

OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE.

ACTS iii. 22.—*A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.*

HAVING shewn that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, is invested with, and actually executes the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, I come now to speak of these offices distinctly; and shall begin with his prophetical office, which is plainly asserted in the words now read.

Here the apostle Peter shews the Jews, Moses pointing to Christ as the great Prophet of the church. Moses had told the Israelites in the wilderness, Deut. xviii. 15. 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.' Peter tells the Jews, that this eminent Prophet was now come, and exhorts them to submit unto his instructions. In the words we have,

1. A description of Christ as to his prophetical office, *A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.* Where

1st, Christ is described by his title, *a Prophet*, and that the Prince of all the Prophets, or the 'great,' or 'chief Shepherd,' as he is styled by the apostles. It belongs to a prophet, by virtue of his office, to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretel things which are to come. All these meet in Christ our great Prophet in a singular and eminent manner.

2dly, He is here described by his type; 'a Prophet like unto me,' says Moses; who therein typified and prefigured Christ. But you may say, is it not said of Moses, Deut. xxxiv. 10. 'There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.' I answer, It is true indeed of a mere man there never arose so great a prophet in Israel as Moses was, either in respect of his familiarity with God, or of the miracles which he wrought by the efficacy of the divine power. Moses, however, was but a servant, and Christ a Son: Moses was but a star to this Sun, and derived all his light and knowledge from him. All the prophets under the Old Testament, however eminent were but Stars, and borrowed all their light from the Sun of righteousness. Nevertheless there were several things wherein Christ was like to Moses; such as, Moses and Christ were both persecuted in their infancy, Moses was a deliverer from the temporal, but Christ from the spiritual Egypt, of which the former was a figure. But more particularly, Christ was like to Moses,

(1.) In this great intimacy and familiarity with God. It is said, Exod. xxxiii. 11. that 'the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.' He spake with Moses freely, familiarly, and immediately; not by an angel, in a dream or vision, as he did to other prophets. Now Christ was like Moses in this respect, and far excelled him in it; for he was intimate with God from all eternity, Prov. viii. 30; he was 'with God,' John i. 1. and lay in his bosom, knowing all his counsels and purposes.

(2.) Christ was like to Moses in the excellency of his ministration, and his great faithfulness in the discharge of it. It is said, Heb. iii. 2. 'He was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.' As the office of Moses extended to the whole house of God under the law, and to all the service of it; so did Christ's reach to the whole church of God, and to all the service of it under the gospel. As Moses was appointed of God to give out what he delivered; so was Christ appointed by his Father to institute what he did institute, and abrogate what he did abrogate. As Moses was faithful to him that appointed him in all the matters of God's house, keeping back nothing that he was commanded to reveal; so was Christ faithful to the Father, who did appoint him in like manner; yea, Christ far excelled Moses, as the apostle shews, Heb. iii. 3. 4. 'For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.'

(3.) Moses was a prophet that mediated between God and the people. He carried God's mind to them, and returned their mind to God, because they were not able to hear the voice of God immediately themselves, Deut. xviii. 16, 17. So Christ is a Mediator between God and man; he deals with God for man, and with man for God.

(4.) As Moses confirmed his doctrine by many miracles which he wrought in the presence of the people to their full conviction; so our great Prophet is like unto Moses in this also: for he wrought many mighty miracles in the view and face of the world, which could not be denied, and thereby confirmed the doctrine which he preached, and verified the divinity of his person and mission.

3dly, Christ is here described by his stock and lineage from which he sprung according to the flesh, 'A Prophet shall the Lord raise up of your brethren; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,' says the apostle, Rom. ix. 5. He was an Israelite: and it is evident that he sprang from the tribe of Judah, Heb. vii. 14. He put great honour and dignity upon that people and nation by his nativity and descent from them.

2. There is a strict injunction given of obedience to this Prophet: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' By *hearing*, in this place, we are to understand obedience: and this obedience is required to be given to this Prophet only, universally, and under great penalties. (1.) It is required to be given to him only; for so *him* in the text must be understood as exclusive of all others. It is true, we are commanded to obey the voice of his messengers and ministers, Heb. xiii. 17. but still it is Christ speaking by them to whom we are to pay our obedience. 'He that heareth you (says he), heareth me.' We are to obey them 'in the Lord,' i. e. commanding and forbidding in Christ's name and authority. (2.) This obedience must be given to him universally: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' Whatever he enjoins must presently be complied with; his commands are to be obeyed, not disputed. It is true, a judgment of discretion is allowed to Christians, to judge whether it be the will of God or not. We must 'prove what is the holy, good, and acceptable will of the Lord,' Rom. xii. 2. And whenever his will is understood and known, we have no liberty to chuse, but must conform ourselves to it, be the duty commanded ever so difficult, or the sin forbidden ever so pleasing and tempting. (3.) This obedience is required under a very severe penalty, even no less than being cut off and destroyed from among the people, and of God's requiring it at our hands, Deut. xviii. 19. Acts iii. 22. 'I will require it of him;' i. e. revenge myself in the destruction of the disobedient. This obligation laid on men to obey the great Prophet, is not a prediction, more than the commands, 'Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery,' &c.

The doctrine natively arising from the text is,

Doctr. 'Christ is a Prophet, and, as the Redeemer of his people, executes that office, in revealing to them, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for their salvation.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation.

II. What is that will of God that Christ reveals.

III. How he reveals this will of God.

IV. For what ends he reveals the will of God, and the necessity of this revelation in order to our salvation.

V. *Lastly*, Make some improvement.

1. I am to shew what is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation, wherein Christ's prophetic work lies. It implies,

1. That as it is God's determined will and purpose that some of

mankind shall be saved, so he has laid down a certain way and method for their salvation, out of which none can be saved, and in which all that take it shall be saved.

2. That the discovery of this method of salvation was a secret of God that man could never have found out, John i. 18. It was a counsel in the breast of God, which, for man or angel, might for ever have lain hid.

