

as filthy rags. Though your heads were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears, and you should weep day and night continually; nay, though you should weep tears of blood, all would be in vain; for it could not cleanse you from the guilt and pollution of the least sin. To depend upon anything that ever he did, or can possibly do, is but like the setting up of a paper-wall to keep off a devouring fire: for it cannot screen you from the consuming flames of God's wrath and fiery indignation. 'By the works of the law (says the apostle), no flesh can be justified.'

7. *Lastly*, If ye would be delivered from the state of sin and misery into which ye are brought by your fall in the first Adam, come unto and accept of the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer. God has laid help for you upon this mighty One, who is both able and willing to save all that come unto God by him. Close with him by faith, and you shall be redeemed from the guilt of sin, have its power subdued in you, and at last be delivered from the inbeing of it, and from all the penal consequences and effects thereof. He is now saying, Behold me, behold me; O do not refuse him, lest ye perish for ever.

OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

LUKE i. 35.—*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

THESE words are the angel's answer to Mary, who, understanding the angel as speaking of a thing presently to be done before Joseph and she should come together, desires to know how she, being a virgin, should conceive. Here,

1. The angel tells her how she should 'conceive and bring forth a Son,' namely by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the power of the Highest, the Spirit of God being the true God, and so the Highest. The author of this conception is the Holy Ghost, not to exclude the Father and the Son, who also concurred to this work, as to all works without God himself; and besides the power of all the three persons is one. But it is appropriated to the Spirit, as creation to the Father, and redemption to the Son, so the consummation of all things to the Spirit. The way of the Spirit's powerful working to this miraculous conception, is denoted by two words. One is, *that the Holy Ghost should come upon her*, not in an ordinary way, as

in the conception of all men, Job x. 8. 'Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about;' but in an extraordinary way, as on the prophets, and those that were raised to some extraordinary work. The other is, that *the power of the Highest*, which is infinite power, *should overshadow her*, to wit, make her, though a virgin, to conceive by virtue of the efficacy of infinite power, by which the world was created, when the same Spirit moved on the waters, cherished them, and framed the world. I shall say no more of this, seeing the Holy Spirit did overshadow or cast a cloud over the virgin in this operation, that men might not pry curiously into this mystery.

2. He shews what should follow on this miraculous conception, namely, that the fruit of her womb, the child she should bear, should be called *the Son of God*. Where the angel teaches two things. (1.) The immaculate sinless conception of the child Jesus, *that holy thing*, a holy thing though proceeding from a sinful creature, not tainted with sin, as all other children are. Job asks, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' and answers, 'Not one.' But though this be impossible with men, yet it is possible with God, whose infinite power can do every thing. The powerful operation of the divine Spirit sanctified that part of the virgin's body of which the human nature of Christ was formed, so that by that influence it was separated from all impurity and defilement. So that, though it proceeded from a creature infected with original sin, there was no sin or taint of impurity in it. This was a glorious instance of the power of the Highest. (2.) He tells the virgin, that therefore, seeing that child to be thus conceived, he should be *called*, that is, owned to be, *the Son of God*. He says not, Therefore that holy thing shall be the Son of God, for he was the Son of God before, by virtue of his eternal generation; but, Therefore he shall be *called*, i. e. owned to be really so, and more than a man. The reason of this is, because Isaiah had prophesied that the Son of God should be the Son of a virgin. When therefore you, a virgin, shall conceive, your child shall be acknowledged to be the Son of God in man's nature. Matth. i. 22, 23. 'Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.' He was promised to the church as the Messiah, 'a child born unto us, a son given unto us,' Isa. ix. 6. And he actually was so, Luke ii. 11.

Doct. 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the

power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.'

In discouering from this doctrine, I shall shew,

- I. Who she was that was the mother of Christ as man.
- II. What we are to understand by his becoming man.
- III. That he was true man.
- IV. What we are to understand by his being conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary.
- V. Why he was born of a virgin.
- VI. Make application in a few inferences.

I. I am to shew who she was that was the mother of Christ as man. Christ as God had no mother, and as man no father. But his mother as man was Mary. She was the seed of Abraham; and so Christ was that seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed, Gal. iii. 16. She was of the tribe of Judah, Luke iii. 33. and of that tribe Christ by her did spring, Heb. vii. 14. She was also of the family of David, as appears by her genealogy, Luke iii. and therefore Christ is called the Son of David, as the Messiah behoved to be. She was, however, but a mean woman, the family of David being then reduced to a low outward condition in the world, having long before lost its flourishing state; so that our Lord 'sprung up as a root out of a dry ground,' Isa. xi. 1. and liii. 2.

