

## A DISCOURSE OF THE MISERY OF UNBELIEVERS.

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*He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*—JOHN III. 36.

THESE words are a part of the discourse of John Baptist to his disciples, which contains a summary of the gospel, and treats of the dignity of Christ's person. The occasion of the discourse is a question stated between the disciples of John Baptist and the Jews about purification: ver. 25, 'There arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying;' what the question was is not fully and plainly recorded. Some think the ceremonial purifications appointed in the Mosaic law were the subject of the contest. But the next verse (ver. 26) intimates the question to be concerning the baptism of Christ and John Baptist, which of them was the most efficacious for purification. Some preferred John's baptism in regard of his priority of time, he being first sent to baptize, and in regard of Christ's receiving baptism from his hands; the other might assert the baptism of Christ to be as purifying as the other, because of the many miracles wrought by him to confirm his mission, which seeing the Baptist wanted (for he wrought no miracles, John x. 41), John's disciples being jealous of their Master's glory, and troubled at the lessening his authority, in the heat of their contest address themselves to John to be an arbitrator in this affair, as being best able to judge of that for which he was commissioned: ver. 26, 'And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.' The contest, it seems, had engendered in their hearts an envy against Christ, because of the multitude of his followers above what their master had, who, they saw, was decreasing upon the other's rising, as the light of the stars is obscured by the appearance of the sun. They frame their relation to John with a contempt of Christ and a charge against him, as if they intended to incense their master against our Saviour. The contempt is in the title they give him. When they speak of their master, it is *Rabbi*; when they speak of Christ, it is *he that was with thee beyond Jordan*, not vouchsafing to name him. How apt is man by nature to have low and mean thoughts of Christ in his heart! The charge here is double:

1. Usurpation. *He baptizeth*, he invades thy office, and takes upon him that function which belongs properly to thee, and after he seemed to enter himself thy disciple, by receiving baptism at thy hands, now is ambitious of an equal authority with thee, without a call or any order from thee, and baptizeth in his own name.

2. Ingratitude. *He to whom thou barest witness*, and by that eulogy gavest him an authority among the people who relied upon thy word. Now he endeavours to obscure thy glory, and hath forgot the obligation he had to thee by giving him so worthy a character. They thought John's commendation of Christ arose from his humility, and not from a knowledge of the excellency of his person. And they urge it with the success of Christ, 'all men come to him.' He makes so great a progress that he will draw from thee all thy disciples, and diminish that honour thou hast gained among the people. By this means they endeavoured to inflame the Baptist against our Saviour, and cause him to change his note, and give such a character of him as might lessen his growing reputation; but they found their expectation defeated by the modest answer John returns to them.

Observe,

1. How do pride and passion often sway in the hearts of professors! The Baptist's disciples fear any disgrace of their master should redound upon themselves, and therefore endeavour to embroil him in contention. The disciples of Christ were not free from the like taint, when they were angry with one man's casting out devils, because he did not follow them, Luke ix. 49. John by his humility rejoices at the appearance of Christ, ver. 29; but his disciples' pride robs God of his present praise for sending the Messiah. We can never value any mercy of God while we value ourselves too much. What need have we to lay shackles upon the pride of nature, to watch over our passions, and restrain them within due bounds, that they may be serviceable to God and not to Satan! Grace must be upon its guard against the designs of the old Adam in us. The devil directed strong engines against the Baptist in the hands of his disciples, enough to batter him, without abundance of grace and an awakened exercise of it.

2. How often have pride and envy been the springs of the church's calamities! These two have been the incendiaries of the church as well as of the world. Pride in Adam overturned the worship of God in the world just after the creation, and envy in Cain made the first division after the promise, which led him to murder the holiest man, and afterwards drove him out from the presence of God. How little did those poor disciples think that in this they imitated the fallen angel! He envied God a service from man, and those envy Christ a glory from the creatures. How far will envy proceed if God do not stop it! Envy in Cain at the appearance of his brother's sacrifice first broached his brother's blood.

3. How forward are men to be drawn from Christ by an admiration of the gifts and graces of the saints!\* They admire here the servant above the master. How long hath it been that the value set upon the saints thrust almost out any estimations of the mediation of Christ? Prayers to the virgin are become more numerous than supplications to the Son of God.

4. How dangerous is contention about ungrounded opinions! Had not John interposed, with what animosity against Christ had his disciples' hearts been filled upon this contest! The weeds would have grown strong, and taken deeper rooting, without a spiritual prevention. What is John's answer to this report? Religious, humble, and modest: ver. 27, 'John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.' He

\* Chennitius.

is not inflamed with any pride and passion, but ascribes to God the glory of his sovereignty, and to Christ the dignity of his person. The words of John may be formed into this argument : \* Every one is to be honoured in the place wherein God hath set him ; God hath placed him you complain of in the highest dignity ; you are therefore to count him for your Lord, and me for his servant. Do not think that that person you charge doth invade this office without a call ; he could not have this success without the singular providence of God ; you must regard the author and original ; things are not in our own dispositions ; whatsoever blessing is received, is dispensed by a sovereign authority. Do not think, therefore, that I will arrogate that honour to myself, which God never assigned me.

Observe,

1. God is the sovereign author of all good to men : James i. 17, ' Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.' All comes originally from him, whatsoever the channels of conveyance are, as rivers from the sea, whatsoever veins of earth they are strained through ; all our springs are in God. Rest not, then, upon anything below, though it be never so choice a mercy ; it is from above. Dart your eyes upward to the spring ; what is not the source of our blessings, should not be the prop of our souls. Trust in other things hath a quite contrary effect to trust in God ; the more we trust other things, the sooner we lose them ; the more we trust God, the fuller we enjoy him. God will strip us of the comfort we take in them, when we strip him of the glory due to him. Praise God alone for any mercy ; it is not fit the creature should run away with the praise of that which we enjoy at the cost of heaven. What stock could any have, if God had not set them up ? Fear not man ; whatsoever is from above shall prosper. If God gives the gospel, man cannot stop the progress of it. Heaven is able to maintain its own grants. It wants no more a power to preserve it, than goodness to bestow it.