3. That our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with this will of God, John i. 18. He was 'in the bosom of the Father.' He was privy to his eternal counsels, as being the eternal Son of God. And therefore he needed not be carried to heaven, to hear and learn from God what he was to teach ere he began to preach to the world, being 'God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. Neither did he ascend unto heaven oftener than once, and that only after he had suffered, Heb. ix. 12.

4. That unto Jesus Christ we owe the discovery and revelation of the divine will. He is the fountain of all that light which points out the way to salvation, Isa. lv. 4. 'I have given him, (says the Lord), for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.' He is that true pillar of cloud that guides to the heavenly Canaan; and no beams of saving light shine on the world but from him, John iii. 13. and in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

II. I proceed to shew what is that will of God that Christ as a Prophet reveals. It is the will of God for the salvation of sinners, and that the whole will of God in all things concerning their edification and salvation. It is 'the word of his grace which is able to build them up,' Acts xx. 32. It is 'written, that ye might believe, —and that believing ye might have life.'

This may be reduced to two heads.

1. Faith. Man was broken off from God and his favour and fellowship. It was the will of God, that man should come and be reunited to him in the way of believing in a slain Redeemer. This Christ has revealed in the gospel. Therein he has laid open the mystery of reconciliation, as laid down betwixt the Father and him from eternity, in all the parts thereof, and this by his word and Spirit to teach his own children.

2. Obedience. Man, as he could not, so he knew not how to serve acceptably. Christ has also fully discovered that point. And therefore we find him at his prophetic work, expounding the law, and vindicating it from the false glosses of the Pharisees, Matth. v. vi. vii. and every where not only shewing men what to do, but how to do it.

More particularly, as the will of God denotes all that God would

have us to know, believe, and do, in order to our salvation; and as there are some things to be known as the foundation of our faith, some things to be believed, and some things to be done in point of duty, as the fruits and effects of true saving faith; so these particulars being the objects of Christ's teaching, I shall mention a few of them very briefly.

1. Christ makes known to us our original state, that holy and happy condition in which man was made; of which I gave you a specimen in the discourse concerning the creation of man. Man was then a holy and happy creature, the peculiar favourite of heaven, and endued with choicer prerogatives than all the creatures in this lower world. It is necessary for us to know this, that we may not accuse God of that sin and disorder which now prevails in our constitution, and renders us objects of the divine abhorrence; and may be unwearied till we regain our forfeited felicity. This is a matter of pure revelation, and is accordingly taught us in the inspired volume.

2. Christ reveals to us our misery and wretchedness by the fall. This I also endeavoured to open up to you in the course of this work. Man, by sin, lost communion with God, fell under his wrath and curse, and is liable to temporal and eternal miseries. This miserable state, though also a matter of revelation, is well known to all the descendants of Adam, so that they feel it in their sad experience, and they have no need to be taught it. But Christ teaches his people this doctrine in a manner that the rest of the world are strangers to. And therefore,

3. Christ reveals to us our woful impotency and inability to help ourselves. This is the fatal consequence of the fall, and has been partly mentioned in the foregoing part of this work. 'O Israel, (says the Lord), thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help,' Hos. xiii. 9. which says, that though our ruin is of us, our help is not in us. Hence men in their natural state are said to be *without strength*, incapable to deliver themselves from the wretched state into which they are plunged by sin. Man is so deeply sunk in the horrible pit, that it passes the skill and ability of men or angels to pull him out. He cannot atone offended justice, or expiate his sin. This deplorable state of man is revealed in scripture, and savingly only to the elect, by the Saviour of sinners.

4. Christ reveals as a Prophet, that there is a way found out, and a method laid down in the adorable depths of divine wisdom, whereby poor sinners may be delivered from sin and wrath, and obtain eternal salvation. For this discovery we are indebted to divine revelation. Of this I have spoken under the covenant of grace.

And Christ, as a Prophet, teaches this article to his people so efficaciously, that they acquiesce in this method of salvation.

5. He reveals to us that he is a full and sufficient Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25. So that his own people cordially embrace him as their only Saviour, and accept him as their sole Redeemer, looking for expiation of guilt, pardon of sin, and peace with God, only from and through him.

6. He teaches, that we must have union with him through faith, or else we can have no benefit by his blood, 1 John v. 12. 'He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life:' that is, he that is united to Christ is spiritually alive, and shall not come into condemnation; but he that is not united to him is still under the curse, and the wrath of God abideth on him. It is by being in Christ, united to him, that we escape condemnation, Rom. viii. 1.

7. Christ teaches us, that we must believe in, and receive him as our only Saviour and Redeemer, resting upon him alone for life and salvation. Hence it is said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

8. Another part of the will of God that Christ reveals to us is *our sanctification*; and we are told, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness of heart and life is absolutely to qualify men for the enjoyment of God in heaven, as no unclean thing can enter the celestial abode.

III. I come now to shew how Christ reveals this will of God for salvation, namely, by his word and Spirit, jointly or together; for both are absolutely necessary for attaining that end.

First, Christ reveals this by his word. This is the external revelation of it, without the knowledge of which no man can be saved. The personal Word of God teaches us by his word written or preached, or extraordinarily revealed. So there are three ways of Christ's teaching by his word.

1. The word extraordinarily revealed, as appears from Heb. i. 1. and Gen. iii. 15. which method having long ago ceased, we need not enlarge upon it.

2. By the word preached; which has been managed two ways, wherein the kindness of the Divine Teacher appears,

(1.) By his own personal preaching, Heb. i. 1. in the days of his flesh, when he went about the work of preaching the gospel to the Jews, for which cause he is called 'the minister of the circumcision,' Rom. xv. 8. putting a glory on the ministerial calling, by himself performing that office. He spake as never man spake. An hea-

venly authority and majesty appeared in his preaching, which attracted the attention of his hearers, and forced them to acknowledge that he was more than a human being.

(2.) By his ambassadors in his name. So he exercised his prophetic office.

[1.] Before his incarnation, under the Old Testament, 1 Pet. iii. 19. instructing his church sometimes by extraordinary teachers, the prophets; sometimes by ordinary teachers, or both. And this he did both before and after the word was written: for although before the scripture the church was supplied by extraordinary revelation, yet all were not so taught, but many were trained up by the external teaching of the patriarchs; as appears from Abraham's practice, Gen. xviii. 17, 19.

