to holiness, are motives to serious attention and consideration. Strong alienation of heart is at the bottom of carelessness, and inattention to things of infinite importance.

But besides all this, experience shews that the strongest motives to holiness, are frequently found ineffectual, even when considered with a good deal of attention, and concern. This is, in a special manner, very manifest as to that consideration and concern, which is the effect of distress or danger. Ofttimes these things have a considerable effect on mens' minds for a time, producing bitter remorse for past offences, joined with many good purposes and resolutions. But, as was observed above, these things may be found, where there is no sincere returning to God with the whole heart. It is in vain to object, that where the motives to holiness are not effectual, though they be considered with attention, there are other important defects in the manner of considering them; and that they are not attended to with a right disposition of soul. Though this be a truth, it is no argument against the power of human depravity, but rather a confirmation of it. The motives to holiness are not only motives to good actions, but to a right disposition of heart. Since attention to motives is not sufficient to rectify the heart, it is an argument of our need of the grace of God for that end.

These things are far from being just objections against the necessity or usefulness of the attentive consideration of motives. As it is in the use of means that we are to seek after divine grace, so a chief mean of holiness, is due attention to motives to it.—Not only is such attention a chief mean of holiness, but a prevalent propensity to it is a chief part of holiness. The suitable exercise of love to God, and hatred of sin, necessarily implies the actual contemplation of the motives to these holy affections. But though the consideration of motives be so very useful and necessary; there is a very great difference between that consideration of them, which is joined with self-confi-

dence, and a disclaiming of dependence on divine grace, and that which is undertaken with humble dependence and earnest application for it. It is this last sort of attention to motives, that is the main scope of the proofs of their insufficiency, of themselves, for the great end proposed by them.

It may not be amiss to observe, that the wickedness of hypocrites, and the many infirmities of the sincerely religious, which are frequently made objections against religion, are indeed strong confirmations of some of the chief doctrines of it; they shew the power of human corruption; they shew that there is not such efficacy as some imagine, in the mere consideration of motives. It is certain, that not only the sincerely pious, but also hypocrites, are ofttimes employed that way. It is remarkable, that there are many severe invectives, especially in the writings of those who oppose revealed religion, which suppose those to be the worst of men in the world, who are most employed in considering the motives to goodness and holiness: namely, the men whose office it is to inculcate these things on others. In the mean time, there is no ground to look on these men as of a different make from the rest of the world. And though there be a good deal of injustice and partiality in such invectives; yet, is there so much truth in them, as shews, that the efficacy of motives and consideration, is not so great as is pretended; and that it is mens' wisdom, in the diligent consideration of motives, to depend on a superior efficacy, that can make them have a due effcet on the heart, and can triumph over all opposition.

Those writers who appear biassed against the doctrine of divine grace, sometimes lay down such grounds of self-diffidence, as are very favourable to it, and evidently tend to prove the necessity of it. They own sometimes, in very strong terms, the necessity of distrusting the most promising good impressions.— There is a remarkable passage to this purpose, in the writings of a celebrated modern author, well versed in the moral writings of the ancients. His words are, "But alas! the misfortune of youth, and not of youth

merely, but of human nature, is such, that it is a thousand times easier to frame the highest ideas of virtue and goodness, than to practise the least part. And perhaps this is one of the chief reasons why virtue is so ill practised; because, the impressions which seem so strong at first, are too far relied on. We are apt to think, that what appears so fair, and strikes us so forcibly, at the first view, will surely hold with us. We launch forth into speculation, and after a time, when we look back, and see how slowly practice comes up to it; we are the sooner led to despondency, the higher we had carried our views before." Here it is owned, that the motives to goodness may have considerable effects on mens' minds, without rectifying the prevalent dispositions of their hearts: and that, without having that effect, they may strike very forcibly, and make impressions which seem at first very strong. Though such impressions of goodness as he describes, are not the easiest things in the world, he affirms that it is a thousand times more difficult to practise the least part. It is evident, that a culpable weakness or perverseness, which defeats so promising impressions, and ideas of goodness which strike so very forcibly, affords strong arguments against that self-confidence, that excludes dependence on divine grace. The author affirms, that so bad success in the pursuit of goodness, tends to despondency. It must, of course, tend to make men quit the pursuit. This shews how desirable, yea, how needful it is, to have so powerful a preservative against despair of success, as the prospect of these powerful aids, that are sufficient for surmounting all difficulties. It may perhaps be objected, that the passage just now cited, treats only of the highest degrees of goodness. But though the beginning of the passage speaks of the highest ideas of goodness, what follows about the inefficacy of the most promising impressions, seems plainly to be affirmed of the practice of goodness in general.

SECTION IV.

Of divine supernatural operations, and mistakes concerning them.

THEY who duly consider the danger of extremes, especially in the concerns of religion, must observe, that there are two extremes relating to the efficacy of second causes, which have a very bad influence on mens' minds, in inquiries of the greatest importance. The one is, an unreasonable propensity to imagine divine interposition in things, that are really the effects of the course of nature, acting in a constant dependence on the Deity. The other is, an excessive fondness for accounting for every thing, by the natural efficacy of second causes, without admitting any immediate divine interposition whatever. The first of these extremes, is ofttimes the occasion of various sorts of superstition and enthusiasm: and the other of more direct impiety.

Some speculative men, who set no bounds to the love of accounting for every thing, are strongly biassed against the doctrine of grace, as clashing with their favourite prejudices. They are disgusted at a doctrine which ascribes to the first Cause, a manner of operation, in producing holiness and happiness, so unsuitable, as they imagine, to his manner of operation in his other works; and to the order that obtains both in the material and intellectual world. They seem to imagine, that in all the other divine works, every thing, without exception, happens merely, according to a natural course, or according to the efficacy of second causes, operating suitably to general established laws, while the Deity only preserves these laws, and the creatures governed by them; the doctrine of grace, appears to those men disagreeable to reason, as interfering with the uniformity of the divine works. And whereas, the efficacy of grace, is sometimes termed supernatural; because, it exceeds the natural energy of second causes; sometimes people annex to that

word, several wrong notions, which strengthen their prejudices against the thing intended by it. They seem to imagine, that supernatural operation, denotes such effects, and such a manner of working, as is unsuitable to the frame of human nature; and reverses the established order of nature, as to the connexion between causes and effects. It is proper, therefore, to make some remarks on supernatural operation, or immediate divine interposition in general, which will illustrate several important properties of the operations of grace; and shew that the prejudices in view are ill founded.

It is of importance to observe, that supernatural operation does not imply a reversing of any of the established laws of nature. When people imagine all supernatural operation, to be unsuitable to the perfection of the divine works, they seem to confound two things that are very different; namely, the reversing the order of the laws of nature, and changing the state or disposition of natural objects. The state or disposition of natural objects, may be changed by the first Cause, without any greater alteration of the laws of nature, than when such changes are produced in any object, by external second causes, and particularly by free agents. Thus, for instance, when men turn a river into a new channel, though they are said to change its natural course, the motion of that power, after that change, is really as natural, or as suitable to the laws of nature as before, though the change be an effect, which there was nothing in the nature of the river itself sufficient to produce. In like manner, it is evident, that the first Cause can easily work good and useful alterations in the state or disposition of various sorts of creatures, without any alteration of the laws of nature, or even any total alteration on the nature or disposition of these creatures themselves. Thus, even in the hearts void of holiness, the Deity can easily restrain wickedness, by good impressions, contradicting particular corrupt passions; or turning some hurtful passions, such as anger and wrath into kindness and good will, Gen. xxxii. In such a case, though

these good impressions would not have happened without external interposition: yet, they may operate afterwards in a natural way, in producing considerable good effects, such as the fruits of kind affection and good will, instead of those of anger or hatred.

These things shew that supernatural operations in general, and consequently the operations of grace, do not imply a reversing of the laws of nature. This will be more evident, in considering afterwards the scripture account of the manner of these operations, and of the means that are subservient to them. But it may be proper first to take a view of these effects, that are the main design of them. And here it may not be amiss to observe, what is the import of the word *natural*, according to the best meaning of it, when it is opposed to what is unnatural; and is distinguished from the corruption of nature. According to this use of the word, it is evident that those things are said to be most natural, which are most suitable to the nature of things, and particularly to the plain scope or end of the structure of our own nature, or most subservient to the highest perfection of which it is capable. Taking words in this sense, that corruption, which divine grace opposes, and is designed to root out, is the most unnatural thing in the world. It is proper to observe this, because, though the use of words be arbitrary, yet, the ambiguity of expressions concerning what is natural, or according to nature, sometimes occasions hurtful misconstructions, and is made a handle to bad purposes.

If the things which distinguish our nature from inferior natures, should be considered as the principal things in our structure and frame; then it is certain that the main things in our own nature, as well as every part of the nature of things about us, point out that to be our chief end and highest perfection, which the scripture represents to us as such. This is evident from the bright display, that every thing in nature gives us of the glory and goodness of its author, the distinguishing capacity which the rational soul has of knowing, loving, and enjoying him, together with its

incapacity of happiness in any thing else; the native tendency of all the divine works and benefits, to excite due acknowledgments of the all-powerful and wise Creator, and the infinitely kind Benefactor, and that conscience which teaches us to consider him as the moral Governor of the world, and remonstrates to us the infinite obligations we are under in point of justice, gratitude, and interest to adhere to him as the source of all good, on whom we have so absolute a dependence. These things, if duly considered, shew that there is no disposition or conduct, truly suitable to the nature of things, but that for which the scripture directs us to apply for the sanctifying grace of God.

On the other hand, there cannot be a more unnatural confusion and disproportion in the world, than what takes place in the prevalent affections of intelligent creatures, when instead of loving God above all things, they give the preference to infinitely inferior objects. There cannot be a more unnatural abuse of God's creatures, than to make those effects of his goodness, whose native tendency is to make us love and honour him, occasions of alienation from him, and rebellion against him. There cannot be a more unnatural stupidity, than that which makes the hearts of sinners so insensible of all the motives to love God: when infinite excellency, in a special manner infinite goodness and all-sufficiency, do not excite the highest esteem, gratitude, and desire. Such perverseness of heart, has in it the greatest incongruity and contrariety in the world, to the most important natural differences and relations of things; namely, the differences between God himself and his creatures, the relations they stand in to him, and the relations we stand in to him ourselves, as our Creator, Preserver, our chief, and in a manner our only Benefactor (other causes of good being but instruments of good in his hands) the Father of spirits and Fountain of life, in whom we live, move, and have our being.

These things shew that that depravity which is opposite to true holiness, is a disposition which has in it

the greatest unsuitableness to the nature and natural relations of things; and is so contrary to the true perfection of our nature, that it has a direct tendency to the destruction of it. Whereas, some people appear prejudiced against supernatural operations of grace, as interfering with the order of nature; it should be considered, that the design of such operations is to remove the most unnatural disorder in the world. They rescue our faculties from the most unnatural abuse and perversion of them. By subduing depravity, they restore the primitive and original rectitude of our nature. They re-establish a blessed order and harmony in the inward principles of action, namely, the inward inclinations and affections of the heart. They render them suitable to the nature of things, proportioned in the main to the worth of their objects, (the heart being chiefly attached to the chief good) and subservient to the true perfection of our nature, and the end of our being.

It may be said, in a very proper sense, that it is the supernatural efficacy of grace, that re-establishes and promotes the most important efficacy of natural causes. The most important and most excellent use of natural causes, is their subserviency to the knowledge and love of God in the hearts of rational creatures. It is prevalent depravity and hardness of heart that hinders their efficacy that way. According to the common and natural way of speaking on moral subjects, the motives to love and obey God, are called just causes of love and obedience: and transgressions of God's righteous laws are said to be without cause and unaccountable. Such expressions, indeed, must be understood in a limited and moral sense; there being that in the heart of a sinner which can account for his transgressions, and is the natural cause of them. But such natural ways of speaking on this subject, are a confirmation of what was observed above, that that depravity which is opposite to true holiness, is, in the sense formerly explained, the most unnatural thing in the world: and that divine grace in subduing it, removes the main hinderance of the chief use and effica-

cy of natural causes, which is their efficacy on the minds and hearts of reasonable creatures, directing them to the first Cause, the source of all good. But this will be still more evident, if we consider, not only the effects of divine grace, but also the scripture account of the manner in which it produces them.

It is evident from scripture, that the operations of grace are suited to the frame of our natures, and to these laws of nature, which relate to the fittest means of producing the best effects on the minds and hearts of reasonable creatures. The proper means or causes of producing belief or persuasion with suitable affections, are such things as these ; light or evidence ; arguments and motives ; serious proposal of them ; mature consideration ; earnest exhortation ; and entreaty ; warnings of danger and the like. As several of these things were considered in the former section, it was observed, that though our need of divine grace supposes the insufficiency of these means in themselves ; yet, the efficacy of grace does not take away the usefulness and necessity of them. It is evident from scripture, that these, and the like means, are ordinarily made use of in subserviency to the operations of grace, both in the first production of its blessed effects, and in advancing them towards perfection.

According to scripture, as divine grace excites men to good actions, by producing good affections ; so it produces good affections and inclinations in their hearts, by informing their judgments, and enlightening their minds. As divine love must be founded on the belief of divine truths, that is, on the belief of the most just motives of love in the world ; so faith, working by love, is represented as the whole of true religion. So much the more unnatural is some peoples way of reasoning, in opposing the importance of faith on pretence of magnifying the importance of good inclinations.— As God affords abundant evidence for the divine origin of what he reveals, and proposes the most powerful motives to what he requires ; so the manner, in which these things are enforced in scripture, is evidently the fittest in the world to command attention, and to make

deep impression. He condescends to reason with us, to expostulate with us, to appeal to ourselves, that we have no just cause for our obstinacy, to anticipate our objections against trusting in him, and obeying him, and, with the most useful and alarming warnings, to mix the most engaging invitations, drawing us with the cords of love, and the bands of a man.

