

A DISCOURSE SHEWING WHO ARE UNBELIEVERS.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.—JOHN VI. 64.

AFTER Christ had discoursed of the necessity and advantages of faith in him, whereby a right to eternal life is acquired, ver. 47, he declares himself to be the bread of life, more excellent than the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness, which was not able to secure them from the invasion of death.* But 'this,' saith he, 'is the bread which came down from heaven,' ver. 50, as if he had pointed to his own body in the speaking those words; and not only the 'living bread,' that have life in myself, but the enlivening bread, 'which came down from heaven to give life' to the sons of men, ver. 51, and this bread is 'my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;' when this flesh shall suffer and become a sacrifice to God, if it be eaten by faith, it shall be capable to communicate life to as many as do so. But the Jews who heard him, had carnal conceptions of this discourse of our Saviour, and raised matter of scandal from that which should have been a ground of their faith: ver. 52, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' How can the eating the flesh of a man be a thing agreeable to God, and an efficacious means to gain eternal life? Christ then perceiving their hardness, and ignorance, and their misinterpretations of his speech, understanding that of an oral eating which they might by his former discourse have understood figuratively of believing in him, he doth more positively assert what he had spoken before, and that by a strong asseveration, which some think to be in the nature of an oath among the Jews: ver. 53, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.' It is an undoubted truth, that I am only able to give you life; and besides, if you believe not in me, it is impossible that ever you should have any life in you; but if you do believe, eat my flesh and drink my blood, by, or in believing, whosoever he be, of what quality and condition soever, he 'shall have eternal life; and to this end, that he may completely enjoy it, 'I will raise him up at the last day' from the dead; for whatsoever your fathers did before eat or drink, manna, and the water from

* Amyraut. in loc. through all the verses.

the rock, was neither meat nor drink indeed, but types of me, of my flesh and blood, which is the true meat, and the true drink to enliven you, and preserve you in life; and, you know, the food you eat, and the drink you drink, are united to your bodies, so as to become a part of yourselves, yet not so perfectly but there is a decay again, so that there remains nothing of that nourishment you have took before, but other must succeed in the room to keep up your bodies in good plight; but the meat and drink which I give are of another kind, for they are the cause of an inseparable union, and inviolable communion: ver. 56, 'He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him.' Natural food, not remaining always in the body, doth not preserve without fresh meals; but this meat continues in its force and vigour perpetually, uniting the soul to me, and me to it. The source of this life is in the Father, who hath communicated a power to me, to enliven those that have communion with me; so that if any one believe in me, he shall live by me, because the spring of life in the Father is communicated to me as the Head, and by me conveyed to all those that are members of me by faith. We are united by faith to Christ, and therefore not united to him as God, or as God-man, but as God-man crucified and risen again for us, ver. 56. And though you have a great opinion of the manna God sent down to your fathers, and it was indeed a great miracle, and mercy, and a confirmation of the ministry of Moses, yet you can take no great pleasure in that, since those to whom it was particularly communicated were not preserved from death, and did not live for ever, which this bread I spake to you of will certainly effect in you, ver. 57. 'These things,' saith the evangelist, 'he spake in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum,' ver. 59, publicly, and in the midst of his enemies, declaring thereby his power, that he knew, when he pleased, how to repress the violence of his adversaries, and restrain their fury from breaking out against him, ver. 60. Now, after Christ had spoken these things, the multitude were so far from being satisfied, that even some of his disciples, who had before heard him in other discourses with much contentment, are offended at this as a strange discourse. They could not conceive how the flesh of Christ could be eaten, and his blood drank,* since the law forbade them to drink the blood of any creature; nor how his body, if sliced into many pieces, could satisfy so great a multitude that were desirous of eternal life; nor could any conceive that his body was better than manna, whereof the Scripture speaks so highly; and which way soever their reasons turned, they could not conceive the meaning of Christ's words, and therefore said, 'This is a hard saying;† it is incredible, no sober ear can endure such discourses as these, or yield any assent thereunto. And though, out of some veneration of Christ, they did speak this publicly, and enter into a dispute with him about this argument, yet Christ, who knew the motions of their hearts, and what thoughts they had of his discourse, obviates this offence, remitting them to his resurrection and glorification: ver. 62, 'What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' and asserting his own deity. The import of it is this,‡ Have you such carnal conceits of my discourse, as to understand the eating my flesh, and drinking my blood, of an oral eating? When you shall see that this flesh shall ascend to heaven, you will see your error, and find it impossible to chew my flesh with your teeth; and then you will understand, that that which you conceive was not my meaning, but that it is to be meant of a spiritual eating and drinking, *i. e.* in believing; and therefore be not troubled at this distance of my body from you at that time, for if you believe, I shall still make good my word and promise of life to you, for it is the

* Ferus. in loc.

† Bruggens in loc.

‡ Amyraut. in loc.

Spirit whom I shall send after my ascension into heaven, who shall communicate this life to you, by sanctifying and purging you: ver. 63, 'It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life.' Should you eat my flesh in that manner which you weakly imagine, it would profit you nothing, neither for the comfort of your souls, nor resurrection of your bodies; you therefore very much abuse me, and abuse yourselves, to put such a construction upon my words, for 'the words I speak are spirit and life'; they are spiritual, and ought to be understood spiritually, and he that receiveth them in a spiritual manner, will find them to be the means of life, and assurance of life to him, and a continual seed and principle of eternal life in him. But it is to little purpose that I should thus comment upon and explain what I have said, since 'there are some of you that do not believe,' and will not believe in whatsoever manner the doctrine of the gospel should be proposed to you, ver. 64. Upon which the evangelist adds a remark and observation of his own concerning the deity of Christ, that being his principal scope in writing this Gospel, which appears to be his purpose in the beginning of his discourse, chap. i., and therefore he records those speeches of Christ, wherein his deity is plainly asserted or implied; and upon several occasions in the whole book, points us to those things which may manifest the truth of it, whereof this is one.

Observe,

1. How blind is man naturally in the things of God! How hard is it for us to understand spiritual truths, not by reason of their obscurity, but our own corruption, wherewith the eyes of our minds are blinded, and our understandings darkened! Had an heathen understood the discourse of Christ in this manner, he had been more excusable than those Jews that were taught from heaven, had the Messiah been wrapt up in their types, might have learned something of him by the paschal lamb, the ceremonies whereof might have informed them of this doctrine. The lamb signified Christ, the killing it signified the death of Christ, the eating of it signified faith in his blood, and thereby a participation of him, and conjunction with him; but they being bewitched with an opinion of a worldly grandeur, neither regarded the type of him in the lamb, nor the discourses he frequently made to them. How few of the Jews understood the meaning of the types of the Messiah; nay, how little can we give a full account of the analogy between the type and the antitype, since they have both met together!

2. How apt are we to have carnal imaginations of spiritual things, and look upon the word of God with false optics! What reason had those people to imagine that our Saviour, whom they saw without spot, whose actions manifested his tenderness and kindness, who was an exact observer of the law, should preach a necessity of their being cannibals and man-eaters, and propose to them the drinking the blood of a man, when the blood of any creature was forbidden in the law to be swallowed by them, and which none but the most barbarous nations have ever practised! What need of prayer and importunity for the Spirit, and diligent inquiry, to make us have right notions of the words of God! The Spirit quickens, the light of the Spirit is only efficacious to give us an understanding of the gospel.

3. The deity of Christ is here asserted; thrice in the space of four verses: ver. 61, 'Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it.' He never heard their voice, nor was informed by the report of others; he knew it by the divine nature communicating that knowledge to his humanity: 'He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man,' John ii. 25. He did not only know that the Jews, which were his enemies, were

offended, but that his disciples murmured at it ; he knew the motions of the hearts of his open enemies, and his unbelieving followers ; not the heart of any in the multitude was locked up from his notice ; he knew it in and by himself, not by another. And ver. 62, ‘The Son of man ascends up where he was before ;’ he was in heaven before his incarnation, he therefore had an existence before his incarnation ; he ascended into heaven in his humanity, where he was before in his divinity. Christ God-man is one person ; the Son of God and the Son of man is one Christ,* in regard of the unity of the persons ; he tells us, while he spake on earth, he is in heaven, John iii. 13, the Son of God on earth *in susceptâ carne*, the Son of man in heaven *in unitate personæ* ; he was in the earth, yet in heaven at the same time. If he were a creature, it were not possible that he could be in two places at one and the same time. Every creature hath a limited essence, and a limited place, he cannot be in it and out of it at the same time. If he be on earth and in heaven at the same time, it is certain that he is God, of an infinite essence, and by consequence eternal ; † since the reason of time is the same with that of place, an infinite nature can no more be bounded by time, than it can be limited by place. If he were before in heaven, it could not be in his flesh that he took of the virgin, he could not be existent in flesh before he had flesh ; he had no flesh but from the virgin, for he was ‘made of a woman,’ Gal. iv. 4. It must be then in another nature, wherein he was existent in heaven before he was incarnate on earth. There is no other nature but the divine, angelical, and human : angelical nature he had not, that nature he took not, therefore was not of it, Heb. ii. 16 ; the human nature he assumed at the time of the standing of the Jewish temple. It must be by the divine nature then wherein he was in heaven before. A third testimony there is in the text, ‘for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.’ From the beginning, *i. e. ab æterno*, saith Ferus. He did so, indeed, as God ; or from the beginning, *i. e. ab initio conversationis discipulorum* : Luke i. 2, ‘As they delivered them to us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses,’ so Brugensis, from the beginning of any one’s following him ; his divine nature communicated to his humanity their sentiments and secret opinions of him. The knowledge of thoughts is a perfection peculiar to the Deity ; man may conjecture, God only knows them. He knew also who should betray him, when Judas had not then the least thought of such an action, or any intention to it ; ‡ nor doth it appear that he had that design, till the high priests had discovered their resolution for his death ; yet Christ knew before that he should do it, before Judas knew that he would do it, as he knew Peter’s denial of him before ever Peter thought of such a thing, and predicted it to Peter, when Peter was resolved against it ; when Christ foretold it to him, then it was, ‘I will not deny thee, though I should die with thee,’ Mat. xxvi. 35. But afterwards, his speech, ‘I know not the man,’ verified the certainty of Christ’s foreknowledge.

There are some of you that believe not. He brings upon the stage the true reason of that offence they had taken at his words. He charges not their ignorance, but their unbelief. He doth not say, there are some of you that understand not, but he dives into the cause of their dulness, they did not believe. The fountain of the wrong notions men have of the word, is their want of faith. And this he speaks to his disciples ; many of them murmured at him for this discourse : ver. 60, ‘many of his disciples.’ They might join themselves to Christ upon many motives, either because of the greatness of his miracles, expectation of preferment from him in his temporal kingdom

* Austin in loc.

† Daillé sur Jean iii. 13.

‡ Muscul. in loc.

they looked for, out of the desire of novelty, a natural curiosity, perhaps from a weariness of the legal discipline, or for gain, as Judas did. Some kind of faith or profession they had, for they were disciples. But when the unbelief is greater than the assent, such a faith is esteemed as nothing ; * it is a faith that will be easily laid aside upon a small occasion, and another profession taken up in the room of it, as they did, ver. 66, 'many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him ;' and though they did follow him for a time, yet all that time of their following him, they had the principle of apostasy in their unbelief, though it broke not out into act.

The observation that I shall handle, lies plain in the words.

Doctrine. Many under the preaching of the word, and that seem to be professors, are real unbelievers. There may be a professed assent, when there is not a firm one, or at least a full consent ; a painted faith, without any sound persuasion of the truth of those things in the heart. Many stand idle in the market, and gaze upon the commodities Christ sets to sale, but open not their hearts to receive the treasures that are opened to them. That prophecy concerning the miserable reception he hath in the world, is of a standing and lasting truth to this day, that 'there is no beauty in him that we should desire him,' that the faces of men are hid from him, that he is despised and not esteemed, Isa. liii. 2, 3. It was verified in our Saviour's time, John xii. 37, 38, and is not ended in ours. There is a secret unbelief in the hearts of men, which is not expressed with their tongues, but writ in their actions : Luke vii. 30, 'They rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' Calvin takes *εἰς* for *ἐν*, in themselves ; there was not an open declamation against John's baptism, but a secret dislike of it by an inward pride swelling up in their minds. There are not only many dead stakes in the hedge, but some flowers upon the hedge, which are not part of the garden, or transplanted into it, as their proper soil. Those that have the deepest engagements to God, are often the greatest rejecters of Christ. There was not a nation which owned in their worship the unity of God, but the Jews. No nation expected and longed for the redemption by the Messiah but they. No nation had the promises of him but they ; they had more particular obligations to Christ than any : they were his own, John i. 11, they were conducted by him through the wilderness, were entrusted with his oracles, heard his word, all other nations were in regard of them none of Christ's. The whole world indeed belonged to him by the right of creation and government ; but in regard they had not such particular obligations to him as the Jews, they are not here called his own. Yet those that longed for him, wished for his coming, instead of receiving him, with the greatest welcome, rejected him with the greatest spite ; as though he that came to redeem them, and perfect the kindness shewn to them in the first administration of the covenant with them, had designed nothing but their ruin. And so now Christ is more contemptible among his own than among strangers ; he is not so much wronged and slighted among heathens that have not known him, as among those to whom the gospel is preached.

I shall shew,

I. That it is so.

II. Who are they that are unbelievers.

III. The causes of this unbelief.

IV. The use.

I. That it is so. In this I shall consider unbelief in general ; not only as it is a non-acceptance of Christ, or a refusal of him, but as it is a denying

* Schlichting. in loc.

credit to any revelation of God; and therefore when it is generally granted that God doth make revelations of his will, and it was a notion owned by men naturally, and that men do not naturally comply fully with such revelations as from God, it is no wonder that men are so often found to be guilty of the refusals of Christ, since there is nothing in nature that can make any discovery of him, or assist our belief in him, the whole stream of nature being against it; yet whenever the Scripture speaks of unbelief, it intends this resistance of Christ in his person, or shadows representing him, or promises concerning him. But that many or multitudes under the word and common profession of Christianity are unbelievers is evident, because,

1. The Scripture always accounts the faithful but few. The Scripture mentions but two of Adam's race at one time, and one of them Cain, an unbeliever, and the head of the unbelieving world after; and in nine generations from Seth, the world was so corrupted, and God's Spirit so striven against by that generation, that he pronounceth of it that 'all flesh had corrupted their ways,' Gen. vi. 3, 12, and only Noah was found with whom he would establish his covenant, viz. that he should enter into the ark, and rely upon God in a way of faith and obedience, which was a type of the eternal security men have in Christ, the true ark. That covenant made with Adam in the promise of the seed of the woman, was rejected by the whole world, and there was none in the earth that owned it, and with whom God would establish it, but Noah. This was the covenant of grace under the shadow of the ark, as the sun under a cloud. It was for their unbelief in the Mediator that the old world was condemned to perish in the waters. For the great work of the Spirit of Christ, by which he preached to them in those days, 1 Peter iii. 18, 19, is against this sin. Christ hath not only suffered by the unbelief of men in these last times, but from the beginning. So that if his divinity had been as capable of suffering as his humanity, he had suffered by the violence of men in former ages, as well as in the latter; for the old world spared him not, but provoked him by their incredulity of his promise. Of six hundred thousand Israelites, there are but two expressly mentioned that believed in Christ, shadowed under the promise of entering into Canaan. It was their unbelief in Christ made them incapable of entering into rest, Heb. iii. 19, for the apostle discourseth there against unbelief in Christ, and brings the misery which fell upon their ancestors as a motive against it. A remnant only in the time of Ahab, in that populous nation; about seven thousand among a great multitude; for the ten tribes could not well be fewer than Judah and Benjamin, who were in one army one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, 1 Kings xii. 21. And in the apostle's time the case was much the same, for which he cites this passage out of the Kings: Rom. xi. 4, 5, 'There is a remnant according to the election of grace,' *λεῖμμα*, a small piece out of a whole cloth. Christ is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, even to the house of Judah and Israel, the only church God had in the world, Isa. viii. 14, and believers so rare among them that they were as wonders and prodigies, which are not often seen, ver. 18. In the days of his flesh few believed in him. John Baptist affirms that 'no man receives his testimony,' John iii. 32; no man comparatively to those that refused him, the number of believers being as a few grains of a commodity scattered out of a scale. A few of the common people believed in him, and but one Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea of the higher sort. But the generality of the Jews, to whom both the promise and offer of the Messiah were made, are charged with unwillingness to come under his wing, Mat. xxiii. 37; with foolish excuses to absent themselves from his feast,

Luke xiv. 18; with a resolute resistance against his call, Mat. xxii. 3; and some that were very forward, and in general seemed to accept of all his terms, and to be content to do whatsoever he required, when it came to the push, did strike off and went away grieved, as the young man, Mark x. 17, 21. Judas professed and preached him, and had not a mite of faith in him; and some at the last shall plead their prophesying in his name, casting out devils, and doing many wondrous works in his name, who were never united to him by faith, nor shall ever reign with him in glory, Mat. vii. 22, 23. And when he comes at last, though there may be a fair harvest of professors, there will be a famine of faith, Luke xviii. 8.