[2.] After his incarnation, by the apostles, who are infallibly guided, and to this day by ordinary ministers, by whom Christ still exercises his prophetic office, Eph. iv. 11. and so he promised to be with them, Mat. xxviii. ult. In this respect they have that awful hedge set about them, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.' On this ground he obligeth people to repair to them for clearing, from the word, the matters of salvation, sin, and duty to them, Mal. ii. 7. 'They should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.'

3. By the word written, John xx. 31. 'These things are written, that ye might believe,' &c. Thereby it is that the prophets and apostles, and all the inspired writers, being dead, yet speak to us, and Christ by them, to shew us the will of God for our salvation. Thus was the church taught from the days of Moses, and in this manner it is taught to this day. We need not say, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' or 'who shall descend into the depths?' that is, for the revelation of the method of salvation. The word is nigh to us, it is among our hands. To that, Christ sends us to know his mind, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony; yet not to juggle out men's teaching from it, Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Yet the word itself is not sufficient to teach us the will of God for our salvation. Not the word preached; for even most of those who heard him that spake as never man spake, were not bettered by his preaching; as appears from John xii. 37, 38. 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Nor yet the word written, for the same reason; nor that extraordinarily revealed, as in the case of Balaam. See 1 Cor. ii. 14. 'The natural man receiveth

not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is a darkness over the minds of men which nothing but omnipotency can remove. Therefore,

Secondly, Christ teaches his elect, who are taught to salvation by his Spirit, who joins internal illumination to external revelation. 'He opened the understandings' of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, 'that they might understand the scriptures,' Luke xxiv. 45. Thus all the elect are taught of God, and so come to Christ; and thus have they always been taught. Ye must not, however, understand these as two different ways of Christ's teaching to salvation, in those that are capable of both; for the word is that by which the Spirit teacheth still. These God has joined, Isa. lix. 21. '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 in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' John xvi. 13, 14. 'When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' Thus the teaching of the elect is begun, and thus it continues to the end.

Indeed the word hath a mighty power and efficacy upon the hearts of men. It enlightens their mind, awakens their consciences, convinces of sin, and can effectually convert and change them. But this is only when it is managed by the Spirit's hand. All its power and efficacy is from him. The virtue of the word is not from itself: it doth not work in a physical way, as natural agents do, for then the effect would naturally follow, unless it were miraculously hindered. But this spiritual efficacy is in the word, as the healing virtue was in the pool of Bethesda, of which it is said, John v. 4. 'An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.' This efficacious power is not naturally inherent in the word at all times, but only communicated to it at some special seasons. Many times the word is purely and plainly preached, but no gracious effect follows. It proves but like the beating of the air, which makes no impression upon it: none are awakened, convinced, or converted by it. Neither is the power of the word communicated to it by the instrument that manageth it: for saith the apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 7. 'Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God

that giveth the increase.' Ministers are nothing, they have no power or strength of their own sufficient for such a purpose as this is. The apostle doth not mean here, that they are useless instruments, and altogether unnecessary, but that they are insufficient of themselves, to produce such mighty effects. It worketh not as it is the word of man, but as it is the word of God. Ministers may say of the ordinary, as Peter said of the extraordinary effects of the Spirit, Acts iii. 12. 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk!' All the power and efficacy of the word is derived from the Spirit of the Lord. It is said, 1 Thess. ii. 13. 'When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' When the word of God is set home by the Spirit, then it is mighty to enlighten the minds, convince the consciences, and humble and break the hearts of sinners. Then it proves as a hammer to break the rock in pieces. And it is said, John xvi. 8. 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' The word made use of there signifies conviction by such clear demonstration as compelleth assent. It not only convinceth men in general that they are sinners, but it convinceth them particularly of their own sins, and of all the heinous aggravations of them. It sets sin before the eye of conscience in all its aggravating circumstances and fearful consequences, as committed against the holy and righteous law of God, clear light, regrets and checks of conscience, manifold mercies and favours, God's long suffering, Christ's precious blood, many warnings of judgments, the reward and wages whereof, by the verdict of a man's own conscience, is death, even eternal death and damnation.

It may not be improper here to touch at the excellency of Christ's teaching, and shew you that it far transcends the teaching of all others.

1. He teacheth plainly and perspicuously. When he was upon earth, and preached the gospel unto men, he taught them by parables and similitudes, he clothed sublime and spiritual mysteries with earthly metaphors, and thereby adapted them to the low and dull capacities of men, and spake so familiarly about them, as if he had been speaking earthly things. And, according to his own example, he would have his ministers to preach, 'using great plainness of speech,' as the apostle Paul tells us he did, 2 Cor. iii. 12. and 'by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,' 2 Cor. iv. 2. Yet he does not

allow them to be rude and careless in their expressions, pouring out rude, indigested, mean, sordid, and methodical words, nauseous and ungrateful to the ears of men. No; a holy, serious, and grave expression suits the lips of Christ's ambassadors. And what man ever spake more weightily, logically, and persuasively, than the apostle Paul, by whose pen Christ hath admonished us to beware of vain ostentation, and swelling words of vanity; but he would have us stoop to the understanding of the meanest, and not to give the people a comment darker than the text. He would have us rather to prick their consciences than tickle their fancies, and break their hearts rather than please their ears. Christ was a very plain preacher, and he not only opened truths to the understanding, but opened the understanding also to perceive them. He takes away the veil from the heart, and causes a heavenly light to shine into the soul, and darts a clear beam from heaven into the mind. Christ's teachings are fully satisfying. The soul doubts no more, staggers or hesitates no more; but fully acquiesces in what Christ teaches. It is so well satisfied therewith, that it can venture all upon the truth of what it hath learned from him.' You may see what is said with respect to this, Prov. viii. 8, 9. 'All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.'