The scripture teaches us also, that holy inclinations and affections are promoted and strengthened in the heart, by the same suitable means by which they were produced at first. The serious consideration of proper motives, and the frequent proposal of them in outward instructions, which is so subservient to due consideration, are of constant use. And, as it was observed before, that besides the due proposal, and consideration of motives, there are various outward circumstances, which are subservient to their good influence; so the scripture shews that the various dispensations of God's providence, are made subservient to the efficacy of his grace. Though the success of these means is not owing to themselves, since experience shews that mens' depravity is proof against them; yet, when divine grace over-powers that depravity, it re-establishes, as was observed, a little above, the good influence of means. It renders them really effectual for these good ends, to which they have an intrinsic, but not an insuperable tendency. Every thing in the order of grace, or in the new creation, is connected suitably to the frame of human nature, to the nature of good affections and inclinations, their means and effects. This is evident from the influence of just impressions of guilt and depravity, on a due esteem of redemption and grace; the connexion between different degrees of evidence, and just assent; of faith and love to the end, and proportionable love to the means; of vigorous and repeated acts, strengthening good habits, and good habits exciting to good acts. When a sinner becomes a new creature, the use of the means of spiritual life becomes, as it were, natural to him. They are as naturally the objects of his hunger and thirst; as it is natural for every living creature to use the

means of self-preservation. That which is of particular importance, in considering this subject, is the influence of a life of faith, on all the parts of holiness. A life of faith on the Son of God, is a life of habitual acknowledgment, and consideration of the strongest motives to love and obey God, as well as of the strongest ground of joy and triumph in him. It is also the appointed means of obtaining all needful supplies of sanctifying grace. Thus, the due acknowledgment of the most powerful motives to holiness, is the means of obtaining that powerful grace, which is the chief cause of it.

These things shew that the operations of grace are fitted to the frame of our nature, both as to the effects they produce, and the manner of producing them.—They are far from reversing these good and wise laws of nature, of which God himself is the Author. They promote the chief end of all these laws, and that in a manner suitable to the connexion, which these laws establish between causes and effects, or between the means of good ends, and the ends themselves. It may be said, that it is sin that has broken that connexion between natural causes and their best effects; and it is divine grace that restores it.

It may be proper for farther illustrating this matter, to consider briefly some of the chief, known ends of the uniformity of nature, or of the general laws that establish the connexion between causes and effects.—Two principal known ends of that constitution are, first that it gives a transcendent display of the wisdom of God; and then, that it directs the activity and good endeavours of creatures. The connexion between causes and effects, is, that which directs us to the means we must use, in order to the good ends we ought to pursue. There is in the operations of grace, an excellent order that answers these good purposes. There is a subordination of causes and effects, a connexion between fit means and good ends, with a mixture of uniformity and variety, that gives a bright display of supreme wisdom. And seeing the promises of divine grace are made in such a manner, as to encourage an

humble diligent dependence on God in the use of means, and to discourage the contrary, it may be said, in a sound sense, that there are laws of grace as well as of nature, calculated to regulate the endeavours of those who seek God with their whole heart, so as to direct them in the pursuit of wisdom and happiness.

Upon the whole, it is evident that divine grace does not otherwise interfere with the efficacy of natural causes, than by preventing the efficacy of the natural causes of destruction. That prevalent depraved affections are the natural causes of misery, is owned even by those who are against divine interposition to prevent it. This is carrying the love of a mere natural course of things to a very great height.

In the mean time, it is proper to observe what concessions ought to be made concerning divine immediate interposition. It should be always acknowledged that it is what the Deity is not obliged to. Several things that are objected against the reality of it, are proofs of the free undeserved condescension manifested in it.—That is the true improvement that should be made of them. If he should leave transgressors wholly to the natural consequences of their depravity, which is what the scripture expresses by God's giving men up to their own hearts' lust, Psalm xliii. or to the hardness of their hearts, he would do nothing but what is perfectly just. All the works and laws of nature contain such obligations, to love and obey the God of nature, as make disaffections and rebellion highly inexcusable and punishable. Were the Deity obliged by immediate interposition to remove depravity, it might with equal reason be affirmed that he were obliged not to punish it, and the divine law alone should have no penal sanction. The Deity can no more be obliged to bless transgressors with holiness, than with all the other ingredients of the most perfect happiness.

But though the interposition of grace is what the Governor of the world is not obliged to; yet if such blessedness is revealed and offered to us, it is evidently our greatest wisdom and interest not to neglect so great a salvation. If indeed we find in ourselves these

grounds of self-diffidence which were formerly insisted on, and if we are obliged to love holiness, and consequently the most effectual causes and means of it, the love we owe to God, to holiness, and to ourselves, should conspire to make us love and earnestly desire operations of sanctifying grace. A sinner can never excuse his opposition or neglect of Divine grace, by alleging that it is better he should want it, or run the greatest risk of wanting it, than that he should be beholden for it to the grace of God, or obtain it otherwise than by a mere natural course of things.

It is proper to observe in the next place that as the operations of divine grace, are far from reversing the order of the natural world; so there is in these operations a glorious order of a superior kind, and that they are highly subservient to that which is called by some, perhaps not improperly, the order of the moral world. As the order of the natural world consists in the connexion between efficient causes and their effects; so that of the moral world consists in the connexion between moral causes, or moral deservings on the one hand, and rewards and punishments on the other hand; and in general, between things that are the objects of God's approbation, and these effects of his favour, which are encouragements to such things. It is true indeed, that, as merit is a relative thing, no creatures, not even the most perfect, can merit at the hands of God, as one creature may merit at the hands of another. But notwithstanding of this, if the Deity vouchsafe to annex perfect happiness to perfect and steady obedience to his law, and where such obedience cannot be pretended, various gracious encouragements to humble and sincere endeavours in dependence on his blessing; it is evident that such an administration introduces into the divine works, an order and perfection of a peculiar kind, and which highly illustrates the divine moral attributes.

It is easy to prove that the order of the moral world is both different from that of the natural world, and superior to it. That it is different from it, is evident from this: that both moral good and evil, are capa-

ble of great rewards and punishments different from these that are necessarily connected with them in the nature of things; and which make them, in some measure, rewards or punishments to themselves. Holiness includes in its nature, a desire of inestimable blessings, that are not necessarily and inseparably connected with it: of which afterwards. As to moral evil, the more it is a punishment to itself, the greater reason there is, for additional penalties, in the divine government, against an evil so destructive to the subjects of it. That the moral order of the world is of supreme importance, is evident from its relation to the most important causes and effects in the universe; namely the happiness or misery of intelligent beings, and the procuring causes of them: besides that the authority or dignity of the moral law of God, has an evident connexion with his moral attributes. It is a principal excellency of the divine administration, that all the parts of it are subservient or suitable to the dignity of the divine moral law, and the regard the Deity has for it. These things cannot be said of any other laws; for instance, of these that regulate the motions of the material world.

If the order of the moral world be of supreme importance, it is certain that the operations of divine grace are, according to the scripture account of them, highly suitable and subservient to it. All the effects of divine grace are bestowed on guilty transgressors, in such a manner as is most suitable to the honour and majesty of the divine law, and justice. The sanctifying grace of the Spirit of God, is the effect and purchase of redemption by the blood of his Son, which magnifies his law to the uttermost. All the operations of God's grace, may therefore be considered as acts of distributive justice as well as of transcendent mercy. They are the rewards of the infinite merit of the Mediator, while they are acts of pure favour to transgressors.

It is not needful, in this place, to enlarge on the scripture account, of the manifold relation between redemption and sanctifying grace. If we consider

how, according to the account there given of this important matter, the blood of the Son of God is the meritorious cause of sanctifying grace; his intercession, founded on his sacrifice, the continual procuring cause of it; the gospel, which reveals it, the external means; and that faith, which includes a due acknowledgment of it, the chief inward means of it; as also how the sanctifying work of God's Spirit is a continuation of that energy which raised Christ, as the head of the new creation, from the dead; how the union between him and all who are redeemed and sanctified by him, is compared to that between the head and the members of the natural body; how, by virtue of that union, all divine grace and consolation is communicated from him to them; all these things shew that the law or covenant of grace is well ordered in all things; and that there is in this new creation, a sublime harmony, and a glorious order, transcending any other we can conceive. This is farther evident from what was hinted above, about the manner in which the promises of divine grace are proposed. It is in such a manner as contains the most powerful arguments against sloth and indifference, and the strongest motives and encouragements, to humble diligence in the use of means; while a due acknowledgment of the grace of God, and humble dependence on it by prayer and supplication, is itself, by divine appointment, a principal means of obtaining that grace, as well as an exercise which has a particular native tendency to make the heart steady and vigorous in all good endeavours.

What has been said, is of use to illustrate divine wisdom and goodness, in the supernatural operations of divine grace; and to vindicate them from the objections hinted at, in the beginning of this section.—These objections are founded partly on mistaken notions of supernatural operations, and partly on wrong suppositions, against which there are strong exceptions from natural reason, though we should abstract from revelation. Of this kind is that notion of the divine works, which supposes that it is essential to the perfection of them, that there should be no divine im-

mediate interposition, of any kind, not even for the most important purposes. We ought indeed to admire the divine wisdom and other perfections, manifested in the established laws of nature, from which so glorious an order results. But the excellency of these divine operations, which may be supposed to be merely according to these laws, and the order that results from them, receives no prejudice from a mixture of other operations of a different kind, which, as was observed, do not reverse these laws, but promote the highest ends of them. To suppose that the first Cause must produce no effects, but what second causes are sufficient to produce by the power he has given them, by general established laws of nature, is a supposition of bad influence, as to natural religion itself. It is exceeding unsuitable to the impressions we should have of the incomprehensibility of God and his works. It tends to lessen our ideas of the influence of providence; and has too much affinity to the old heathen fate. It tends to lessen moral dependence of reasonable creatures on the Deity; and to lessen our apprehension of that moral order of the world, which is of supreme importance, and to which the natural order of it is subservient. It is a notion, which, when taken in its full latitude, clashes with the known observation of the best philosophers on the laws and chief known parts of the frame of nature; namely, that though they are calculated for a very long continuance, yet not for a perpetual continuance without renewed divine interposition.

The uniformity of the course of nature has been made an objection against prayer, relating to external providences. Several such prayers seem to suppose divine interposition, restraining the depravity of wicked men, and over-ruling the efficacy of natural causes in the material world, when threatening us with outward dangers and distresses. As to divine interposition restraining wickedness, as it has been owned by people who had only the light of nature, so it is evidently suitable to the most natural notions of supreme goodness. As to the motions in the material world, when

it is supposed evident and unquestionable, that all of them, without exception, happen merely according to general laws; this seems partly owing to inadvertence. It is true, there is a visible constancy and uniformity in most of these things, particularly in the motions of the heavenly bodies, and what has a connexion with it. But it is obvious there is one part of the visible creation, on which the usefulness of the other parts of it to its inhabitants very much depends, in whose motions there is so vast a variety of changes, that no uniformity can be discerned (or pretended); nor any general laws by which they can be, for the most part, accounted for. The motions of the air, in which we breathe, are of that importance, that without them, the regular variety of seasons would be useless; and all the other provision for the life of the animal world lost. As these motions are ordinarily the means of innumerable advantages; they are capable of being the instruments of various calamities: such as famine, pestilence, and epidemic diseases, besides various particular disasters. The thing that makes them capable of answering so many different ends, is their inconstancy and variety, which no philosophy can reduce to general laws. Some indeed have supposed, that infinite wisdom may have so contrived the original frame of nature, that all these motions, however various, should owe their rise to natural causes, without any immediate divine interposition. But though it cannot be proved that this is impossible, seeing nothing is so to infinite wisdom and power; yet, as there can be no positive proof of it, so it is sufficient to the present purpose to observe, that it is possible it may be otherwise: and that, though many of these motions proceeded from immediate interposition, operating, when once they are produced, according to the laws of nature; such interposition would not marr the uniformity and constancy of nature in these other parts of it, where such uniformity is requisite. The mention of this instance, is the more suitable to the chief subject in view, because of the known scripture expressions, and comparisons, taken from that part of nature, to

illustrate, in some measure, that important subject to our weak capacities, John iii. 8.

Though it were supposed, that there were no immediate divine interposition, in producing any other effects whatever, but only these ascribed to divine grace, yet the disparity between these and all other effects, is of sufficient importance to account for this difference, of so vast importance, that it serves to refute all objections, concerning a disparity in the manner of producing them. A main evidence of this is the subject insisted on in the preceding section. Human corruption, and the inefficacy of natural causes to subdue it, has made such interposition necessary.

That which has made it necessary, is a thing peculiar to free agents, and of which the inanimate or irrational part of the creation is not capable. Only intelligent beings are capable of introducing such disorder into the universe, as needs divine interposition, to rectify and redress it. They only are capable of a voluntary abuse, and corruption of excellent natural powers, and of departing from their original, and what may be properly called, their natural state. And therefore, though it were certain that it belonged to the original perfection of the other divine works, that there should be no need of divine interposition afterwards; yet, this cannot conclude any thing as to free agents. Various arguments were adduced above, to shew that they do need such interposition: and if there is sufficient force in these arguments to prove our need of it, it should make us very cautious how we subtilize against it, as to its want of analogy with other divine operations, lest the love of philosophizing carry it against the love of true holiness and happiness.

Though it were supposed, that in other cases there are very useful and desirable effects, for which divine interposition is necessary, as well as for the effects ascribed to divine grace; yet, there are no other effects in the world, that are in themselves so necessary, or which, in respect of importance, bear any proportion to them. Divine interposition may be necessary for other desirable effects; but no other effects

are necessary to happiness, but conformity to God and the enjoyment of him. As these are the great ends of divine grace, so they are evidently the noblest effects that can be produced in the highest order of created beings. There is a peculiar and transcendent excellency in these effects of divine power, as they are the chief effects of divine goodness.

Though human corruption did not make divine supernatural operation necessary in order to holiness, it is necessary on other accounts, in order to compleat happiness. Though holiness be a chief part of happiness, it does not comprehend the whole of it. It includes, in its nature, desire of enjoyments that are not inseparable from it. Suitable love to God with the whole heart includes transcendent desires after God; not only after his favour, but after the fullest assurances of it, and of its perpetual continuance. As also after such enjoyment of God, such intercourse with him, and communications from him, as cannot be the effects of the mere course of nature; and cannot take place while the Deity acts towards a creature, merely in the character of universal Cause, supporting the established laws of nature.

SECTION V.

Of the peculiar excellencies of the grace of divine love, and the lively vigorous exercise of it.