2. The suggestions of Satan, and our own corrupt hearts to pride and envy, are to be bridled by the consideration of the sovereign disposal of God. This is the intent of the Baptist's answer. How loose and shaking would those lusts be in our hearts, if we were practically settled in this truth, that all dispensations are the fruit of the divine sovereignty ! In envying man, we envy God the disposal of his own gifts ; we invade his propriety, as if we had been God's partners in his own possession ; we would bring God down to our humours, and make our fancies the rule of divine actions. We entrench upon his wisdom, as though he were not wise enough to dispose of his own goods ; as though he should have asked our counsel, before he made a distribution of what is solely his own. It is a presumption to prescribe laws to our lawgiver. It is contrary to his goodness, as if we would tie the hands of his universal goodness, that it should run only into our cisterns. The consideration of the sovereignty and wisdom of God, would hinder us from being envenomed by this fiery dart.

3. Every man ought to be content in the place where God has set him. The will of our sovereign ought to be our rule ; we are not our own carvers ; let us rather bless God for what we have, than murmur that we have no more ; since all are his gifts, he can better choose for us, than we for ourselves.

4. How doth the wise God defeat the devil, and extract the greatest good from his worst intentions, and the sins of men ! The devil, by God's conduct, doth us good against his will. His tempting those disciples is the

occasion of this excellent summary of the gospel, which we might have wanted had the devil restrained his temptation. The passions of those disciples are the occasion to produce the fullest testimony out of the mouth of John, of the dignity of Christ's person, the truth of his commission, fitness for his work, the necessity of address to him, the means of enjoying the benefits purchased by him. Thus the devil tempted Christ to conquer him, and God ordered it for fitting of our Saviour to relieve us with more compassion, from an experimental sense of his subtilty and our misery. Joseph's slavery in Egypt by his brothers' sin is the preservation of the church in Canaan; and the crucifying the Son of God, the redemption of the world. Why should we distrust God, who can use the sins of men to clear up the way of salvation, both to ourselves and others?

After this introduction, the Baptist more particularly instructs them: ver. 28, 'Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him,' and opposes to their ambitious emulation his former testimony of Christ, and the doctrine they had heard from him, acknowledging him the Messiah, and himself but the herald or harbinger to prepare the way before him. I have often told you, as well as others, that I am not the Christ, intimating thereby that he it was whose glory was to outshine that of all the former prophets, since he was the grand prophet promised to the church. He retorts upon them their accusation of the ingratitude of Christ to him: Since I have given him such a testimony, as you well remember, that I did but baptize with water, but one coming after me was to baptize with the Holy Ghost; it is he you complain of is the person I meant; it is he to whom God hath given the Spirit not by measure; it is he that is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world; you cannot think I should be so foolish, as to deny my words. If you had respect for me, and good will to yourselves, you would have believed me and believed in him, since it is necessary for you so to do.

Observe,

How hard a matter is it to change the false opinions we have erected? These disciples had entertained a notion that their master was the Messiah; they dreamt of an earthly advancement by him, though he had made declarations to them, and in their hearing, to a committee sent from the Sanhedrim, that he was not the Christ, John i. 19, 20, yet that sentiment stuck in their heads. Pride makes men foster opinions against the glory of God, when they seem to conduce to their own interest; we are loath to submit our reasons to the wisdom of God. Man is a creature naturally apt to hold fast anything but divine truth. Bran will remain in the sieve, when the finest flour will drop through. The disciples of Christ would not part with the sweet thoughts of an earthly grandeur under their Master, though he had so often given notices of his violent death. Let us examine everything well by the word, before we lodge it as a notion in our heads, and measure every proposal by the respect it bears to the glory of God, as well as to our own advantage.

He proceeds further to shew the difference between Christ and himself: ver. 29, 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled;' as much as there was between a bridegroom, for whom the spouse is adorned and prepared, and a friend which served him in that occasion, who rejoiceth that he hath contributed to the satisfaction of his friend. I have prepared the people as a spouse for him; it is to him therefore they are to have recourse, him they are to love and honour; and it is my joy that I have rendered him any

service, according to the commission I received from heaven :\* intimating thereby, that they should follow his example, and be so far from envying the glory of Christ, which they imagined to be the obscurity of his, that they should rejoice, as he did, in hearing the bridegroom's voice. Some understand it of the marriage between the divine and the human nature of Christ ; the divine being the bridegroom, the human the bride, which the divine nature assumed into union with itself. Most understand it of the marriage of Christ with the church, which was promised.

Observe,

1. Some evidence of the deity of Christ. He is the bridegroom that espouseth the church to himself. A thing promised by God to be done only by himself, Hosea ii. 16, xix. 20 ; it is Jehovah, the Lord, saith, ' I will betroth thee unto me for ever,' Jer. iii. 14. The Scripture often compares the union of the church with God to that of a marriage, and never gives the name and quality of the spouse of the church, to any but the true God.†

2. The end of Christ's coming into the world. To form a church, to make a spiritual marriage between himself and the souls of men. The church was not fit for his embraces, being defiled, polluted, of a corrupt extraction ; but Christ takes flesh, makes himself a sacrifice for her, pours out his own blood to wash her, and render her fit to lie in his bosom, Eph. v. 25-27. What love is this, to bring filthy man into a perpetual band of love with him ! He bore our sins that defiled us, he is sensible of our afflictions that trouble us, he communicates his goods to enrich us, he took our nature that he might communicate his own, he is become one nature with us, that we might become one spirit with him. Never did loving husband do so much for his spouse as Christ for his church. How should we love, honour, serve, and adhere to so good a Saviour, and pay him that reverence and faith which is due to him !

3. Ministers are and ought to be the servants of Christ, to woo for him, to persuade men to be espoused to him, by declaring their misery without him, their happiness with him, his willingness to entertain them. They are instruments to bring them to Christ, and after they are brought, to persuade them to keep the conjugal covenant with Christ. This ought to be our highest desire, and our chiefest joy ; ' This my joy is fulfilled,' saith John, since I have now attained the end of my embassy.

He then comes to make this conclusion, quite contrary to the intention of his disciples, and resolves to exercise his humility where they would have excited his pride : ver. 30, ' He must increase, but I must decrease.' He must grow up in authority ; the opinion that I am the Messiah must fall, that he may be owned to be the only person of God's designation. The person of Christ could not receive an increase, being infinitely great and glorious. Nor was there any diminution of the dignity of the Baptist, who lost nothing, but gained much by the appearance of our Saviour ; his glory increased with his humility, and his honour of being the forerunner of Christ remained, though his office expired ; but the increase and diminution was in regard of the exercise of their offices, the moon is to rule the night, and the sun the day, and in the opinion of the people, who ran after John as the Messiah, who must learn that the honour of that office only belonged to Jesus.‡ John decreased, as the stars may be said to do when they are obscured by the sun ; not that their native light is taken away from them by the presence of the sun, and they lighted up again as a candle when the sun sets ; but because men need not the light and direction of the stars in the

\* Amyraut. in loc.