2. Unbelief is natural to man, and therefore it is no wonder that many under the preaching of the gospel, and that seem to be professors, are unbelievers.

(1.) There is an enmity in nature to the grace of faith in Christ. Since in a state of nature men are in constant arms against God, they have no natural inclination to give credit to any revelation of God. Men do not usually believe their enemies, or trust them without a caution. Since we first left God, it is natural to us in all straits to have recourse to sensible objects; and because we once left him, we are loath to return to him, because our natural pride refuseth to charge ourselves with the folly of our first revolt. Man despiseth Christ: Isa. xlix. 7, 'Thus saith the Lord to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhors.' Man in his fallen estate would have a bottom of his own to stand upon; he is abhorred by the nation, *i. e.* by the nation of the Jews, called *the nation* as being more peculiarly under God's conduct, the nation to whom he was peculiarly sent; and therefore when Christ came, it is said there was no man, none to answer his call, Isa. l. 2, no man naturally. And this is not so much from a dulness of understanding as a natural disaffection. Since man can understand things that are abstruse, and with a liveliness search into those things which are pleasant to his nature, and easily believe them; his not believing the mysteries revealed by God is from the reluctancy of his nature against him, and unwillingness to acquaint himself with those things which may over-rule his sensuality and natural inclinations to pleasure. A man may sooner suffer for a truth of Christ than believe, because there may be many motives in corrupt nature to persuade a man to suffer for an opinion, as a repute of constancy, courage, an affectation of a fame (such a vanity as acted that person that burnt Diana's temple, that he might not be forgot in the world); yea, a man may in distrustfulness of God's providence be weary of his life, and be desirous in some creditable way to be stripped of it; but faith finds no assistance in nature. Pride can be no encouragement to it, as to suffering. It is a grace which wholly empties a man of himself, lays him in the dust, suffers not any ambition of a righteousness of his own, strips him of all his own excellency. Since pride is a man's darling in nature, everything that lays it low is abhorred by nature. There is as great an opposition between the heart of man and the mysteries of God, as there is between fire and water. Our resistance of the Spirit is natural, the Holy Ghost never overcomes without striving, Gen. vi. 3. The principle of the flesh opposeth that of the Spirit in a good man, much more in an unrenewed heart; nay, there is an enmity in the heart against the truth of Christ, because it is truth: John viii. 45, 'Because I tell you the truth, you believe me not.*' Not that men think that they hate the truth when they reject Christ, but they are led by an instinct of the devil, who is their father, and the father of lies, against the truth, as there is something in it that doth

* Muscul. in loc.

not please their natural affections. As those that are prone to contention cannot endure the counsels of peace, because they are the counsels of peace; and those that are given to drunkenness cannot endure admonitions to sobriety, because they tend to sobriety; so when men love lies by nature, and the power of the devil their father, they hate anything that tends to divine truth.

(2.) The attendants on faith are against the grain of nature; unbelief, therefore, and the attendants on it, are suitable to nature. No man is naturally willing to part with a dear member, a right eye, mortify carnal affections, deny his dearest self; nay, men are hardly brought to consider the things of faith, examine themselves about the nature of faith; they are drawn to the touchstone as hardly as a man to some sharp punishment. Who is naturally willing to crucify that which is incorporated with him, the flesh? to deny what is dearest to him, himself? If the apostle 'delighteth in the law of God after the inward man,' Rom. vii. 22, an unrenowned man by the rule of contraries delights in the law of sin after the inward man (sin hath the chief fort in his soul); and he that doth so is as unwilling to have it slain as to lop off one of his principal limbs, or fling his whole estate into the sea. Hence Christ pronounceth it hard for a rich man, or one that trusts in his riches, to enter into heaven, Mat. xix. 23, 24. We are naturally enemies to holiness, which is the fruit of faith, and therefore to the person of Christ, as holy, which cannot, because of his holiness, be embraced by one deeply in love with sin. The laws of Christ are too spiritual to be entertained by a carnal mind; his ways too strict to be trod by a loose spirit. The inward as well as the outward man must come under his sceptre; and this is a hard task, the stomach swells against it. The righteousness of Christ is a thing without us; it is counted a dishonour to us to be beggars at another's door for happiness; there must be a righteousness also within us, and against this the whole legion of devilish corruptions riseth up in arms. Not any part of the train belonging to faith that nature can look friendly upon; we are unlike God, and we naturally hate everything that would render us conformable to him.

(3.) Corrupt reason is an enemy to faith, and a friend to unbelief. The life of sense is the first life we live; after that a life of reason, which forestalls faith. Reason is the supreme principle in a man before faith gets footing; it manageth all the actions, and therefore opposes that which would impair part of its sovereignty. Therefore the oppositions that are made to the gospel are called reasonings against the knowledge of Christ, which are strongholds: 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, 'Pulling down strongholds, casting down imaginations' (*λογισμοὺς*, reasonings). Reason exalts itself, and will not submit to revelation, unless it finds marks upon it suitable to its own principles. Not that God doth impose upon men; but whenever he hath made a new revelation of his will, he hath attended it with signs and undeniable evidences that it was of divine authority. But after once it is manifest that the revelation itself is from God, the principles and doctrines delivered in it are not to be cited and tried at the bar of our reason. Yet as man sets his will against the law of God, so he lifts up his reason against the wisdom of God. As enmity to God in the will is as natural to man since the fall as the will, so contradicting reasonings against the knowledge of Christ are as natural as his understanding. As it is impossible a man can be a rational creature without understanding and will, so it is impossible he can be a carnal man without prejudices in his mind and dissatisfactions in his will against God: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Unbelief, therefore, is natural to

man. Therefore, when God subdues the soul to the obedience of faith, it is in a way of conquest, captivating the reasonings and thoughts of the mind to Christ. Besides, reason is the excellency and glory of man: the more rational men are, the more they are in esteem; and it is not easy to part with a dignity in submission to that which the heart naturally counts foolishness. Adam, by his affecting to know as God, hath conveyed a principle to men, whereby they think themselves as wise as God. Thus they in the text censured Christ's discourse by their own mistaken reason, believed him not, and at last departed from him.

(4.) The common unbelief of men in things evident to sense manifests the naturalness and easiness of it in the higher mysteries more remote from sense. This is cleared by that one instance of men's flattering themselves into hopes of a perpetual life on earth. Though they seem to assent that they shall die, yet how doth the whole course of many men's actions speak another language, and give the lie to themselves, acting in the extremes of their lives as though they were to linger out an unlimited term of years! If we do not seriously believe that whereof we have every day fresh objects and undeniable testimonies beating in upon our sense, how naturally inclinable must we be not to believe that which is at a distance from us, and whereof we have not such immediate sensible demonstrations! 'If we believe not earthly things, how shall we believe heavenly?' John iii. 12. If we believe not things that are agreeable to the light of nature, that arise from the dictates of our own consciences, but manifest our own unbelief of them by a practice quite opposite to them, how shall we believe the heavenly things Christ acquaints us with? How shall we believe those things which are not seen by a natural light, that have no foundation in the nature and reason of men, but are purely to be discerned by the light of heaven? What hath some foundation in nature is far easier to be believed than what hath only supernatural revelation for its bottom. The gospel is a remedy which neither men nor angels could find out; a way which man in a state of innocence was not acquainted with, nor in a state of corruption without special discovery.

(5.) We have naturally jealousies of God. Since enmity to God was planted by the devil in the nature of man, no friendly act can pass from the creature to God. Without a change of nature, suspicions of God do as naturally arise in the heart as fire ascends upward, or a stone falls downward. Who in a state of distance from, and contradiction to, God, can readily believe that God should love men so much as to give his Son for those he had no need of, that were lumps of vanity and enemies to his glory? and yet, if he would give his Son for them, that it should be to a death so painful and shameful? The fear that Adam had* when, frightened at the voice of God, he hid himself amongst the trees of the garden, hath remained in part with his posterity when they reflect upon their crimes. We measure the nature of God by the qualities of our own; and because we are not forward to remit men's offences against us, we are apt to imagine that God hath not clemency enough to pardon the faults committed against him. Hence it is that persons deeply humbled under a sense of the curses of the law are ready to lick up the dust under the feet of Christ, and beholding an absolute necessity of him, are with much ado brought to believe. Though the design of God in setting out Christ for a propitiation be declared to them, the sufficiency of his merit, the acceptation of it by God, the fruits others have found of it, that the design of Christ's coming was to ease those in that condition, yet they are hardly induced to lay aside those jealousies they have of God. For this cause perhaps God doth not put us off in his promise with a single 'I will betroth thee

* Daillé sur Jean iii, Sermon 9, p. 344.

unto me,' but repeats it three times to assure us of his reality, Hosea ii. 19, 20. How doth Abraham's incredulity break out after a spiritual promise : Gen. xv. 1, 'I am thy shield and exceeding great reward. And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless ?' as much as to say, I would have deeds and not words ; I have had such promises before, yet they are not performed. After God's discourse with him, it is said, ver. 6, 'he believed in the Lord,' after this second repetition of the promise. But when it was declared to him before, we have not that remark upon him that he believed. And God complains of this carriage, Hosea. vii. 13, 'I have redeemed them,' (אָפַדְתִּים, 'I will redeem them,' it is my purpose to redeem them by my Son, as some understand it,) 'yet they have spoken lies against me ;' they think I have no good intentions towards them, but thoughts of evil. We think him false, when he is true, and cannot lie ; we think him an enemy when he is a friend. We are apt to think God hath designs upon us, and wants sincerity in his proposals. So after the deluge, though God had promised that he would no more drown the world, the people would not believe it, but would be erecting a tower to preserve them from sinking again in those mighty waters. Though Noah's sons were at that time living, had known the promise of God, and they had often seen the rainbow, the sign of that covenant in heaven, yet, Gen. xi. 4, 'Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven ; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered again upon the face of the whole earth.' If this were the reason, as some think, it shews, that they were as unbelieving of the promise of God after the deluge, as the old world had been of his threatening before it. But it is evident in the Israelites, for whom God hath done as much as might be to bind them to a belief of him : he had showered plagues upon their enemies, and miraculous mercies upon themselves, fed and watered them in the wilderness, yet they apprehended God had a design upon them to destroy them, and were scarce ever free from expressing their jealousies by their murmuring, till at last their unbelief was a bar to their entering into Canaan, and the utter ruin of that generation.

(6.) Affecting to stand by a righteousness of our own is natural to us, and therefore unbelief is natural. Adam was to have lived upon his own righteousness in the state of innocence. Since we are fallen, this relic of nature is in us, to desire to rise by our own strength. We would find matter of acceptance and acquittance in ourselves. Some throw themselves upon a heap of external duties, as the heathens had recourse to in their sacrifices, thinking to appease God by the blood of brutes ; and believers themselves are sometimes too apt to cling as fast to their inherent graces as to Christ himself,—'We have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore ?' Mat. xix. 27,—and set Christ's crown upon that head. What pains had the apostle to work the Romans and Galatians from their own righteousness ! A desire of a legal justification is inbred. This might be the case of them in the text, when Christ would take them off from their admired shadows, to feed only upon him the substance ; to eat his flesh and drink his blood, to believe only in him for eternal life. Sure I am, the Jewish nation split themselves to shivers upon this rock, in a calm sunshine of the gospel, in endeavouring 'the establishment of their own righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3. This seems to begin early. Before the flood, it is uncertain whether idolatry was set up in the world, or whether after the flood, before the confusion of languages ; but resting upon their services, and neglecting the promise of the mediator, seems to be that wherein their unbelief did consist. The patriarchs,* Adam, Seth, &c., had the promise of

* Melanct. loc. octav. p. 230, 23, i.

a mediator, and of pardon of sin in him, and had external rites and modes of sacrificing delivered to them by God, as signs of the promise and props of their faith; these rites and sacrifices, they, *i. e.* the old world, kept up and performed, without considering the doctrine of the promise and faith; and it is likely that they entertained an opinion, that by those ceremonies they did merit the favour of God, and pardon of sin. This is likely to be Cain's miscarriage; he did offer to God, but without that faith which seasoned Abel's sacrifice, Heb. xi. 4; his eye therefore was not fixed upon the promised seed, but probably expected God's acceptance of his offering and favourable return to him upon the account of the offering itself. The object of the worship was the same; Cain brought his offering to the Lord, Gen. iii. 8; the difference was in the sacrifice, and in the inward principle of offering. His offering did not represent the mediator, as a bloody sacrifice would have done; the principle of his offering was not faith in the Mediator; for though he desired to be accepted, yet he desired that acceptation without respect to the promised seed. After the deluge, the boldness of men grew to a greater height, they framed other deities, and so departed from the knowledge of the true God, and the promise of a redeemer. And so likewise after Moses, when ceremonies were instituted to be *mementoes* of a mediator, the multitude, though they professed their belief in the promise of a Messiah, and were the only church God had in the world, yet were forgetful of the intent and design of this promise, and rested not upon it for the free pardon of their sins for the sake of this mediator; but fancied that their sins were forgiven for the sake of the rites and sacrifices under the law. After the gospel shone upon the world, yet the professors of it were very inclinable to expect a justification by their own works. To oppose which was the great design of the apostle in his epistles to the Gentile churches. And afterward, men professing the Christian religion swerved from the main principle of it, and expected to gain pardon by monastic vows, oblations in the mass, intercessions of dead men, rather than by Christ. So that this principle of a self-righteousness and dependence upon external services, with the neglect of the mediator, being the thing God contended with the Jews for, as well as their idolatry, before the incarnation of Christ, and with others after his death and resurrection, and this being an evil which runs in the stream of nature, we may well suppose it to be the main thing which was the cause of the wickedness, and the destruction of the old world, since it is not clear that they had framed any idols to worship. And since barefaced idolatry is exploded among us, this principle of a self-righteousness is more spiritually lurking in us, whereby we invalidate the redemption by Christ.

(7.) The naturalness of unbelief is evidenced by the difficulty of believing under the highest means, and greatest testimonies of a divine authority.