IT is evident, from what was considered formerly, concerning the scripture account of the effects of divine grace, and the distinguishing characters of true holiness, that the lively and vigorous exercise of the grace of divine love, is a chief part of true religion. But because this vigorous engagement of the heart, and affections in religious worship, is in itself a matter of so great importance; and, at the same time, a thing against which many people appear very much prejudiced, it is proper to consider this subject somewhat more particularly.

It was observed before, that all the grounds and

motives of divine love, are so many motives to the frequent exercise of that noble affection. The same laws of nature and revelation which require divine love, require frequent divine worship. They require our honouring God, and our endeavouring to strengthen the love of God in our hearts, by habitual acknowledgments of his excellencies, and our manifold obligations to him. It is obvious, there are two very different ways of doing this; namely, a cold superficial, and careless way, which does not affect the heart, and a serious, affectionate way, with deep reverence, esteem, gratitude, and strong desires after conformity to God. It is easy to observe, which of these two ways of worshipping or contemplating God, are most suitable to the love of God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength. People void of love to God, may be employed in considering and acknowledging their obligation to love him; but while their hearts are insensible of these obligations; while their hearts are not in some measure penetrated with suitable impressions of them, their praise, their adoration and prayer, are not sincere acts of religious worship. Sincere acts of divine worship, must be real exercises of divine love. Acts of worship are not designed to inform God, either of his own infinite excellencies and benefits, or of our wants; all which he knows infinitely better than we do. Seeing the end of worship is not that we may inform God, but that we may honour and enjoy him; it is evident, neither of these can be done, unless we honour him with our whole heart.—Acts of worship are designed for strengthening and fortifying divine love in the heart, by a due exercise of it. It is evident, that a few strong and vigorous actings of any good affection or habit, have a greater tendency to strengthen it, than many weak and superficial actings. It is necessary for us to be accustomed to acknowledgment of God's perfections and benefits; but it is dangerous to accustom ourselves to acknowledge these things in a cold and indifferent manner.—For the natural effect of this must be a habit of coldness and formality, about things of infinite importance;

The negligent and careless performance of divine worship, is next to the utter neglect of it. Nothing, therefore, is more agreeable both to scripture and reason, than that, as it is with the whole heart, we should love God; so it is with the whole heart we should worship and serve him.

For preventing mistakes on a subject of such importance, it is proper to make some remarks, concerning the true strength and vigour of good affections. It is evident, that these things must be judged of by a better standard, than the natural outward signs of inward emotions, which depend on constitution, and other causes. In persons of different constitutions, the same degrees of love, joy or sorrow, may have very different effects as to these outward natural signs and appearances. The true measure of the strength of any affection, is its superiority to other affections, especially those that may interfere with it; and its influence on mens' actions. A main thing, therefore, wherein the true strength of divine love consists, and of whatever holy affections have a connexion with it, is their superiority to all other affections, their efficacy in keeping other affections within due bounds, and directing them to right purposes, and their influence on universal holiness in practice. These men, therefore, have the strongest love to God, who have the strongest propensity to a course of universal obedience to him; whose love is able, by God's blessing, to surmount the greatest difficulties, that attend such a course; and to resist the strongest temptations to the contrary. But in speaking of obedience, acts of divine worship and contemplation, and due exercise of divine love in them, must not be excluded; but included as an essential and principal part; and as such a part of obedience, as has the most advantageous influence on all the other parts of it.

These things shew how we ought to make an estimate of the strength of divine love, as habitually rooted in the heart, governing the life, and duly exercised in contemplation and worship. It is evident, that the more vigorous the exercise of that affection is in wor-

ship, the more is the attention of the mind fixed on its infinite object, Psal. cviii. the more does the heart cleave fast to God, and follow hard after him, Psal. lxiii. the deeper are the impressions on the heart of his infinite excellencies, and of all our obligations to him, and the greater is the willingness and complacency of the soul in divine worship itself.

These things serve also to remove the ambiguity of words, that is observable sometimes in unlimited insinuations and objections, against the use of devout affections. Such are the objections which suppose a real difference between suitable affections towards God, and a due attachment of the will to him; choosing him as the soul's chief good and chief end. Such a choice, as was observed before, is a main thing included in divine love. But it is an unreasonable strife about words, to pretend that such a choice, such high esteem, gratitude and desire, as are included in divine love, and were formerly described, are not affections. When people deny the necessity or importance of devout affections, they must either deny the necessity of the love of God, or deny that the love of God, even with the whole heart and soul, is an affection of the soul. Though the use of words be arbitrary, yet, if there are abuses of words, which tend to embarrass and mislead mens' thoughts; the ways of speaking, which would exclude the most transcendent love or joy, from being affections of the soul, are of that number.

Whatever reason there may be for distinguishing between the will and affections, in some other cases, there is no reason for distinguishing between the due attachment of the will to God, and the affections included in sincere love to him. The will cannot be duly attached to God, without habitual love to him with the whole heart, deeply rooted in the soul. Without the actual exercise of that love, there cannot be a right disposition of the will towards God, in his worship.—These things admit of very different degrees. They who love God most, may sometimes come short of that lively exercise of divine love and joy, which they have

attained to at other times. As the want of such attainments is consistent with a prevalent attachment of the will to God, it is also consistent with prevalent love to him. But it is needful to distinguish between the want of such things, and the want of all desire after them. The want of all such desire is inconsistent with sincere love and due attachment, of the will to the source of all happiness. If there is ofttimes ambiguity in common expressions about the affections, the same thing takes place in more formal and philosophical expressions, about the various actings of the will: and the things which serve to give fixed and determined notions, in the one case, serve in both. There are transient and fictitious actings of the will, as well as emotions of the heart or affections. It is needful to distinguish between the will and the affections in these cases, wherein men are deeply affected with various things against their will, as when Felix trembled in hearing Paul's discourse; in these cases, mens' affections are involuntary and forced. On the other hand, men may be sincerely willing to be more strongly affected towards certain excellent objects, or to have their affections towards them more lively and vigorous than what they are; it is evident, this must be the case, as to all who are endued with sincere love to God and holiness. Divine love, where it takes root in the soul, is the most voluntary affection in the world; and wherever it is sincere, there must be some aspiring after higher degrees, and a more lively exercise of it. Hence, it follows, that where there is a due attachment to the will of God, this is so far from superseding the devout affections, formerly explained, that it must include a sincere desire after them: that is, it must include a concern to have the heart more and more strongly affected with God's perfections and benefits, and all the motives of sincere love to him.

These things shew the tendency of incautious subtilizing, on the differences between the will and the affections. People are apt enough, without the help of philosophy, to satisfy themselves with a mere speculative belief, and speculative meditations on God and

his will. It is true that mens' affections in devotion, are too oft of a corrupt nature and tendency. The more need there is of due cautions and directions, as to the affections we should prize and seek after. It is, indeed, a sure way to avoid wrong affections in devotion, to discard all devout affections in general. But on this footing, people might as reasonably discard all devotion itself. Irregular devotion, or wrong affections in devotion, are far from being the only dangerous things that sinners need to be guarded against.—Experience shews, men may be very wicked in their practice, who are very cold and formal in devotion. Indeed, the most obvious things in the frame of our nature shew, that while mens' religious belief and exercises, do not in some measure affect their hearts, they cannot much affect their practice.

What was hinted about the attachment of the will to God, shews that when mens' devout affections are in themselves good and useful, they are not the less commendable, because, they are voluntary; or, because men have been active and diligent, in the use of proper means, and in humble dependence on God, in attaining to them. This shews, that when people direct their ridicule or invectives against those who work themselves up to devout fervours, or who endeavour to be fervent in spirit in serving God, they ought to restrict their censure to fervours, or strong affections that are of a corrupt or trifling kind, or excited by wrong means. For it is obvious, that when such invectives or insinuations are understood without restriction, (which is ofttimes the case, when writers or others express no restriction) they tend to expose all the holy affections, included in the strong exercise of love to God with the whole heart, excepting those in which men may be in all respects passive.

The view that has been taken of the true strength of the best devout affections, is of use, not only to prevent mistakes about words, but to shew the excellency and usefulness of these things themselves In the mean time, though we are chiefly to consider the excellencies of *Divine love*, it ought to be remembered

that there are other devout affections, which come short of it, and which, notwithstanding, are far from being despicable or useless. Unless we own this, we must maintain, that they who as yet are void of divine love and true holiness, either ought not to desire these things, or should desire them only in a cold and indifferent manner. This is so far from being true, that the best way such people can be employed, is in earnest desires after such things, exciting diligent endeavours; though such desires and endeavours, while men are void of real holiness, be attended with very essential culpable defects. To excite desires after the love of God, even in hearts that have not yet attained to it, is a main design of considering the excellencies of that noble affection, not only considered as habitually rooted in the heart, but as vigorously exercised in religious worship.

One comprehensive and principal excellency of the best devout affections, is their powerful influence on practice. This is evident, from what was observed before, concerning these prevalent desires of conformity to God, and of his approbation, or, which is the same thing, that prevalent propensity to obedience to him, which are essential ingredients of sincere love to God; and such ingredients of it as all other holy affections, which may be distinguished from them, must conspire to strengthen and promote. The influence of sincere love to God, on universal obedience to him, is a matter of so great importance, not only for shewing the excellency of that holy disposition of soul, but also for discovering the delusions of self-deceivers who falsely pretend to it; that it is needful to consider this matter at some length by itself; and, therefore, it is to be the subject of a following section; but it is proper to observe here, how unreasonable it is to make one ingredient of divine love clash against another. This is plainly the case, if, on pretence of inculcating strong inclination to keep God's commandments, we diminish the importance of just impressions of his excellencies and benefits. To have a due esteem of God's excellencies, a due grateful sense of his benefits, a pre-

valent inclination to due habitual acknowledgment of these things, with suitable desires after the favour, the approbation, the enjoyment of God; to have such suitable esteem, gratitude, and desire towards God, is to fulfil the chief commandments of God. It is by these things, we obey the commandments of God which relate to the heart, or prevalent dispositions of the soul. Such suitable affections towards God, are principal parts of conformity to him, or of obedience to him. They are in themselves essential duties of holiness, and they include a just impression of the chief motives and encouragements, and of the chief patterns of all the other duties of holiness in general. A due esteem of the chief moral excellencies of God's nature, has such an influence on suitable love to the moral duties of his law, that these things cannot be separated.

In considering the excellencies of the lively exercise of divine love, it is of particular use to explain these properties of it, which distinguish it from strong affections to inferior objects. Whereas, it is a chief use of reason and judgment, to controul and restrain our strong affections towards other objects; it is a chief use of these faculties, to promote and strengthen the vigorous love of God, and that love of our neighbours, which is inseparably connected with it. The lively exercise of divine love, is the noblest use to which human reason and understanding, sanctified by divine grace, can be subservient. It is the more needful to consider this, because of various insinuations, and ways of speaking, which tend to give a quite contrary view of things. Of this number, are these ways of speaking, by which the rational way, and the affectionate way of devotion, are without any due explication or restriction, distinguished, or rather opposed to one another. It is true, indeed, that all affectionate devotion, is not wise and rational: but it is no less true, that all wise and rational devotion must be affectionate. All suitable divine worship must include the exercise of divine love. Seeing there are various affections different from true love to God, or inconsistent with it, warm devotion ofttimes may be unreasonable:

but seeing love to God with the whole heart is the most reasonable, and the most necessary thing in the world, all cold and superficial devotion must be unreasonable. The use of human understanding is to know God and his works. The chief end of knowing God's works, is the knowledge of God himself. The highest end of knowledge is not mere speculation.—The great end, therefore, of knowing God and his works, is to love God, to honour, and obey him, and to enjoy him. Divine love and joy are the highest attainments of human nature, and highest ends of all its faculties.

It is the use of reason to curb mens' passions, but it is to curb passions that are hurtful or liable to excess. It is needful, and requires great efforts to set due bounds to our love of other things. But the end of setting bounds to our love of other things, is, that we may set no bounds to our love of God. When people speak of rational and affectionate devotion as opposite things, they seem to go in so far to the philosophy, that made it the use of reason to root out the affections. But whatever rash and inconsistent things may have escaped men in sallies of zeal against devout affections, yet, when men calmly consider the most useful things in human nature, few are capable of denying the affections to be of that number. It is with good reason, that a famous author, Malebranche, speaking on that subject, compares the state the intellectual world would be in, without inclinations or affections, to the state of the material world, were it without motion, on which its beauty and usefulness so much depends. If it were, indeed, the true use of reason, to root out all affection, the right use of reason would be inconsistent with virtue and happiness. These things necessarily imply suitable affections towards God and our fellow-creatures; and especially, that love and joy of which God himself is the object.

It is the use of reason to oppose these affections, which are in their own nature evil, and to moderate those, which, though in their own nature useful, are subject to hurtful excesses. Mens' affections are irra-

tional or unreasonable, when they are not founded on a well-informed judgment, when they are not excited by just and sufficient motives, when they are excessive in their degree, or have a bad influence on the mind and practice. If there are various affections, which may be introduced into mens' devotions, which are liable to these imputations; the more necessary are the good and wise affections included in divine love, which are evidently of an opposite nature and tendency.

The affections included in divine love, are founded on these truths, for which there is the greatest evidence in the world. Every thing in the world, that proves the being of God, proves that his creatures should love him with all their heart. The evidence for these things is in itself very strong, and level to every capacity. Where it does not beget conviction, it is not owing to the weakness of mens' capacities, but to the strength of their prejudices and pre-possessions. This is manifestly the case, as to the great truths of natural religion, concerning God's infinite excellencies and benefits; the many endearing relations we stand in to him, and our absolute dependence on him; the necessity of the enjoyment of God, in order to complete happiness, and of supreme love to God in order to the enjoyment of him: and in general, the necessity of having the affections of our hearts, as much as possible, proportioned to the worth of their objects. Whatever proves that reasonable creatures are obliged to love God and his law, proves that sinners are obliged to suitable hatred of sin, and self-abasement for it. A sinner cannot have due prevalent love to God and hatred of sin, without prevalent desire of obtaining deliverance from sin, and the enjoyment of God. A suitable desire of so important ends cannot be, without proportionable desire of the necessary means. If a sinner, therefore, who hears the gospel, have these suitable affections of love to God and hatred of sin, to which he is obliged by the laws of natural religion, these things cannot be separated from a real complacency in that redemption, and graces which are proposed in revealed

religion. This does not suppose that natural religion, can discover or prove the peculiar things of the gospel to be true; but when they are discovered, it proves them to be infinitely desirable. A book of laws that are enforced with awful sanctions, cannot prove that the sovereign has passed an act of grace, or indemnity, in favour of transgressors. But it proves that such favour is to them the most desirable, and the most necessary thing in the world. It proves that the way of saving us from sin, which the gospel reveals, is infinitely suitable to the honour of God, to the dignity of his law, and to the exigencies of the consciences of sinners. But it is not suitable to the scope of our present inquiry, to enlarge here on the evidences of the main principles of natural religion, and revelation.