† Daillé in loc.

‡ Daillé in loc. p. 450.

midst of the sunbeams.\* Christ then increaseth in our hearts, when our knowledge of him, affection to him, and valuations of his person, rise to a taller stature in our spirits.

Observe,

1. All the glory, greatness, and righteousness of men, ought to veil to the glory and honour of Christ. We should become nothing for Christ's honour, as Christ became a worm for our benefit. The Baptist was willing to be obscured, that Christ might fill the world with a spiritual and divine glory. It is observable, that a little after this John was cast into prison by the providence of God, when his authority did clash with the authority and glory of Christ in the esteem of the people; that the Baptist's disciples, being deprived of their master, might fly to the Messiah, whose messenger their master was. It is a comfort in the afflictions of God's servants, that they make to the glory of Christ, as well as the benefit of their souls. What Herod and Herodias did, out of enmity to John, God ordered for increasing the authority and glory of the Messiah. Let us never value anything as a comfort that is a rival with our Saviour.

The reasons why he must increase he delivers from ver. 31, all which he lays down also as grounds of faith to build that conclusion on, which he makes in the text, and contains the marrow of the gospel.

1. In regard of the difference of their originals, ver. 31.

2. In regard of the manner of the communications of their doctrine, ver. 32.

3. In regard of the authority of his mission, ver. 34.

4. In regard of his excellent fitness, ver. 34, 35.

5. In regard of the special relation between the Father and the Son, and the special affection of the Father to him, ver. 35.

6. In regard of the full power given him over all things.

1. In regard of the difference of their originals: ver. 31, 'He that comes from above, is above all; he that speaks of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth.' He is from above, heavenly in his original; I am of the earth, earthly, born according to the law of Adam, by natural generation. What I speak, therefore, is mean in comparison of the declarations which shall be made by one of so illustrious a descent.† As his original is from above, so his authority is above all; but I am merely of a human descent, and have nothing in my nature but what is common to mankind. I have made no other revelations than what other men have made by the influence of God upon them; but he of whom I speak is above all, in the dignity of his person, the excellency of his office, the height and clearness of his knowledge, the purity of his graces, the extent of his authority. It is fit, therefore, that I should *decrease*, that he should *increase*. Earthly things are to give place to heavenly; his being from above notes his divine original, as the other's being of the earth notes his earthly original. It is not said, he *was* above, but *is* above all. He lost nothing of the rights of his dignity, by assuming our humanity; he was above all in reality, though a worm in appearance.

Observe,

1. The Deity of Christ is asserted, in regard of his original, 'he comes from above;' in regard of his dignity, 'he is above all;' in regard of his original, he is opposed to all men, who are from the earth in regard of generation. He was first in heaven before he was upon the earth; he could not come from above, if he were not first above. It is not therefore meant of his miraculous conception only, made by the power of heaven,‡ and not from any earthly cause; because the flesh of Christ was never in heaven when

\* Illyric.

† Amyraut. in loc.

‡ Daillé, in loc. pp. 453, 454.

it was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the virgin's womb ; nor till after his resurrection, when he ascended in his human nature far above the heavens. Though Adam was formed immediately by the hand of God, yet it was never said that Adam descended from heaven. But he is called *earthy*: 1 Cor. xv. 47, 'The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven.' If there had been nothing heavenly in Christ but his conception, he might be called earthy as well as Adam. Nor can it be meant only in regard of his gifts ; for the gifts of John Baptist and all the prophets were from above, from the Father of lights ; yet he calls himself earthly, he distinguisheth himself as he was by nature from what he was by grace. John was from heaven in regard of his office, from earth in regard of his original ; but Christ was from heaven in regard of original as well as office. He comes from above, not by a change of place, for his divine nature fills all things, but in regard of manifestation, discovering his divinity, which before was manifest only in the heavens, as God is said to descend from heaven, when he manifests himself in ways either of signal mercy or justice. In regard of his dignity, he is above all, above all creatures,\* and therefore God. None but God can be above all, and have the title of supremacy ; as much above all angels and men, as the heaven, from whence he came, is above the earth, to which he descended, for the manifestation of himself in our flesh ; it could not be said of any angel, that he was above all. If, therefore, Christ be above all, we must pay that reverence and veneration to him, that is due to his deity and infinite superiority. He that is above all must have our affections and our services above all things, according to the excellency of his person, and dignity of his office.

2. The highest saints must be sensible of original corruption. The being of the earth is not only meant by John of his human condition, but his corrupted condition, as he descended in a way of ordinary generation from Adam. Behold, here is one greater than the prophets, Mat. xi. 11, the immediate harbinger of the Redeemer of the world, honoured with an employment above any that went before him, to prepare the way before the Messiah ; a burning and a shining lamp, one sanctified in the womb, rejoicing at the approach of a Saviour before he saw the light ; acknowledging the depravation of his nature, as he was the son of Adam, humbling himself under the consideration of it. Was there ever any elevated soul but complained of it ? David, in the Old Testament, of his being 'shapen in iniquity,' Ps. li. 5 ; Paul, in the New, groaning under his 'body of death.' Were this more in our thoughts, pride would not be so flush in our hearts and actions.

John expresseth here his humility, by considering himself as earthly, which includes the miseries that follow an earthly extraction, viz. corruption, blindness, rebellion against God.† He doth not assert his baptism, and the doctrine he preached, to be earthly. They were from heaven, and our Saviour gives that testimony of him ; but he pronounceth what himself and all men are in and by themselves, not what they are by the gift and grace of God.

3. Where is perfection to be found ? When such a person as John, the greatest among those born of a woman, endued with such honour as to be the herald of the King of glory, confesseth himself earthly, and speaking of the earth, *i. e.* his words savouring and scenting of the corruption of his nature, shall men of a less stamp ever lay claim to that, which so humble and holy a person, one so characterized by Christ, could not challenge ? If such a burning and shining light were not the possessor of a perfect state in

\* Daillé, in loc. p. 455.

† Illyric. in loc.

this life, where is the man that is inferior to him in his other titles, that can count himself superior to him in this ?

4. The gospel and word of Christ is worth credit. It is not the word of a corrupted man, but of an heavenly offspring. Who shall we hear, if heaven can find no credit with us ? Are we fit to enjoy the happiness of the place, if we will not receive the precepts of it ? He is from above, he is above all, his words cannot be false while heaven is true.