2. Christ teaches fully. He gives us a full and clear revelation of the will of God with respect to all things which concern our happiness, either in this life or in that which is to come. That is spoken of Christ which we have, Psal. xl. 9, 10. 'I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth from the great congregation.' He hath given us a perfect rule of faith and obedience, in nothing defective or superfluous, but comprehending the whole duty of man. The scriptures contain the counsels of God, which he hath graciously sent to redress the miseries of the fall; and therefore it is said by the apostle, Acts xx. 27. 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' He hath kept nothing back from men that was needful to be known in order to their salvation. Hence saith he, John xv. 15. 'All things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you.' And it is said, 2 Tim. iii. 15. that 'the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation.' Christ hath plainly shewed us what course we are to take, that so we may obtain the friendship and

favour of God here, and come to the enjoyment of him for ever hereafter. You may see what David says, Psal. cxix. 97. 'O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.' Christ by his word gives us a full discovery of our duty in every state and condition that we can be in while here in the world; and our relative duties are fully revealed. See what is said by the apostle, Tit. ii. 11, 12. 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'

3. Christ teaches the will of God purely. His doctrine has not the least dash of error mixed with it to allay and debase it. His malicious enemies, who were continually lying at the catch, and most observant of his words and actions, could find nothing to charge him with. He preached the gospel most purely unto men. He is the true and faithful witness, Rev. i. 5. And he hath commanded his ministers to preserve the simplicity and purity of the gospel, and not to mix and sophisticate it. Hence it is said, 2 Cor. iv. 2. 'We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' And says Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 17. 'We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.' Here the apostle vindicates himself from the practice of false apostles and corrupt teachers, who adulterated the word, and mingled their own errors and inventions with it, and studied to please men more than God, to advance their own temporal interests thereby, more than the salvation and eternal interests of men's souls.

4. He teaches the mind of God in a most sweet and affectionate manner. His words make men's hearts to glow and burn within them, as it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 32. It was prophesied concerning him of old, that 'he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street,' Isa. xlii. 2. 'The Lord hath given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' Isa. l. 4. How sweetly did his words slide into the hearts of his hearers? He drew them with the bands of love, and with the cords of a man. See how affectionately he speaks, Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' He discouraged none, nor upbraided any from coming to him. He assured them, that all who were willing to come should

be heartily welcome, and meet with a gracious reception. His great familiarity and free condescension to the most vile and despicable sinners were often made the matter of his reproach. Such is his gentle and sweet carriage towards his people, that the church is called the Lamb's wife, Rev. xix. 7.

5. He teaches the will of God powerfully. It was observed by the multitudes that flocked about him, that he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes, Matth. vii. 29. They were but dull and coldrife preachers; their words did freeze as it were between their lips: but Christ spoke with a divine efficacy and power. There was heat as well as light in his doctrine. And so is there still, though it be declared by the mouths of poor, weak, and despised men. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 4. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,' &c. It is still 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 14. The holy apostle imitated his great master Christ: being filled with his Spirit, he spake freely and home to the hearts of men. His words made the consciences of sinners to shake and tremble in their breasts. It is true, all faithful and able ministers are not alike gifted in this particular; but yet there is a holy seriousness, a spiritual grace and majesty in their doctrine, commanding reverence and regard from their hearers.

6. Christ teaches the will of God infallibly. The wisest and best of men may mistake, and lead others into the same mistakes with themselves: but it is not so in the teachings of Christ; for they are not subject to error and mistake. His Spirit guideth men into all truth, and into nothing but the truth, John xvi. 13. He is an unerring guide, and a shepherd that will not suffer his sheep to stray and wander to their eternal destruction upon the mountains of sin and vanity. All who are taught of Christ shall certainly arrive at celestial glory: for he hath said, John x. 28. 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' His word is abundantly sufficient to make men wise unto salvation. And saith the apostle, Gal. vi. 16. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.'

7. The teachings of Christ are abiding teachings. They make deep and indelible impressions upon the soul, which can never wear out. The words of men evanish like smoke, and fly away: but the words of Christ stiek close by us. What he teacheth he writeth

upon the heart. So it is promised, Jer. xxxi. 33. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' It is usual with gracious souls, whose understandings have been savingly opened by the Lord, to say many times afterwards, I shall never forget such a scripture that once convinced me, and such a promise that once encouraged and comforted me. To this purpose it is said by David, Psalm. cxix. 93. 'I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me.'

8. Christ teaches men the will of God in a saving manner. They are all made wise to salvation who are taught by him. See what the apostle Paul says of the holy scriptures, which contain this divine revelation, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. 'The holy scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' There is a great deal of other knowledge that goes to hell with men. The pavement of that infernal furnace, as one speaks, is pitched with the skulls of many great scholars. Many who have learned heads, have graceless hearts. But life eternal lies in the teaching of Christ. Hence says our Saviour, John xvii. 3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' This is deservedly called 'the light of life,' John viii. 12. And 'in this light' men 'clearly see light,' Psal. xxxvi. 9.

You see then, from what hath been said on this head, that Christ's teachings far transcend the teachings of all others; so that it may be justly said of him, as was said by his hearers of old, 'Never man spake like this man.'

IV. I now proceed to shew for what ends Christ as a Prophet reveals the will of God; where I shall touch at the necessity of this revelation in order to salvation.

The end of this revelation is for our salvation. Man by nature is ignorant of true happiness, and of the way that leads to it. But 'the grace of God, that bringeth salvation,' i. e. the glorious gospel of Christ, 'hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' The great design of the gospel-revelation is to shew what course we must steer that so we may escape deserved wrath and misery, and arrive at everlasting happiness and glory. So that now we need not cry out like those of old, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of

rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Micah vi. 6, 7.

But here it may be inquired, Is not the light of nature sufficient to inform us of the way of salvation?