[1.] The eloquence of Christ was admirable. Grace was in his lips. Since he was both the Word of God, and Wisdom of God, his words were enough to divide the soul, and break the rock; they were like a hammer to bruise, like a gentle shower to mollify; yet how few were either broken by his thunders or melted by his lightnings! He acquainted them with the truth, yet they did not believe, John viii. 46. His miracles were stupendous, and above the united force of men and devils; they were undeniably the works of his Father, John x. 37, 38, yet they believed not. Nicodemus, who had some respect for him, and inclinations to him, thinking him 'a prophet come from God,' John iii. 2, understood no more the doctrine of faith in Christ, and a new birth, after Christ's explanation of it, than he did at the first declaration: ver. 9, 'How can these things be?' He was a man of eminency, and in Israel too, ver. 10. It had been no wonder if

one of the common people had been ignorant, or a great heathen philosopher, bred up in the sink of idolatry, should neither have understood nor believed; but a master, a doctor in Israel, a reader of the prophets, so lately taught by John Baptist, who was sent to prepare him for the doctrine of the Messiah, not to believe that which was clear in the prophets, is a declaration of the natural stupidity of men in the things of Christ. It was but a little faith the apostles had, who were constant attendants upon Christ, spectators of his miracles, hearers of his instructions, and those more plainly delivered to them than to the multitude. How often doth our Saviour upbraid them with the slowness of their hearts to believe.* The death and resurrection of Christ are the two necessary foundations of our redemption, the one of his satisfaction, the other of his discharge; yet his disciples were hardly brought to believe either of these; and though Christ did plainly assert both, especially the certainty and necessity of his death, in several discourses with them, yet Peter, who had the greatest insight into the mystery of Christ, presumed to rebuke him for speaking of so incredible a thing as the death of him, who by his own confession was the Son of God. And for his resurrection, though he had often asserted it should be, in as plain words as might be, and fixed the time, within three days, yet they had not the least thought of it, and when it was reported to them that he was risen, they had not faith to believe it, though confirmed by witnesses of their own company, whose honesty they knew to be without exception; and it was so great, that he gives them a sharp rebuke for it: Mark xvi. 14, 'He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.' After the apostles were risen to a great height of faith, they found it difficult to persuade men, with all the miraculous assistances of the Holy Ghost. That first great miracle of the descent of the Spirit upon them, Acts ii. 6, 11, wherein the majesty and power of God, and the divine authority of Christ, were evidently manifested, in endowing poor fishermen with the gift of tongues, who were never out of the confines of Judea, were skilled in no language but their own, could now speak not one or two languages, but many, not those of the neighbours, but those of the greatest distance, with which nations they could not have had any commerce; yet what an unreasonable construction do the unbelieving Jews put upon it: ver. 13, 'These men are full of new wine.' No reason could second their reproach; such an excess had rather hindered their speaking plainly in their own tongue than furnished them with an ability to speak sense in languages they never before understood. Unbelief invents foolish reasons against that which hath the clearest reason to support it. Are our souls less overgrown with an enmity to God? Is unbelief less natural to us than it was to them under the power of so many miracles, the miracles of Christ, when they called him a wine-bibber, and the miracle of the descent of the Spirit, when they assert the heavenly gift to be the effect of drunkenness? If it were not settled in nature, what is the reason that among multitudes to whom the gospel was preached, so few embraced it, though the things proposed were in themselves desirable, and suited so well, in respect of the blessedness promised, to the natural appetites of men? It was the complaint, that few believed their report. In all ages many, nay, most, have been so far from embracing Christ, that they persecuted the gospel and professors of it. He hath been despised not only by the blinder sort of people, but by many of the most elevated understandings in earthly affairs. By the Jews, too, who had the promises of the Messiah made to them, who expected him about that time, who had so many prophecies

* Davenant, de Justitiâ, cap. xvi. p. 282.

deciphering him, which all had their accomplishment in his person; who were amazed at the miracles wrought in his life, and those which attended him at his death; and can unbelief now be less natural to us, who have those things by report, than it was to them who were eye-witnesses of them? I might add also, that the production of faith by an almighty power is a testimony of the naturalness of unbelief. For were it not so, there would be no more need of the arm of omnipotency to be revealed in the engendering this grace in our hearts, than in furnishing us with any human science, for which we have a natural capacity in our understandings. Since faith cannot be infused but by an almighty strength, unbelief cannot be dispossessed but by the same power, and therefore is rooted in our nature, and friendly embraced by it. It is therefore obvious enough, I hope, that since the Scripture hath told us of the paucity of believers in all ages, and that the exceeding naturalness of it to us is so great and plain, it must be granted, that there may be in this age, and among us, as great a number of unbelievers under the preaching of the gospel, and among professors, too, proportionably, as there have been in other ages and places of the world.

II. Who are unbelievers?

No question but there are many among us inwardly guilty of a notional unbelief, many more guilty of a practical. We have no open idolatry among us,—I mean those of the Protestant party in opposition to the Romanists,—yet is there not an inward practical and interpretative idolatry in the conversations of men? There is not an absolute atheism, or a plain and open denial of a God, yet there is a denial of him in works, Titus i. 16. As God, so Christ, may be denied in works under a profession of him. The testimony of works is deeper and clearer than that of words; the frame of men's hearts is rather to be measured by what they do than by what they say. As such men therefore are more notorious atheists who believe a God and walk contrary to that belief, than those that deny the being of a God and do those things which are more agreeable to the laws of God than the other; so those are more notorious unbelievers that profess an assent to the doctrine of Christ and faith in him, than those that deny his person and office, and yet walk in ways more corresponding with the strictness of his precepts. All that profess faith in Christ, without the vital operations of faith, are unbelievers. We can no more say a man believes who hath no essential act of faith, than that a man lives who exerciseth no function of life. There may be a nominal life with a real death, like those of Sardis, Rev. iii. 2, a faith in appearance without a faith in reality. There may be an abhorring of Christ with the soul even by Judah: Zech. xi. 8, 'My soul loathed them, their soul also abhorred me.' It is as impossible there can be faith without fruits, as that a tree can live without bringing forth fruits proper to its kind. There is no question but those are infidels that have an opinionative contradiction against the gospel, who are a gainsaying people, as the Jews are termed, Rom. x. 21, who at this day call the New Testament a heap of lies, בלתי אמת.* Such that may be of that pope's mind, Gregory IX., who is reported to have called Moses and Christ, as well as Mahomet, *tres Balatrones*, the common barreters or incendiaries of the world. And as little are they to be counted believers that esteem the Christian religion no better than a certain suspicion of 'one Jesus being dead, who is affirmed to be alive,' Acts xxv. 19; that have some floating imaginations of the truth of it, but not a settled certainty. Those that resist the grace of God, that value

* Clark's Sermons, p. 115, out of Matthew Paris.

Christ no more than a dog doth a heap of spices or a bag of delicate perfumes; those that strike the blood of the Lamb of God upon their thresholds to be mixed with the dirt of their feet, which they should sprinkle upon the posts of their doors, the faculties of their souls.

But to waive these at present. Let us consider those that pretend to be disciples of Christ.

1. How many that go under the name of Christians are ignorant and inconsiderate! He that is not rooted in spiritual knowledge can never be rooted in faith; those that see not the beauty of Christ can never account him a fit object of trust. Faith can never be the daughter of ignorance. Only those that know Christ will put their trust in him—Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee'—and that know him to be one that doth not forsake them that seek him. Belief is an intellectual act; how can any believe till they know what they are to believe? The object must be known before any faith can be exercised about it. If we would believe a man, we must first know him to be a person of credit. The ground must be known to be firm before any man will trust the weight of his body upon it. We must know God in his ways, so as to judge him faithful, before we can rely upon his promise: 'Sarah judged him faithful that had promised,' Heb. xi. 11. If there be no light in the mind, there can be no motion in the will: 'He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes,' John xii. 35, nor what to lay hold on for his support. How can they be counted believers that know not what Christ is, what offices he is invested with, that cannot give an account of the doctrine of Christ, that never considered the nature of a Christ, the necessity of a Saviour, the corruption of their nature, the immortality of their souls, the judgment to come; who have only some loose thoughts of these things, and therefore cannot have but a loose and shadowy faith at the best, which is an unbelief in the account of Christ? And are there not many among us that understand not what Christ and a spiritual righteousness is, that know not their own wants, and so cannot value Christ's worth?

2. How many receive not the gospel upon a divine account? There are several outward engines which move men to profess the Christian religion: authority of magistrates and superiors, education and custom, respect to some persons valued by them. Some are Christians because Christianity hath been handed to them from their ancestors, and can give no other reason why they are so but because they were bred up in it. The religion of the state is the rule also of many men's religion. What else should make those tribes of Israel, who were fond of the temple-worship in Solomon's time, turn speedy votaries to the calves at Dan and Bethel under Jeroboam's reign, and at last totally revolt from God? Such a founded Christianity is no more sufficient to denominate any man a believer, than a flock of sheep, used to the voice of the shepherd from their first yearning, and to follow his whistle wheresoever he goes, can upon that account be said to be rational creatures.

(1.) The motives of this faith are merely human. The object of faith is divine, but the motive human; the faith therefore produced by it cannot be divine; the effect cannot be of an higher nature than the cause. This belief is as vain as Christ declares the worship to be which is 'taught by the precepts of men,' Mat. xv. 9. Though they have the material object of faith,* yet they have not the formal object, which is the divine authority or truth revealed in it. They take it up from custom and the instructions of

* Lingend. tom. i. p. 323.

their childhood, but not from the true motive of faith. As some men may perform acts of moral virtue, not from principles and motives of virtue, and so may do a righteous act, though not righteously, so those have the object of faith without a principle of faith, and pretend a belief of the truth, but not believingly. The material part of Christianity, without the formal, is just like a carcase, which hath the matter of a man, but not the enlivening and quickening soul. Though they hit upon the profession of the true religion by some human inducements, this makes them no more Christians and believers than if a company of wandering cattle, gone astray from their owner, should break into some ground belonging to their true master in that place whither they are run, should be understood to do it with an intention to come into their master's possession, it being an act of chance in them, and not of choice. It is not the excellency of Christ, but the happiness of an education, the piety of parents and magistrates, the birth and not the judgment, makes them Christians. They are believers by conformity, not by principle. He that embraceth the Christian religion upon such slight or wrong grounds is so far from being a believer, that he rather sins, because he doth not use his reason God hath endowed him with aright in the things of God; was the speech of a philosopher* whose new notions have been thought to minister too great an occasion to the atheism of our times.

(2.) This kind of faith hath no stronger a foundation than the belief of any heathen or idolater in the world. The same motives that excite the papists to observe the superstitions and idolatries of Rome, a heathen to adore the idols of his country, a Turk to cry up the divine authority of Mahomet, a Jew to hate the Lord of life, because they have received those ways of profession from their ancestors, and have sucked them in with the milk of their infancy,—such and no higher motives have common Christians for their faith in Christ. The same arguments which make others refuse him, make them profess him, and had they been educated in any of those ways, they would have been as fond adorers of idols, as now they are professors of Christ, and would have been as ready to drink blood as wine, as sheep will follow their first leader into a slough as well as a fat pasture. This is no better than to be heathens in Christianity, since they both agree in the same inducement of their faith, which can be no more called a true faith, than the Athenians' altar 'to the unknown God' could be called a true worship, Acts xvii. 23; they worshipped they knew not whom, and they knew not why. This is an unbelieving belief, and a childish Christianity, if it proceeds no further. True faith may be ushered in this way, as the faith of the Samaritans was by the report of the woman, testifying that Christ had told her all that ever she did, John iv. 39, but afterwards was transplanted to another ground, and set upon a stock of knowledge,—ver. 42, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,'—and indeed was a greater faith than we find at that time in the apostles; for they believe him not only to be the Messiah, and a Saviour of the seed of Abraham, as the apostles did, but of the world; acknowledging thereby the whole world sunk into misery, under a necessity of a redeemer, and this Jesus to be the person appointed by God for the redemption of it.

(3.) Such a belief is rather a disparaging of God and Christ, than a believing in them. If we embrace divine truths out of affection or interest in persons or parties, and for the sake of the instruments which convey them, rather than of God who reveals them, we believe not in God but in man; our faith terminates in the publisher, whether parent, or magistrate, or

* Descartes Prin. Philos. Respon. ad secundas object. pp. 78, 79.

neighbour, not in God. If the motive of our belief is not the authority of God, but the influence of some creature on us, or because wise, learned, and holy men believe it, we postpone the credit of a wise and holy God to that of a wise and holy creature, and ascribe a greater veracity to that than to the Creator ; so that though the matter of our faith be divine, yet the manner of our acknowledging discredits the authority and faithfulness of God. As if we believe this or that divine truth delivered in the word, not because it is there delivered, and hath the stamp of God's authority upon it, but because it is in itself undeniable to principles of reason, we believe ourselves rather than God, and thereby reproach and dishonour him, by setting our reason, not as a subject to him, but as a judge of him, and what he dictates. The creation of the world is a matter of faith revealed in the word : Heb. xi. 3, ' By faith we understand,' &c. It is also a truth assented to by reason. But if we acknowledge the creation of the world only upon the account of reason, and not in the respect of the revelation of God, God accounts it not as an honour to him, for it is not a respect to the word of God, but to our own rational principle. To believe, therefore, a divine truth upon human grounds, is to regard man as more infallible, true, and honest, than God himself. As we are to obey because God commands, though men may command the same things too ; and if we perform a thing merely because our superiors enjoin us, though it be a divine command also, and part of the law of God, it is not an obedience to God, but to our superiors ; so when we believe a divine truth revealed to the world by God, not upon the credit of God, but the credit of the persons that acquaint us with it, it is not a belief of God but of man : as if a master orders his servant to go upon such an errand, and he cheerfully and willingly goes, because he hath some business to do that way by the by, this cheerfulness ariseth not from a principle of obedience to his master, but from the opportunity of serving his own turn. As it is thus in obedience, so it is also in the belief of men. Also, when men will assent to no more of the articles of the word than what is made clear to them by natural reason, as well as Scripture arguments, this is not a faith. Though they believe some of the fundamentals, yet if they believe not all those that are fundamental, they truly believe not any one ; because if they did believe one upon account of the divine authority revealing it, they would believe all. For as it is a certain maxim, He that breaks one law of God breaks the whole, James ii. 10, because he despiseth the authority commanding, so he that discredits one article of faith believes not any, because he undervalues the authority revealing one as well as the other. Though the materials of faith be divided into many things, even as many truths as are revealed, yet the foundation and motive of faith is but one, viz., the authority of God ; as, though the law be divided into several commands, yet the authority commanding all is one and the same. He that refuseth a belief to any one article, though he doth not deny all, yet he believes none with a divine faith ; for if he did believe any one with a divine faith, he hath the same reason to believe every one, because the same authority runs through the veins of all, and is as infallible in one as another. If we received any one truth as testified by the Spirit of God, we should receive all the truths the Spirit witnesseth to. Those that are charged in the text with unbelief, might believe many things that Christ said, for they are called his disciples ; but not receiving them from him as a person appointed by God as the Messiah, they are said not to believe ; all their faith in other things was no faith.

Let us then try ourselves by this, what are the motives of our profession of Christianity ? If they be merely human, we are unbelievers in our be-

lieving, and are the disciples of men, not the disciples of Christ. A profession now cannot lay such claim to sincerity as those sudden conversions to and acknowledgments of Christianity could in the primitive times; because then the civil power did not countenance it, no carnal interest could encourage them in it, none but inward and spiritual motives could prevail upon them for the owning of it. But since it hath been delivered to us through a long succession of ages, and it is become, in part, our outward interest to be external professors of it, the profession is not sufficient to entitle a man a believer, unless his motives be as divine as theirs.