She was a virgin before and at the time of her bringing forth Jesus, but espoused to Joseph, who was of the same tribe with her. What she was after, I think Christians should raise no question about that matter, seeing the scripture has buried it in silence. And therefore, as they are presumptuous who would always make her being a virgin an article of faith, so they are rash that would define the contrary. For they are but little versed in the scripture, who know not that kinsmen among the Jews are ordinarily in sacred writ called *brethren*; as Abraham and Lot, his brother's son, are called *brethren*, Gen. xiii. 8. So no argument can be drawn from persons being designed *the brethren of Christ*, in the evangelists, to prove that Mary bore children to Joseph.

II. I come to shew what we are to understand by Christ's becoming man. It implies,

1. That he had a real being and existence before his incarnation. He truly was before he was conceived in the womb of the virgin, and distinct from that being which was conceived in her. He tells us himself, that he was in heaven before he ascended thither: 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' John vi. 62. Yea, he was with his Father from all eternity, before any of the creatures came out of the womb of nothing.

So Prov. viii. 29, 30, 'When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' Here the Spirit of God describes the most blessed state of Jesus Christ, from those eternal delights which he had had with his Father before his assumption of our nature, 'Then I was by him,' or 'with him:' he was so with him, as never any other was, even in his very bosom, John i. 18. 'The word was with God,' ver. 1. And he calls himself 'the bread of life that came down from heaven,' chap. vi. ver. 33. Here he opposeth himself to the manna, wherewith God fed the Israelites in the wilderness, which never was really in heaven, nor had its original from thence. 'Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but the Father gave you Christ really from thence.' John xvi. 28. 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.' He is called 'Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.'

2. That he actually took upon him our nature. He assumed the entire nature of man into the unity of his divine person, with all its integral parts and essential properties; and so was made or became a real and true man by that assumption. Hence it is said, John i. 14. 'The Word was made flesh.' But though Jesus Christ had two natures, yet not two persons, which was the error of Nestorius, who lived in the fourth century. He so rent the natures of Christ asunder, as to make two distinct persons of them, and consequently two Christs, of which one was crucified at Jerusalem, and the other not, as he blasphemously alleged; and so he plainly denied the hypostatical union of the divine and human natures in the person of our blessed Redeemer. But though Christ had two natures, yet but one person: for his human nature never subsisted separately and distinctly by any personal subsistence of its own, as it is in all other men; but, from the first moment of his conception, it subsisted in union with the second person of the adorable Trinity. Again, though 'the Word was made flesh,' yet it was without any confusion of the natures, or change of the one into the other: which was the heresy of the Eutychians of old, who so confounded the two natures in the person of Christ, that they denied all distinction between them. Eutyches thought that the union was so made in the natures of Christ, that the humanity was absorbed and wholly turned into the divine nature; so that, by that transubstantiation, the human nature had no longer being. To oppose this heresy, the ancient fathers did very fitly make use of the sacramental union between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ, and thereby shewed that the hu-

man nature of Christ is no more really converted into the Divinity, and so ceaseth to be the human nature, than the substance of the bread and wine is really converted into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, and thereby ceaseth to be both bread and wine. But by this union the human nature is so united with the Divinity, that each retains its own essential properties distinct. The properties of either nature are preserved entire. It is impossible that the majesty of the Divinity can receive any alteration; and it is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impression of the Deity, so as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinite. As the soul and the body are united, and make one person; yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change indeed made in the humanity, by its being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity; as a change is made in the air when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasius makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ's incarnation; the fire signifying the divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven. As the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into the fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire: So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it: but they are so united, that the properties of both remain firm: two are so become one, that they remain two still; one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Divinity, and the weakness of the humanity. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ.

3. Christ's becoming man implies the voluntariness of this act of his in assuming the human nature. When he was solacing himself in the bosom of the Father with the sweetest pleasures that heaven could afford, yet even then the very prospect of his incarnation afforded him unspeakable delight, Prov. viii. 31. 'Rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth, and my delights were the sons of men.' See what is said, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.' And when he was in the world, and had endured many abuses and injuries from sinners, and con-

traditions of them against himself, and was even come to the most difficult part of his work, yet even then he could say, 'How am I straitened (or pained) until it be accomplished!' Luke xii. 50. He longed to have the work of Redemption finished, for which he had assumed the human nature, that thereby he might be fitted and qualified for suffering. He cheerfully assumed our nature, that so he might be capable to suffer, and thereby satisfy offended justice for his people's sins. He was not forced or constrained to become man, but he willingly laid aside the robes of his Divinity, and clothed himself with the infirmities of the flesh. Yea, if he had not willingly engaged to take on our nature, and die for our sins, divine justice could not have accepted of his blood as the price of our redemption.