As what has been hinted, gives some view of the greatness of the evidence, it shews that if the truth of these principles is once supposed, they contain the most reasonable, and most just motives in the world, to the good affections included in divine love. The most obvious principles of natural religion, are evident proofs of the necessity of loving God with our whole heart. The peculiar doctrines of the gospel, relate to our deliverance from sin. And it is manifestly the most reasonable thing in the world, that deliverance from sin, should, in the most vigorous manner, occupy the thoughts and affections of sinners.

As the affections included in divine love, are founded on the most reasonable grounds and motives, they are incapable of excess. This is a principal excellency of these affections, and it is peculiar to them. It is unreasonable to object, that men may be so occupied about one part of religion, as to overlook and neglect other parts of it. Such partiality in religion, does not argue an excess in mens' love to God or holiness, but a very culpable defect in it. The more men have of these holy affections, the stronger must their inclination be, to that obedience to God, which is universal, and extends to all his precepts.

The affections included in divine love, are so far from being capable of excess, that they must always

come short of the worth of their object. This must be the case, even though men were in a state of perfection. It is not only impossible to overvalue God's excellencies and benefits, or his favour and the enjoyment of him. Our esteem of these things, our gratitude, our desires, our complacency in God, can never fully come up to the motives and grounds of these good affections. When it is said, that holiness implies a due proportion between our affections and their objects, it must be understood with obvious limitations and restrictions, relating to God's infinity. The love of creatures to God, is infinitely unequal to the object.—But since the object of that affection is infinitely superior to all other objects, the affection itself should, as much as possible, transcend all other affections. It is always capable of the most just and reasonable additions and increase of strength. We cannot have sincere divine love, without a real desire of such progress in it. The necessary disproportion of that affection to its object, and the strong obligations to it, the divine benefits which are continually multiplying upon us, are evident proofs of this. And as there is good ground to suppose, that strong desire and endeavours after progress in the love of God, is a main thing, intended by the scripture expressions about our loving him with all our heart, and all our strength; so there are manifold other instructions in scripture, which shew that we cannot love God truly, without endeavouring to love him more than we do, and that desire of progress is a main character of sincerity.

From what is said, it is evident, that it is equally absurd and impious, to suppose that creatures may love God too much, or more than they ought. Hence, it follows, that sinners cannot hate sin too much; that they cannot prize deliverance from it too much, or be too thankful for it. It is true, that there are certain bounds, beyond which mens' affections cannot rise, in their present frail state, without doing hurt to their frame, or even unhinging it. But there are very obvious reasons, that this is no proof of a danger of excess in the good affections in view. In mens' present

imperfect state, these affections labour always under culpable and hurtful defects; they are also subject to very hurtful decays through opposition from inward infirmities, and outward hinderances and temptations, of a contrary tendency. This may be very evident to us, if we consider some obvious differences, betweeen these excellent affections in view, and mens' affections to inferior objects; particularly these appetites, which relate to the subsistence of bodily life, and its enjoyments. These appetites seem scarcely capable of being extinguished, or liable to dangerous decays, by neglect. The thing that requires effort and labour is to moderate them. It is far otherways, as to the noble affections, included in the love of God and holiness. These superior affections are liable to so manifold opposition, and to so dangerous decays; that men can never be too careful, in using all proper preservatives against defections, and all proper means of steadiness and progress. Men may have sincere love to God, rooted in their hearts, while they are not in the actual exercise of it: but not without some habitual propensity to such exercise: and the lively exercise of it, is the great mean of preserving and strengthening it, and of avoiding these dangers, from within or from without, which threaten the decay of it.

These things shew, that as the affections included in divine love, are in themselves incapable of excess; so they are the chief means of restraining the inordinacy or excess of mens' affections, to inferior objects. Mens' chief affections must always be fixed on some object or other. There must still be some affections, which have the sovereignty in the heart. If mens' chief affections are not fixed on God, they must be fixed on some other objects, which are infinitely below him. Disorder and confusion in the prevalent affections of the heart, must necessarily ensue upon such a preference of the creature to the Creator. It is in vain to pretend to remove the inordinacy of affections to other objects, while that supreme love to God, to which these other affections should be subordinate, is neglected. It is

divine love that restores and establishes a noble order in all the affections of the soul. It is divine love that establishes inward temperance in the affections, and maintains the sobriety of the heart. All the good affections included in it, tend to restrain these irregular selfish passions, which have so bad influence, both on mens' practice, and on their judgment and understanding; the more violent degrees of which passions so often marr the exercise of reason. Such passions oftimes do great prejudice by an excessive application, and, in a manner, a confining of mens' thoughts to some one object. Divine love employs the mind and heart, about all that beautiful variety of useful thoughts and actions, which are necessary in the practice of universal holiness. Though religion is called the one thing needful, yet, that one thing comprehends a great many things; yea, all the things by which we should promote the glory of God, the good of society, and the perfection of our natures. That unity of principle and end, which takes place in holy affections and actions, together with their amiable harmony and connexion, and mutual subserviency to one another, give them an unspeakable advantage, above all strong affections towards inferior objects. Corrupt and inordinate affections, through their frequent clashing and interfering, the impossibility of satisfying them, the necessity of curbing and moderating them, the difficulty of this where that affection, which is the source of true moderation is wanting, and on various other accounts, have an evident tendency to disquiet and perplex the mind, and consequently, to darken it. The tendency of divine love is, in all respects, the very reverse of this.

All these things shew, that as divine love is the highest use of human reason and understanding, so it has the greatest tendency to the true improvement and cultivating of it. It makes men truly wise, and gives them a right judgment in things of the greatest importance. Inordinate affections are the greatest enemies to reason, if right understood. They bribe it into their corrupt interests, and bias it against evidence.

A main thing, therefore, in true freedom of thinking and reasoning, is freedom from that bias of wrong affections. If this cannot be had without the prevalence of the contrary good affections, the source of true freedom of thought, is divine love. It is a general property of the strong affections, that they have a natural influence on the memory, on fixing the thoughts, and on rendering mens' invention more fruitful. But different affections make mens' inventions fruitful in a very different manner, according to the good or bad nature, and tendency of these affections themselves. The mind is naturally fruitful in these thoughts, which are most suitable and most favourable to these affections, which are most predominant. These things shew, that the love of God, and that love of truth which is implied in it, have a manifold advantageous influence on mens' reasoning faculties. Divine love restrains these perverse affections, which are the causes of wrong judgment, and of delusion every day; it gives the mind a freedom from the most hurtful biases, it fixes the attention, it puts the mind in the best situation for the most useful inquiries, it makes the mind fruitful in the thoughts that are most subservient to them, it reconciles it to what labour and application may attend them.

It is proper to observe, that there are two sorts of reasoning, on things that relate to practice, between which there is a considerable difference. The one is, that reasoning which is designed for finding out the truth, in cases where men as yet want evidence, and must suspend their judgment. The other is, that reasoning which is designed to strengthen good affections and purposes, by reflection on proper motives of the truth, of which the mind has already a well-founded persuasion. As to the first sort of reasoning, even where divine love takes place, and is founded on a just assent to the most essential truths, men may have occasion for such inquiries, and find them attended with difficulty. The frequent diversity of sentiments among the best men, in a special manner, about the application of uncontested general rules to particular cases,

puts this out of question. In such cases, it is necessary to avoid a blind affection to one side of a question, before a man's judgment is sufficiently informed and determined on good grounds. This is that cool and judicious consideration, which is so requisite in impartial inquiry. It must exclude the influence of corrupt affections, because they tend to bias the mind against evidence; but, for the same reason it must not exclude the influence of the love of God, than which nothing is more truly subservient to the search of truth.

But, notwithstanding the usefulness of such inquiries, it would be manifestly unreasonable to place the whole of religion in them. It would be absurd to pretend that all devout exercises should be performed with such a suspense of judgment, as these inquiries suppose. This would infer, that there can be no exercise of divine love, founded on the just and firm belief of divine truths; and that a state of sincere holiness must be a state of perpetual scepticism. It is evident, that this would cast a very injurious reflection on the means God has given us of knowing his will. It would infer, that they are so obscure and defective, that mens' belief can never be fully determined on good grounds; and that the right use of reason in religion is, to be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

From what is said, it is evident, that the lively exercise of divine love and joy, has the greatest connexion with the most desirable sedateness and composure of mind. When men oppose sedateness of mind, and lively affections to one another, they do not consider duly the great disparity between these irregular affections, which should never be introduced into devotion; and, those affections which belong to divine love, which are essential to the right performance of devotion. What has been said above, concerning the opposite tendency of these two sorts of affections, shews that the one is as useful in order to due composure and serenity of mind, as the other is hurtful to it. Irregular affections tend to darken the mind, hinder due

attention, and distract the thoughts. The very reverse of this is the natural result of divine love, and of all these concomitants of it, which the apostle calls the fruits of the spirit; joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness. Whoever believes the scripture account of future blessedness, must own that it is a state of the most vigorous, and most perfect love and joy, in the most perfect serenity and tranquillity. To have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and to be filled with joy and peace in believing, is the nearest resemblance of that blessedness. That faith which works by love, is a faith by which the soul and conscience enter into rest, Heb. iv. While that faith and love are wanting, and while mens' chief affections are such as cannot be satisfied, and must be controuled, there can be no durable and solid rest or composure of mind.

SECTION VI.

Of various general properties, common to the best devout affections, with the other affections of human nature.

AFTER considering the distinguishing excellencies of the affections included in divine love; it is useful to consider some properties which are common to them, with other devout affections; or all the other affections of human nature in general. A right view of this matter, is of use, both for vindicating the importance of these holy affections, and for farther illustration of their peculiar excellencies. Some general resemblances between them and other affections of a very different kind, are sometimes made use of as arguments against two very important points. These things are improved partly against the usefulness of all devout affections, considered in themselves general; partly against ascribing any of them to divine grace. Whatever may be said of such objections otherwise, their success, on the minds of many, makes them considerable. If there are people who are strongly prejudiced against devout affections, it is not to be won-

dered at, that this should bias their minds in favour of any appearance of arguments against them.

The general resemblances between the affections included in divine love, and other devout affections, are either such as relate to the means of exciting them, or the effects which proceed from them. As to the first, it is sometimes objected that the same natural causes, which are means of exciting human affections in general, have a natural influence in exciting devout affections, and that both in good and bad men, as well as any other affections whatever. As to these natural causes, or means of exciting the affections, some view was taken of them above. The primary means are, the knowledge and due consideration of proper motives. This alone seems essential and necessary, for exciting the affections in a reasonable manner. But there are other secondary means, which, though not so absolutely necessary, as attention to motives, are natural helps subservient to it. Such as the advantageous proposal of them, pathetic discourse, the force of example, and the like.

Some people seem to imagine, that because devout affections are excited, both in good and bad men, by such natural causes: therefore, none of them ought to be ascribed to divine supernatural operation. And again, because there is so great a resemblance between all devout affections, as to the manner of exciting them, they imagine there can be no very material difference in the affections themselves. Seeing, therefore, the devout affections which may be excited in the hearts of bad men, are of so little use; they think we should judge the same way of all devout affections whatever, without exception.

Such objections, sometimes dazzle the minds of the inconsiderate, and of those who are strongly prejudiced against devout affections. In order to shew that they are of no force against the affections included in divine love, it is sufficient to remove the ambiguity of words, and to make some reflections on things that were considered formerly, concerning the relation between the efficacy of grace, and the good influence of means.

When it is said, that all sorts of devout affections are excited by natural causes or means, this may be understood in two different meanings, between which there is a very important disparity. The meaning may be, either that the production of such effects is wholly owing to these means; or, that these means have a real influence on them. In the first meaning of the expressions, when the efficacy of means is made an objection against the efficacy of grace, it is a begging *the question.* To say that all sorts of devout affections, are wholly owing to natural causes, and that, therefore, none of them should be ascribed to divine grace, is not reasoning, but naked assertion. The various evidences, from scripture and experience, against that assertion, were considered at large above.

As to the other more large meaning, namely, when all that is pretended is, that the natural causes or means above-mentioned and the like, do really contribute to all sorts of devout affections, this is no objection against the necessity or efficacy of divine grace. To set this matter in a due light, it is useful to consider the following things.

In the first place, the efficacy of grace, and the good influence of motives, and other means, are no way inconsistent. The end of divine grace is not to render motives and other means useless, but to make them effectual. And, therefore, when the good dispositions and affections, included in divine love, are produced and excited; they may be indeed the effects of the things above-mentioned, as subordinate means, while this does not hinder their being the effects of divine grace as the principal cause.

In the next place, it is proper to observe, that the natural means of producing good affections, operate variously on different persons, according to the previous rooted dispositions of their hearts. The diversity of mens' inward prevalent dispositions, may make the same motives and other means, have the most different effects in the world, on different persons. This is so evident from reason and experience, that it is not needful to insist upon it. It is well known that

the same instructions and persuasives, which are means of producing the best effects, on well disposed minds, may be abused by people of the most perverse dispositions, to the worst purposes, Rom. vii.

If there may be a vast disparity, in the effects of the same motives or other means, on different dispositions; even where there is no immediate divine operation; much more must this be the case, where such operation is interposed. The same instructions and motives, which in the minds of some, only produce the common good affections formerly described, may, by God's blessing, produce and strengthen in others, the excellent dispositions and affections included in divine love. While they excite in some, only admiration, good general desires of escaping future punishment, and of obtaining future blessedness, they may in the hearts of others produce the chief things wherein true holiness consists: they may, through the efficacy of divine grace, change the heart, by sanctifying it; or, through renewed supplies of the same grace, promote and advance so blessed a change.