3. All those who do not diligently seek after that which is proposed in the gospel, come into this rank of unbelievers. As the psalmist argues the atheism of men from their not seeking God, Ps. xiv. 1, 2, and the apostle the unrighteousness of men from the same ground, Rom. iii. 10, 11, so the unbelief of men may be demonstrated from their non-inquiry after Christ, the benefits offered, and the precepts enjoined by him. When we have no valuations of it, when the gospel is not esteemed as the richest jewel, the sweetest dainties, the most ravishing comforts; when it is not sought after with ardent affections, it is not thought worthy of acceptance by the whole man. Can he be supposed to believe he hath a soul, who never minds it? Or can he believe that there is a Saviour, who can go whole months and years without inquiries after him? He that is desperately sick and wounded, and hears of an infallible medicine without employing all his industry to procure it, is either in love with the wound, or doth not believe the medicine so sovereign as is reported! Can we believe that to be necessary for us, that we have no heart to think of? Whosoever is more diligent in things of an inferior concern, supposeth them in his judgment more capable to administer satisfaction to him than the things of Christ. Can we be called believers, if we be no more moved than stones with the purchase and promise of Christ? Insensibleness and unbelief are inseparable companions: Acts xix. 9, they 'were hardened, and believed not.' If we were informed of a place full of all earthly advantages, and rich commodities at an easy rate, how ambitious would men be to set out ships to be interested in the trade, or at least inform themselves of the truth of the report. If men did believe the gospel, and the rewards of another world, could they sit yawning, with folded arms, without making inquiries after them? Would they not be full of great undertakings for them? How can our understandings be fully possessed of the goodness of that which our wills do not ardently pursue? If our minds believe it, why do not our wills embrace it? What bar is there between the understanding and the will? In other things, the last judgment of the mind is followed: what that pronounceth good, the will is presently upon the track of; what makes the stop here, if the gospel were assented to. The order of God's working is according to the order of nature, the understanding first enlightened, then the will inclined. If then the will be not inclined to the things of Christ, the understanding was never fully prevailed upon to assent to the truths of Christ. Belief among men is a vigorous act, that makes them govern themselves according to their persuasions; and why should it be less in matters of religion? If Paul believe the knowledge of Christ so excellent, he will 'press forwards towards the mark,' Philip. iii. 8, 12, 14. He will follow after, he will thrust through a crowd of temptations to gain Christ. Can we then be said to believe that Christ hath expiated our sins, calmed the wrath of God, stands ready to knock off our chains, and hath prepared a blessed residence in paradise, without seeking the enjoyment of such necessary benefits? The sottishness of the Jewish rulers is a picture of that which will be in some men to the end of the world. They sent a

committee of their Sanhedrim to John Baptist to know whether he was the Messiah, John i. 19; they were persons of authority and learning among them, 'priests and Levites;' they were sent from Jerusalem, from the great council, to know what his calling was: 'Who art thou?' John told them he was not the Messiah, but that the Messiah was come, and among them, 'whom they knew not,' ver. 26. Now it is strange that those men who expected the Messiah about that time, and came to John for that end, to know whether he was the person (for when they asked him, 'Who art thou?' he answered, 'I am not the Christ,' ver. 20, intimating that the intent of their coming to him was to know whether he was the Christ), should not ask him where the Messiah was, who was this person that he said was among them, and greater than he, how they should know him that was so near to them, and how he himself knew him. But they depart without asking one syllable of this nature, which John gave them so full an opportunity to inquire into, as if they were resolved to reject him before they knew him. They are imitated in the world to this day. If we seek him with loose affections, it is a sign we have only some suspicions of the necessity of him, not a certainty; a faint search ariseth from a weak conjecture.

4. Profane persons are unquestionably unbelievers. A diabolical life and a believing heart are contradictions. No man can with any reason lay claim to a faith in Christ, who prefers the pleasures of the world before the sweetness of a Redeemer, that which is an offence to him before that which is his delight, the weight of sin before the yoke of Christ. How can they believe in Christ that are carried down with the violent current of their own lusts, and regard not one tittle of his law? If faith be full of good works, a scarcity of them implies an emptiness of faith.

(1.) The proper effect of faith is to purify the heart, Acts xv. 9; where therefore the kennel of the life and the sink of the heart are not purified, there is no faith. What wants the essential effect hath nothing of the cause. If 'unfeigned faith' be always attended with 'a pure heart and good conscience,' 1 Tim. i. 5, then that faith which is attended with an impure heart and a defiled conscience is a counterfeit faith. If a good man fall into any sin, there is first a flaw in his faith; the soundness of that would prevent the disease of sin. Hence Christ prays that Peter's faith might not fail, implying that if that kept firm he would give no kindly glance to a temptation, to cursing, swearing, and denying his master. Let no man boast therefore of his faith, if it leaves him in the mire of vice. It is an idol of faith, such an one that the apostle calls but a carcase of faith, James ii. 26, a dead faith, nay, ranks it with the faith of devils, who believe and tremble, who have no profit by it but a sense of damnation before the time. Is it not a faith worse than that of devils? They have a belief with a fear; some boast of a faith in Christ, but a want of fear. A profane faith, an adulterous faith, a drunken faith, are contradictions.

(2.) 'He that commits sin is of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8, not of Christ. He that is under the devil's empire never was Christ's subject by believing. The language of their practice is the same with that of the evil spirits, 'What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?' Not to believe the truth, and have pleasure in unrighteousness, in the unrighteousness of nature, in the unrighteousness of practice, are made one and the same thing, 2 Thes. ii. 12. The knowledge of God makes men at least escape the pollutions of the world,' 2 Peter ii. 20. This is the lowest degree; whence in consequence is clear that those that are bemired with the pollutions of the world have not the knowledge of Christ. We have no acquaintance with Christ if we cherish those works which Christ came to dissolve and melt away by his blood, and

go about to settle the sovereignty of the devil against the authority of the Redeemer. Can you imagine him to be a loyal subject who gives himself that character, when you see him with arms in his hands against his prince and country? Nor is he a Christian, whatsoever he may call himself, who is a rebel against Christ his sovereign. Such are loath to be thought to doubt of the truth of the gospel, but their lives proclaim that they do not in the least doubt of the falseness of it. Is it possible that those should believe that God sent his Son to die for them, who will not let a lust die to save his glory in the world? A descent to brutishness can never be an assent to Christianity; a filthy swine may as well be a believer as a sensualist in that state; 'as brute beasts they corrupt themselves,' walking in the ways of their own heart. Whatsoever some of the Philippians might profess, yet making 'their belly their god,' the apostle affords them no better character than 'enemies of the cross of Christ,' Philip. iii. 18, 19. It is not opinion but practice distinguisheth a Christian from a pagan. Vile lusts are appropriated to the Gentiles as their will; they are not the qualifications of a believer's will, 1 Peter iv. 3. No man can receive Christ, but he must receive him as a refiner, Mal. iii. 3, with the blood of sprinkling, which purgeth the inwards of the heart, as well as the skirts of the conversation, and sets an edge upon the conscience against everything that is contrary to the plain precept of Christ, and brings the thoughts and desires under his law and yoke. Profane men are the disciples of Epicurus, not the disciples of Jesus. It is as impossible for a man to be an invisible believer and a visible atheist, as to be a man and a toad at the same time.

5. All that live in a constant omission of known duties (though they are not guilty of the grosser open sins), are unbelievers.* Every omission of good, or commission of evil, is not an evidence of positive infidelity (who could, then, have the noble title of a believer?), but when the omission is a constant course. As every actual omission is a fruit of partial unbelief, so all habitual omissions are signs of habitual unbelief, when they are not accompanied with a self-condemnation in the case, and resolutions of reforming for the future. How can we be said to believe in Christ, if we own not the power of that religion he hath instituted, and the holiness of it in the duties it requires, as well as the pleasure of it in the privileges it bestows? When our sloth will not permit us to rise at Christ's call; when our thoughts do but now and then hit upon him, as a bird upon a branch; when his service is a vile thing in our eyes; when we can with as good a heart overlook duties as perform them; when we make other things our business, and the precepts of Christ our burden, is this a believing on him? Faith fights against all iniquity, and obeys not God by parcels and retail. He that cannot endure the injunctions of the gospel in the fulness and extent of their holiness, is an unbeliever: 2 Peter ii. 21, 'they turn from the holy commandment,' because of the purity of its commands, and the universal obedience it requires; there is an enmity to it in the hearts of men. The gospel is a 'doctrine according to godliness,' 1 Tim. vi. 3-5. If we do not consent to the godliness of it, but doat about questions and curiosities; if we receive the light of it into our heads, and not the religion of it into our hearts, we are destitute of the truth, know nothing, believe nothing. If we make light of what God commands, we are no more Christians than the most ignorant Indian and heathen in America; we are not so good as a Jew, who believes the Old Testament, practiseth those duties it enjoins, and the legal rites which he supposeth still in force. Worse we are, if our hearts be not moulded according to the form of the gospel; for Christianity is not a specu-

* Jackson's quarto, changed.

lation, or a dead notion, but an active principle, mastering every faculty of the soul ; as active in the will as it is clear in the understanding. He is more an infidel that assents to the truth of a proposition, and the doctrine of the gospel, and yet denies obedience to it, than he that denies the divine authority of it, yet walks morally, and performs the duties incumbent upon him to man ; because he in some measure doth that which he denies, the other denies that which he doth profess. The one's denial is verbal, the other's real ; one hath a moral conscience, the other a vain religion, James i. 26. Habitual sins are evidences that we are not implanted in Christ by faith, but still under a covenant of works : Rom. vi. 14, ' Sin shall not have dominion over you : for you are not under the law, but under grace.' The reign of any one sin in the heart, whether of omission or commission (though it be not of the grosser sort marked by the world), is inconsistent with that faith which interests us in the covenant of grace ; for true faith expels sin from the heart, as a candle doth darkness from the lantern wherein it is placed. All the doctrines and propositions in Christianity do in their own nature lead to an holy practice. The articles of the conception, incarnation, and life of the Son of God, are incentives to be like our great head and master. The gospel frees us not from the natural obligation upon us as creatures to obey God ; nay, Christ by his death could not free us from it, because the law of nature is immutable and perpetual. As by his death he did not free us from being creatures, so neither could he free us from the obligation which lies upon us as creatures ; but the satisfaction Christ made to God increaseth the obligation ; for whereas before we were to obey God as creatures, we are now bound to obey God as redeemed creatures ; therefore he that is as disobedient to the precepts of Christ as if Christ had never died, hath not a faith in his blood, nor any sense of the obligation of it. How is it possible a man should believe Christ to be the true prophet of God,* without embracing his doctrine ? How can we believe him to be an High Priest dying to expiate our sin, without loving him, reflecting often upon our sin with sorrow, and shewing our gratitude in a course of habitual obedience ? How can we believe him to be a mighty and gracious King, without reverencing and fearing him ? How can we believe the gospel to be a divine truth, without devoting ourselves to that holiness which it enjoins, under the penalty of never seeing God without it ? We cannot be persuaded of his divinity without giving credit to his doctrine, nor believe his doctrine without conforming to his law. If, therefore, the will of Christ be contemned in any one thing, we may be assured we believe not the gospel of Christ. If we would put such base conditions upon him, as to have a reserve of any one lust in our hearts, we dislike his terms, disown his royal dignity ; and though we would acknowledge him our Saviour, we make him an insignificant Lord. If we have no love to him and his commands, we have no faith in him.

Therefore they do not believe,

(1.) Who wholly neglect the means of grace. He that rejects his word, rejects his person, because he rejects all the means of the discovery of himself, which he after his ascension left upon the earth. What his messengers declare according to his order and the rule of his word, is as if he himself declared it ; whence the apostle tells the Ephesians, Eph. i. 17, that Christ preached peace to them ; not by himself, for he was never in person there, but by his apostle. Those that condemn all the means God hath appointed, may be rationally thought not to believe any one article of Christianity, though they usurp the name of Christians. By the same reason

* Daillé sur Jean iii. p. 792.

that faith purifies the heart, it puts a man upon all those means which may promote that purification, and increase the vigour of a divine life. They that will not 'know the joyful sound,' have no mind to 'walk in the light of God's countenance,' Ps. lxxxix. 15.

(2.) Who never look into the Scripture. Have they a faith in Christ who have no mind to know his will? What a contempt of a prince would it be to neglect the reading a kind letter from him, or a commanding order! The gospel brings men to obedience by its promises and threatenings, as by moral instruments: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having those promises, let us cleanse ourselves.' If we never look into them, it is a sign we have no mind to believe them, or be under the influence of them. When the credit of them is weakened, the efficacy of them is lost; for no moral instrument can work without an assent to it. Who can be said to believe in Christ, that hath no mind to understand his doctrine, and read the records of his will? What little credit hath God with us, when we do not constantly take hold of that cord which God lets down from heaven to fetch our souls up to him! The belief of an eternal life is little or none, if the Scriptures are not searched, which point out the way to it, John v. 39. He that will not dig into it, doth not imagine any treasure laid up in it, and believes not anything of a legacy of grace in the will and testament of Christ, that flings it at his heels, or only reads it as a story, and a thing of course.

(3.) Who never pray to God, or content themselves with formal and customary addresses to him. This sin of unbelief, being in its own nature 'a departure from God,' Heb. iii. 12, a total neglect of any approach to him, or an unwillingness to have any commerce with him, testifies this sin to be predominant in the heart. He scarce believes there is a God, that will not offer him a spiritual sacrifice, and give him in this duty the glory of all his attributes. Prayer is the first act of faith, the vital act of the new creature; 'a spirit of grace and supplication' are inseparable, Zech. xii. 10; God gives not one without the other. A still-born child is a dead child; a prayerless Christian is a dead Christian, that hath nothing of the life of faith; crying is natural to a child, it is not learned by art. Where there is a full assent to the truths of the gospel (which is the first act of faith), it engenders a vehement appetite for the benefits of it. Prayer is nothing but a reducing this appetite into act, and proposing it to God; the total omission of it, or constant slight performance, is a sign of a dissent from the gospel. We cannot but be zealous for those things we believe to be true and necessary; but when we think the benefit will not recompense the pain and labour, we shall be cold and dull. Where there is a performance of this duty out of natural conscience, but a faintness and languishment in it, it is a sign of too great a predominancy of it, Luke xviii. 7, 8. Christ, speaking of prayer, and crying day and night, adds, that he should scarce find faith on the earth at his second coming; they should be grown dull in prayer, out of a belief that God would not avenge them.

(4.) Who never exercise any serious sorrow for sin. Where there is a faith in Christ, there will be a delight in his law; and a delight in his law cannot be without a resentment of the violations of it. It is impossible he can seriously believe that Christ came to expiate the sin of the world, the sin of nature, and the streams of it, that is not affected with the evil of that sin which put Christ to such sorrow. As the Spirit of grace and supplication are inseparable, so a look upon Christ, and a mourning for sin, are undivided companions, Zech. xii. 10; the sense of the sweetness of Christ is not without a bitterness of soul. Every believer imitates Christ. If Christ groaned under it, he will groan for it; he will look with a wet eye upon all

corrupt propensions to that which is contrary to him. If a true believer would not have a lust live, he cannot but mourn, that notwithstanding all his pains, he cannot make it utterly die. No man can believe that Christ died upon the occasion of sin, and condemned sin by his death, that doth not grieve that ever he cherished such an enemy to Christ, and lament also that it is not thoroughly executed as well as condemned. If we believe he is risen, should we not bewail our clogs, which hinder us from following him in a resurrection to a newness of life? Faith and love are inseparable both in habit and act. Peter's faith flagged before he denied his Master; his love did not revive till his faith was out of its swoon; and both joining together presently engendered a mourning for his sin; and we scarce find Paul, in his highest exercises of faith, without humbling reflections upon his former sin.

6. All that are wholly sunk into worldly affections are unbelievers. He that hath an high opinion of the world's fulness, hath an opinion of Christ's emptiness. Where men's longings are most for the goods of the world, they are little or nothing for the benefits of the gospel; they cannot amount to that hungering and thirsting, that vehemency of desire, for the benefits of redemption by Christ. Would not he neglect the lesser things that believed greater? Can any man be very earnest to be temporally blessed, who believes Christ came to purchase an eternal happiness? Would any man spend his time in the making of puppets, that believed that, with as much earnestness, he might gain a crown? Who would ever rake dunghills, that believed a substantial treasure might be possessed at an easier rate? Who would ever sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, that believed it to be an excellent privilege? Who would drink of a puddle, that did believe a fountain accessible to him? He cannot be a believer that values everything above that Christ he pretends to believe in; that thinks vain riches or pleasure worthy of industry, and overlooks the blood and righteousness of Christ. I appeal to any, whether such can be accounted believers. A filthy swine may as well claim the title. The apostle joins the swinish belly-gods and the covetous earth-worms together, among the professing Philippians, as 'enemies to the cross of Christ,' Philip. iii. 18, 19. Can enemies to the cross of Christ be believers in a crucified Saviour, who is the formal object of faith? Earth is the furthest distant from heaven, and earthy affections at the greatest distance from Christ. Job approves the sincerity of his trust in God, by not having confidence in the things of the earth, as well as in avoiding the common idolatry of the age, Job xxxi. 24-26. All our revolts from God arise from two causes: unbelief of the blessings of the gospel-promise, and deceitfulness of sin, in regard of the goods of this world, Heb. iii. 12, 13. To turn from God infers that there is not a belief that he is an infinite good,* sufficient for our happiness, and to be valued above all other things; and to turn to the creature, as if that were the source of our blessedness, implies a deceitfulness of sin in the understanding, *i. e.* wrong opinions of God and Christ, and the things of this world. He that doth not make God his chiefest good, but placeth his confidence in anything else, is an unbeliever; and he doth not make God his chiefest good that thinks anything can make him happy without God, or that thinks God alone cannot make him happy without earth. If earthly things be preferred before supernatural objects, it is easy to conclude such an one understands not the excellency of that which he so slights. No man but will judge him ignorant of the virtue and worth of a diamond, that believes a brass ring to be of greater value, or chooseth a

* Mestrezat in loc.