III. I proceed to shew, that Christ was true man. Being the eternal Son of God, he became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul. He had the same human nature which is common to all men, sin only excepted. He is called in scripture 'man,' and 'the Son of man, the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David,' &c; which designations could not have been given unto him, if he had not been true man. And it is said, Heb. ii. 14, 15, 16. 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' And so he became not an angel, but a man. As man consists of two essential parts, body and soul; so did Christ. He had a real body of flesh, blood, and bones, not a fantastical body, which is only a body in appearance. Hence he said to his affrighted disciples, when they thought they had seen a spirit when he first appeared to them after the resurrection, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: Handle me and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have,' Luke xxiv. 39. He was born with a body which was prepared for him, of the same appearance with those of other infants. He increased in stature, and grew up by degrees; and was so far from being sustained without the ordinary nourishment wherewith our bodies are preserved, that he was observed by his enemies to come eating and drinking; and when he did not so, he suffered hunger and thirst. The thorns that pricked the sacred temples of his head, the nails which penetrated through his hands and his feet, and the spear that pierced his blessed side, gave sufficient proof and testimony of the natural tenderness and frailty of his flesh.—The actions and pas-

sions of his life shew that he had true flesh. He was hungry, thirsty, weary, faint, &c. As therefore we believe that Christ came into the world, so we must own that he came in the verity of our human nature, even in true and proper flesh. With this determinate expression it was always necessary to acknowledge him. For 'every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God,' 1 John iv. 2, 3. This spirit appeared very early in the Christian church, in opposition to the apostolical doctrine: and Christ, who is both God and man, was as soon denied to be man as God. Simon Magus, the arch-heretic, first began, and many afterward followed him. And as Christ had a true body, so he had also a rational soul. For certainly, if the Son of God would stoop so low as to take upon him our frail flesh, he would not omit the nobler part, the soul, without which he could not be man. We are told that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, the one in respect of his body, the other in respect of his soul. Wisdom belongeth not to the flesh, nor can the knowledge of God, which is infinite, admit of an increase or addition. He then, whose knowledge did improve together with his years, must have a subject proper for, and capable of it, which was no other than a human soul. This was the seat of his finite understanding and directed will, distinct from the will of his Father, and consequently that of his divine nature, as appears by that known submission with respect to his drinking the cup of divine wrath; 'Not my will but thine be done,' says he. This was the subject of those affections and passions which so manifestly appeared in the course of his life, and particularly when he breathed forth that language, when entering upon his last sufferings, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.' This was it which on the cross, immediately before his departure, he committed to his Father's care, Luke xxiii. 46. 'Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit.' And as his death was nothing else but the separation of his soul from his body, so the life of Christ, as man, consisted in the vital union and conjunction of that soul with the body. So that he who was perfect God was also perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Which is to be observed, and asserted against the ancient heretics, who taught that Christ assumed human flesh; but the Word, or his Divinity, was unto that body in place of a soul. As he could not have been real man without a real body and reasonable soul, which are the two essential and constituent parts of man, so he could not have borne the punishment of his people's sins, if he had not suffered in both. They had forfeited both soul and body to divine jus-

tice, and should have suffered in both for ever, in hell; and therefore Christ, when he substituted himself in their room, suffered both in his body and in his soul. The sufferings of his body were indeed very great; it was filled with exquisite torture and pain; but his soul sufferings were much greater, as I observed in a former discourse.

IV. I come now to shew what we are to understand by Christ's being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This is a great mystery, beyond the reach and comprehension of a finite mind. The conception of our blessed Saviour was miraculous and supernatural, above the methods of nature. To open this a little three things are to be considered here.