To this I answer in the negative. This revelation of the will of God which we have by Christ, was needful to be superadded to that, by reason of our natural darkness and blindness of mind. Men by nature know not God; their understandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them. The whole world is involved in darkness. Though the light of nature tells us that there is a God, and that it is our duty to worship and serve him, yet it cannot teach us how we are to do it, so as to be accepted of him; as is clear in the case of the heathens, of whom it is said, Rom. i. 23. 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' They debased the adorable Deity, by entertaining unworthy conceptions of him, and performing such acts of worship to him, as were not fit for a rational nature to offer, nor for the holy and glorious Majesty of heaven to receive. Besides, they ascribed his honour and attributes to the creatures; not only to the sun, moon, and stars, and to invisible powers which they supposed governed and ruled these shining luminaries, but even to the most despicable things in nature. Birds, and beasts, and creeping things, were the objects of their adoration. Again, though the light of nature directs us to many excellent moral duties, as to honour our parents, to do to others as we would have them to deal with us, &c. yet it cannot teach us to perform these duties in an acceptable manner. The apostle tells us, that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.' The mind of man by nature hath not only a native blindness, by reason of which it cannot discern the things of the Spirit, but also a natural enmity that it hates the light; so that till the mind be healed and enlightened by Christ, the natural faculty can no more discern the things of the Spirit, than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason. It is as easy for men to read the law in tables of stone, after they are pounded and crumbled to dust, as to read true notions in lapsed and corrupt nature. This is excellently described by the apostle Paul, Eph. iv. 17, 18. 'This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Here he terms it 'vanity of mind,

darkness in the understanding, and blindness of heart.' All the essential faculties of the rational soul are entirely corrupted; the mind which is the repository of principles, that noble faculty, whereby we judge of things good and evil; the understanding, that discursive faculty, whereby we collect one thing from another, framing conclusions from the principles of the mind, and reducing these principles into practical dictates; and the heart, i. e. the will, conscience, and affections, which were to apply these principles, and draw out these reasonings on the stage of life; all are corrupted. And the most ingenious nations for natural knowledge and civil prudence verify the apostle's character in their brutish actions. The Egyptians, who were men famous for wisdom and learning, and propagated the sciences to the other parts of the world, were worse than beasts in their worship. The Greeks, who counted their Athens the eye of the world, were not more refined, when they adored thirty thousand gods, and some of them infamous for murder and adultery, and held three hundred and twenty-four different opinions about the chief good, as learned men tell us. And the Romans, though eminent for civil prudence, were not much behind them, when they worshipped a fever, and dignified a strumpet with the title of the Goddess of Flowers. And a great philosopher among them takes notice of their ignorance of God in the various notions which they have of him. Even those among the heathens who for acts of justice and temperance might justly put many men under the gospel to the blush, have had a thick darkness upon their minds in regard of God. But here more particularly I shall shew you several things absolutely necessary to be known in order to salvation, wherein the light of nature is very defective.—As,

1. The fall of man, which is the first cause and original spring of all our misery and woe. This is what the human understanding could never find out by its most accurate search and inquiries. For though the heathen philosophers were abundantly sensible of many confusions and disorders in their souls, and of their woful subjection to the rage and tyranny of unruly passions, yet they could never find out the fatal cause, nor trace those streams to the true original. They found indeed that something was amiss, and much amiss too; but from whence this disorder did arise, nature itself is wholly ignorant, and hath not so much as a regular guess without revelation. And though Plato seems to have had some dark notices of man's original and fallen state, when he expresses the one under the symbolic image of the golden age under Saturn's reign, and the other by the miserable iron image under the reign of Jupiter, in which he lived; yet we may warrantably conclude, that he had these disco-

varies from the scriptures of Jewish tradition. Origin is of opinion, that Plato understood the history of man's fall by his conversation with the Jews in Egypt. This first cause of all our misery is only made known by the scriptures. Men by nature know not the fall of Adam, which is the source and bitter root from which all their woe and trouble springs. And the light of nature is too dim and weak-sighted to pierce into the depths of Iniquity. It cannot acquaint us with the fumes of sin, and with that inward strength and power of it, which gives birth and nourishment to all those irregular actions which flow from it. There was therefore a necessity of some other light to penetrate the clouds of nature, and search into the depths of the belly, and bring to view that habitual disconformity of our natures to that rectitude required of us, and which was once possessed by us.

2. The light of nature cannot acquaint us with the true and adequate object of our religious worship, namely a Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead. This sacred doctrine is wholly supernatural, and entirely beyond the reach of the human understanding. The most illuminated Philosophers that ever were in the world, though they found out the causes of many things, and could discourse to excellent purpose concerning the magnitude, motions, and influences of the stars, and the nature of plants and minerals, and many other things which are veiled from vulgar minds, yet they could never by their most accurate search and enquiry find out the mystery of the Trinity. This grand article of the Christian faith was altogether hid and unknown to them. We find indeed that some of the ancient philosophers had some dark and imperfect traditions concerning the Trinity. Hence some think, that that great Oriental maxim which Pythagoras brought with him into Greece, touching God, viz. that he was *hen kai polu*, that is, one and many, was but some broken Jewish tradition of the Trinity. And the Platonists had also some weak and corrupt traditions of three *hypostases*, or persons, which they called *Trinity*. But these and the like poor notices of the Trinity, it is most probable, Pythagoras first, and Plato after him, derived originally from the Jews, if not immediately, yet mediately by the Phœnicians and Egyptians. But yet neither the Grecian, Egyptian, nor Phœnician philosophers, had any sound and true notion of this great mystery; as will appear clear and evident to any sober mind, that considers what a world of fables and contradictions they mixed with those broken discoveries which they had received concerning it. Plato himself ingenuously confesses this, when he said, that he had received many mysteries from the ancients which he did not understand, but expected some

interpreter to unfold them unto him. But we find the gospel sets this mystery in a clear light. See Mat. iii. 17, 18. 1 John v. 7. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. all of which, and other scriptures, were considered when I discoursed on the doctrine of the Trinity. The gospel gives us a clear discovery of the persons in the Godhead, as to their nature and operations, and their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness. We find they all concur in the work of man's redemption: the Father contrived it, the Son purchased it, and the Holy Ghost applies it.