Bristol stone before it. It is as impossible to believe in Christ, and rely upon the world, as to love God and the world in an equal supremacy; the love of this is inconsistent with the love of God, 1 John ii. 15. If Moses had preferred the pleasure of the Egyptian court and kingdom before the reproach of Christ, it had been sufficient evidence of no faith in the Messiah, Heb. xi. 24, 26. Well, do we believe that the least particle of glory is better than the empire of the whole world, and yet will not deny ourselves the least pleasure for heaven? Do we labour without ceasing, and with a world of trouble, for a little worldly pelf? this could not be, if we did believe the excellency of Christ, that he came to overcome the world, and hath writ contempt upon it, both in his life and death.

7. Distrusters of the providence and promise of Christ, and murmurers at his proceedings. There is a constant murmuring and distrust which shews the reign of unbelief, as a partial murmuring shews a relic of it: Ps. cvi. 24, 25, 'They believed not his word, but murmured in their tents;' as if it were more desirable to be under the Egyptian scourge than God's protection in the wilderness. This was partial in Abraham; his faith faltered in the courts of Pharaoh and Abimelech, when he would save himself by a lie, owning Sarah to be his sister, who was his wife. But it is from a total unbelief, when there is a despondency without seeking to God, when the heart faints, and the hands are not lifted up, when men can weep and howl under their afflictions, as totally undone, and be shut up in a perpetual silence towards heaven like a senseless stake, when they venture upon some forbidden path for their remedy, and move hell rather than heaven for their relief. This was the posture of the heart of Job's wife in that blasphemous advice to him: Job ii. 9, 'Curse God and die;' or a bloody mockery of him, if the words be translated, as some do,* 'Bless God and die.' You have served God indeed for a fine reward, you had best go on blessing him still, and meet with death for your pains. But are you so brutish as not to discern God's disaffection to you, who else would never have reduced you to those extremities? And by the like temptation, Satan hoped he should be our Saviour's conqueror: Mat. iv. 3, 6, 'Command these stones to be made bread.' The voice from heaven which told you you were the Son of God, was a mere illusion. Can the Son of God be exposed to such a condition as to live in a desert, without refreshment for his hunger, and repose for his body? Would a good father refuse bread to his famished child? If you are therefore the Son of God, for whom the heavens were opened, and upon whom the Holy Ghost visibly descended, turn those stones into bread to appease your hunger: thus he tempted him to impatience with his heavenly Father. Promises are not believed where there are disputes against providence, and an unwillingness to wait upon God for his wise conduct of affairs and successful event. Faith crucifies discontents, and unbelief arms them against God and others. When the soul is out-witted by the smallest crosses, and questions the providence of God upon every occasion, as though he had left the government of the world to chance and the power of men, he hath little evidence to shew for his faith. How can we think Christ stored with a fulness to redress our necessities, if upon every light disappointment we murmur against him, and complain of his want of truth and love? How can any trust him with their immortal souls, when they will not trust him with their perishing concerns? Can we believe he has shed his blood for the expiation of our sins (the greatest affair his divine person could undertake) if we cannot submit to him for our earthly comforts? If we resign not ourselves to his wisdom for the management of these, we shall hardly believe his merit sufficient for the pur-

* Durant, Tentat. du Christ, p. 213, &c.

chase of other. This being the fruit of too much anxiety, which is but the stream of this poisonous fountain, evidenceth a man as little a believer as a heathen who knows nothing of the provision made by Christ. By this Christ distinguisheth the Gentiles from his disciples: Mat. vi. 31, 32, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all those things do the Gentiles seek.' If there be then a predominant impatience (which is a fruit of this solicitousness, a quality proper to a Gentile), it will render the professor of no higher elevation in faith than the pagans, who were darkened in their mind, and in the rubbish of carnality. We cannot think him a sufficient security for that part of us which must run along with eternity, when we will not trust him with the little clay we possess in the world. Little credit can be given to the promises of the gospel, where there is a prevailing diffidence of his providential care.

8. Doubters of the grace of God in Christ. Not every doubt of something contained in the word before it be clearly known to be in the word; the Bereans had then merited a dispraise rather than a commendation. If we do not examine things before we embrace them, we may receive we know not what, and we know not why. Nor are doubts for resolution and clearing things revealed tokens of infidelity. Mary's question upon the angel's message to her of conceiving Jesus, who should be called the Son of the Highest—Luke i. 34, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?'—was not a question of unbelief, but of a desire of clearer information in the manner how this should come to pass. Nor are strong motions of questioning the being of a God, the truth of redemption, and faithfulness and fulness of the promise, testimonies of infidelity, provided they be abhorred and repelled with an holy indignation. Christ had then been an atheist himself, and a distruster of the promises made by the Father to him, who was as strongly moved to it by Satan, as also to fall down and worship that head of rebellion, as ever any man was, Mat. iv. Nor are those doubts which arise at the first conversion, and beginnings of faith, when the state of the soul is like to that of the twilight, a mixture of light and darkness. Nor those which sometimes assault strong believers, as when Asaph doubted whether there were any mercy left in God, when he imagined God had barred up any motion of his bowels towards him. This was a start of passion, a pang of unbelief, not an evil heart of unbelief; his infirmity: Ps. lxxvii. 10, 'This is my infirmity.' A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubt before it springs into a flame; this is a partial unbelief, because there is *imperfectio actus*. But when there is a prevailing doubting of the goodness and truth of the gospel, which is the property of an absolute unbelief; or though this be not questioned, yet there is a doubt of the relation and extent of the promise as to our particular, till the soul closeth with the promise of God in the gospel, it is an unbelief.* It is not like Peter, who staggered when he began to sink, yet casts a look and sends forth a cry to Christ, acknowledging his sufficiency: Mat. xiv. 30, 'Lord, save me.' But the soul is like a ship tossed with the waves of the sea, without an anchor, dashing against every rock and upon every shelf. It stays not on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, but like Cain cries out, 'My sin is greater than I can bear,' Gen. iv. 13. This is an utter rejection of the abundance of grace, and a scanty contracting the infiniteness of God's mercy and Christ's merit, as though our iniquity were more efficacious than divine goodness. Though this is not so openly frequent among us, there being more presumers than despairers, yet this is included in a recourse to anything but Christ. When we are sensible of the fiery tempest of God's

* Sedgewick's Doubting Believer changed.

indignation for sin, as though there were not shadow and shelter enough under the wing of the Lord Jesus, there is not a belief that he is able and willing to save all those that come to him, but jealousies of God and of the authority and divinity of the Scripture entertained and cherished, as when we are jealous of a friend, we shall be so far from believing him, that we shall misconstrue the plainest and clearest declarations he makes; as the Israelites, under the promise of mercy and experience of a deliverance, imagined God intended nothing but their destruction; that the mercy of manna, quails, and water in the wilderness, were the presages of God's anger with them. Such habitual doubts and habitual misconstructions, are evidences of habitual unbelief. All unhumiliated persons are not only to doubt, but despair, of the grace of God while they remain in that condition, and wallow in the mire of the old Adam. God doth not require that we should immediately rely on Christ without falling out with sin, nor can there be a relying act of faith without a resigning act; but when a soul is deeply sensible of its undone condition, accounts itself guilty before God, and will not reach out a hand to lay hold upon the promise of the gospel, nor bring a vessel to receive its treasures; though such may be in the way of faith, yet they are at present in a state of unbelief, confusion, and darkness, and at best like meteors hanging in the air, and fixed nowhere. They understand not the perfections of God shining forth in Christ as an object of trust and confidence. As some doubtings are a sign of little faith—'Why doubt ye, O ye of little faith?'—so habitual doubtings are a sign of a want of faith. When we question the whole tenor of the gospel, and reason against the design and intention of it, we cannot in that act be accounted believers.

We might further instance

In hypocrites. No man could be so prodigiously mad to put on a mask and personate the outward garb of a convert, without endeavouring after the inward frame, if he did believe the declarations of the gospel in its commands, promises, and threatenings.

In apostates, that begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; who have an *Hosanna* for Christ one day, and, upon a turn of the wind, *Crucify him* the next; that seem to value his blood in their hearts, and shortly trample it under their feet; that take their leave of him when the sun shines hot, or the storms blow hard, and prefer sin before the reproach of Christ, imagining that to embark in the same bottom with him is to be cast away for ever. Such a generation is adulterous, Mark viii. 38; they absolutely violate the covenant, and declare they have no mind to keep it. When our professions rise and fall according to a worldly interest, it is a faith like the motion of a weather-glass. All indeed who have not the operations of faith are unbelievers. Faith is an active thing, and can no more lie idle than fire in an heap of tow.

III. The third inquiry is, What are the causes of unbelief?

1. Original corruption. From the womb we go astray from God, Ps. lvi. 3. Departure from God is rooted in our nature;* it grows with us in the womb, springs with us into the world. An evil heart of infidelity is as old as our life. We are as much disputers against the promises of God by nature, as we are rebels against the law of God, and have as little reliance upon his truth, as we have conformity to his holiness; as little will to be beholden to his mercy, as we have to acknowledge his sovereignty. Our whole man is enmity to him; and the object of our enmity is not one, but all, the perfections of God. The state of our hearts is such by nature that we are

* Sedgewick's Shepherd of Israel, p. 307, changed.

more prone to believe anything, though an irrational and idle fable, than the truth of God. Adam did so, and our misery is that we are his children, and exceeding like him. He would stand by the strength of his own understanding, and aimed at a self-sufficiency more than life. He might have eaten of the tree of life, which, say some, was a type of Christ, from whom he was to expect his confirmation, and to whom he was wholly to subject his understanding. It was by Christ as his head, though not as the seed of the woman, that Adam was to be confirmed in an innocent state, as well as the angels are by him confirmed in a perpetual grace and blessedness. If it be so (which I do not assert, though it would deserve consideration), our unbelief of Christ, and the benefits offered by him, runs more directly in a blood, and is more rooted in our nature, than any other sin. It is certain that the first sin was pride, and unbelief of God's threatening. But upon this notion his sin was a refusal of Christ as the root of his standing, to settle himself upon his own bottom, and not wait for his settlement from the wisdom of God, by whom he was created. And, as we have declared before the probability of this being the first sin of the devil, so it is not unlikely but that this was the first sin of Adam, by the temptation of the devil, endeavouring to engage man in his party against the Son of God. But that the tree of life was a type of Christ, the Scripture seems to deny, Gen. iii. 22; the reason rendered of his expulsion from paradise was, lest he should eat of the tree of life. And God would not have hindered him from acts of faith on the seed of the woman, which he had so lately promised and proposed to him as an object of faith.

But howsoever this be, there are two effects of the depravation of nature that are the causes of unbelief.

(1.) Darkness of the understanding, Eph. iv. 18, whereby it is unable to see and judge of the spiritual objects presented to it, as the eye possessed by a beam is to exercise a visive faculty. Though a natural object hath such excellent qualities, that if it be understood, it will attract the will and affections to it, and open the arms of the other faculties for the embracing it; yet if the mind be ill disposed, and doth not judge of that object according to its merit, it will refuse it: as offer a man gold and diamonds, who understands not their worth, he will not be allured by them: a vitiated mind can as little behold the beauty of spiritual things, whereby to embrace them with satisfaction. There must be a concurrence of both the plainness of the object, and the clearness of the mind, for uniting them together. Though the sun shines in its glory in the firmament, yet if the eye be blind, there is no perception of it, or rejoicing in it.* As the apostle saith of the Jews, 'They would not have crucified the Lord of glory, had they known him,' 1 Cor. ii. 8, so men would never reject the gospel, were they sensible of the excellency of it. What hinders them from seeing and acknowledging it but sin, which hath blinded their minds? as nothing hinders a man from admiring the brightness and lustre of the sun but the want of his eyes. Vain things are the objects the mind made vain by sin doth only understand, and such things it hunts after for satisfaction. Since it is alienated from the life of God, it perceives not the light of God. And this natural darkness is too thick and powerful for the light or beams of the gospel which shine into it, without a spiritual illumination, and an opening the inward eye by the same almighty power, which can only restore the eye of the body when the light of it is wholly extinct: John i. 5, 'The light shined in darkness,' *i. e.* upon the dark minds of men, 'but the darkness comprehended it not.' From this darkness of mind springs that alienation from the life of God, or that

* Amyraut. Sermons sur divers Texts, p. 466.

life which we should live by the faith of the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20 ; so that they do not desire the spirit of revelation, which can only open the eye, renew them in their minds, and make them capable of discerning the excellency of spiritual objects. When Adam was in innocence, he did not judge rightly of what he ought ; there was a flaw in his understanding, whereby he did dissent from the truths of God's command. So the corruption of our nature is first and primarily in our understanding, and flows from thence into the lower faculties, as many diseases do from the head by catarrhs into the members of the body.

(2.) Perversity of will, whereby it withstands the impressions of truth, and beats them back, as the hardness of a wall doth the ball flung against it,* and runs as much counter to the will of God's mercy, whereby he would gratify us, as to the will of his authority, whereby he would have us serviceable to him. This is expressed by the apostle in the same place : Eph. iv. 18, 'Through the blindness of their hearts (*πῶρσιν*).'[†] The word translated *blindness*, signifies properly a callousness or hardness, and it is so translated, Mark vi. 52, 'They considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened ;' and John, xii. 40, where the hardness of the heart, which is expressed by this word, is distinguished from the blindness of their eyes. There is a callousness and brawniness in their heart, whereby it is rendered insensible of spiritual mysteries. The enmity to God is seated in the will ; it is seated by the apostle in the mind, Rom. viii. 7 ; it is indeed radically there, as liberty is, but formally in the will. We cannot be said to be enemies to any with our understanding, but in regard of prejudices, principles, wrong notions, which give birth and breeding to that aversion we have in the will to anything ; and the Scripture lays our not coming to Christ upon the obstinacy and inflexibleness of our wills altogether ; which is evident in that when God hath expressed himself in the most indulgent manner, offering those blessings which man in his lapsed condition is in absolute need of, which his own reason in some measure informs him he wants, and when his own heart tells him in his retirements he can have no true acquiescence in anything below ; yet there is a backwardness to entertain the gospel with choice affections, a refusal of that with contempt which should be entertained with joy ; not only an indisposition in the will to receive it, but a contrary disposition and stout-heartedness against it, which makes them 'far from righteousness,' Isa. xli. 12 ; a love of darkness, and resistance of light ; that though the word be in part understood, the heart is not presently converted. The chains of sin are affected by the soul, it resists Christ when he comes to file them off, loves the bondage of the one better than the service of the other. 'It is 'desperately wicked,' Jer. xvii. 9 ; it hates Christ for speaking the truth, for pressing a return to God ; it desires not the knowledge of God's ways, and likes not to retain God in its knowledge. From this depravation of the will it is that the gospel meets with the greatest opposition when it first sets footing in a place, or is presented to a person ; as there is the greatest cold in a morning (say some) about the time of the rising sun, because the vapours exhaled are resisted by the sunbeams, which, being not powerful enough to conquer and dispel them, do accidentally unite and strengthen them. So all the sin in man's heart rouseth and arms itself against that gospel which would destroy it.

2. Insensibleness of our state is another cause of unbelief. A congealed soul can no more receive the gospel, than frozen flesh can take in salt, whereby it may be preserved. The Pharisees would not believe but that they

* Sedgewick.

could clearly see, though they were absolutely blind : John ix. 40, 'Are we blind also ?'