1. The framing of Christ's human nature in the womb of the virgin.

2. The sanctifying of it.

3. The personal union of the manhood with the Godhead.

First, Let us consider the framing of the human nature of Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary. In the text the act is expressed to be the effect of the infinite power of God. And it sets forth the supernatural manner of forming the humanity of our blessed Saviour. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee*, and by an act of creative power frame the humanity of Christ, and unite it to the Divinity. In the framing of Christ's manhood, we are to consider the matter and the manner of it. The matter of his body was of the very flesh and blood of the virgin, otherwise he could not have been the Son of David, of Abraham, and Adam, according to the flesh. Indeed God might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it of the dust of the ground, as he did the body of Adam, our original Progenitor: but had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam, though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us; because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. It was therefore requisite to an affinity with us, not only that he should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to him. And thus he is of the same nature that sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us. Whereas, if he had been created as Adam was, it could not have been claimed in a legal and judicial way. Now, the Holy Ghost prepared the matter of Christ's body of the substance of the virgin; and he formed it of the matter thus prepared. Hence says Christ, 'A body hast thou prepared me,' Heb. x. 5. And says the apostle, Gal. iv. 4. 'God sent forth his Son made of a

woman.' The Holy Ghost sanctified that part of the virgin's substance whereof the body of Christ was to be formed, purging it from all sin and taint of impurity. For though a man cannot, yet God can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, and endue it with a capacity for the generation of a human body, which otherwise it would not have had alone. Though Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, yet we are not to think that he was made of the substance of the Holy Ghost, whose essence cannot be at all made. The Holy Ghost did not beget him by any communication of his essence; and therefore he is not the Father of Christ, though he was conceived by his power. The Holy Ghost did not minister any matter unto Christ from his own substance. Hence Basil says, Christ was conceived, not of the substance, but by the power, not by any generation, but by appointment and benediction of the Holy Ghost. And as for his soul, it was not derived from the soul of the virgin, as a part thereof; for spiritual substances are indivisible and impartible; and nothing can be cut off from them. But it was created and made of nothing by the divine power, as all other souls are. Hence God is called 'the Father of spirits,' Heb. xii. 9. and is said to 'form the spirit of man within him,' Zech. xii. 1. Here the forming of the soul of man is joined with these two glorious effects of God's creative power, the expansion of the heavens, and laying the foundations of the earth. Our Saviour's spirit was created by God, and infused into his body, when fitly organized to receive it. Again, the manner of framing the human nature of Christ is also to be considered; and that was extraordinary and miraculous, not by generation according to the ordinary and stated course of nature, but by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Ghost above the laws of nature: and for this cause it exceeds the compass of human reason, and the highest reach of created understandings, either to conceive or express the order and manner of his conception.

Secondly, Let us consider the sanctifying of Christ's human nature. I have already said, that that part of the flesh of the virgin, whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was purified and refined from all corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold. Our Saviour was therefore called *that holy thing*, Luke i. 35. Now, this sanctification of the human nature of Christ was necessary.

1. To fit it for personal union with the Word, who, out of his infinite love, humbled himself to become flesh, and at the same time out of his infinite purity, could not defile himself by becoming sinful flesh.

2. With respect to the end of his incarnation, even the redemption and salvation of lost sinners; that as the first Adam was the fountain of our impurity, so the second Adam should also be the pure fountain of our righteousness. God 'sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh;' which he could not have condemned, had he been sent in sinful flesh. The Father 'made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' which we could never have been made, if he had been tainted with any sin. He that needed redemption himself could never have purchased redemption for us.

Thirdly, We are to consider the personal union of the manhood with the Godhead. To clear this a little, you would know,

1. That when Christ assumed our nature, it was not united consubstantially, so as the three persons in the Godhead are united among themselves; they all have but one and the same nature and will: but in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills, though but one person.

2. They are not united physically, as the soul and body are united in a man: For death actually dissolves that union; but this is indissoluble. So that when his soul was expired, and his body interred, both soul and body were still united to the second person as much as ever.

3. Nor yet is this such a mystical union as is between Christ and believers. Indeed this is a glorious union. But though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with him.

But more positively, this assumption of which I speak is that whereby the second person in the glorious Godhead did take the human nature into a personal union with himself, by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the second person, yet without confusion, as I shewed already, both making but one person Immanuel, God with us. So that though there be a twofold nature in Christ, yet not a double person. For the human nature of Christ never subsisted separately and distinctly by any personal subsistence of its own, as it doth in all other men; but from the first moment of conception subsisted in union with the second person of the adorable Trinity, in a miraculous and extraordinary manner, being supernaturally framed within the womb of the virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. Again, as it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary, that thereby he might heal the whole na-