*Reason 2.* The manner of the knowledge of Christ, or the communication of the doctrine to him: ver. 32, 'what he hath seen and heard, that he testifies.' John was inspired, but our Saviour had not only heard but seen what he testified ; and in this respect he is superior to all men. The prophets saw the things upon earth, Christ hath seen them in heaven. They saw them in streams, Christ in their fountain ; they saw the image of some things, but Christ hath seen the eternal models of all. He was in the bosom of the Father, and drew all that he knew from the depths of infinite wisdom. Yet, though the things he speaks are so plain and clear, few receive his testimony. So great a person, so fully understanding the mysteries of God, cannot find a reception among men ; very few believed in him, like the gleanings of a vintage after the gathering of the grapes.

Observe,

1. The fitness of Christ for his prophetic office. He hath seen things in the bosom of the Father, heard things from the mouth of the Father, he hath seen them, not by revelation, but as the Son of God ; was interested in the debates and results of the Trinity. He was 'by the Father when the foundations of the world were laid,' and the course of all things ordered, Prov. viii. 27-30 ; nothing is unknown to him that is known to the Father. As he only knows him, so he only hath ability to declare him. The things which Paul saw were unutterable ; he wanted ability as well as authority to declare them, 2 Cor. xii. 4. Christ hath both ; he hath seen and heard, and can and did testify what he saw and heard ; it was his Father's mind he should do so. How worthy is God of all our praise for his wisdom in appointing, and his love in sending, a person so fully accomplished, to make known his eternal counsels concerning the pardon of sin, and conferring eternal life on the lost sons of Adam ? How inexcusable doth it render the conditions of those that will not hear his voice, believe his word, since he witnesseth the things he hath seen and heard, in and from his Father !

2. From those words, *no man receives his testimony*, the paucity of believers is asserted ; few in comparison of those that receive him not. Let not the general unbelief of men discourage us from faith. It was foretold by the Baptist ; forewarned, forearmed. The devil is the god of this world ; he influenceth most men ; Christ is a mediator for those that are not of this world. All in the world enjoy some benefits of his mediation, but not the saving benefits of it. It is dangerous to go with a multitude. Let no man plead, such wise and learned men are of this or that opinion. If we follow the example of the most, we cannot be believers.

The Baptist makes a digression to describe the nature of faith, and the excellency of it: ver. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony,'—there is the nature of faith,—'hath set to his seal that God is true ;' there is the excellency of faith.

1. The nature of faith. It is a receiving the testimony of Christ in the certainty of it, and in the extent of it. The testimony of God's promises to encourage us, of his precepts to direct us, of his threatenings to awe us, and make us adhere faster to him : a resting in this testimony as certain, as the centre of our souls, the only foundation of our hopes. God is the ultimate



object of faith, Christ the immediate object of faith. Christ gives the testimony, God is the subject of that testimony. When the witness Christ gives of the things he hath seen and heard is received, to be rested in as the ground of our hope, and the rule of our walk, this is faith.

2. The excellency of faith. It owns the truth of God, 'he sets to his seal that God is true,'—a metaphor taken from contracts, to which men testify their approbation by fixing their seal. Thus we honour God, when we set to the seal of our faith to justify the truth of his word. No man that owns a God did ever absolutely doubt of his veracity; but the truth here meant is the fidelity of God in performing the promises of the gospel, in sending the Messiah. He owns God to be as good as his word, in sending a person every way complete for the office he had undertaken, to effect our redemption. God seals his covenant to us in the blood of his Son, and by sacraments; faith is a sealing the counterpart to God. We acknowledge his truth in what he hath done, and rely upon his truth in what he hath promised yet to do; and the hearty acknowledging his veracity in what he hath already performed, is the ground of our reliance on him in what is yet to be performed. If we believe not the first, we cannot rest upon him for the latter. We cannot honour God more than by owning his truth. The glory of it is the design of the whole Scripture, from the first promise to the close of the book. He that denies the manifestation of God's truth in his Son, either opinionatively or practically, denies the authority of the whole book, makes God as bad as the devil, accounts him a greater liar than any creature, 1 John v. 10. As faith gives God the greatest honour that a creature is capable to render, so unbelief fixeth the greater disgrace upon him.

3. In regard of the authority of his mission: ver. 34, 'he whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God.' He is sent of God, which is also an encouragement to faith in him. The prophets were sent of God but as servants, Christ as a Son. He came out from God, as a beam from the sun, the prophets came from God as matter kindled by a sunbeam. He was sent by God with an immense fulness of Spirit, the prophets were sent by God with some parcels of grace. The first act of faith is to believe that God hath sent him: John xvii. 21, 'That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' He speaks the words of God, so did the prophets; Christ always speaks them, the prophets sometimes, as they were inspired according to the pleasure of God. Whatsoever Christ speaks, is the word and will of God. The prophets spake to the ear, Christ can speak with efficacy to the heart. He can give eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand; he speaks to the ear, and imprints upon the heart. He speaks the word of God with such an evidence and certainty of truth,\* than which, if God himself should appear, there could not be greater.

4. In regard of his excellent fitness. Another motive to faith, 'for God gives not the Spirit by measure to him,' ver. 34. He hath the Spirit in the full source, the prophets in some little streams; he possesseth all the treasures of the Spirit, the prophets some grains and lesser parcels. This was the foundation of his fitness for the discharge of his prophetic office, as he was to speak the words of God, Isa. lxi. 1-3. The fulness of the Spirit he had not at the first bestowed upon him, in regard of the gifts of it (though he had the fulness of it for the sanctification of his human nature), but it was communicated to him proportionably to his age and private state, whence he is said to grow in wisdom, Luke ii. 52. But when he was to enter upon the discharge of his office, it was given without measure at the time of his baptism; and this inward donation of the Spirit of God to the person of

\* Amyraut. in loc.

Christ, was shadowed by the appearance and descent of the likeness of a dove upon him, to which the Baptist might refer in this expression.