(1.) Insensibleness of our lapsed condition, and the miseries attending it. We have a notion of the fall of man, the propagation of his corruption to us by generation ; but the notion in our minds, and a suitable impression upon our hearts, do not meet together : our heads and hearts are at a greater distance in regard of the influence of the one upon the other in this case, than the heavens from the earth. If we understood the deplorableness of it, it were impossible but we should seek for a remedy ; and when we can find no other to satisfy our curiosity, we should acquiesce in the way of the gospel as the fullest, safest, and most gratifying medicine. The physician is not valued when sickness is not felt ; when we understand not ourselves 'poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked,' it is no wonder that we account the gospel foolishness ; and no man can do any other till he feelingly understand what he lost, and what he contracted, by Adam. This was the great obstacle in the Jews ; they so prided themselves in their noble extraction from Abraham, that they never remembered they were the offspring of Adam : John viii. 33, 'We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man ; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free ?' Do we sensibly understand how much we have incurred the displeasure of the Lord, defeated the end of our creation, enslaved ourselves to vile lusts, subjected ourselves to the devil, the most desperate rebel against God, and the incendiary of the world ? Are we sensible how by Adam's transgression of the precept, we, as well as himself, are exposed to all the curses of the law, become guilty before God, as full of a stout enmity against that God we have offended, as we are full of a thick ignorance how to work out our reconciliation with him ? Are we sensible that we lie in our blood, are estranged from the life of God and holiness of God, possessed by a carnal mind and a perverse will, overgrown with poisonous weeds in our nature, and jolly with that sin which is the cause of our misery ? These are the things the apostle preacheth, Rom. iii., before he insists on the doctrine of faith, intimating that the only way to faith was a due impression of that wretched condition by nature ; and the great cause of unbelief is an insensibleness or inconsideration of it ; and Christ intimates in that sweet exhortation, Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden,' that men must feel the weight and load of the curses of the law, before they will have recourse to the refreshments of the gospel.

(2.) Insensibleness of the severity of God's justice. We fancy a God made up only of mercy, without reminding ourselves of his wrath, and think that, because he hath put bowels into creatures, he hath nothing but bowels in himself to the worst of rebels. Are we sensible of the steadiness of his truth to the word of his threatening, the dearness of his honour to him, and the dreadfulness of his wrath ? Will God make a nullity of his own threatening, bear the affronts of his creatures, suffer the honour of his law to lie without regard in the dust ; let the creature triumph in rebellion, and add to his former ingratitude new darings of heaven ? How can we forget to mind the punishment due to our sin ? How can we think the great God, the pattern of all excellency in his creatures, can be guilty of that weakness and falseness to his own honour as to break his word, and that his justice so heinously provoked, presently after his goodness had put his creature into a condition of serving him, as well as arming against him, should tamely put up the injury ? Yet this is the true cause of unbelief ; we consider not the power of his wrath (Ps. xc. 11, 'Who knows the power of his anger ?'), believe him not to be a consuming fire, and understand not the greatness of his anger in such a measure as it is to be feared.

(3.) Insensibleness of our own insufficiency to free us from this miserable condition, and the necessity of some other remedy than what our own nature, or all other human assistances, can furnish us with. Are we not naturally insensible that we have contracted a weakness of our satisfying one tittle of the law? that we can increase our debts and pay none, under an impossibility of remedying ourselves, or proposing a remedy to our offended Creator? Alas! we neither feel our wants nor know how to find supplies. We cannot satisfy that justice we have provoked, nor content that holiness we have displeased. We know not how to reduce ourselves to that God from whom we have wandered, nor regain that heaven we have forfeited. It is as impossible for us to find a place of rest, to which we might invite our souls to return, as it was for the dove sent out of the ark to find a place where to set her foot while the waters were upon the earth. This kind of inconsiderateness was the cause of the Jews' unbelief; they rested in the shell of their sacrifices, their outward washings, and purifications, and lifeless ceremonies, which had as little ability to bring them to God, as by nature they had a will to come to him: John v. 45, 'Moses, in whom you trust.' They trusted not in the person of Moses, but in the doctrine delivered, and ordinances enjoined, by Moses. What sinful or innocent creature hath so much power or favour as to interpose for us? Can any man be able to answer the just demands of the law, or stop the cries of it, by bearing the punishment it requires? Can we remove the loads of our guilt, and stifle the cries of our innumerable sins against us? If we consider the nature and circumstances of sin, the nature of the majesty offended, should we not be sensible that no created strength was able to pay our debts, or bear our punishment and secure our standing? But we are insensible of this; we naturally think a few outward devotions, a pack of legal services, glavering prayers, and heartless reformatations, can make God a compensation for all the affronts he hath sustained from us, retrieve our loss, and uncloud the face of God; and we apprehend not how sin hath mastered our faculties, and rendered them impotent to any perfect obedience, and unable to effect the everlasting redemption we absolutely need.

It is this, then, is another cause of unbelief. We believe not that we sprang from Adam, or else we believe not that Adam was so putrefied a root as the Scripture represents him to us. And how can the second Adam appear beautiful to any who is not sensible of the deformity of the first, and his own filthiness by him? Who would look for an eye-salve, that believed himself perfect in the organs of sight, or search for a treasure, who thinks he hath wealth enough already by him? The want of conviction by the law is the cause of the want of conversion to the gospel. We know not the disease, and therefore we regard not the remedy. Had we due apprehensions of this, we should be restless till we had an account of some salvation from it, to escape the wrath of God which is due to such a state. Let each man of us, therefore, in our private retirements, fancy ourselves in the stead of Adam, each woman of us in the state of Eve, and consider what we should have thought after God's conferring a being upon us with so much honour, our committing an offence with so much heinousness, and the terrors of conscience, and fears of punishment felt in ourselves. If we had a full sense, as they had, of the blessedness they had lost, the misery they had contracted, with what affectionate devotion and greediness should we enclose in the arms of our souls the offended Redeemer, with all his conditions! as no question they did the promise of the redeeming seed, which could only pacify their lately offended Creator, and calm their stormy consciences.

3. Pride of corrupted reason. Hence ariseth the opposition to, and slight of, the gospel, in great wits and the princes of the wisdom of this world.

They cannot believe anything which hath not some affinity with the false principles rooted in their minds, nor with the interest of their wills and passions. They condemn the revelations of God, because they are not suited to the opinions and notions of decrepit nature. The disproportion of the truths of the gospel to the principles of the received philosophy, made the Greeks count it foolishness in regard of the design of the sufferings of Christ, which had not entered into the heads of any of the masters of their sects, 1 Cor. i. 23.

(1.) This was the cause of the Jews' opposition to Christ. As the Greeks expected a doctrine savouring of the wisdom of their philosophy, so the Jews expected a Messiah with a magnificent retinue; and therefore the preaching of a crucified Christ was a scandal to them, because of the ignominy of the cross, contrary to the reason or fancy whereby they conducted themselves in the expectation of him. And the greatest wits among them, the pharisees, dashed upon this rock, John ix. 40, 'Are we blind also?' We know the common people are ignorant, but will you charge us with ignorance of the mind and will of God, who are so far above their rank? But, ver. 40, Christ tells them, because they boasted of their wisdom, their sin, *i.e.* their unbelief, remained. The pride of their knowledge was the mother and nurse of their incredulity. The opinion of the excellency of the law given by Moses, above any revelation whatsoever, fixed them in this sin. They always fenced against the edge of Christ's and the apostles' discourses with their arrogant brags of Moses: John ix. 28, 'We are Moses his disciples.' 'We know that God spake unto Moses.' The great doctors of that nation deride the Son of God, while the people adore him; the insolent disciples of Moses condemn him as a seducer and a partner with Beelzebub, while the simple-hearted receive him as the great prophet and son of David, and submit their reasons to the declarations of God; the wise men of the Jews crucify him, while the wise men of the east, the shepherds of Bethlehem, with the wisest creatures in heaven, the angels, rejoice and worship him.* Men swelled up with an opinion of their science, are unfit for faith. This is one of the strongholds exalting itself against the knowledge of God. The babes, and not the wise and prudent men, conceited of their natural wit, have, by the grace of God, the fullest store of the mysteries of the gospel, while he lets others fall, by the subtleties of a proud knowledge, into the snares of the devil. They will not believe, lest they should incur a censure of folly, imprudence, and credulity, though they have a rational ground of believing.

(2.) No question but this is a secret let in many among us. Though they cannot in reason deny the being of such a person as Jesus, cannot but own his miracles, life, death, and the wonders wrought by the apostles, because the testimonies of them are undeniable. Such as believe not this, must believe nothing, not that there is such a country as Spain, East Indies, America, which they never saw; nor believe that there were such persons as Alexander and Cæsar, which were conquerors of nations, which they have only by report; since there are more evidences that there was such a person as Christ, such doctrines taught, such miracles wrought, confessed by the enemies of the Christian religion among the heathen, and to this day by the Jews. But their reasons are nonplussed in the doctrine how Christ should be the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, that the divine and human nature should be so miraculously united without confusion of properties, how an innocent person should die for offenders, that God would not pardon by a free act of grace without a satisfaction, that he

* Daillé, Vingt Serm. sur Mat. xxi. 8, 9, p. 501.

should exact it of his Son, and by so bitter a death as that of the cross. These things have no footing in the common received principles of rationalists; and men are loath to captivate their reasons to the obedience of faith.

But how unreasonable is this pride of reason, upon which the unbelief of many is founded! Because we can understand some things, are our reasons capable of everything? Are they as infinite and unlimited in their capacities as God himself? Do we not owe that respect to our Creator as to believe he might keep some things to be revealed at what time he pleased, and that the discovery of his infinite wisdom might exceed our scanty comprehensions? Would not such rational men skilled in astronomy, laugh at those that should measure the greatness of the sun, and moon, and stars by their eye? If sense be too weak to comprehend the things that belong to reason, may not reason be as much too weak to comprehend the things that belong to revelation? If there be some things above our sense, why may there not be as many things, or more, above our reason? A man's eye cannot behold that which an eagle's can. As reason cannot comprehend the unbounded essence of God, no more than a man, if he were near the sun, could grasp it in his arms, so neither can it comprehend all the revelations of God, no more than a man can enclose all the beams and emissions of the sun in his eye, the infinite wisdom of God being infinitely more above our reason than the sun can be above our sense. We have natural proofs that there is a God, but have we capacities to comprehend the infinite perfections of his nature? Can we understand the depths of his wisdom, the lustre of his holiness, the steadiness of his truth, his boundless immensity, and the abyss of his counsels? We know he is, and hath all this; but we know not how nor the manner of his acting. So we have rational proof that the Scripture is the word of God, that the Christian religion is the revelation of God; but shall we, therefore, think to span and measure all the discoveries of God in Christ? As the nature of God cannot, so neither can the actions or truths of God be grasped in our reason, no more than the waters of the ocean can be included in a nutshell. If men's reason will not own revelation till they understand the manner of all the truths revealed, they must be unbelievers for ever. If they were admitted into heaven in that state, with as great a perfection of reason as Adam had, they could no more have a full view of those things than the angels have of God, who (we know) cover their faces before him; Isa. vi. 2; 'His ways are above ours, his thoughts above ours,' and his wisdom infinitely above our reason, Isa. lv. 8, 9. Besides, the natural light of the understanding is impaired by the fall (not to speak of the loss of that supernatural light man had), and men must not think to be as apprehensive and comprehensive of the reasons of things as if they were in innocence; as if any man could see things as clearly with a beam in his eye as he could if he had a clearness of sight and a fulness of spirits. Let us not think we can comprehend the revelations of God, till we can comprehend the nature of creatures. If men could fully understand the latter, yet those are but natural things, and will not infer that men can comprehend heavenly mysteries by earthly reason. Unbelief springs not from the incredulity of the object, but the weakness of the eye, and a foolish opinion that it is clearer and sharper than it is. As in the text, the things were true which Christ spake concerning the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, *i. e.* believing in him; but their understandings were weak, and could not conceive of them as Christ meant them, and were more fond of that they esteemed reason, than ready to wait submissively upon him for further information, though they counted him a prophet sent from God,

by reason of his miracles, which might have overruled their foolish imagination of his discourse.

(3.) This pride of reason is manifest in humbled persons at the beginning of a gracious work upon them. How ordinary is it for them to reason themselves from taking hold of the promise of life in Christ, find out witty inventions against the mercy of God, support their unbelief with pretences of unworthiness, wrest the promise to a contrary sense to what God intended it, as Manoah argued from the appearance of God that they should die, Judges xiii. 22, and indulge any ungrounded imagination against the promise of God! A corrupt nature, and a weak understanding, meeting with a doctrine so sublime, render us liable to mistake; as the weakness of our eye, when the height of an object transcends it, is the reason of misconceptions. The transcendent excellency of the thing promised, being in itself so glorious, and the soul finding itself so vile, the proffer is as a dream to it, as the greatness of the deliverance was to Sion, Ps. cxxvi. 1. When men are soundly convinced of the nature and evil of sin, they become vile in their own eyes, their sin galls them, the law terrifies them, the notions of God's justice are awakened in them, and lie close to them; they are sensible of the degenerateness and rebellion of their nature; they think God cannot but hate them, and they expect from him only the severity of a judge; and when evangelical mercy is declared, it seems incredible to them, because it exceeds their nature and dispositions; the greatness of the mercy proffered, makes them stagger; they believe not God to be so merciful, because they cannot be so (for in all conditions of men, it is natural to limit God according to their own petty dimensions, and not elevate their thoughts to his, but judge of his thoughts by theirs); and although his mercy is above the mercy of a creature, we are apt to think his nature as incapable of a largeness as our own. Since man is become vain in his imaginations, he is apt to measure divine things according to those principles which are in his own fancy. Hence God calls to men to forsake their thoughts, their disparaging conceptions of him, since his thoughts were different from theirs, as much as the heavens from the earth, Isa. lv. 7-9. He had higher thoughts of good to them, than either they had for themselves, or could think God had for them. Thus the greatness of the provision God promised the Israelites in the wilderness, made Moses his faith dizzy, he could not imagine how God should send food for such a vast number as six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, for the space of a month: Num. xi. 21, 22, 'Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together, to suffice them?' The greatness of the thing dazzled his thoughts, which were not proportioned to the mighty power of God, and measured the infinite majesty by a created line. Such humbled persons are like the disciples, who believed not the resurrection of Christ for joy when he appeared among them, Luke xxiv. 41; there was a twilight of faith, but obscured by the darkness of reason, the strugglings of this obstructed the victorious breaking out of the other. They had known their Master dead, his heart pierced, his body buried, they thought they saw him now present among them; their joy sprang up at the sight, but they could not tell how to believe it was he, against so many natural sentiments which might start up in them. Thus poor souls, scorched by the apprehensions of the curse due to their sins, hearing the greatness of mercy, wish it were so great as it is reported; come after, upon a nearer approach to the object, to hope it is so. But as too great an object dissolves the spirits, the strength of the sense, as the lustre of the sun dims the eye, the greatness of the sound deafens the ear; so the transcendent excellency of the spiritual object overpowers the

understanding. It is this, therefore, puts God to his oath, that as he lives he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, Ezek. xxxiii. 11; it was after an objection made by them, ver. 10, that if their transgressions were upon them, and they pine away in them, how should they then live? It is by an oath too that he settles our high priest, that we might have a strong consolation, which our scanty and suspicious natures, when once awakened, would scarce admit of. All this doth arise from a fondness of our own reason, or rather rooted imaginations exalting themselves against the wisdom of God, and a natural corruption whereby man is desirous to darken the glory of God. To produce, therefore, and excite faith, to quell and conquer unbelief, let us look only to the word, as God sends them to the word who measured the thoughts of God by their own: Isa. lv. 11, 'So shall my word be that goes forth of my mouth;' consult not flesh and blood; follow not the *ignis fatuus* of our own corrupted reason, a thing compacted only of earthly vapours. He that seduced the reason of Adam, when it was innocent, will much more be able to mislead ours when depraved and filled with a thousand follies. Let all our *whys* and *wherefores* be subjected to the word.

4. A self-fulness and conceit of ability, high opinions of other things, and resting upon them. This was a bane of the Jews, an outward observance, a bodily compliance with the commands of God; they thought enough to bear them out before his exact tribunal. This was the righteousness of the pharisees, which Christ would have ours exceed, Mat. v. 20; this was the righteousness the Jews pursued, whereby they missed of the other, Rom. ix. 31, 32. Their seeking after righteousness by the works of the law, hindered their pursuit of it in a way of faith.