3. The light of nature cannot inform us of the way and method of our recovery by Christ. The whole scheme of this amazing work of redemption, was without the compass of our most searching faculties. There are three things with respect to this, which I shall touch at a little; and we had never known any of them unless they had been revealed. As,

(1.) The mystery of eternal election. From all eternity God foresaw that man should fall, and thereby plunge himself into an abyss of sin and misery, and that it would not be possible to recover himself out of it, neither could he receive help from any creature in heaven or earth; and God not intending that the whole race of man should perish, and become the eternal trophies of hell, set apart a certain number in his eternal purpose and decree, whom he designed to make vessels of mercy, and bring to the fruition of endless glory, to the everlasting praise of the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace and rich mercy in Christ. So the apostle teaches us, Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. upon which passage I formerly discoursed in the course of this work. This is indeed a profound mystery, which could never have been discovered by the clearest sighted reason: but the great Prophet of the church hath revealed it unto us.

(2.) We had never known the astonishing method of redemption, by which the elect are brought into a state of salvation, unless it had been revealed: How that God from all eternity entered into a covenant with his own Son, promising him assistance, a numerous seed, and great dignity and glory, if he would undertake the work of redemption, and free the elect from sin and wrath; whereupon Christ cheerfully condescended, and engaged to become the Sinner's Surety, to pay the debt: he was content to stand in his people's room, and submit himself to the avenging strokes of justice: he was willing to become a curse, that they might receive a blessing; to become poor, that they might be made rich; to be accused and condemned, that they might be justified; and to endure the shock of his Father's wrath, that they might go free. Hence he is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as Surety in their stead, Psal.

xl. 6, 7. '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.' He willingly yielded to all the conditions which were required for the accomplishment of that great and difficult work. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. x. 5. 'A body hast thou prepared me.' He behoved to have a body to suffer that which was represented by those legal sacrifices where-in God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with all the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. The incarnation of Christ is a great mystery, which could never have entered into the thoughts either of angels or men, unless it had been brought to light by the gospel. Hence says the apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 16. 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh,' &c. But of this I spoke at large when treating of the incarnation of our Redeemer.

(3.) The light of nature could never tell us, that it is by faith in Christ that we must be saved. '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. He is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. It is only through faith in Christ that the elect can be saved. All that believe in him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. We are commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall have everlasting life. Now, this way of salvation is above the strain and reach of natural reason to attain to the knowledge of it. There are some seminal sparks of the law in the hearts of men by nature; some common principles of piety, justice, and charity, without which the world would soon disband, and fall into confusion. But there is not the least conjecture of the contrivance of the gospel. It could never have entered into the thoughts of the Israelites, that by looking to a brazen serpent erected on a pole, the wounds should be healed which they received by the bitings of the fiery serpents. And as little could guilty man find out a way to satisfy divine justice by the death and sufferings of a Mediator, and to heal the wounded spirit by believing on Christ crucified. The most active and inquiring reason could never have thought of the wonders of the incarnation, and that a virgin should conceive, and a God be born. Nor could it have dreamed of the death and sufferings of the Prince of

life, and of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord of glory. Now, the human understanding, as bright and clear as it is corrupt, yet it could not, by all the help of argumentation and reasoning, arrive at the knowledge of it. Supernatural revelation was absolutely necessary to discover it to the holy angels. The apostle tells us, Eph. iii. 10. 'Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' This was a mystery locked up in the breast of God, of which the angels seem to have had no thoughts, till the revelation of it was made to the church. And even since that discovery, these wise and intelligent beings have not a perfect knowledge of the whole of the gospel-state; for they are still making further enquiries: 'Which things,' says the apostle, 'the angels desire to look into,' 1 Pet. i. 12.

4. The light of nature does not inform men of the evil there is in the first inclinations to sin. The heathen philosophers allowed the disorder of the sensitive appetite to be innocent and harmless, till it pass to the supreme part of the soul, and induces it to deliberate or resolve upon moral actions. For they were ignorant of that original and intimate pollution that cleaves to human nature. And because our faculties are natural, they thought that the first motions to forbidden objects were natural desires, and not the irregularities of lust. Accordingly all their precepts reach no further than the counsels of the heart; but the desires and motions of the lower faculties, though very culpable, are left by them indifferent. So that it is quite evident, that there are many stains and defilements in their purgative virtues. The law of God requires holiness and purity in all the habits and dispositions of the soul, an entire conformity to the will of God in all its various motions and actings; or else we can never be happy: for the scripture tells us, that he must have clean hands and a pure heart, that would ascend into the hill of God, and stand in his holy place; and that it is only the pure in heart that shall see God.

5. The light of nature and philosophy, improved to the highest height, is very defective in respect of piety, and in many things contrary to it; as will appear from the following particulars.

(1.) By delivering unworthy notions and conceptions of the Deity. Not only the vulgar heathens changed the truth of God into a lie, when they measured his immense and incomprehensible perfections by the narrow compass of their shallow imaginations: but the most renowned philosophers among them highly dishonoured God by their base and unbecoming apprehensions of him. For the true notion of God signifies a being infinite, independent, the universal

Creator and powerful Preserver of heaven and earth, and the absolute Director of all events; that his providence superintends and takes notice of all the motions and actions of his creatures; and that he is a liberal rewarder of those that seek him, and a just revenger of those that violate his holy and righteous laws. Now, all this was contradicted by some of them. Some asserted the world to be eternal, and others that matter was so, and in that denied him to be the first cause of all things. Some limited his being, confining him to one of the poles of heaven? others extended it only to the amplitude of the world. The Epicureans totally denied his governing providence, and made him an idle spectator of things here below. They maintained and asserted, that God was contented with his own majesty and glory; and that whatever was without him, was neither in his thoughts nor care; as if to be employed in the various accidents of the world were inconsistent with his own felicity. Thus, by confining his power who is infinite, they denied him in confessing him. There were others who allowed him to regard the great affairs of kingdoms and nations, and to manage crowns, and sceptres, and matters of state: but to stoop so low as to regard particular things, they judged to be as unbecoming the divine nature, as for the sun to descend from the firmament to light a candle for a servant in the dark. They took the sceptre out of God's hand, and set up a foolish and blind power to dispose of all mutable things. Some again made him a servant to nature, that he necessarily turned the spheres. Others subjected him to an invincible destiny, that he could not do what he desired. And thus the wisest of the heathens dishonoured the Deity by their false imaginations of him; and, instead of representing him with his proper attributes, drew a picture of themselves.