ture of the disease and leprosy of sin, which had seized upon and wofully infected every member and faculty of man. Christ assumed all, to sanctify all. He designed a perfect recovery by sanctifying us wholly in soul, body, and spirit: and therefore he assumed the whole in order to it. Again, he assumed our nature with all its sinless infirmities: therefore it is said of him, Heb. ii. 17. 'In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.' But here we are to distinguish between personal and natural infirmities. Personal infirmities are such as befall particular persons, from particular causes, as dumbness, deafness, blindness, lameness, leprosy, &c. Now, it was no way necessary that Christ should assume these; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c. These he was subject unto, which, though they are not in themselves formally and intrinsically sinful, yet they are the effects and consequents of sin. They are so many marks and stains that sin hath left of itself upon our natures; and upon that account Christ is said to 'be sent in the likeness of sinful flesh,' Rom. viii. 3. Again, the human nature is so united with the divine, that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. And this distinction is not, nor can be lost by that union. The humanity was indeed changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature; but not by being brought into an equality with it: for it was impossible that a creature should become equal to the Creator. He took upon him the form of a servant, but he lost not the form of God. He despoiled not himself of the perfections of the Deity, by taking upon him the humanity. The glory of his Divinity was not extinguished or diminished, though it was eclipsed and obscured under the vail of our humanity; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the sun, when he is shadowed by the interposition of a cloud. And this union of the two natures in Christ is an inseparable union; so that from the first moment thereof, there never was, nor to all eternity shall there ever be any separation of them.

Quest. But how did this union remain between them, when Christ's human soul and body were separated from each other upon the cross! *Ans.* Though the natural union between his soul and body was dissolved by death for a time, yet the hypostatical union between his divine and human nature remained as entire and firm as ever. For though his soul and body were divided from each other, yet neither of them were separated from the divine nature, but still subsisted as they did before, by the subsistence of the second person of the Trinity. And though Christ cried upon the cross with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' yet that did

not imply a dissolution of that union: for if that dereliction should signify a dissolution of the former union of his natures, the separation had been made in his life, and not at his death; for he made this dolorous complaint before he gave up the ghost. But these words infer no more, but that he was bereft of such joy and comfort from the Deity, as should allay and mitigate the bitterness of his present troubles. And therefore when our Saviour yielded up the ghost, he suffered only an external violence; and what was subject to such corporeal force did yield unto these dolorous impressions: and the imbecility and frailty of our nature being such, that life cannot subsist long in exquisite torments, the disposition of his body failed the soul, and the soul deserted his body. But because no power hath force against omnipotence, nor could any finite agent work upon the union made with the Word, therefore that did still remain entire, both as to the soul and to the body.

V. I now proceed to shew, why Christ was born of a virgin. That Christ was to be born of a virgin, was prophesied and foretold many ages before his incarnation, as Isa. vii. 14. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' Now, that the mother of Jesus was that virgin spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, is evident from the testimony of the evangelists, particularly Mat. i. 18, &c. It was not convenient that he should be born in the common order of father and mother; for if he had been so born, he would have been a natural son of Adam, and so represented by him in the covenant of works, and an heir of Adam's sin, as others are that are born by virtue of the blessing of marriage. By such a birth he had been polluted and defiled with sin: 'For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean;' Job xiv. 4. The Redeemer of the world behoved to be so born, as not to derive the stain of man's nature by his generation. For if he had been tainted with the least spot of our corruption, he had been incapable of being a Redeemer: he could never have redeemed others who stood in need of redemption himself. And although God by his almighty power, had perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother and cleansed them from all original sin, that so the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made, yet it was not convenient, that that person, who was God blessed for ever, as well as man, in partaking of our nature, should have a conception in the same maner with ours, but different from it, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person; which could not have been, had not a supernatural and a divine person been concerned as an active principle in it. Besides, such a

birth had not been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him the seed of the woman, not of the man; and so the truth and veracity of God had suffered some detriment by it. The seed of the woman only is set in opposition to the seed of the serpent. By his being born of a virgin, the holiness of his nature is effectually secured. This exempted him from the stain and pollution of Adam's sin, which his nature wholly escaped, in that he received it not as all others do, in the way of ordinary generation, wherein original sin is propagated: but this being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing. Christ was an extraordinary person, and another Adam; and therefore it was necessary he should be produced a new way. At first Adam was produced neither of man nor woman; Eve of a man without a woman; all others of a man and a woman. The fourth way remained, viz. of a woman without a man; and so Christ was born. And the wisdom of God appeared in that he was born of a virgin espoused; for thereby the reproach of illegitimacy was warded off; he had Joseph to take care of him in his infancy; his mother's good name and life were preserved from the malicious Jews; and our faith was the more confirmed by Joseph's testimony concerning Mary.