Two things are to be considered in this:

(1.) Reliance upon outward privileges. The Jews bolstered up their hopes by their pompous worship, their circumcision, the law and ceremonies prescribed immediately by God to Moses, privileges granted by God to no nation under heaven besides, Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20; and upon the account of those, never left till they had brought the Messiah to the cross and grave. As they had before resisted the prophets who called them to the observation of the moral law above the ceremonial, and commanded them to offer their hearts more than their sacrifices to God, they dreamed of a justification by them, and forgot the kernel. There were four names possessed the minds of the Jews: * *People*; they thought God was so bound to the seed of Abraham, and that his seed was so holy by the holiness of their ancestors, that it was impossible for God to reject them, and choose another people. The *law*; that they thought was so pleasing to God, that whosoever observed it, was by that acceptable to God, and righteous before him; hence it is that they so often boast of and oppose their circumcision, and being the seed of Abraham, against the prophets, Christ, and the apostles. The *temple*; they imagined that God had fixed his perpetual habitation in the material temple, and was so delighted with the stateliness and richness of that edifice, that he could not be persuaded upon any account to desert it, and choose a place of worship anywhere else: Jer. vii. 4, 'Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these.' They trusted in the temple as the preservative of the city, and the security of the nation from judgments, and therefore they constantly cried up the temple of the Lord, against the threatenings by the prophets. *Land of Canaan*; they imagined this land so delightful to God that he could not endure to be worshipped in any other

* *Λαὸς, Νέμος, Ναὸς, Τόπος.*—*Illyric. de velam. Mosis*, pp. 221, 222.

territory ; and fancied that God was so tied to that order of priesthood among them, that he would never suffer them to err ; and therefore boasted that the law should not perish from the priest, nor the word of the Lord from the prophet. This is the veil which is upon their hearts to this day, and darkens their eyes from beholding the excellency of the gospel, and the true interpretation of the design and meaning of their ceremonies. They thought it enough to sacrifice their oxen, kindle their incense, observe their feasts, and hold up their hands to heaven, though filled with blood. Is not man as apt now to pin his hopes upon modes of worship, the baptismal laver, lukewarm devotions, as if those indeed did propitiate God, wipe off their guilt, and secure their souls, thus making those things which are means, to be ends, centres, foundations of blessedness ? Do not the papists at this day depend upon their sacrifice of the mass, the treasures, intercessions, yea, the carcases, bones, rags of the deceased saints, pilgrimages to shrines and sepulchres, as if those were expiations of sin and satisfactions of justice, the rod of their strength, which is an impediment to their settling their faith and confidence only in Christ !

(2.) Upon moral virtues. How many imagine that because of the good things found in them, God cannot but receive them, though they set not their faces toward, nor fix their eyes on Christ ? They think they have no need of the benefits of a Redeemer. Who will look after the righteousness of another, when he thinks he hath enough in his own chest to carry him out, he hath enough in his own bag to supply his wants ? Those that think they have no need of Christ, will cast him at their heels. There are two sorts, wherein this natural confidence in a self-fitness appears : such who exalt their own righteousness, and think themselves too good to have any need of Christ ; and such who, after some conviction, think themselves not good enough to come to Christ. One is so proud he will not be beholden to him, because he hath a portion of his own ; the other is so proud, that he will not be beholden to him till he can bring something of a valuable consideration ; for that he expects to receive from him some box of ointment to pour upon him ; both which proceed from a natural stout-heartedness against God. We would be Christ's partners, not his almsmen, as if we envied him the sole glory of our justification. Paul laid the whole weight of his soul upon the slender beam of his own righteousness while he was a Jew in religion ; but when he became a Christian, it was then, ' Not I, but the grace of God in me.' His circumcision, his being of the stock of Israel, of the sect of the pharisees, and his righteousness in the law (all which he terms flesh), were his gain before, but accounted his loss afterwards, Philip. iii. 4-7. And the reason of this is the ignorance of the perfection of that righteousness which God requires, that his holiness cannot endure a spot, that thousands of services and moral excellencies cannot make a recompence for one sin ; they understand not the exactness of God's justice, the extent of the law in its precepts, nor the dreadfulness of it in its curses ; they understand not the nature of sin to be so great as to need an atonement by the blood of God, or their righteousness to be so foul as to need a covering before the holiness of God. If they have not a notorious stench in their lives, they regard not the noisomeness of the fumes in their hearts. A trusting in any fleshly excellency is a cause of departing from God, Jer. xvii. 5, a robbing God of the credit we ought to give to him. While we would make our own peace, hew a prop out of our own rock, we shall never value, or place our trust in, the Redeemer.

5. Affectation of worldly things. When Israel was grown fat and plump, he ' lightly esteemed,' or disgraced, ' the rock of his salvation,' Deut.

xxxii. 15, יְשׁוּעָתוֹ, his rock Jesus. The Spirit of truth, which engenders faith in the heart, 'the world cannot receive,' John xiv. 17; men of worldly principles and worldly affections. The whole world followed antichrist, Rev. xiii. 3; not only the world in regard of multitude, but in regard of the cause; men whose hearts were linked to the world, and thirsted after a worldly grandeur. As the devil is the god of this world, he blinds the eyes of men that believe not, 'lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. Not understanding that natural blindness which all men derive from Adam, but some additional blindness contracted by his means, as he was the god of this world; not physically, by quenching the light of their minds, but morally, by presenting to them some false image of the world in its allurements or affrightments, whereby they were hindered from acknowledging the truth of the gospel, though clear in itself, and resplendent as the light. He is called the god of this world, not by right of possession, but as making use of the things of this world to propagate and maintain his empire in the hearts of men; by those, he bemists their understandings not to know the Redeemer.

Two things of the world are the roots of this sin.

[1.] The riches of the world, the objects of covetousness. The pharisees, which were covetous, derided him after he had preached a searching sermon against it, Luke xvi. 14. What made the young man turn his back upon our Saviour, after some fair show of a willingness to be his disciple, but the love of his possessions? Why did the Gadarenes pray him to depart out of their coasts, but that they loved better to remain with the devil than to live without their swine? What restrained the invited guests from accepting the dainties provided for them, but the immoderate affection to the husbanding a farm, and proving of oxen? Mat. xxii. 5. Why did the third ground so easily part with the word? Because they valued the profits and pleasures of the world above the happiness it proposed. And why did the Jews prosecute Christ to death, but because they feared the Romans should come and take away their kingdom? And what was the reason then, is no less a reason now; when the heart is stuffed up with the dregs of earth, there is no room for the impressions of heaven. Whoever is under the government of this lust, can no more believe than a man lying under a heap of rubbish, or at the bottom of the sea, can see the glory of the heavens. The intentness of the eye upon one object hinders it from the view of another, and that may be more excellent. When men hunt after the wealth of this world, they will hardly gasp for the riches of another. They would make Christ a happiness, by the by, when other things fail.

[2.] The honours of the world, the objects of ambition. This was and is still the root of the Jews' opposition to Christ. They dressed up a Messiah in their fancies, with the accoutrements of a gallant general at the head of his troops, by his conquering sword to make them lords of the world, and all other nations their slaves; and being full of those vain-glorious hopes upon his coming, they were so enraged against the person of Christ, because the meanness of his appearance did not gratify their carnal expectations of grandeur. And though he wrought many great miracles as testimonies of his commission, whereby their judgments might have been swayed to a belief of him, yet he not having that good they conceited, they rejected that good he proposed. The meanness of his person was the occasion of their contempt; he appeared as a despicable shrub, Isa. liii. 2, 'as a root out of a dry ground,' giving no marks of rising to a full-grown tree, to shadow that nation from the fury of their conquerors: 'he hath no form nor comeliness;' there is no comeliness like that of the Messiah we expect, nor that splendour,

wherein he seems to be promised. There is neither the grandeur of the world in his person, nor the eloquence of the world in his preaching. His discourse and practice was to cast contempt and scorn upon it : he allured them not with the sensual delights of the world. The corner-stone is therefore rejected, because it squared not with that fabric of worldly greatness and wealth they had erected. Had he promised them the pleasures of this life, assured them they should set their feet upon the necks of their enemies, the whole nation had listed themselves in his troops. They cracked none of the promises to taste their spiritual sweetness ; fed only upon the husk, and never regarded sin, or any deliverance from it. This stakes them down in their unbelief to this day ; their eyes cannot pierce to the spiritual things veiled under temporal promises ; they are so fond of the shell that they neglect the kernel ; and though they have seen their desires and hopes frustrated beyond the time fixed by any of the prophets, yet this dazzling expectation flatters them out of any thoughts of a Redeemer, but what is framed according to their own model. What was that which made the disciples flag in their faith after the death of Christ ? The thoughts that Christ was to redeem them, not from the tyranny of sin, but the usurpation of the Romans. When they saw him dead, their hopes were crucified and buried with him : Luke xxiv. 21, ' We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel.' Now they had no trust left. What made some of the rulers (when they could not in their judgments resist the force of the miracles) silence their confession of him, but the ' loving the praise of men more than the praise of God ' ? John xii. 42, 43 ; and our Saviour tells them, ' John v. 44, that one passionately affected to vain-glory doth not only not believe, but cannot believe ; it is not possible, while he is so disposed, that he should pay to Christ any thing but a disdain. Ambition and faith cannot join hands together ; for faith humbles, and ambition puffs up ; faith glorifies God, and pride magnifies itself. None that make their reputation their god, can endure anything which they suppose will blemish it, and expose them to the scorn of the brave spirits of their age.

We see then another cause of unbelief. ' Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble,' 1 Cor. i. 26. Not many *wise*, because they will not submit their reasons ; not many *mighty*, δυνατοι, or rich, because they will not be weaned from their worldliness ; not many *noble*, because they will not sacrifice their honour. Pride and covetousness have taken possession of the noblest parts of them ; pride of the understanding, and covetousness of the will. If we are biassed by both, or either of those, we are as much deriders of Christ in heart as the Pharisees were in their lies and gestures, Luke xvi. 14, ἐξευμνηρίζον ; and we can no more believe in him now, if ruled by those principles, than they did then who beheld the glory of his miracles ; they are both bars against any gospel faith, howsoever clear the truth shines in the midst of men.

6. Sensuality and corrupt habits settled in the soul. The fleshly interest hath produced evil habits, and strengthened them in the souls of men ; they become natural to them, and men are loath to be divorced from them. ' Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, John iii. 19 ; they are loath to see the vileness and ugliness of their sins, as some are loath to behold the disfigurement of their faces. Let light, the most excellent thing in the world, glare upon one that hath sore eyes, he will shut his eyes against it, or turn away from it ; though he understands the worth of it, yet it is a quality offensive to him in those circumstances. As the gospel is too clear for a darkened mind, so it is too pure for depraved affections ; as men are wedded to this or that particular vice, they are estranged

from the doctrine and purity of the gospel. Those passions are dearer to them than truth and goodness, they blear the eyes of their mind that they cannot behold them, weaken the intention of the mind that it cannot pursue the apprehension of them, and arm the powers of the soul in opposition to them. Appetite imposeth upon the judgment. As there is a conjunction or opposition between men's carnal affections and points to be believed,* so is there an assent or dissent from them. If there be anything in any part of the gospel which they can wrest to favour their darling lust, they will esteem it as a sweet and delightful voice. But when Christ offers to make them happy,† only he will take away their vice; this they cannot endure; they will take their leave of Christ, and love rather to live without him, than without the swine which they idolise, Mat. viii. 34. They would depend on his sacrifice, but cheer themselves with their pleasures; they would be saved by his cross, but ruled by their lusts; they would part the offices of Christ, which God hath joined together, not to be separated for the pleasure of the rebellious creature; they would lay hold on his promises, but not observe his precepts; and have a faith of reliance without a faith of resignation. To follow the conduct of our affections hinders a conduct by the understanding, and consequently believing, since faith is an intellectual act. The harp and the viol in the feasts hinder any regard to the 'operations of God's hands,' Isa. v. 12, any serious reflections on the designs of his providence in the world; much more any sentiments of Christ, the sum and centre of all his providences. Corrupt affections cloud the understanding, as vapours from the stomach dim the eye. They are like coloured glasses, changing the species of the object which is seen through them; ill judgments of good things are engendered by them, because contrary to those vicious habits which are rooted in them.

7. The devil. As the devil opposes the kingdom of Christ, so he opposeth that which is the great prop of that kingdom. As he would make Christ doubt whether he were the Son of God, so he would make us doubt whether he were sent of God. The devil's sin seems to be a rejecting of Christ as head, and therefore he endeavours to conform men to his own image by unbelief, as God conforms his own to the image of his Son by faith; and this contempt is so properly the devil's image, that he is said to work more particularly in opposition to Christ in the first times of the gospel: Eph. ii. 2, 'Now works in the children of disobedience.' Now that a crucified Saviour is preached as head of the world, now that the Spirit works in men to draw the lineaments of a divine faith, and restore them by it to the happiness they have lost, so Satan works to hinder faith, that he might perpetuate men in that state to which he at first reduced them; for he knows there is no way of recovery but by faith; there is no way to happiness but by a perfect obedience commensurate to every tittle of the law, or a satisfaction for the breach of it; the first we cannot perform, because we have offended; the second we cannot do by ourselves, because we are creatures. God proposed not the way of working to Adam for his repair after the fall, but that of believing in the seed of the woman. If the devil, then, can keep us from faith, he keeps us under his own empire, because there is no other means but faith of settling us under another head. Besides, by keeping us from this, he keeps us from paying any obedience to God. Without this grace we can do nothing but sin, Heb. xi. 6; and with it we may pay him some poor kind of obedience in our own persons, and glorify him in owning the obedience of another which he hath exposed to suffering in our stead. Faith is all the weapons a man can have to resist him, 1 Peter v. 9. He therefore will en-

* Dr Jackson.

† Daillé, sur Jean, iii. p. 405.

deavour to hinder us from it, or disarm us of it. If he cannot prevent it, he lays siege to batter it; he will second the perverse reasonings we make against the grace of God, and stake down the imagination to him. When we are in the dregs of nature, he makes us believe our state is good; when we are looking out of the pit, and begin to consider the proffers of Christ, and the glory of another world, he stirs up an awakened conscience, presents God as an armed enemy, and casts veils upon the merciful bowels of God. As he sowed jealousies of God in the heart of Adam, and endeavoured to plant suspicions of God in the heart of our Saviour, Mat. iv., so he kindles and blows up ill apprehensions of God in the hearts of men. All have a tendency to nuzzle them in good conceits of themselves, and either to allure or bar them from faith in the Redeemer.

IV. Use.

1. How lamentable is this frequency of unbelief! Is it not an astonishment that the devil should find such strong inclinations in us to his kingdom and our own misery, and Christ so little dispositions to his own glory and our own happiness; that we should rather choose to die slaves in the chains of the devil, than to live gloriously in the bosom of a Saviour; that the Redeemer should be so willing to shed his blood, and men's nature so averse from accepting it, upon conditions as much advantageous for their own happiness as the Redeemer's glory? Are not all the good things we enjoy from his mediation—whatsoever natural light we have in our minds, whatsoever good motions start up in our wills? Is it not a thing to be bewailed, to be ignorant of him who is the procurer of such benefits? Like the inhabitants of Egypt, who enjoy the streams of *Nilus*, and the fruitfulness of their land thereby, and know not from what spring the river doth first arise. If faith were a rich manor, a wedge of gold, or a Babylonish garment, exhortations to it would be needless, the desires of men would outstrip one another in the gain of it. Doth not everything besides man obey Christ's voice; did not the winds, seas, diseases, hear his voice, and march or stand still, at his pleasure; and shall we only, who have reason to obey him, use our reasons to rebel against him; we who are capable of believing in him, refuse a real and practical credit to his word? Is it not sad, that many that profess a kindness to him should hate him worse than their sins, worse than their spiritual tyrant? Christ himself wonders, that when he 'told them the truth,' they did not believe, John viii. 46; when he made not only a simple declaration, but demonstrated it by many signs, a truth of the greatest moment which respected a blessed eternity! Thus it was when his divinity, shining through his miraculous actions, might have persuaded men to receive his doctrine with veneration; but not only the obstinate sort rejected him, but some of his followers in the text; and they are offended at his discourse, when they should rather have charged their own ignorance. His miracles might well have persuaded them there must be a divine meaning in what he proposed, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, though their understandings were at present too short to comprehend it. Is the world at a better pass now? Are the inclinations of men more natural towards Christ than in that age wherein he lived? Do they not rather seem to vie with Christ's voluntariness in undertaking redemption, by their wilful disdain of the conditions of it? Why should not that gospel, which hath been successful in many ages, in some of all conditions, be received in all the terms of it? Why should not his truth move us more, who have been bred and nourished among Christians? Why should they affect us no

more than fables? It is lamentable that Christ, after so many proofs, miracles, and grace, cannot be believed but by a few; that most should prostitute themselves to vile temptations, let a Saviour stand without, while they are playing the wantons with the roysting mates in their hearts; as if the mercies he offered, were his crimes rather than his kindness, and he wronged us by shedding his blood for us.