(2.) Philosophy and Nature's light is very defective as to piety, in not injoining the love of God. The first and great command of the law is this, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and strength.* Yet these philosophers speak little or nothing of this, which is the principal part of natural religion. Aristotle, for as clear-sighted as he was in other things, yet when he discourses of God, is not only affectedly obscure to conceal his ignorance, but even in his morals, where he had reason to consider the Deity as an object most worthy of our love and obedience in an infinite degree, he totally omits such a representation of him, though the love of God is that alone which gives value and price to all other virtues. And this is the reason why philosophy is so defective as to rules for preparing men for an intimate and delightful communion with God, which is the effect of holy and perfect love,

and the supreme happiness of the reasonable nature. And if, in the Platonic philosophy there are some things directing to this, yet they are but coldly expressed, and so dark and obscure, that, like inscriptions on ancient medals or marbles which are defaced, they are hardly legible. It is the singular character of the gospel, which distinguishes it from all human institutions, that it represents the infinite amiableness of God and his beauty and goodness to us, to excite and draw out our affections to him in a superlative manner. It commands us to follow him as dear children, and presses us to seek for those gracious dispositions which may qualify us for the enjoyment of him in a way of friendship and love.

(3.) The best philosophers laid down this servile and pernicious maxim, That a wise man should always conform to the religion of his country. Socrates, who acknowledged one supreme God, yet advised his friends to comply with the common idolatry, without any difference in the outward worship of him and creatures: and those who did otherwise he branded as superstitions and vain. And his own practice was according to this advice which he had given; for he frequented the temples, and assisted at the sacrifices, which he declared before his judges, to purge himself of the crime of which he was accused. And Seneca, speaking of the Heathen worship, acknowledges that it was unreasonable, and only the multitude of fools made it excusable: yet he would have a philosopher to conform to these customs, in obedience to the law, not as pleasing to the gods. Thus they made religion a dependant on the state. They performed the rights of Heathenish superstition, that were either filthy, fantastical, or cruel, such as the devil, the master of these ceremonies, ordained. They became less than men by worshipping the most vile and despicable creatures: and therefore God gave them up to the vilest lusts, carnal impurity being a just punishment of spiritual. Rom. i. 23, 24.

(4.) Philosophy is very defective in not propounding the glory of God as the chief and ultimate end to which all our actions should refer. Now, the philosophers had other views and designs than this, in their precepts and dictates. As,

[1.] To make use of virtue as a means to gain honour and reputation in the world. This was plainly discovered in their books and actions. They were sick of self-love, and did many things to satisfy the eye. They led their lives as in a scene, where one person is within, and another is represented without, by an artificial imitation of what is true. They were swelled with presumption in having little merit, and a great deal of vanity. Now, this respect which men have to the opinion of others, corrupts the intention and

vitiates the action. It is not sincere virtue, but a superficial appearance, that is regarded; for it is sufficient to that purpose to seem to be virtuous without being so. And from hence he may discover that many of their most specious actions were but disguised sins; their virtues were as false as their deities. Or,

[2.] The end of philosophy was to prevent the many mischiefs which licentiousness and disorders might bring upon men from without, or to preserve peace and tranquillity within, by suppressing the turbulent passions arising from lust or rage, which trouble and discompose the mind. This was the pretended design of Epicurus, to whom virtue was amiable only as the instrument of pleasure. Or,

[3.] The highest design of philosophy was to propound and expose to view the beauty of virtue, and its charming aspect, as the most worthy motive to draw and influence the affections. Now, supposing that some of the heathens (though very few), by discovering the internal beauty of virtue, were taken with, and had a love to it, and performed some things without any private respect, but for the rectitude of the action, and the inward satisfaction that springs from it; yet they were still defective: for virtue is but a ray of the Deity; and our duty is not complete, unless it be referred to his glory, who is the principle and pattern of it. In short, the great Creator made man for himself: and it is most just and reasonable, that as his favour is our sovereign happiness, so his glory should be our supreme end, without which nothing is regular and truly beautiful.

From all which the necessity of Christ's teaching, and of a divine revelation, clearly appears.

But I must conclude this subject with some improvement.

1. From this doctrine we may infer the continual necessity of a standing ministry. Christ is gone into heaven, and will continue there until the time of the restitution of all things; but by his ministers and ambassadors he daily teaches and instructs us, and for that purpose hath fixed them in the church by a firm and lasting constitution, which shall remain to the end of the world, Matth. xxviii. 16, 20. This is a great and valuable privilege, which we ought highly to prize, and carefully to improve. This alone is sufficient to counterbalance the greatest outward affliction that people can meet with in the world; and therefore we have that promise, Isa. xxx. 20. 'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.'

2. The most rude and ignorant may be taught, seeing Christ executes the office of a Teacher. He can teach the most stupid, and

give them an understanding to know the truths of the gospel. Therefore ignorance can be no excuse to gospel-hearers, to whom Christ offers himself as a Teacher. Let the most ignorant among you apply to him, and he will teach you more than the most accomplished philosophers could ever attain by all their improvements of natural light.

3. The weakest Christians need not be discouraged at the dulness and incapacity which they find in themselves: for Christ can easily reveal that to babes which is hid from the wise and prudent: 'The testimonies of the Lord are sure (says the Psalmist), making wise the simple.' Yea, the Lord delights to chuse such as you are, that his grace may appear the more conspicuous in your weakness, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. Well then, weak but serious Christian, be not discouraged, because you are not so docile and quick in your apprehensions of things as others about you. Many of your neighbours may know more in other things than you do: but you are not incapable of knowing so much as is necessary to the salvation of your soul, and shall certainly know it, if Christ be your Teacher; and that is sufficient to make you happy for ever. Others indeed may far excel you in the knowledge of other things: but if you know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus, one drop of your knowledge is more valuable and desirable than a whole sea of their natural and political knowledge. One precious truth sucked from the breast of Christ by faith and prayer, is infinitely better than ten thousand dry notions, hewn out by racking and torturing the understanding.