Observe,

1. Christ hath an abundant fitness from God for the discharge of his office, and an abundant fulness for his people. God did not measure to him a certain quantity of the gifts and graces of his Spirit, but poured it upon him without stint. Besides the fitness of Christ by virtue of the hypostatical union, whereby the divinity supported the humanity in the whole work, there was a fitness by the grace of unction, when he was 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' Heb. i. 9. The end of giving the Spirit in such a fulness, was to communicate to his people, that we might 'receive of his fulness,' John i. 16. It was given, not as a treasure to be preserved in a cabinet, but as a fountain to send forth fresh streams for a supply. Our Joseph hath the corn, not only for himself, but the supply of the people that come to him. And thus is Christ fitted to be an object of faith. He only is fit for this, that hath abundance of Spirit; a fitness to relieve us, a fulness to supply us; our faith were else in vain: no man would trust in a person, of whose ability, as well as sincerity, he were not assured. He is faithful in speaking the words of God, he is able in having the Spirit of God without limitation. And there is good reason it should be so, because there is a special tie between God and him, the relation of Father and Son.\* He hath chosen us according to his pleasure, for the glory of his name; but he is the Son of God, and therefore the object of his unspeakable love. Hence is the 5th and 6th Reason, viz.

5. In regard to the special relation of God to him as Father, and his affection to him, ver. 35.

6. In regard to the full power given him over all things, ver. 35.

Observe,

1. God has a special love to Christ in his office of mediatorship. He loved him from eternity, as he was his Son by eternal generation; he loves him as mediator, by special constitution; he bears this love to him as mediator, as those words are understood, John xvii. 24, 'For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;' and the words in this verse are meant of a love to him under this consideration. The gift of all things to him, and appointing him heir of all things, is a fruit of this affection to him, as undertaking the work of redemption. God loved him in his person; he loves him in his office; he is his beloved Son, as he is sent as a prophet to be heard and obeyed, Luke ix. 35. He loves him for undertaking our cause, for interposing for our peace. As he was the Son of God, he was *hæres natus*; as he is the Son of God in our nature, he is *hæres constitutus*, Heb. i. 2. He is the principal object of God's love; he loves none but in him, as he chose none but in him by his eternal decree, Eph. i. 4. Who can we then trust better than him who possesseth the love of the Father? We approve of the Father's affection to him, by bestowing our faith and love upon him. How highly do we please God, when our affections are pitched upon the same object with his, and run to the same term! If he loves the Son, he will love every one that loves him, and hate every one that contemns him. How comfortable is this love of the Father to Christ as mediator! He loves all for whom Christ doth exercise this office, all that believe in him; and his love is as unchangeable to the one as the other. Our security is founded upon the love of God to the Son, which is immutable, and consequently to all that are embraced in that office by him. God will

\* Amyraut. in loc.

not repent of what he confers upon us, because he gives it for the love he bears his Son, which love redounds to his seed. As that love will never fail, so his grace and favour to a believer will never fail.

2. Christ is entrusted with all things necessary to our salvation. Some, therefore, interpret it, he hath given all things to man through his hand; he hath the possession, but for the believer's use. God hath given all things into his hand, all creatures to rule them, all treasures to bestow them, all power to protect his people; he hath given him the world of men and angels to govern, the world of his elect to redeem; he hath put all things under his feet, and 'made him the head over all things for the church,' Eph. i. 22. The consequence of the Baptist in the next verse, of believers having eternal life, would not be valid if he had this power only for himself, and not for their use. How comfortable is this! Things were given into the hands of Adam for his use and his posterity's; but he lost them, undid himself, and drew with him all that were in his loins. They are now given into the hands of Christ for our use, who cannot lose them; and therefore we cannot be lost if we believe in him. It is our happiness they are in his hands, and not in our own; in the hands of one who cannot lose them by sin, as Adam did, because of the permanent holiness of his nature, having the sanctifying graces of the Spirit without measure; nor by the craft and power of the devil, because of his infinite superiority above him, and having the enabling gifts of the Spirit without measure. His humanity was opposed, but not conquered; he hath an holiness infinitely distant from sin, and a wisdom to defeat the subtlety of the serpent.

We know also where to go for the alms we want. Christ is God's almoner to us, and our advocate to God; a mediator between God and us; he hath a commission to ask, and a promise to receive, Ps. ii. 8. We may be sure to receive if we believe. The unchangeable God will stand to whatsoever the Son doth; he will not diminish his love to his Son, nor deny his own grant to him. The gift given is without repentance in the Father, and the management of the trust without deceit in the Son. We have not what we want, because we go not to the officer God hath appointed for distribution; a treasure is deposited in his hand, but for want of faith we want the comfort. We dishonour the wisdom of God's choice, as well as the pleasure of his will, and deny the authority our Saviour is invested with, by neglecting him, and not believing in him. Oh wonderful goodness! to put our concerns into the sure hand of his Son, which were lost by the weak hands of Adam.

Upon all this discourse, John Baptist founds this conclusion, ver. 36. 'He that believes in the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believes not in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Though all power be given to Christ, and he hath authority to dispense the treasures of God, whereof everlasting life is the chief, yet none can expect to enjoy it but upon the condition of believing on him. It is very reasonable that whosoever expects the blessing he is entrusted with, should assent and consent to God's choice of him and the conditions of enjoying them.

The text is made up of a motive to faith, and a dissuasive from unbelief.

1. The motive is drawn from the reward, *everlasting life*; spiritual life *de facto*, eternal life *de jure*; one in hand, and the other in hope, Rom. viii. 24.

2. The dissuasive from the misery, which is double.

1. Exclusion from life; shall not see or enjoy life, or shall not have so much as the least sense of it.

2. Permanency of wrath; the wrath of God abides on him.

Thus, after the description of Christ's person, dignity, and power, the

Baptist directs his disciples, who at first made the complaint of our Saviour, to a belief in him, by the most forcible arguments. He being so great as I have described, can give eternal life to his followers; and being so dear to God as he is, the wrath of his Father will remain upon his rejecters; and therefore, if the happiness of eternal life be desirable, and the terrors of divine wrath formidable, be sure that you receive his testimony, that you may acquire the one and escape the other.

He notes the special and immediate object of faith in both his conclusions: *believes on the Son*, and *believes not the Son*. Christ, as the Son of God, and sent by God, is the object of our faith.

The word translated *believes not*, is ἀπειθῶν, which some render, *he that obeys not*; the word properly signifies disobedient and obstinate, but in the Scripture it is often rendered as it is in the text, *unbelieving*, which is not without precedent in heathen authors.\* It may well be rendered ‘*he that believes not*,’ because it is opposed to believing in the first part of the verse, and may be meant of final unbelief, where there is not a simple ἀπιστία, but an obstinacy and unpersuadableness against the gospel. It is not said, the wrath of God shall come upon him, but abides upon him. Either,

1. To shew man’s misery by nature. Every man is born in a state of wrath, and remains under wrath, unless some expiation be made for his sin. Now, since there is no relief against this state but by the blood of the Son of God, which was shed for propitiation; if this be refused or neglected, the soul lies under that curse original corruption placed him in, and which he hath since frequently merited by an addition of many actual sins. The debt due to the law must be paid, either by believing in him who hath paid it, or by suffering it in our own persons; it is faith only makes us pass from that death our natural state hath subjected us to, unto that life which God hath provided in and by his Son: John v. 24, ‘He that believes is passed from death to life.’