The same truths may be considered as motives to different good affections and actions. The great doctrines of religion are motives to divine love, and universal holiness. They are also motives to these other common good affections which come short of it. True holiness does not exclude these other affections. It includes, it directs, it purifies, and strengthens them. It necessarily includes them; it makes men earnestly desire future happiness: but not in a mere general and confused way: it makes men fix their chief desires on God, and place their chief happiness in him. The natural efficacy of motives, ofttimes produces these common affections, without divine love; and rests there, without rising higher. The end of divine grace, is as it were, to complete the good influence of motives: to make them effectual for the chief purposes to which they are subservient: and to make them successful means of producing the divine image, and of promoing it. These things necessarily imply the implanting of divine love in the soul, and the lively exercise of it.

From what is said, it appears that a general resemblance, as to the means of exciting mens' affections, does not disprove an essential disparity in the affections themselves, that are produced or excited by these means. The sufficiency of natural causes to produce various other affections, does not prove their sufficiency to produce those included in Love to God with the whole heart. There is so vast a disparity between these different effects, that there is no just arguing from the one to the other. The power of corruption and depravity shews our need of the power of divine grace, to produce and promote sincere divine love.—The sufficiency of means to produce other affections, does not disprove the power of depravity, but is rather a confirmation of it. It is a strong confirmation of its power, that it defeats so many promising good impressions. It shews that the efficacy of inward perverseness is very considerable, when men may be so deeply affected, and so sensibly touched, with the chief persuasives and motives to their duty, without a cordial compliance with it. There is a great difference between transient impressions of motives, and a thorough compliance with the true end of them. But these impressions are in themselves of a good tendency; and it is the power of depravity that makes them so transient and ineffectual as they are. These things shew, that the sufficiency of means for other purposes, and their subserviency to the good dispositions included in true holiness; cannot disprove our need of divine grace, for producing such dispositions and affections, and for the suitable vigorous exercise of them.

Though whatever disproves the self-sufficiency of motives, and other means, proves our need of divine grace; the efficacy of grace does not take away the necessity or usefulness of means. The principal means, as was observed above, of good dispositions, are the knowledge, the belief, and consideration of proper motives. Divine love necessarily supposes the belief of those divine truths, which are the chief motives to it. It implies, in its very nature, a prevalent propensity to the actual consideration of them; and such con-

sideration is necessarily implied in the actual exercise of that good affection.

These things shew, that true holiness necessarily implies a disposition, to the active use of the means of it. And as motives are the principal means of it, a suitable impression of them rooted in the soul, is a main thing, wherein true holiness consists. This shews how unreasonable it is, in considering the efficacy of grace, and of motives, or other means, to make these things clash and interfere, between which there is so evident a consistency and harmony. The groundless imagination of an inconsistency in these things, is a main source of the objections which embarrass the subject in view. What has been already said, shews on what principles the force of such objections must depend. Some of them are built upon this supposition, that if an all-seeing God, who knows our hearts, knows that the mere proposal and consideration of motives, and other means of holiness, will not of themselves be effectual; he will not make the use of such means, on our part, necessary for that end. This is manifestly a very unreasonable imagination. It is evidently agreeable to God's perfections, that the offers and operations of his grace, should be suited to our necessities. It is necessary for us to be holy, and to be beholden to the grace of God for that end. But this makes it no way necessary for us to be made holy, without the use of means.

Some of the objections in view are built on this position, that if the Spirit of God make men holy, he must do it, without disposing them to the habitual consideration of the motives to holiness; at least, not in order to the exciting of the holy dispositions which are included in divine love, or which have a connexion with it. This is a position that contradicts itself. It implies, that if the Spirit of God is the Author of all holiness, he is not the Author of some of the most essential parts of it. A sincere disposition to consider the motives to divine love, and to use all proper means of the lively exercise of it, is both an essential part of holiness, and has a powerful influence on all the other parts of it.

These things shew, that the influence of means is no just objections against the efficacy of grace. They shew, therefore, that, though the use of the same means may excite the holy affections included in divine love, and other affections of an inferior sort; this does not hinder a vast disparity, not only in these affections themselves, but also in the manner of their production. The external means may be the same. Mens' inward meditations may be on the same moving subjects. But there is a difference between what is wholly the natural production of means themselves, and what is the effect of divine grace operating by them. There is a difference between the natural and intrinsic efficacy of means, operating suitably to the previous dispositions of mens' hearts; and the efficacy of means, when divine operation rectifies the inward dispositions of the heart, and gives to means and endeavours, that good success which inherent depravity or infirmity would otherwise hinder.

When people imagine that the use of means, or activity and diligence in the use of them, clashes with the reality of divine operation, they so far go into one of the most unreasonable branches, of what the body of Christians reckon the enthusiastical scheme of religion, namely, that if God act on mens' minds, men themselves must cease to act; or that they must forbear the use of means, till they find some previous impulse exciting them to it.

They who do not own the doctrine of grace, must own, that if divine grace were needful and real, it would not hinder, but excite, activity and diligence in all good endeavours; and that it is suitable to the divine perfections, that if divine grace were bestowed, it should be bestowed in such a manner as to encourage diligence.

It is a main source of error in general, that men frequently confound things, between which there are the most substantial difference, because of some resemblances of less consequence. It is thus, that some people strengthen their prepossessions against all piety, because of the resemblances of it, that are found

in hypocrites. It is evidently a delusion and self-deceit of the same kind, when men despise all devout affections in general, these included in divine love not excepted, because of some kind of resemblance between all the affections of human nature in general. The view that was taken before of the difference between true holiness, and false appearances of it, shews that that difference is the most important and the most essential difference in the world. The name and general notion of affections, are applicable to the best and to the worst things, the heart of man is capable of. The best and the worst dispositions or emotions of the heart, are called affections, as the most useful truths, and the most hurtful practical errors in the judgment, are called principles. Some general properties may be affirmed of all sorts of principles, as well as of all sorts of affections. The natural means of producing or confirming principles, are real or seeming arguments; as the natural means of exciting affections are suitable motives, which are indeed arguments, relating not not merely to the reality, but to the goodness of certain objects, or the contrary. Notwithstanding such general resemblances, as it is absurd to annihilate the difference between truth and falsehood, in mens' principles, it is no less absurd to annihilate the differences formerly considered, in mens' affections. It cannot be justly objected against this illustration, that the same evidence produces the same principles. The strongest evidences of the most useful truths, are ofttimes considered, with some attention, without begetting persuasion. Sometimes men may consider such evidences, and then do their utmost to refute them.—Sometimes these evidences procure assent to some good conclusions, while the most important conclusions, deducible from them, are not admitted. There is a resemblance between the various success of the evidences of the truth, and of the motives to holiness. Sometimes such motives are heard and considered with some attention, and at the same time, with strong aversion and disgust. Sometimes they excite these inferior good affections, which were formerly described, while the main design of them is not complied with.

The reasonings which have been insisted on, concerning the influence of means, or of natural causes, on all sorts of devout affections, serve equally to vindicate the two important points, formerly mentioned, concerning the holy affections included in divine love: namely, the great importance of these attainments considered in themselves, and the reasonableness of ascribing them to divine grace. But there are various things which make it needful to consider this influence of natural causes, on mens' devout affections, somewhat more particularly. It is a theory, in which there has been a good deal of philosophizing against serious piety, or affectionate devotion. But when duly considered, it is of manifold use for better purposes. It is of use for vindicating piety, and for unfolding the delusions of self-deceit, in false pretences to it. It is owned, on all hands, that there are various causes and helps in the nature of things, which are subservient to devout affections, especially to divine love. It is of importance to consider, whether this be a just objection against such affections, or an argument for them: and whether or not, the philosophy that subtilizes so much against devout affections, without any due restriction, reflects dishonour, not merely on the corruption of nature, but on nature itself. On the other hand, it is owned by all parties, that men may impose on themselves and others, by devout fervours, which either come short of holiness, or are even of an opposite nature and tendency. A right view of the natural causes, which have an influence on strong fervours of affection, is of manifest use, for due caution against so hurtful delusion.

Before we enter on the more particular consideration of the natural causes in view, it may not be improper to observe a remarkable inconsistency, in the reasonings of many people, against devout affecti ns, as the mere product of such causes. Many people, who object against such attainments, as the effects of operations that are merely natural, are against all operation that is supernatural. It might be expected that such people would never make it an objection, against

the goodness or excellency of any effect, that it is a mere natural efficacy that produces it. According to them, this must be the case, as to all the noblest attainments, in the minds or hearts of the best of men. It is very unreasonable in any people to maintain, that nothing can be of importance, that proceeds merely from the natural efficacy of second causes. But that principle is chiefly unreasonable, in people who acknowledge no other efficacy on mens' hearts, but that alone. If such efficacy is no objection against other valuable attainments, and if they are not to be the less esteemed, because they are the effects of mere natural causes or natural powers; it is manifest partiality to make such a manner of production an objection against all devout affections: especially, against the noblest affection of the soul, fixed on the noblest object.

These things are so obvious, that though people sometimes argue, not only against the divine origin, but even against the importance of any strong devout affections, on pretence that they may be accounted for from natural causes; yet, it seems reasonable to understand such objections with some restriction. The meaning of them seems to be this, that devout affections are of little or no importance, not merely because they are the effects of natural causes, but because they are the effects of such causes, even in the hearts of wicked men: and that these must be inconsiderable attainments, which may be produced in mens' hearts, without any changing of their hearts to the better.—When the objections in view are understood in this meaning, a sufficient answer to them is contained in the description formerly given, of the vast disparity between different sorts of devout affections. That description proves, that to argue from some particular sorts of devout affections, to all sorts of them in general, without exception, is contrary to the most evident and incontested rules of just reasoning.

In considering the particular natural causes, which have a tendency to excite devout affections, that which deserves to be chiefly inquired into, is strong attention to proper motives. The native tendency of strong at-

tention, affords various arguments in favour of vigorous affections towards objects, of the greatest excellency in themselves, and of the greatest importance to us. There is probably no controversy, whether serious and steady attention to such things, or the contrary, thoughtlessness and inconsiderateness about them, be most subservient to true wisdom. The same things, which are the chief motives to devout affections, are the chief motives to all good actions. If attentive consideration of these things be a natural cause, which has a tendency to lively devout affections; the usefulness of the cause, is a good argument for the usefulness of the effect. This way of reasoning is evidently founded on a general principle, on which the most satisfying arguments are founded in other cases; namely, that if the natural causes which have a direct tendency to produce any effect are good and useful, the effect itself must be so likewise. This shews, that instead of its being a just objection against devout affections, that they are naturally excited by attentive consideration, it would rather be a more plausible objection against them, if they were excited ordinarily any other way.

It was observed before, that mens' natural power of exciting several common good affections, does not disprove their need of divine grace, to produce and excite divine love. But though mens' power of attentive consideration, in order to excite some good affections, does not take away their need of that superior power; yet, the use of such serious consideration, with application to God for his blessing, is of such importance, and of so good tendency, that it is necessary to vindicate it from objections, founded on the bad use of it, and artificial imitations of it. The interest of true piety requires the vindication, not only of divine love, but also of earnest desires, and other devout affections, that quicken mens' endeavours after it. And whatever be said of mens' power, of exciting some such affections, by strong attention, it is certain that the use of that power, is a thing to which too many have a strong backwardness, that does not need to be fortified by arguments.

It is incontested, that mens' power of exciting their affections, by attention to motives, is ofttimes abused, to very bad or very useless purposes. By strong attention to those things, that are inducements to irregular affections, these corruptions are more and more strengthened. Sometimes men may employ all the force of attention they are masters of, for exciting fictitious and artificial emotions, either about religious subjects or other things, merely to amuse and deceive others, and to procure their applause. Sometimes people may be very deeply affected with things they know to be fabulous; and desire to be so affected, not out of any love to the objects which occupy their thoughts, which they know to have no being, but out of love to the amusement produced by raising the passions. There are methods, by which some people, no doubt, acquire a peculiar dexterity, in raising such fictitious passions in themselves and others. There is no ground to doubt, but such dexterity may extend to all sorts of objects, that are fit to excite the affections. It is a just commendation of the objects of Christian faith, that there are no objects in the world, which, considered in themselves, are so capable of exciting the most delightful affections of the soul. There is the less ground to wonder, if men who are intent upon such fictitious and artificial affections, about objects of so elevating a tendency, for the unworthy purposes abovementioned, may acquire some faculty that way. But if such intention in devout exercises, be a heinous contempt of the Deity, the more enormous this evil is in itself; the more enormous is the malignity of charging any persons with it groundlessly. Christian charity and candour, should incline us to suppose, that external signs of inward affection are real, and that where no remarkable signs of that kind appear, there may be affectionate devotion in mens' hearts notwithstanding. If we must form any judgment of the sincerity of others in devotion, as we should incline to the charitable side, it would be very unreasonable to confine our charity to those who appear least serious.

Some people, when they consider how men may ex-

cite in themselves, artificial and fictitious fervours, imagine they have discovered mighty objections against the importance of devout affections. But it should be remembered, that dexterous mimics can imitate the most amiable good affections towards men, as well as devout affections towards God. They can imitate the joys and sorrows of the most tender parents, and most generous patriots, and counterfeit the good affections, which men should have to their families and their country. But these affections are not the less commendable, or the less important, because they may be imitated. It is because these affections, where they are real, are so amiable and praise-worthy, that men who want them, seek favour and applause, by artificial imitation of them. If it is not a just objection against any good affection towards men, that there may be artificial imitations of it; it is evident partiality to make it an objection against devout affections towards God. Whatever resemblance there may be between artificial emotions, and those which flow from sincere affections rooted in the soul; it is a resemblance that is consistent with a very important disparity. It is true, that there is not such disparity in outward signs. To pretend that there should, is to pretend that outward signs should make the hearts of other men, as it were, transparent to us. It is necessary for us to search our own hearts, but it is not necessary, nor fit we should have access to discern the hearts of others; as we would not think it very desirable, they should discern all that passes in ours. But of these things, more fully afterwards, in treating of the natural effects of strong affections, after considering the means of exciting them.