4. Prayer is a proper means for the increase of knowledge. Prayer is the golden key that unlocks that sacred treasure. When Daniel was to expound that secret which was contained in the king's dream, about which the Chaldean magicians had racked their brains to no purpose, you see he addressed God by Prayer, Dan. ii. 17, 18. and you see there what success he had, the secret was revealed to him. Luther was wont to say, Three things made a divine, viz. meditation, temptation, and prayer. And a holy man in our neighbouring nation was wont to study upon his knees. And indeed those truths which are got by prayer leave an unusual sweetness upon the heart. In the use of means you should have your eyes towards Christ, and pray that he would open your understandings, and enlighten your minds with saving knowledge. This was David's practice. See Psal. cxix. 18, 33, 34.

5. Learn from this what entertainment ye are to give to the word. Be not strangers to your Bibles; but read them as Christ's word to you, with reverence, faith, and love. Make conscience of

attending on the preaching of the word, catechising, and the dispensing of the sacraments; and set yourselves to drink up the doctrine of Christ from himself as your Teacher. If people believed that Christ were exercising his prophetic office among them in that way, they would not dare to treat these exercises as they do.

6. See here the abomination of the Quakers and other enthusiasts, who separate the Spirit from the word. To these may be added those who take up the principles without ground from the word, upon the credit of dreams, visions, voices, and impressions. And much more those who do so upon their own light fancies, without serious examination of them by the word. The practices of all such are an abomination to the Lord; they act in direct opposition to Christ as the great Teacher sent from God; and consequently the light that is in them is darkness.

7. See also the abomination of formalists and legal professors, who know nothing of religion but *Do, do*. Being unacquainted with a due sense of their own emptiness and darkness in spiritual things, and with the way of making use of Christ as a Prophet, they content themselves with the word without the Spirit, and what they can hammer out of it on their own anvil, so separating the word from the Spirit. And thus they live ignorant of the Spirit's irradiations on the word, and his clearing up scripture-truths to them; which are only had in the way of the soul's going out of itself and its own wisdom to Christ, in a way of believing and depending on him for influences of light and knowledge. This is the neck-break and ruin of many in our day.

8. Wo to them, then, that have the teaching of the word without the Spirit. Ah! do men think nothing to hear so much, and to be illuminated by the Spirit in nothing? Christ may be a Prophet to others, but he cannot be one to such. Let them seriously consider that awful passage, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.'

9. Receive Christ as a Prophet, and learn to make use of him daily as such. Renounce your own wit and wisdom, and receive instruction from the mouth of this divine Teacher, who teaches to profit. Be of a docile disposition, willing and inclined to be taught of God: for the meek will he teach his way. And, for the Lord's sake, refuse not to hearken to the voice of this great Prophet, otherwise it will be your ruin. Consider the awful certification in the 23d verse of the chapter where our text lies, 'And it shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that Prophet, shall be

destroyed from among the people.' Hear him, then, and 'beware lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish,' Acts xiii. 40, 41.

10. *Lastly*, Would you know if ye be taught of God? I offer you the following marks.

(1.) Christ's teachings are very humbling to the soul. Human knowledge puffeth up; but divine knowledge abaseth and casteth down. It empties a man of all conceit of his own worth, and fills him with low and abasing thoughts of himself. So it was with Job, chap. xlii. 5, 6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The same light of the Spirit which discovers unto us the glorious greatness and majesty of God, and his other shining perfections, discovers also, at the same time, the vile-ness, baseness, emptiness and utter unworthiness of man, yea of the best and holiest of men, as in the case of Isaiah, chap. vi. 5. 'Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' When Paul got a saving sight of Christ, he calls himself the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. Were you ever deeply humbled before the Lord and made to see your own emptiness and vileness? Those who are puffed up with pride and self-conceit, are strangers to the teaching of Christ.

(2.) The teachings of Christ deeply affect and impress the heart. They fully reach the soul of a sinner, Hos. ii. 14. 'I will speak comfortably unto her;' or, as in the original, 'I will speak to her heart.' When Christ sheweth unto men the great evil and danger of sin, he so convinceth and toucheth the soul, that no creature-comforts can yield any pleasure or sweetness, but prove all tasteless and insipid, and have no more pleasure than the white of an egg. And when he speaks peace to the soul, and intimates the pardon of sin, he so comforts and refreshes it, that no afflictions or pressures, however heavy and uneasy, have any weight or bitterness in them at all. One drop of consolation from heaven sweetens a whole sea of trouble upon earth, and fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Says the Psalmist, Psal. xciv. 19. 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

(3.) The teachings of Christ are sanctifying and renewing: they change and reform the heart, Eph. iv. 21, 22, 23. 'If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.' You see here that holiness and

purity is the effect of divine teaching; holiness both external and internal, negative and positive. All the discoveries of God which Christ makes to the soul have an assimilating quality, and change it into his own likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(4.) All Christ's teachings are practical, issuing in cheerful obedience. Idle notions and useless speculations are not learned from Christ. As his creating words, so his teaching words, are always attended with effect. As when he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' so when he says to a soul, Be thou humbled, it is effectually humbled; as in the case of Job, chap. xl. 4, 5. 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.' And when he says, Be thou comforted, comfort immediately follows, Isa. lxvi. 13. 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.'

(5.) Christ's teachings are always agreeable to the written word. The Spirit of Christ and the word of Christ never disagree, as John xiv. 26. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' When he speaks to the heart of a sinner, whether in a way of conviction, instruction, or consolation, he either makes use of the express words of scripture, or speaks to the heart in a language every way agreeable thereunto. So that the written word becomes the standard and touchstone to weigh and try all doctrines by, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Whatever differs from the scriptures of truth, must not pass for an inspiration of God, but is a deluding sophism and insinuation of the devil.

(6.) You will have a great love to your teacher, and will be in case to say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,' Psal. lxxiii. 25.