2. Or to distinguish it from the momentaneous wrath which sometimes lights upon a believer, which is called ‘a little wrath,’ Isa. liv. 8. There is a wrath which breathes upon a man like fire, which doth not destroy but refine; but this is a permanent wrath, which punisheth and preserveth the subject for ever under it. It is a wrath that will not pass away, whereby the eternity of punishment is at least implied; it shall never depart from him. In other expressions of God’s anger, there may be a mixture of tastes of comforts; but here wrath encompasseth, and overflows like a sea of gall, without a taste of joy, or a touch of blessedness.

The doctrine I shall insist on is this: continued and final unbelief renders a man infallibly an object of the eternal wrath of God. The communication of the life of God was broken off by the sin of man, to which we are restored only by faith in the Redeemer; and without faith we are at a distance from God, the fountain of life, and remain under that wrath the state of nature put us into. As faith unites us to God, so unbelief separates us from God. Whatsoever righteousness there is in a man without faith in Christ, is vain and perishing; it is as stubble, or a paper wall, which cannot defend any man from the flaming sword of God’s justice. It is of no efficacy of itself to eternal life; it may render the wrath and punishment less sharp than another’s, but cannot remove it, and put a man into a state of life. It is not all kind of unbelief, or dissent from some particular truth, that subjects a man to eternal wrath; but unbelief that despiseth the Son of God, that refuseth to receive his testimony. It is by this men perish under the gospel, and not for want of declarations of divine goodness, or want of provision

\* Stephanus Thesaur. cites Hesychius explaining ἀπειθῶς in Sophocles by ἀπιστος.

in Christ. Those that refused the invitation to the supper, so incensed the king, that he pronounceth an irrevocable sentence against every man of them, that they should not taste of the dainties he had provided, Luke xiv. 24. And our Saviour, in the direction to his apostles for preaching the gospel, orders them this theme : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned,' as the immutable decree of God, concerning the state and condition of mankind, as to life or death. The latter follows upon the former ; for if he that believes shall be saved, then the contrary to salvation will fall upon the unbeliever ; and not only a bare privation of salvation and exclusion from the blessed vision of God, but a sharper sentence of misery, according to his ingratitude, in refusing the riches of divine grace, offered to him in the gospel.

I shall premise two things.

1. Unbelief is not the only sin that damns. Other sins will condemn as well as that. Adam's first disobedience was the ground of Adam's condemnation. Man was condemned by the law, before Christ was promised in the gospel. The world had come short of the glory of God, before Christ took the infirmities of our nature for suffering. He came to save, which supposeth man in a state of damnation ; he came to redeem, which supposeth man in a state of captivity ; he came to bring us to God, which supposeth our distance from God ; he was incarnate to free us from the law, which supposeth our being under the curse of it.

2. Yet it is that sin, without which no other sin would damn a man that hath heard the gospel. If a man be found guilty of felony, for which the law allows him the mercy of the book, if he can read, he prevents the sentence of death ; if he cannot, he sinks under the penalty of the law : his felony, and not his ignorance, is the meritorious cause of his execution. The case is much the same ; men are condemned for other sins, which misery would have been prevented by faith ; yet it differs in this, that unbelief is our sin ; it is our duty to believe, since God hath authority to reveal his truth, and command us to acknowledge it ; but the prisoner's not reading is his misery, not his crime. The sickness a man lies under would not have killed him \* if he had taken the physic offered him ; though the disease were mortal in itself, it might have been expelled by that sovereign remedy. The refusal of the medicine may be counted the formal or moral cause of his death, though the disease be the procuring or natural cause of it. A malefactor is cast into prison for treason ; a pardon is offered and refused ; had it been accepted, he had not undergone the penalty due to his crime. No sin could destroy us, if unbelief did not reign in us. Faith would instrumentally remove the guilt of all other sin. Upon the embracing the expiatory sacrifice of the gospel, our other debts would be cancelled ; upon a refusal, our guilt stands upon record, and charged upon us in full vigour, and receives a greater aggravation, by the rejecting the most obliging revelation of God, and counting the remedy for sin in the merit and satisfaction of Christ a trifle. Other sins condemn *meritoriously*, and this *formally*, say some. Though all graces are in a believer, yet his salvation is principally ascribed to faith in the rank of grace : Eph. ii. 8, 'By grace you are saved, through faith.' So, though a man be guilty of all sins, yet his condemnation is attributed to his unbelief. The guilt of the most monstrous enormities would not be laid to any man's charge, if he did by faith and repentance turn to God ; and the most glittering righteousness, with unbelief, will not prevent his being fuel for wrath. Who are excluded from the bosom of Abraham ? The sons of the kingdom, bred up and nourished among the ordinances of

\* Gerhard. harmon. cap. clxxix.

God, but neglecting or refusing a Saviour. And who are entertained there? Gentiles besmeared with the mire of idolatry, yet expiated by the mediator they believed in, Mat. viii. 11, 12; it is upon the occasion of the faith of the centurion, that Christ speaks of the happiness of the Gentiles and misery of the Jews. Men, strangers to God for so many ages, are engrafted by faith, and prepared for heaven, while those entrusted with the oracles of God are disinherited by unbelief, and made vessels of wrath. In regard of merit, every sin is the cause of condemnation; in regard of execution, unbelief is the sole cause. Shimei reviles David,\* is pardoned by him, and his pardon renewed by Solomon, but with a condition that he should not go out of Jerusalem; he breaks this condition, is, according to Solomon's word, executed. The true cause of his death, is his reviling of David; had he not been guilty of that, Solomon had no ground of offence, nor had imposed any condition upon him. But when he violates that condition, and goes out of Jerusalem, against the command of the king, Solomon takes occasion to punish him for his former crime. Shimei might have avoided the punishment, by observing the condition commanded. Men are condemned by the law, and executed by the justice of it; the condemnation of the law would not take place, if faith, the cure of guilt, had possession of the heart. No sin can condemn, if faith be present; and no righteousness can save, if faith be absent. While unbelief remains, all sins are retained; when this is removed, all sins are remitted. All that perish, perish either *by* or *for* this not believing; those to whom the gospel is not revealed, perish by reason of their not believing, through ignorance; it is by reason of that the wrath of God abides on them; and when there is but one medicine to cure a disease, the ignorant patient perisheth for want of the knowledge of it; the knowing patient perisheth for want of applying it. This the schools understand,† when they say, the heathens that never heard of Christ perish *ratione infidelitatis*; those that hear of him perish *propter infidelitatem*, in a state of infidelity, though not for it.