When we consider the frequent abuse of mens' power of exciting their affections, we should remember that in all other cases, the abuse of things, that are in themselves useful and necessary, is acknowledged to be no just objection against the due use of them: but rather an argument for it. Unless we adhere to this, we may plead for laying aside the use of all the powers and faculties of human nature. As all evil is, one

way or other, the abuse of good, and all moral evil consists in the abuse of some good natural powers, or some perverseness that tends to such abuse; so it is a common and no less just observation, that the abuse or corruption of the best things is the worst. If the rectitude of our affections, the due exercise of them, and of all the active powers of the soul in subserviency to them, were not of the highest importance; the abuse of these things would not be so odious, nor so hurtful as it is. When people object against mens' power of exciting their affections, by attention to motives, because that power is abused in exciting such affections as are very trifling or hurtful; they may, with equal reason, despise mens' power of acquiring and strengthening habits, by repeated acts, because that power is subject to the like abuses. This is not a blaming the corruption of nature, but nature itself, and a blaming the very main things in that noble structure. These powers, which are so much neglected or abused, would take place in human nature, though it were perfectly free of all moral evil; and, it is indeed in such a state, that they should be exerted, even with the greatest vigour. Next to the capacity of divine love and joy, to which all the powers of the soul should be subservient; there is not a nobler faculty in the frame of intelligent creatures, than the power of knowing the motives and grounds of these excellent affections, and of serious consideration of them. It was observed before, how effectually depravity hinders such consideration, and defeats the good tendency of such motives, even when considered. Serious consideration and reflection, on such perverseness, suggests strong motives to earnest desires after that divine grace, that gives sinners new hearts. But when such serious consideration itself, at least serious consideration, in order to excite suitable affections, is the object of mens' contempt, they take the most effectual method to avoid strong affections towards God and religion; and it is then they are most destitute of any proper preservative, against strong affections of a different kind.

In considering the abuse of useful powers, it should

be remembered, that natural powers, and the natural laws which regulate their efficacy, are the effects of supreme goodnesss and wisdom. This is the more evident, the more carefully men inquire into these laws, which regulate the connexion between causes and effects, in the minds and hearts of reasonable creatures. The connexion between causes and effects, by shewing the connexion between the means and the end, directs us to the right improvement of our active powers, in pursuing the best ends, by the fittest means. No attainments are more desirable than good habits, and especially good affections. Such attainments are the true end of the laws of nature, which give such efficacy to repeated acts, and intense meditation, or serious consideration. The end of the structure of our nature, as a divine workmanship, is to make us active in attaining and strengthening good habits, and good affections. It is the corruption of nature that makes men abuse their good faculties, in subserviency to evil habits, and evil affections. Alienation from God and holiness, implies an aversion from the due use of our best faculties. It has introduced manifold abuses of them. But there is not one of these abuses of them, which, if seriously reflected on, does not suggest strong incitements, to a vigorous improvement of them, to the contrary good purposes.

If mens' natural power, of exciting their affections, by strong attention, be ofttimes abused by strong attention to the incentives of corrupt and irregular passions; this shews the necessity of greater attention to the proper motives of good and righteous inclinations. If men are ofttimes deeply affected with things they know to be fabulous, this should make us ashamed, if we are not deeply affected, with things we know to be true, and at the same time, of the greatest importance. If designing men, can raise in themselves, artificial passions, about religious objects, without any sincere love to them, merely for low and unworthy ends; this should stimulate us to endeavour after deeper impressions, of the same objects, for the most excellent purposes.

In the case of artificial devout affections, that for which men are to be blamed, is not their intense meditation on objects of faith; it is not their being deeply affected with these things; it is not their being active in exciting their affections; if the object of their meditation be truth, the fault of their affections lies chiefly in unworthy and corrupt intention. We should endeavour to be more sincere than they, but not more formal. We should avoid their hypocritical intention, but not their attentive meditation. When such men continue in their wickedness, notwithstanding their strong attention to the motives to holiness; their meditation, their attention, their affections, aggravate their guilt. This would not be the case, if their attention and their affections were not in themselves of a good tendency, notwithstanding the wrong ends they propose by them. Whatever be mens' intentions in considering divine truths, or the motives to holiness; the more antentively they consider these things, and the more strongly they are affected with them; the more inexcusable are they in not complying with them.

These things shew, that if some men are active, in exciting, in themselves or others, corrupt and artificial affections, this is no objection against vigorous activity in endeavouring after better attainments, and for better purposes. Artificial devout attainments, are neither just objections, against the affections included in divine love, nor yet against other good affections, which imply some desire and endeavour after it. All these persons, whose attainments come short of divine love, are not equally perverse. Those are most perverse, who in their devout exercise, intend to deceive others, and to procure their applause, or some such other unworthy end. Others, without any design of imposing on their fellow-creatures, may deceive themselves, in mistaking their attainments for divine consolations, or true holiness, while they are only false appearances of these things. Of all who want true holiness, those are least in danger, who neither deceive themselves, nor intend to impose on others; namely, those who, though they want true holiness, are sensible of their want,

and desirous to get so important a want supplied, joining with earnest desires the diligent use of proper endeavours.

In considering the exercise of the common good affections, so often mentioned, it is needful to distinguish between the good tendency of these affections, considered in themselves, and the bad tendency of that self-flattery, which makes men mistake these attainments for true holiness. People, who want true holiness, are well employed, when endeavouring to have deep impressions of the motives to it. When they mistake every good impression of that kind, for holiness itself, their mistake is of dangerous tendency. But such attainments do not become wholly useless, because they are over-valued. Partial reformation is much over-valued, when it is mistaken for universal obedience. But notwithstanding of this, it is in itself, so far as it goes, good and desirable. It is unspeakably preferable to the enormity of a dissolute practice.

Sincere good affections towards God or men, ought not to be called artificial, because men are active and diligent in exciting them. That name, when applied to affections, implies an odious meaning, and denotes something very different from commendable activity, in the use of proper endeavours. It implies dissimulation or corrupt intention.

There are some good affections in human nature, in the lively exercise of which, in some cases, men can scarcely be said to be active. Thus, the sorrow of a tender parent for the loss of a favourite child, does not need endeavour to excite it, but rather for restraining it. It springs naturally from a strong affection, rooted in his heart, meeting with a disaster that robs it of the object of its tenderness. These good affections, the exciting of which, does not require so much endeavour, as the due moderating of them does, are things, which, however good, and useful of themselves, are common to very bad men. All the good dispositions, which distinguish good men from others, are of such a nature as to need active endeavours for stengthening and confirming them. They ought not.

on that account, to be called artificial. If one who has a sincere love to his country, is careful to excite the vigorous exercise of that good affection, especially when employed in difficult service, his being so active in exciting that affection, does not make it the less amiable. If his weakness made him need such endeavours, his endeavours ought not to be discommended, because they were necessary. If it is a laudable thing, to be active in exciting and strengthening all such good affections, as are far from being too strong already; it is highly unreasonable to think of the Deity, as the only object whom men should not labour and endeavour to love.

What has been said concerning the influence of attentive consideration, in exciting mens' devout affections, serves to give light to the influence of other natural causes, formerly hinted at; which, though not so necessary for exciting just and reasonable affections, as attention to motives, are subordinate helps, naturally subservient to it. Of this number, as was observed above, is pathetic discourse, and the force of example, between which there is a manifest affinity. Pathetic or affectionate style, properly speaking, is that manner of expression, which is the natural effect of the actual vigorous exercise of the affections; though like various other natural things, it may be artificially imitated. Experience shews, that when men are under the actual influence of strong and lively affections, good or bad, they have a natural effect on the turn of mens' thoughts, and expressions. The turn of thought and style, which is the natural effect of strong affections in one person, is a natural mean of exciting the like affections in others. Its influence that way, is far from being irresistible; nor is it at all so considerable in itself, as the intrinsic force of proper motives, whatever way expressed. It is ofttimes abused, as the best things are, to bad purposes; but notwithstanding all this, it is of importance to observe, that it is far from being in itself entirely useless or inconsiderable.

The laws of nature which relate to our make and

frame, are not merely caculated in a subserviency to the union of soul and body, but also to the union of men to one another, in society. This is evidently the end of mens' natural power, of communicating their thoughts. It is also the end of their natural power of communicating their affections. It is a property of human nature, resulting from the union of soul and body, that the affections of the soul, have a manifold influence on the body. They have, in a special manner, a natural influence on the voice, which is the chief means of communicating our thoughts; and on the aspect, which is a sort of mysterious glass, giving some discovery of our affections; such as our joys or sorrows, and the like. The discovery, which such outward signs give of our inward affections, is indeed only general; and it is of importance it should be so. Thus, for instance, if the natural signs of mens' devout joys, or sorrows, could discover, whether these things proceeded from sincere divine love, or only from some inferior affection; this would make the chief things in one man's heart, transparent in a manner, to the bodily senses of others. There are obvious wise reasons, why it should be otherwise. Mean time, the differences between divine love and all other affections, which come short of it, are of the greatest importance, as was proved above at some length. But outward signs do not admit of so great diversity, as mens' inward affections, nor is it fit they should.

The various things in the frame of our nature, which are subservient to the communication of affections, are good arguments for the importance of good affections, and for mens' mutual subserviency to one another, in promoting and strengthening them. We should judge of mens' natural power, of communicating their affections, as we do of other natural powers, and particularly of mens' power of communicating their thoughts. The abuse of good powers, is no just objection against their intrinsic worth and usefulness. The more there is of evident contrivance in our frame and make, subservient to the exercise of any power; the more evident is the importance of that power, considered in

itself; and, consequently, the more excellent and advantageous, is the due improvement of it, and the more dangerous is the abuse of it. The manifold contrivance and mechanism of several parts of the body, in subserviency to the faculty of speech, or the power of communicating thoughts; shews the importance of that faculty in itself; how unnatural it would be if men should neglect it; and how culpable they are, when they abuse it. In like manner, the manifold subserviency, of the laws of union between soul and body, to the communication of affection, is a proof that that power is capable of being improved to valuable purposes, and that men should be careful neither to abuse it, nor to neglect it.

What was formerly observed, about mens' power of exciting their affections, is applicable to their power, both of communicating their thoughts and affections.

The true use and tendency of these powers, as the effects of supreme wisdom and goodness, is the communication of such thoughts and affections, as are good and useful. These good powers are much abused to the contrary bad purposes; but this is not peculiar to them. It is common to them with all the other faculties, even the most valuable faculties of human nature. This does not make these faculties in themselves contemptible. It shews the necessity of all proper precautions against the abuses, to which the best things are liable. For that end, it is needful to know these abuses, and to be deeply affected with them. They who love devout affections, should consider the bad effects of the communication of affections, that are not founded on truth and righteousness. These hurtful passions, or corrupt and irregular affections, spread and strengthened by sympathy, and communication in society, have had lamentable effects in various ages.—These things shew the vast importance, of having our judgments well informed about the things, that should be the objects of our chief and strongest affections: but they contain no better argument against all devout affections in general, or all communication of them, than if men should argue against the faculty of communicat-

ing our thoughts; or against our other best faculties, because of the many terrible effects, which have been so frequently produced by the abuse of them.

The power that men have of communicating their thoughts and their affections, does not make other men masters, either of our judgment or of our inclinations. It does not put it in their power to force our assent to what is false, or our inclination to what is unjust. We have a power of examining all persuasives that may be proposed to us; and our affections should be founded on a due information of our judgments. Yet, as there are various ways, of informing our judgments, about these things, that should be the chief objects of our affections; and of reminding us of our chief obligations to love God with our whole heart, and to love our neighbours as ourselves; the cold and indifferent way of doing this, is far from being the most reasonable or most safe. If it is a dangerous thing, when affections that are corrupt are strong and vigorous, it is also dangerous, when the best affections are wholly wanting, or weak and feeble. The safety of the mind requires freedom from these strong affections, that are perverse and irregular. But the best preservative against these evils, is the strength and vigour of such affections, as are of an opposite nature and tendency. If we prefer the cold and lifeless way of persuasion to the pathetic way, this implies, that when men propose the most just motives, to excite or strengthen the best affections in others, they should endeavour to be void of these affections themselves. This is far from being reasonable, or according to nature. If men have at heart, the success of their best persuasives on others, they should endeavour, first of all, to be penetrated with just impressions of these things themselves. And though men may be very active in exciting their affections, as well as in fixing and in expressing their thoughts, yet, it is otherwise, as to the influence of inward emotions on all the outward natural signs of them. Where mens' affections are at once vigorous and sincere, and affectation does not interpose, these natural signs do not wholly depend on the will, though

they may, and ought to be regulated by judgment and reflection.

The natural influence of society on mens' affections, instead of being a just objection against the importance of devout affections, affords solid arguments for society in devotion. This is the more evident, the more we compare together the great ends of true religion, and the ends of human society. The design of true religion and devotion, of divine love, and divine grace, is not to root out or impair whatever is social in human nature, but to refine, to purify, and strengthen such things. Religion is designed to unite God's reasonable creatures to one another, and to himself the common source and object of their happiness, the highest object of their noblest affections, and of their purest love and joy. The best cement of true union among reasonable creatures, is that love which is the end of God's commandments. Divine love, and brotherly love to our fellow-creatures, have a manifold natural influence on one another. Suitable love to God necessarily implies love to his creatures, and all just love to his creatures, is subservient to the love we owe to himself. Such is the make of the heart, that the vigorous exercise of suitable love to one object, facilitates the exercise of the same good affection towards other proper objects; and tends to give the heart a due turn, and disposition for that purpose. If our love to one another is highly subservient to the love of God, a principal means of mutual love, is mutual usefulness, especially in things of the greatest importance; the natural good influence of good example, and of the communication of good affections, are not indeed the only things, wherein mutual usefulness in the concerns of religion, consists: but they render mens' usefulness to one another, in these important things, considerably greater and more extensive than otherwise it would be.