Thus we may be thoroughly satisfied,

1. That Christ had a true human body; and that though he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he had not merely the likeness of flesh, but true flesh, Luke xxiv. 39. Heb. ii. 14.

2. That he had a reasonable soul, which was a created spirit, and that the divine nature was not instead of a soul to him. When he died, he commended his spirit to God, Luke xxiii. 46. There is in him a created and an uncreated understanding and will, Mark xiii. 32. Luke xxii. 42. Thus he was true man, consisting of soul and body. And the human nature being united to the divine, there were great gifts of holiness, wisdom, &c. in the human nature of Christ, by virtue of this union, which yet were not infinite, Luke ii. 52.

3. That Christ's body was not made of any substance sent down from heaven, but of the substance of the virgin, Gal. iv. 4. He was 'the seed of the woman,' Gen. iii. 15. and the fruit of Mary's womb, Luke i. 42. otherwise he had not been our brother.

4. That the Holy Ghost cannot be called the Father of Christ, since his human nature was formed, not of his substance, but of that of the virgin, by his power.

5. That though as to the nativity of Christ there was nothing as to the way of it extraordinary, but he was at the ordinary time brought forth as others, Luke ii. 22, 23. and that as a general truth,

'A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come,' John xvi. 21. yet he was born without sin, being *that holy thing*. He could not have been our Redeemer, had he not been so. Heb. vii. 26. Neither could he have sinned, seeing the human nature was put beyond that capacity, by its union with the divine; and whatsoever Christ did or could do was the action of that person who was God, and so free from sin.

6. That the reason why Christ was born without sin, and the sin of Adam did not reach him, was because he came not of Adam by ordinary generation, not by the blessing of marriage, but by a special promise after the fall.

I shall conclude all with some inferences.

1. Jesus Christ is the true Messiah promised to Adam as the seed of the woman, to Abraham as his seed, the Shiloh mentioned by Jacob on his death bed, the Prophet spoken of by Moses to be raised from among the children of Israel, the Son of David, and the Son to be born of a virgin.

2. Behold the wonderful love of God the Father, who was content to degrade and abase his dear Son, in order to bring about the salvation of sinners. How astonishing is it, that he should send his only-begotten Son to assume our nature, and bear that dreadful wrath and punishment that we deserved?

3. See here the wonderful love, and astonishing condescendency of the Son, to be born of a woman, in order that he might die in the room of sinners. O how low did he stoop and humble himself, in assuming human nature, with all its sinless infirmities, in being subject to his own law, exposed to all manner of injurious usage from wicked men, to the temptations of Satan, and at last suffering a shameful and ignominious death! What great love to sinners, and what unparalleled condescension was here!

4. See here the cure of our being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. Christ was born of a woman for us, and he was born without sin for us, that the holiness of his nature might be imputed to us as a part of that righteousness which constitutes the condition of our justification before God. In him is a complete righteousness for our guilt, and a fountain for washing away our spiritual pollution.

5. Christ is sensibly touched with all the infirmities that attend our frail nature, and has pity and compassion upon his people under all their pressures and burdens. Hence the apostle says, Heb. ii. 17, 18. 'In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people:

for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' How comfortable is it to believers to consider, that he who is their great High Priest in heaven, is clothed with their nature, to capacitate and qualify him to have compassion on them in all their troubles and distresses.

6. Let this encourage sinners to come unto him, that they may be united unto him by faith, and so partake of the blessings of his purchase. Come and enter into a marriage-relation with him. Sin shall not stop the match, if ye be willing. He that could sanctify the virgin's substance to make it a sinless piece of flesh, can easily sanctify you. And he that united the human nature to his divine person, can also unite you to himself, so as ye shall never be separated from him.

OF CHRIST'S OFFICES IN GENERAL.

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

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

In the 11th verse of this chapter, there is a typical action crowning Joshua the high priest with two crowns, which is applied and explained in the following verses as representing Christ in his offices, who has on his head many crowns. In the 12th verse, there is a prophecy of the incarnation of Christ, under the metaphor of a branch, as sprung from the family of David, and making but a mean appearance in the world, 'as a root out of a dry ground.' In the verse where our text lies, we have the offices which he was to execute as our Redeemer; which are three.

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

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