For the evidence of this doctrine, let us consider some propositions.

1. All men by nature are under condemnation. The insensibleness of this, is the cause of unbelief; and without a due consideration of this, there can be no entertainment of the gospel. Christ himself preacheth this doctrine: John iii. 18, 'He that believes on me is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He *is* condemned *already*, not *shall be*, but *is*, *i. e.* he is in a state of condemnation. The sentence is pronounced by the justice of God against every son of Adam. 'Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,' and 'judgment came upon all men to condemnation,' Rom. v. 12, 18. All the branches of Adam were adjudged to eternal death by that law, which he, by his original apostasy, transgressed, and they, by their repeated offences, have further violated. All are the children of wrath, all are become guilty before God: 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. iii. 10. The whole race of mankind was bound up in that sentence pronounced against Adam upon transgressing the law, which God had enacted: Gen. ii. 17. 'Thou shalt die the death.' By the same act of justice which cast Adam out of paradise were all his posterity expelled. We are an accursed generation by the covenant of works; our hands and our heels are lifted up against our sovereign Lord; we are utterly naked of original righteousness; all the sins we have committed have every one damnation at the heel. We are exposed to the curses of the law, the fury

\* Barlow on Tim. part. ii. p. 24.

† Vines, Supper, p. 362.

of God, the scoffs of the tempting serpent; there is but an inch between us and devouring flames; all are condemned, though all are not yet executed; God yet gives respite to man to lay hold upon his mercy in the gospel. If a man die without faith in the Son of God, he is as surely undone as if he were under the full execution of all the threatenings of the law at this instant. He is 'condemned already,' i.e. he hath the cause of condemnation in himself, the sharp points of the law are full against him; as a malefactor in the gaol for some capital crime may be said to be condemned already, in the nature of the offence he hath committed, by the equity of that law he hath violated. There is a double condemnation, one by the law, another by the gospel. All men are in nature condemned by the first, all unbelievers by both; they are condemned at the tribunal of the law for transgressing it, and even at the mercy-seat of the gospel for rejecting it. None are exempted from it but by faith in the gospel, which is the only way to escape the severity of the law. When a man appeals from the tribunal of the law, whereby he stands condemned, to the throne of grace, wherein mercy sways the sceptre dipped in the blood of Christ, casting himself upon the merit of that blood, and resolving to obey the voice of a Redeemer, he comes forth from his prison, and the darkness of condemnation, into the light of life. He is condemned already. Every elect person is thus in a state of condemnation, while he remains in a state of unbelief; for if there be 'no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1, then there is nothing but condemnation to them that are yet out of Christ; and if a man depart out of the world in that state, he for ever lies under the irrevocable sentence of the law, for ever cursed, because for ever guilty. And the reason is rendered, 'because he believes not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He refuseth the only remedy God hath provided, and excludes himself from the life, salvation, righteousness, and happiness which Christ hath purchased, and therefore lies under the judgment of the old sentence by refusing the grace of the new administration, and acquires a new guilt; for the more excellent the person that is neglected, the only Son of God, the greater punishment is deserved. He further describes to us\* that faith which brings us out of that natural condemnation; he doth not say, because he hath not believed that the only Son of God is come into the world, which is a faith that many rest upon,—this would exclude only absolute infidelity and dissent from the doctrine of the gospel,—but 'because he believes not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' He receives not his word, relies not upon his office, submits not to his authority, for *name* signifies this and much more in Scripture. A man may believe the Son of God is come, yet place no confidence in him, nor pay any obedience to him. A man may believe such a man to be a physician, and able to cure, but if he useth not his medicine he shall be never the better for his skill.

2. Man being thus naturally condemned, his unbelief binds all his guilt upon him: John viii. 24, 'I say therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins; for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins.' In the illative, *therefore*, he notes their natural condemnation, because they were 'of this world,' ver. 23. And there is no remedy to prevent this death, but to 'believe that I am he,' the Messiah, the person appointed to bruise the serpent's head, appointed to be the Saviour of the world. All sins are 'sealed up in a bag,' Job xiv. 17, recorded with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, Jer. xvii. 1. Every indictment remains in force; nothing but faith in the blood of Christ can cancel the writing, deface the seal, take the accusation off the file. Unbelief therefore locks all other sins

\* Muscul. in loc.

like shackles upon the conscience,\* which otherwise by the help of Christ might easily shake them off; all men's violations of the law stick to them, and the wrath due to them hangs over them. When a prince pardons all misdemeanours by his proclamation upon easy conditions, and swears that if there be not an acceptance of it the refuser shall answer the law for all his guilt; if a man will not sue out his pardon, will not perform so easy a condition, he continues the weight of all his former guilt upon him. The first promise was made after the fall, to take away the guilt of transgressions against the first covenant, Heb. ix. 15. If the promise be not received, the mediator applied, the guilt of those transgressions endures. We are condemned upon the breach of the first covenant, and can only be restored to a state of life by embracing the new. Sin remains in its vigour, as a disease upon a patient, by refusing the only physician able to cure it. It fastens guilt the more, because it is an approbation of all the iniquities committed against the law; and increaseth the guilt of those sins he was guilty of before, because he manifests a greater fondness of them, a stronger unwillingness to part with them. It leaves the unbeliever naked to the stroke of divine justice, without a refuge to cover him. He that refuseth shelter against a potent adversary exposeth himself to his fury. There is no pleading the covenant of works; that hath been transgressed, and proclaims only punishment, not pardon; nor the covenant of grace, the sanctuary of that he refused to enter into. So that he is not only, as a heathen, in the same condition as if Christ had never suffered, in regard of want of relief, but in a worse, in regard of sharpness of punishment; he hath not only no more title to happiness than if Christ had never died, but a stronger title to punishment because Christ did die. His sin remains in more vigour against him, because the only remedy is refused by him. The weight of guilt is not removed, and the hour of punishment is reserved for such an one.