It is natural, that society in good actions and joint participation of the same enjoyments, should heighten the sweetness of mens' enjoyments, and strengthen their mutual good affections. Experience puts this

beyond all question. They who are alienated from the love of God, are for confining mutual usefulness, and all the advantages of society, to things that relate to the life of the body, and the inferior enjoyments of the mind; which enjoyments, when compared with the substantial happiness of the soul in God, and separated from it, are indeed mere amusements. Yet, even in this case, while mens' enjoyment is unhappily confined to inferior things; it is justly observed, to depend very much on good affections, which they feel in themselves, or observe in others. We should acknowledge it is an effect of supreme goodness, that the advantages of society, the influence of good example, and of the communication of good affections, are not restricted to inferior things, but extended to things of the highest importance. It tends to make creatures, who are made for society, to be more in love with it, and more attached to its interests. It does not tend to lessen due inclination to secret worship; seeing secret and social worship have such an influence on one another, that, where mens' hearts are sincere, each of them increases the inclination of the heart to the other.

It should also be observed, that society, in serious devotion, gratifies various good desires, that are necessarily included in the love we owe to God and men. To a heart well disposed, it must be a real pleasure, not only to be well employed itself, but to see others well employed likewise; and, not only to feel the best dispositions in itself, but also to observe the probable evidences of the like dispositions in others, to rejoice in the prospect of their begun happiness, and to be under the influence of their good example. This desirable mixture of divine and social enjoyment, is the native tendency of that love, which is the fulfilling of God's law, when duly exercised in the society of good men, employed in the best actions. The more we love men, the more we must wish them to love God, and the more we love God, the more we must desire that all others should love him also. Thus, the advantages of society in devotion, by gratifying the good

desires, that are included in divine and brotherly love, tends to encourage, and by encouraging, to strengthen these two comprehensive good affections, which are the chief parts of true holiness.

In considering the force of example, to which the influence of pathetic discourse is so much owing; it should be remembered, that good examples, not only are means of attention to other motives, but also partake of the nature of reasonable motives and persuasives themselves. It is true, indeed, that the influence of example abstractly considered, may be distinguished from the proposal of motives, or that strong attention to them, which was formerly treated of. Men may propose to us the chief motives, to the best affections, without giving us an example of them. Men may appear deeply affected with the best things, when they are not proposing them to us. Our best affections, should be founded on motives, far superior to the example of any creatures whatever. But the due influence of the highest motives, does not exclude the usefulness of various additional incitements. It rather renders the heart more susceptible of deep impressions, from all reasonable incitements of whatever kind.—Good examples, whether as to good actions, or good affections, are evidently of that number: if it were otherwise, and if good examples did not considerably strengthen our obligations to goodness, the resisting of their influence, would not be so great an aggravation of wickedness, as all reasonable men allow it to be.

As the influence of example, and other natural causes, is no just objection, but rather an argument for the importance of devout affections; neither is it any just objection, against ascribing the affections included in divine love, to divine grace. Various general considerations were proposed above, for illustrating the harmony between the efficacy of grace, and the good influence of means; but there are several peculiar proofs of that harmony, which arise from what has been observed concerning the usefulness of society, and example. Divine grace could produce its effects,

without making such means subservient to them. But if it is a principal end of the grace of God, to promote mutual love among men, it is evidently suitable to this noble end, not to lessen mens' mutual usefulness, in their most important concerns, but to increase it. If it is not the design of divine grace to unhinge or weaken, but to strengthen the bands of society, it is evidently suitable to this good end, that society in devotion, should not be superfluous, but attended with peculiar advantages. It is a great effect of God's goodness, that the operations of his grace, are so much suited to the frame of human nature, and to the interests of human society. It is a remarkable instance of this, that there are special promises of God's grace, and presence to those who meet together in his name.

Such encouragements, evidently tend to strengthen mens' inclination, to society in devotion. This is manifestly suitable to the relation, between the beginnings of true holiness and happiness here, and the consummation of them hereafter. The design of the one, is to prepare for the other. Future blessedness is a state of happy society, and communion with the most perfect creatures, and with the Source of all perfection; with God who is love, and with those who love God and one another. It is evidently suitable to the designs of divine grace, in preparing them for future blessedness, to encourage these things which bear a peculiar resemblance to it.

In considering the operations of divine grace, it should be remembered, as was hinted before, that they are suited to our frame, and suited to our necessities. None of its operations are superfluous. We need divine grace, in order to suitable impressions of all proper motives and inducements to holiness; but not in order to lessen any of these motives and inducements themselves. Mutual love, and mutual usefulness, are necessary parts of holiness. And, as was already proved, if mutual usefulness were lessened, this behoved to lessen the motives and inducements to mutual love, and the good effects of it.

If there are operations of divine grace, which are

necessary to us, for producing good dispositions and affections in the soul; it does not follow, that there should be other operations, which are no way necessary, to hinder the natural influence, of the affections of the soul on the body. That influence belongs to the union between these two parts of human nature. It is from that union, that the communication of affections, and that force of example which is implied in it, results. If we need divine grace, to sanctify the affections of the soul, it does not follow that this should impair its union with the body. The Author of grace, is also the Author of nature, though by no means, of the corruption of it. These things in our nature, which belong to the union of soul and body, and the uniting of men to one another in society, are no parts of the corruption of our nature, but principal parts of its original frame and structure. The design of divine grace, is not to impair that noble structure, but to remove what is hurtful to it.

In considering the natural causes, which have an influence on mens' affections, it is needful to have in view, not only the influence of the soul on the body, but also that of the body on the soul. It seems to be generally owned, that as the affections of the soul naturally produce some inward effects on the body, so these things have a reciprocal influence on the soul, suitably to the union between these two parts of human nature. It is not necessary for us to know precisely, what these inward things in the body are, which are most immediately affected by the various operations of the soul, or which have the most immediate influence on them. As people are divided in their sentiments about animal spirits, it is not needful to know which side is in the right. That which is of importance, in the present inquiry, is to consider some evident consequences of a general principle, which seems to be owned on all hands; namely, that that mutual sympathy of soul and body, and reciprocal action upon one another, which we are speaking of, is a general property that takes place, in all the affections of human nature, and is not to be restricted to any par-

ticular sort of them. Many who own this general principle, when they are considering the union between the soul and body, do not seem to advert to the plain consequences of it, when they are considering devout affections. It is proper, therefore, to observe some evident consequences of it, which are of use to prevent mistakes on that important subject.

In the first place, if this sympathy between soul and body, be a general common property, of all the affections of human nature, it is unreasonable to look on it as a distinguishing character of the devout affections of self-deceivers, or impostors.

No doubt, the affections of such mens' souls, in devotion, and in other cases, have an influence on their bodies, and that influence is reciprocal. But seeing this is by no means peculiar to them, but common to the affections of the best and of the worst of men; it is a thing of no use, in stating the differences between true holiness, and false appearances of it, or between true and false pretences to the divine Spirit. If this sympathy take place in the most corrupt, or most artificial affections, of persons who are impostors, in devotion, or in other things; it takes place also, in the exercise of mens' best affections towards their fellow-creatures, towards their families, their friends, or their country; and there is no reason for excluding it from the vigorous exercise, of the best affections towards God. No doubt, there is a great difference between even the bodily effects of irregular violent passions, and the effects of these good affections, which tend to true serenity, and tranquillity of soul. Yet, the greatest serenity of soul, does not impair its union with the body; but has a very desirable influence on it.

It would not be needful, to insist so much on these things, were it not that in considering devout affections, men suffer themselves to be more easily misled, by confused and undetermined notions, than on other subjects of less importance. Because, these properties of lively affections, which result from the union of soul and body, are no proofs of sincerity or of true holiness, some people seem to consider them rather as

objections against it. Whereas, indeed, to suppose such things, proofs of sincerity or objections against it, are extremes equally unreasonable. It is proper to observe, that the affections of the soul, have a real influence on the body, when they do not produce such sorts of outward natural signs of inward emotion, as are more remarkable, such as weeping or shedding tears, whether for joy or sorrow. Some good and strong affections may be of such a nature, as even to hinder such external signs. Yet, where such signs take place, they are far from being just objections against the excellency of the inward affections, whence they proceed. Thus, when Jacob wept and made supplication; when rivers of tears were shed by David for his own sins, and the sins of others; when Peter wept bitterly; when Paul besought men with tears, inculcating upon them things of infinite importance; when the spirit of grace and supplication, fulfilling the divine promise, makes sinners mourn for their sins, as one mourns for a first born; when Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb, and wept over Jerusalem; it is evident, that in these, and the like cases, there behoved to be such a mutual sympathy between soul and body, as was mentioned above; and, it is no less evident, that this is no objection against these affections, which produced such bodily signs, as if they were not therefore truly excellent and holy, and did not proceed from the Holy Ghost.

These things, and the things formerly observed, concerning the union between soul and body, shew the necessity of guarding against the ambiguity of words, and its bad tendency, in speaking of animal passions, or affections in devotion; seeing all the affections of the soul, in its present embodied state, are the affections of a rational animal. When people speak of animal passions, or affections in devotion, they do not mean such affections as have for their objects, the concerns of animal life. They mean either such affections, or emotions of affections in the soul, as produce certain natural effects on the body; or, these effects in the body, which are produced by such affections in the

soul, and have a reciprocal influence on them. When people incline to use the term animal affections, in this manner, it is evidently necessary to observe, the great and essential difference between the affections excited in the soul, and the bodily effects of them: which difference, is suitable to that between the soul and the body. When, by animal affections, are meant the affections in the soul, which have an influence on the body, this is a property, which agrees to the best affections, of which the soul is capable, as well as to the worst. According to this meaning of the word, when animal affections are said to be of little or no importance, without restriction or exception, nothing can be more opposite to truth, and to piety. The more needful it is to state aright the differences between devout affections that are of importance, and these that are not; the more care is requisite, against confounding these differences between them, with the general properties of human affections, that are common to both. If such confounding of things be a preservative against placing much of religion in affections, that are useless or inconsiderable; it has a tendency to exclude those that are of the greatest excellency and importance, by begetting a contempt of all vigorous devout affections in general. When people entertain strong prejudices against the most useful things, it is, as was formerly observed, by confounding them with other things, and by misimproving, for that purpose, some general resemblances, that are really consistent with a very essential disparity. And as such confusion, is indeed, the worst confusion that sophistry or inadvertence can introduce into mens' thoughts, it is of so much the greater importance, to avoid even such ways of speaking, as have a tendency to it.

As the use of words is arbitrary, people cannot be charged with wrong principles, merely for giving wrong names to things. When people give the name of *animal affections*, to all the affections of the soul, which have an influence on the body, they express a property of human affections, in which there is some reality, and which it is useful to consider. But they

express it in such a manner, as, by the force of custom, or of the association of ideas, has a bad tendency. By the force of custom, the names of *animal affections*, and *passions*, carry a low meaning, and raise ideas of affections, relating to the concerns of animal life. By this means, such ways of speaking, tend to make men confound things, between which there is the greatest difference, and to make them despise things which should be the objects of their high esteem.

When people understand by *animal affections*, not the affections of the soul, which produce certain effects in the body; but these bodily effects themselves, it is easy to observe, how we ought to judge of the importance of animal affections, according to this meaning of the expression. When people attain to the most desirable exercise of the best affections, such as divine love, and joy; it is the good affections excited in the soul that men are chiefly to prize; their good effects on heart and life, and not any immediate natural effects of them on the body, which admit of so great diversity, according to diversity of constitution. It is needful to caution men against over-valuing any bodily effects, or signs of inward affections; but this is abundantly practicable, without ways of speaking of so bad a tendency, as these in view. If the Author of our nature has so contrived it, that the best and most useful affections of the soul, should have certain natural effects on the body, we should avoid giving such names to these things, as tend to inspire a contempt of the effects of supreme wisdom. It is an incontested effect of the union of soul and body, that a right disposition of the one, is subservient to the best, and most useful operations of the other. Even they who love to philosophize about animal affections, own, that the bodily effects of the best dispositions and affections of the soul, are subservient to the strength and continuance of these affections, and to that application and attention of mind, which is so helpful to them. And, if this indeed be the case, it is evident, that animal affections without restriction, are far from being just objects of contempt.

From what is said, it is evident, that when people affect the above-mentioned ways of speaking, about animal affections in devotion, it has a tendency to mislead and seduce men, by confused notions of things, and in a special manner, to prepossess them against the vigorous exercise of the best affections. But it is proper to observe, that the manner in which some people love to subtilize on these things, tends, not only to encourage hypocritical formality in devotion, but also to lessen the guilt of self-deceit, and of enthusiasm, in false and presumptuous pretences, to divine communications. It tends to excuse such false pretences, when they are ascribed too much to bodily causes, and mens' ignorance of their own constitution, not only in the case of distemper of mind, but in all other cases in general.

In considering the causes of false pretences to the Holy Ghost, and to true holiness itself, it was observed, that such self-deceit, in ordinary cases, is chiefly to be ascribed to other causes than bodily constitution, or want of philosophy. Pride, self-flattery, inexcusably false and partial notions of religion, inconsiderateness about the word of God, mens' neglecting to search and try themselves impartially, and to compare heart and life, and their various attainments in devotion, with that divine standard, with the like culpable causes of practical error, are the things that are chiefly to be blamed as the causes of self-deceit, in false pretences to the divine Spirit, or to the divine favour and image. Bodily constitution, may indeed have a considerable influence on these devout attainments, which men over-value in ascribing them to sanctifying grace. But ofttimes it may happen, that these attainments themselves, may be things useful, for which men are not to be blamed: they may be, in themselves, things of a good tendency. It is the self-flattery, by which men lay more stress on them than they ought, to which mens' delusion is chiefly to be imputed. There is sincerity and hypocrisy, and there are true and false pretences among persons of all sorts of constitutions; of which more afterwards.

In the mean time, seeing mens' over-valuing their attainments in devotion, or their devout affections, contributes so much to their self-deceit, in their highest hopes and pretences; it is of great importance to state the differences between these attainments which have a connexion with sincere holiness, and those which come short of it. It is necessary to consider the distinguishing characters, of these two different sorts of attainments. But, seeing the influence of the affections of the soul on the body, is by no means of that number, due precautions should be taken against a mistake so unreasonable in itself, and of so manifest bad tendency.