2. See the madness and folly of men under the gospel. What an indifference there is in many men whether they should believe or no! What folly would it be for any to be indifferent whether he should accept of life when he might have it upon honourable terms; to be indifferent whether they should be saved or no? Is it not a folly in us, and a high crime against God, to be so hardly brought to honour him in that way wherein he hath honoured himself, and would advantage us? Yet this is the folly of many men, yea, of most men. Is not that man worse than brutish, that believes sin damnable, and yet is fond of it; that believes God righteous, and yet offends him; that believes God good, and yet abuseth him; that believes Christ a Saviour, and yet honours him neither in heart nor life? Pretences are vain, if practice be not accommodated to them. Such believe none of those things, they believe not God good or righteous, sin damnable, or Christ a necessary Saviour; they drive on to hell, and turn their backs upon the only Redeemer, as if they envied themselves a happiness, and Christ the honour of their salvation.

3. Let us examine ourselves whether we be true believers or no. 'Prove whether you are in the faith,' 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Much faith is counterfeit; the colour and flame of fire may be so represented by the art of man, that at a distance it may deceive our eye, but upon an approach to it, and touching of it, we shall find nothing of the quality of fire. Faith must be examined by the effects and fruits; what displeasure with sin, what affection to Christ, what flames in the heart, what regulation of the life? Let no man take his outward honesty and morality to be faith; there may be much of that where there is nothing of this. No reason to account all infidels that have been rebels to Christ, and fools to themselves, to be false to men. We may well suppose those in the text to be no debauched persons, they had then forsaken Christ before, when he dissected, in several discourses, the gross lusts of the world. Many civil persons may be without a knowledge of the true intent, ends, and conditions of the coming of Christ; they may own the person of Christ, and oppose the Spirit of Christ, as well as the Jews owned the shadow of Christ, and opposed the substance; acknowledged the types, and refused the antitype. Try your faith by your love to Christ and his truth. It is the common sentiment of men, that whatsoever thing a man counts his sovereign good, he doth necessarily love, and it is impossible he should do otherwise.* Men differ in their choice; one chooseth pleasure, another honour, another wealth, some an image of moral virtue; but, let it be what it will, the affections follow it. If any man be convinced that God is the chiefest good, that Christ is the only Redeemer, in whose death is our life, in whose resurrection is our justification, and that this Redeemer can only bring us to the enjoyment of God, our chiefest good, then the setting our chiefest love upon God the centre, upon Christ as the means, is unavoidable. If we believe those things really, it is as certain that we shall love God supremely; and our love to Christ as the way, would be equal to the desires of the enjoyment of God as the end. If there were many means to bring us to it, there might be a debate which to pitch upon. But if we believe there is but one, and that Christ is this true and living way, that

* Amyraut, *Serm. sur divers Textes*, pp. 275, 276.

necessity which determines our love to the sovereign good, will carry us to affect, and follow, and pursue the only means to bring us to the fruition of it. If a man were desperately sick, and knew of but one medicine to cure him, and believed the cure certain upon the application, the love that he hath to his health would make him affect and value the only means to procure it. Do our hearts come under the influence and authority of the gospel? are the counsels of God esteemed and treated by us as the greatest wisdom? are the conditions of it entertained with readiness? do we rejoice in the light and flames of it? do we stifle those fleshly suggestions that would choke the appearance of it in our hearts, or stop us from obeying the precepts of it in our lives? Is the person, death, resurrection, yoke of Christ precious to us? 1 Peter ii. 7; have we works of faith as well as the professions of it? would we obedient to his commands, as well as interested in the happiness of his promises? John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me.' Can we deny ourselves for him, our right hand or right eye, whatsoever is dearest to us? offer up the most affected corruption we have, to be crucified by the power of his cross? These are the operations of faith. But is it so, that we have a confidence in the flesh? that we are fond of a righteousness of our own, or indulgent to some secret lust, and would rather break with Christ than break with either? are we unwilling to come up to the terms of Christ? we would accept some but refuse others; is there anything more savoury to us than Christ? have we higher valuations of the things of the world than of him? are we content he should bear the divine wrath for us, but we would not imitate his divine righteousness, or leave some endeared lust for him? would we have his salvation, but put off the service of him to the dregs of our lives, when we cannot serve ourselves? would we only serve our turn of him, but pay no service to him? do we like his sacrifice and dislike his service, love the sweetness of his cross, but not the weight of his yoke? would we have the benefit of redemption with a liberty of sinning, make the gospel the ground of our confidence, but not the rule of our walk? While our wills are thus unconquered, we are unbelievers. No man believes, that hath not a bended will to Christ, even to his very feet. Our neglects of him render us guilty of this sin, as well as our oppositions to him. The guests invited to the feast, did not absolutely refuse to come, but made their excuses: Mat. xxii. 5, they 'made light of it;' ἀμελήσαντες, were careless of it. What society hath faith with profaneness or a resolution of disobedience? 'What agreement hath Christ with Belial?' There are but two standards to come under, Christ's or Satan's; Christ is only the public head appointed by God. Who do we fight for? He that is not with him is against him; he that is not with him by a gracious will, holy desires, affectionate valuations, holy meditations, resolutions to cleave to him, is against him, and no believer in him. No man can be in league with Christ and the devil at the same time. As Christ said to the Jews, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham,' John viii. 39; so if we are Christ's followers, we shall do the works of Christ; works of obedience to him, and imitation of him.

4. Use is of exhortation.

(1.) Let us endeavour to be stripped of our unbelief. The least thing we can be obliged unto, upon any declaration of God, is the belief of it; an assent to the truth, and consent to the goodness. The law of nature teacheth us, that every revelation of God is to be believed as true, and embraced as good. We are as much bound to believe God, because of his truth, as to love him because of his goodness. What can be more reasonable than to turn to

God, trust in him, accept of a righteousness from him, that we may be freed from guilt, and glorify his name? The owning the Christian religion (supposing there were reasons to doubt of the truth of it), and a faith in Christ cannot render a man worse than he was before. All confess the necessity of an holy life, the approbations of it they have in their consciences. But what infidel can say his life is agreeable in every particular to the dictates of his conscience, and to the law of nature in him? what infidel can imagine he may appear before God with confidence upon the account of his own works, who knows he hath not paid a tribute to him according to his law, according to his own sentiments of God? Though he accounts God kind, because he sees the tokens of his goodness in the world, yet he must account him just, who sometimes sees the arrows of his vengeance darted in the world. If he hopes to be happy by the mercy of God, is he ever the further from it by believing in Christ as the way of communicating that mercy? The satisfaction he thinks to make to God by a righteousness of his own, his own conscience, if he will silently hear it, will tell him is not perfect; is he ever the further from perfection by accepting of the satisfaction Christ offers him in the word, which hath so many marks of a divine stamp upon it, as may easily stagger him; is the righteousness he builds upon impaired by it, or not rather advanced to higher strains of love to God, desires to glorify him, referring all to the Creator, whereby his own righteousness (though not thereby satisfactory to God, or to be rested on, yet) is rendered more agreeable to his own conscience, and more contenting to himself? Faith in Christ impairs nothing that a man's conscience, upon just ground, can call good and comely. But as for those who believe the doctrine of the gospel, there is much more reason they should really have that faith they pretend to. We confess God hath appointed no other to be the Redeemer, why should we not believe it with our hearts and affections, as well as confess it with our lips? Shall he who we believe is advanced by the Father above the highest heavens, be set lowest in our hearts? As there is but one God we must own, so there is but one priest, one sacrifice we must rely upon, one king whom we must obey. Pray therefore against your unbelief. As we need a Christ to free us from the curse, so we need the Spirit to open our eyes, that we may see our misery, the attainableness of happiness, and the way to it, and that we may acknowledge all those admirable qualities and suitableness in the Son of God to all our necessities. We have as great an impotency to faith without grace, as we have an emptiness of it by nature; there is such an estrangedness from God, such an aversion to him, that not a man in the world would ever turn to God without an overpowering grace. No man is an unbeliever but because he will be so; and every man is not an unbeliever, because the grace of God conquers some, changeth their wills, and bends them to Christ. Every man's heart is by nature of the same metal and temper; no man is more pliant than another, but by the fire of grace melting him. Pray for it; God never denied it to any wrestler with him; he knows how to give good things to them that ask him, and are importunate for them. Pray for it as for your daily bread; wait upon the means where grace pours forth itself. Lie at the foot of the throne of grace for this necessary grace, and study much the guilt of sin, the deformity of your souls by it, the extent of the law, the justice of God, and the satisfaction of Christ in the gospel.

(2.) Let believers be ashamed both of their old unbelief and the remainders of it in their hearts. Let us reflect upon ourselves, and remember how Christ called us in his word, and how long it was ere we listened to it; how he made some impressions on our hearts, and the next temptation blotted

them out; he offered his blood, and we would have our sins; he promised heaven, if we would believe, and we would have a hell; with what earnestness did he call, and with what earnestness did we refuse; how gracious was he in his invitations, and how perverse were we in our slights! A great Redeemer soliciting, and a vile wretch would not be entreated! How often have we misunderstood his word, opposed his will, loathed his ways, nor would admit of the levelling a mole-hill lust, much less a mountain! Were we not like most in the eastern parts, that upon the appearance of the star at the birth of Christ, did not stir to present him with their services! Many might see the star, but only three wise men followed the motions of it. How often hath a star risen upon us to conduct us to Christ, darting out its motions to invite us to seek our Saviour, and we have lain in our old country, our old sins, and would neither bring ourselves, nor send our presents, to Christ! And have we been loyal to Christ since he freed us from the chains of the devil, and snatched us from the lion's paw; have we exercised that faith he desired, and paid him that affection he deserved? Shall not this be matter of shame to us? How little faith is there in the world, and how much unbelief; how little faith is there in the hearts of believers themselves, and how much unbelief! What complaints of this sin have we often heard of in holy men, and that even the nearer they came to God!

(3.) Watch against the stirrings and appearances of it. All God's works, from the beginning of the world, have been to draw out our hope and trust in him. He created man a noble creature, and made the world for his service, that he might depend upon the goodness, wisdom, and power of his Creator; he suffered man to fall into misery, that he might give in redemption a stronger ground of confidence in him, and encouragements of recourse to him; he chased man out of paradise after his sin, that by experimenting the miseries of the world, he might pitch his faith more upon the promised seed; he delivered Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand, an essay and type of what he would do in the deliverance of their souls from a spiritual tyranny. At last, he sends his Son to die upon the cross to satisfy for our sins, that no occasion might remain to doubt of his goodness. It is a sin natural to us, therefore should be watched against. The only people in the world acquainted with the promises of God, and receiving the most eminent deliverances from God, yet how did this sin creep in upon them against all arguments to the contrary, and possess their souls! When they heard of the strength of the Anakims, they consult about returning to Egypt, and would rather submit to the mercy of a provoked enemy, than depend upon the promise of a tender and faithful God. They lose the benefit of the former experience of God's kindness. They had seen the Egyptians sinking to death in the waters, and they think the same power cannot match the Anakims upon land; he had spread a table for them in the wilderness, and they think he cannot as well whet a sword to defend them against their enemies, as though his power were spent upon the Egyptian carcases. How soon doth a sottish fear starve their faith? The promise of their deliverance from Egypt well performed, did not make them expect the donative of the land of Canaan promised to them by the same word of truth from God, who had as much power to perform the latter, as to accomplish the former. Watch against this sin therefore: a sin, as well as an enemy that is slighted, is most dangerous, and often victorious. Grow in the knowledge of God and Christ; the more we know him, the more we shall trust him. Our confidence in a man increaseth, as our acquaintance with his honesty and ability advanceth. The grounds of faith are the perfections of God, and the actions and sufferings of Christ; the more ignorant we are of them, the less we

shall confide in him. Check unbelieving suggestions at the first appearance ; such weeds if suffered to be set will quickly grow. Oppose the truth of God to the suggestions of Satan ; Satan is a false spirit, but he is not more false than God is faithful. Take heed of predominant suspicions of God's fidelity, and Christ's sufficiency. Consider which is most worthy of credit, the true God or a false heart ; a God we never found false, or a heart we scarce ever found faithful. His charter of mercy is of the same force as ever ; he hath not cancelled a bond he stands engaged in. The gospel shall not be drained of its milk till God be emptied of his fidelity ; nor the promises cease to be *yea and amen*, till the seal of the blood of Christ wants an efficacy to confirm them. When you are assaulted by unbelief, you know what power to address. That omnipotent arm that first planted faith, can only protect it against the powers of hell, that would pull it up by the roots. 'Lord, increase our faith' should be as much in our mouths, as 'Lord, pardon our sins.' Let us grieve for it. Our Saviour grieved for the incredulity he perceived in the hearts of the Jews, let us grieve for that we find in ourselves. The mourning under what we feel is a good preservative against any further encroachments. Let us never lay down our arms against it ; as God will not cease till he hath put all the enemies of Christ under his feet, so let us not cease till we have put our unbelief, his greatest enemy, under his and our own.

4. Let those that have faith, strengthen their faith the more, by how much the less there is in the world. Let us more straitly embrace the Redeemer,* renounce all other hopes either in heaven or earth, expect happiness and comfort from nothing but the sufferings of the cross, advance continually in that faith whereby we are united to the Saviour of the world, and let temptation be so far from snatching it from us, that they may be occasions of strengthening it in us, as the blustering of the wind makes men wrap their garments closer about them. The more Christ is slighted by others, the more let him be prized by us, that we may, by adhering to him, endeavour as much as in us lies, to repair the glory he loses by others rejecting him. Let that blood be the more cherished in our hearts, when we see others more desperately treading it under their feet. While we believe he pleads for us in heaven, let us not suffer anything to plead against him in our own bosoms. Joseph of Arimathea owned Christ boldly, when he was crucified, who never did, that we read of, own him before, or ever spake with him, though he was a disciple in secret, Mark xv. 43. This use the disciples that remained with Christ made of the apostasy of those in the text : those that were here offended at his word, did, ver. 66, 'turn their backs upon his person.' Did the other disciples stagger by the fall of their neighbours ? No, they are knit the faster to him : 'Whither shall we go ? thou only hast the words of eternal life ;' and their revolt drew out that glorious confession from Peter, in the name of the rest, 'We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God,' John vi. 68, 69. Strengthen it the more by how much unbelief grows in the world, since we are told by our Saviour, that just before his appearance, for the recovery of the church from the hands of men and devils, and bestowing that glory upon it which he hath promised, there shall scarcely be 'found faith upon the earth,' Luke xviii. 8 ; as at the time of Christ's resurrection, which was a token of the resurrection of the church, the disciples did not believe they should ever see his face again. Since therefore Christ hath told us how predominant unbelief should be, let us the more strengthen our faith. And why should we not do it, as well as the disciples did upon this occasion in the text ? Is it not the same

* Amyraut, Serm. sur divers Textes, p. 456.

gospel upon which our faith is founded, on which theirs was ; doth not the cross and resurrection of Christ furnish us with greater encouragements than they had at the time of this profession ; have we not the same Jesus to look to, who is the author and finisher of our faith as well as of theirs ? Why should any of us suffer ourselves to go along with the corruption of the age, instead of resisting it ; why should we be borne down by the temptations of the world, instead of combating with them ? Let us be fuller of thoughts of the cross of the Redeemer than of the delights of the world ; and the stronger our faith, the sweeter will be our comfort in the worst of times.