Though several things have been already hinted, concerning the influence of particular bodily constitution, on the affections of the soul, this is a subject that deserves to be inquired into somewhat more particularly. The due consideration of it is of use, both for avoiding the delusions of self-deceit, in over-valuing some sorts of devout affections; and for avoiding other mistakes, that tend to make men despise other devout affections, that are of the greatest importance. As it is dangerous to ascribe the effects of mere bodily constitution to a higher cause, so it is needful to use proper precaution against an opposite extreme, which many are ready to give into.

That diversity in mens' bodily constitutions occasions some diversity in their affections, and that this extends to all human affections in general, and consequently to these which belong to devotion, seems to be past all question. But it is needful to observe, what that diversity is, and to distinguish it from other differences in mens' affections, which ought by no means to be confounded with it. Here it is needful to reflect a little on what was formerly observed, concerning the most important differences that can take place, in the affections of rational creatures: namely, the differences between those who love God with their whole heart and soul, and are endowed with sincere universal holiness, and those who are destitute of so desirable a disposition of soul. It was shewn above, that

the actual exercise of mens' affections, in a special manner, in devotion, partakes of the difference that takes place in the rooted habitual dispositions of the soul, whence these actual exercises of affections proceed. It is evident, that these differences in mens' affections are of such importance, that all other differences, when compared to them, arevery inconsiderable. It is no less evident, that those differences do by no means arise from diversitv of consitution. To suppose that they do, would be equally absurd and uncharitable. Such a supposition would restrict true holiness and happiness to men of some particular bodily constitutions ; and exclude all others from a possibility of attaining the end of their being.

If we consider the differences, which result merely from constitution, and compare them with the other differences formerly explained at large, it is evident, that there is no proportion between them. Constitution may occasion a diversity in the influence of the affections, both on the mind and body, but it is in things of far less importance, than the uprightness of the heart, and that true strength of the best affections, which was formerly explained. As to the mind, it may cause a diversity as to penetration, memory and invention, and the influence of affections on these things ; to all which, vivacity of constitution may be subservient. As to the body, constitution may occasion a diversity in the influence of vigorous affections in the soul, on the inward bodily effects, and outward natural signs of inward emotion. It may make some men more susceptible than others, of strong impressions from the above-mentioned inferior, though useful, natural means of exciting the affections, as particularly the force of example. It may make them more ready to be moved, in seeing others affected. It may make them more fit to excite the affections of others, because their own have a greater influence on their thoughts, their state, their voice, or aspect, and the like. By these means, bodily constitution, when joined with good endowments, may give some men a superior dexterity in persuasion ; which, when im-

proved with integrity and to good purposes, is far from being contemptible. But, it is obvious, that all these and the like differences, are not at all of the same kind with the great differences in mens' dispositions, that were formerly considered. Whatever differences relate only to penetration, memory, invention, bodily effects and signs of inward affections, and the like, are not comparable to the differences between true holiness, and all the attainments that come short of it.

Persons, whose constitution gives them the greatest advantages above others, in all the things that depend on mere constitution, may equally surpass others in good endowments and abilities, and in the wicked abuse of them. Among those who have attained to true holiness, persons of the most desirable constitutions, though truly sincere, may have made less progress than others in these most substantial things, wherein true holiness consists; as sometimes they may be found, by God's blessing, to excel others in these things, as well as in endowments of an inferior nature. Persons of the most different constitutions may have equal degrees of sincere divine love, though that affection exert itself in different manners, both as to inward emotions, and external unaffected expressions and signs; while love to God with the whole heart, equally excludes coldness and luke-warmness in both.

Thus, while men are endowed with suitable love to God, and their neighbours; though diversity of temper and constitution, may occasion unlikeness in things of far less importance, it does not mar their happy resemblance and conformity, in a common participation of the divine image. It does not make them differ, in the main, as to the prevalent rooted dispositions of their hearts, and the tenor of their lives. It does not make them differ as to the chief principles, the chief rules, and last end of their actions. Their chief love and hatred, their greatest joys and sorrows, their chief hopes and fears, may be the same, though in some circumstantial effects, and external signs of these inward affections, there may be a very discernible diversity. There is a great diversity of degrees,

and of strength, in holy dispositions and affections; but neither is diversity of constitution, the source of it, nor are the effects of constitution, the things that manifest it. This is evident, from the account formerly given of the principal things, wherein the true strength of holy affections consists, which it is needful to have still in view, for avoiding the most hurtful mistakes, in this subject. Their true strength does not consist in their influence on external bodily signs, or the other inferior things above-mentioned, but on their influence on other effects, of incomparably greater importance on mens' hearts and lives; their superiority to all other affections, their efficacy in keeping other affections within due bounds, and directing them to right purposes; their powerful influence on steady universal holiness in practice, and vigorous opposition to temptations to the contrary, are the things by which we are to make a true estimate of their sincerity and strength. These are things very different from these properties of human affections, that depend on constitution. The effects of constitution, therefore, do not belong either to the essence of holy affections themselves, or that progress in them which all should aspire after.

These things shew, that the influence of constitution on mens' affections, is neither a just objection against the importance of the good devout affections formerly described, nor yet against ascribing the affections included in divine love to divine grace. The arguments which prove the necessity of divine love and grace, shew the necessity of these things, to men of all sorts of constitution. If these things be necessary to all, it is highly unreasonable and uncharitable, to suppose any sort of persons excluded from a share in them. It should be observed, that the diversity which takes place in the constitution of mens' bodies, and even in the temper of their minds, and various endowments; as well as the other manifold variety in the divine works, is designed by supreme wisdom for valuable purposes, and is very subservient to the good of society. This makes it still the more unreasonable, to

imagine, that if divine grace sanctified mens' souls, it behoved to take away all diversity in the constitution of their bodies.

A principal thing in the constitution or condition of the body, that has a peculiar influence on the affections of the soul, both in the concerns of religion and other things, is melancholy. All who have considered the influence of that indisposition, are agreed that it has ofttimes contributed much to very hurtful irregularities and delusions. It is also well known, how people who are prepossessed against devout affections, make a handle of these irregularities for strengthening their own prejudices and those of others. It is in this as in many other cases, where people endeavour to form plausible objections against the most useful things by exaggerating the abuses of them; and by magnifying those resemblances of them, which may be found in things that are hurtful or contemptible.

Melancholy is taken sometimes for a temporary disease on the body, which, in various degrees, hinders the exercise of reason; sometimes for a particular bodily constitution, which, without hindering the exercise of reason, causes a greater disposition in some than others, to sadness in the mind; though, on some occasions, they may exceed others in passions of a contrary nature. These things admit of a great variety of degrees. It is a well known property of melancholy, espseially when considered as a disease, that it renders men more susceptible of vehement affections; and particularly of the opposite extremes of joy and sorrow, of gladness and fear; and that sometimes by turns. As there are many degrees of that disorder, it is certain that in many cases it does not render mens' delusion so insuperable and excusable as those of men who are in the strictest sense, distempered. In many cases, where melancholy people falsely pretend to holiness and to the Holy Ghost, it is too favourable a way of accounting for their self-deceit, to ascribe it wholly to bodily causes Ofttimes their self-deceit, as well as that of others, is chiefly owing to pride, self-flattery, and other spiritual evils formerly mentioned. Yet

as self-flattery founds its pretence to the effects of the Holy Ghost, on attainments which seem to have some resemblance to them; melancholy may contribute to spiritual delusion, by its peculiar influence on strong fervours. Melancholy people may impose on themselves the more easily, by means of their vehement affections in devotion; as others may impose on themselves by wrong principles which exclude, in effect, the heart and affections from being concerned in devotion. The natural effects of melancholy should make those who are subject to it, and are not incapable of reflection, the more jealous of themselves, and the more careful in examining their attainments. It should make them exceeding cautious how they pretend to any thing extraordinary. It should also make those, who have access to do them good offices, careful not to second and promote the bad tendency of their indisposition.

But notwithstanding all this, though some melancholy people, as well as others, may overvalue their devout fervours, and may impose on themselves in their pretences to holiness; it would be very unreasonable, and even cruel to affirm this of them all. Such distresses render those who labour under them objects of the compassion of men; and it is highly absurd to suppose, that they exclude them from sharing in the compassion of God. Charity obliges us, not only to other good offices towards men in such circumstances, but also to as favourable sentiments and hopes of them as of other people in other troubles. This is the more reasonable, because the afflicting dispensations of God's providence are so subservient to the designs of his grace; and that there is no reason to exclude any sort of afflictions from being capable of a subserviency that way. People endowed with sincere piety and holiness, may be subject to melancholy, as well as other troubles; though, in such cases, it is needful to distinguish between the effects of the best dispositions rooted in their souls, and the effects of their bodily indisposition.

But, however melancholy be not inconsistent with

integrity and true holiness, it is so noxious a disorder, that people cannot be too cautious in avoiding whatever has a real tendency to it. Most part of people, both good and bad, seem to be apprised of this in general. When, therefore, they who oppose serious piety, endeavour to charge some of the principal things that belong to it, with so hurtful a tendency; they choose a plausible topic, if their reasonings were well founded. That this is far from being the case, is evident from what was observed before, concerning the influence of divine love and joy, on the most desirable serenity and composure of soul; and on the good disposition of the judgment and understanding. But this may be farther illustrated, by comparing together briefly, the chief known causes of melancholy, and the chief means and effects of divine love.

It is generally owned, that though melancholy may sometimes owe its rise, merely to natural causes in the body, it proceeds very frequently from disorders in the mind. When there are natural causes of it in the body, if their bad tendency is not wholly insuperable, and if there are preservatives that may be of use to defeat them, good dispositions in the mind must be of that number. There is all the evidence, that a thing of that nature is capable of, that by the laws of union between soul and body, the best disposition in the one, has the most favourable influence on the other. This is evidently agreeable to experience, and to the maxims of those who have made the best observations on nature in different ages, nor can any thing be more suitable to that perfect wisdom and goodness, which are so conspicuous in all divine contrivances, of which the union between the two essential parts of human nature, is none of the least remarkable.

Where the disease of melancholy in the body arises from disorder in the mind, it arises from things that are of a very different nature from divine love, and of a very opposite tendency. They who have given the best accounts of that disease from experience, observe that a principal cause of it in the mind, is that immoderate and violent affection towards inferior objects,

which, in the case of disappointments and losses, naturally produces immoderate dejection and sorrow. As every disposition of mind that gives the love of any inferior object, the sovereignty in the heart, implies a contrariety to divine love; so there is not, perhaps, any one inordinate affection in the heart, that is not in experience found capable of disordering the judgment. Seeing divine love is the best, and indeed the only true preservative against inordinate affection; it must be the best antidote against overwhelming sorrow. It is itself an affection to an object which the soul can never lose. They who have this affection, have nothing to fear about the object of it; all that they have to dread is the weakness and decay of the affection itself. It is the only good affection of which this can be said. It is otherwise as to mens' best affection towards their fellow-creatures, their families, their friends, their country. Such affections may occasion overpowering melancholy, on the account of disasters that cannot be repaired. All good affections towards any other objects, but the independent Being, may multiply our sorrows, by making us sharers in the sorrows of others. This does not hinder good affections to our fellow-creatures from being amiable and necessary; but it shews that the love of God is the affection that is farthest from a hurtful tendency to sorrow.

It is fit to observe, that inordinate and violent affections, occasion over-powering melancholy in these who are so far from having any favourable concerns about religion, that they are inveterate adversaries of it.—Some people are apt to imagine, that if mens' melancholy be attended with a concern about religion, it must have been some concern that way that gave rise to it at first. But people who have written on this subject, have publicly owned the contrary from their own experience.* A deep concern about religion, may be awakened by these sorrows which produce melancholy, in the same manner as it is awakened by other great sorrows, which have no such effect. If great

* Mr. Clifford on Melancholy.

distresses and sorrows, which are means of recovering men from thoughtlessness and inconsiderateness, have a tendency to awaken a concern about religion, this is no just objection against such concern, but rather an argument in its favour.

Where melancholy is owing in whole, or part, to a concern about religion, as the source of it; sometimes is proceeds from bitter remorse for enormities joined with a neglect of the true ends of repentance, and sorrow for sin. In such cases, whatever is of a hurtful tendency in mens' sorrow, is wholly owing to their sins, and not to their repentance. Ofttimes, where a concern about a future state has an influence on melancholy, it is owing to mens' low thoughts of the true grounds of hope and trust in God. Nothing can be a better preservative against such evils, than just impressions of the chief motives to divine love. The same great truths of religion are at once, the chief grounds of humble hope and confidence in God, and of ardent love to him; as also, of the most effectual hatred of sin and sorrow for it. The same things that are the chief means of establishing the peace of God in the conscience, are also the chief means of kindling the love of God in the heart. If men, who have sincere love to God, fall under some degrees of melancholy, and religious fears have some influence on it, it is not to the strength, but to the weakness of their faith and love, that their distress is to be imputed. If men who have some good hope of the favour of God, are overcome with melancholy, this it owing to their not prizing the blessedness of an interest in the divine favour, as they ought. Want of due esteem of the happiness of the soul in God, is a principal cause of all inordinate affection, and of all immoderate sorrow and discontent. If melancholy may be sometimes much owing to immoderate solitary contemplation, it is evident, that as this implies a culpable neglect of the duties of society, it argues an important defect as to mens' love to God and his laws. Suitable love to God, implies love to society, and a prevalent inclination to usefulness in it.—If melancholy be ofttimes owing to false notions of

religion, and particularly to such notions, as annihilate or impair the amiable apprehensions we should have of God, this only proves that the same misapprehensions, which are the hinderances of divine love, are the causes of melancholy. Some people, indeed, seem to imagine, that, if we have the most amiable thoughts of God, we must have more favourable thoughts of sin, than what the scripture suggests to us. But it can be proved, from the principles of natural religion, that whatever is a motive to the love of God is a motive to hate sin; and is a proof of its bad tendency and danger, by proving the importance of that law which is violated by it.

If some people confine their devout exercises too much to religious sorrow, which perhaps is a rare extreme, the bad tendency of this is an argument in favour of divine love and joy. Christian doctrine shews, that the consideration of the grounds of our sorrow in ourselves should be subservient to just impressions of the grounds of our joy and triumph in God. It teaches us, indeed, that joy in God must be tempered with penitential sorrow for sin. But nothing is more necessary to true wisdom, in the heart of a sinner, than so desirable a mixture: and nothing is more subservient to solid and durable joy.

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