3. The covenant of grace, in the hand of a mediator, is the last covenant that God will make. The times of the gospel are called 'the last times,' 'the last days,' Isa. ii. 2, Heb. i. 2; no other relieving administration is intended by God, or can be expected by us; this contains the whole and utmost counsel of God about the salvation of men, Acts xx. 27. An anathema is poured out against any that 'preach another gospel,' Gal. i. 9; 'No more sacrifice remains for sin,' Heb. x. 26, 27. There is but one sacrifice for expiation, but one mediator for intercession, but one special officer appointed by God under whose wing we can be safe. It is a covenant of infinite grace; there can be none above it, because there cannot be grace above infinite. There can be no refuge but in mercy; if mercy refuse, what can step in for our relief? Mercy is the only bar to justice; if the bar be removed, what stop to the overflowing surge? This covenant is settled, that no man shall enjoy the benefit of the satisfaction the surety hath made, without the conditions of repentance and faith. If this law stand of force, it cannot be supposed that there can be any salvation without a satisfaction for the breach of this covenant, as well as a satisfaction was necessary for the breach of the first; for the honour of God will as much or more require a satisfaction for the breach of this, as being a greater contempt of him, than for the breach of the first covenant, wherein the contempt of him was less, and so many attributes were not disparaged by it. This satisfaction must be by a stronger surety than ourselves; for ourselves we are as unable to return a recompence for the violations of the second covenant, as we were to do it for the first. So strong a surety we cannot have, unless the Son of God should be sent to suffer again, only upon this condition, that the sinner should be discharged without anything done on his

\* Reynolds's Life of Christ, p. 496.



part. But as to the first, the sufferings of the Son of God must never be repeated; he was to bear sin but once, his second appearance is to be 'without sin unto salvation,' Heb. ix. 28, the salvation of believers, the damnation of unbelievers. No more sacrifice remains for any sin in the world. Nor, suppose Christ were sent to bear sin, and be again the chastisement of our peace after the violations of the second covenant, it cannot be upon such terms, that upon the account of his sufferings, without anything done on our parts, we should be discharged. It seems not congruous to the honour of God to send his Son to suffer again, or if he did, to impose no conditions upon those that should enjoy the benefit of those sufferings. There can be no less required than is now, which is no more than the receiving the atonement, Rom. v. 11, a consent to it, and acceptance of it. Nor is it consistent with the holiness of God to discharge men upon the suffering of a surety, who will persist in that sin for which the surety suffered, and make use of a Saviour to be free from suffering but not free from offending. No more is required now; in this consists faith and repentance; and no less can reasonably be thought to be required if Christ should again be exposed to suffering. What less can any prince, any man require, for any favour he doth, but acceptance and gratitude? So that though the transgression against the covenant of works is relieved by the covenant of grace, yet the transgressions against this can have no relief but in it. For it is the last, and if it were not, you cannot suppose any covenant to succeed upon lighter terms than the grace is offered in this. To suppose a covenant without conditions, is as much as to suppose man to be created without a rule of obedience; and this is to suppose God without an exercise of his sovereignty, and a creature without subjection, both which are impossible.

4. It is impossible, according to the economy of the gospel, that an unbeliever can be saved by mercy. A man must either be saved by justice or mercy: by justice he might in the first covenant, had he not provoked it; by mercy in the second covenant he may, if he doth not refuse it. Now, justice cannot save him in the first covenant, because he wants a righteousness of his own; mercy cannot in the second, because he will not accept the conditions of it, which is, the receiving the righteousness of another. Other sins offend justice, but this provokes mercy, which is the severest attribute when provoked, as the sweetest when received. It is not fit, indeed, that mercy should save an impenitent, unbelieving sinner, God having appointed a mediator, for the content of his mercy, as well as the satisfaction of his justice (that mercy might not complain for the severe destruction of mankind), and mercy fully acquiescing in the reasonableness of the conditions of faith and repentance proposed in the gospel. Justice and mercy having met together upon those articles, and struck hands in a full agreement, it is not fit mercy should entertain an unbelieving sinner, who refuseth the terms infinite mercy hath been satisfied with in the compact between itself and justice. If mercy should offer to embrace such a one, it would not be true to its own condition; as, if justice should not punish the transgressions of the law, it would not be true to the law, and consequently not true to itself, because it is the rule of the law. Mercy to such a one after this agreement would be an unequitable mercy. We must not fancy a weak and dishonourable mercy—a God unrighteous in his acts of compassion. Mercy cannot but be offended to see the conditions it gained in its suit, and which it was fully contented with, despised and trod underfoot. Mercy can no more save any that remains an object of revenging justice under the first covenant, than justice can condemn one that is an object of mercy by receiving the blood of the second. The attributes of God cannot invade one another's rights. It

is fit he should be left to the hands of justice, that will not stand to the terms and covenant mercy made for him.

(1.) This is not consistent with the truth of God. When God made the law, he annexed promises and threatenings, and his truth was bound to make them good upon the suitable behaviour of man; though we find only a threatening upon record, yet that implies a promise, Gen. ii. 17. If death be threatened upon transgression, life is implied upon obedience. But when man broke the law, truth was engaged on the side of justice, and had nothing to do in a legal way with mercy; for man, by his sin, had rendered himself fuel for justice, and had entailed upon himself the horror of the threatening. But in the work of redemption, mercy and truth, which sin had separated in regard of any joint acts towards man (asking truth to be a second to the justice of God), met together, Ps. lxxxv. 10. These attributes, which were severed, were joined again in an indissoluble knot—mercy to the sinner, and truth to the threatening. Mercy took man's part, and desired peace; justice took the law's part, and required punishment: neither mercy nor justice could lose their nature; sin had severed them, Christ re-unites them, and truth now is engaged on both sides. If an unbeliever, therefore, in that state thinks to be saved, mercy and truth must be severed; but this happy union cannot be dissolved for the sake of rebels against both. As the power of God, though infinite, is regulated by his will,\* so the mercy of God, though infinite, is regulated by his truth: he hath made faith an unalterable condition of the covenant; and God cannot deny his covenant, because he cannot deny himself. The truth of God is engaged to damn such a man more than before; it is as well engaged to make good the evangelical threatening, as it was before to make good the legal. Justice will condemn both by law and gospel; it is reason that justice should satisfy itself upon that man, as far as he is able to give satisfaction, who will not be contented with that which infinite justice was satisfied with. Mercy will condemn him; that hath no reason to afford any relief to that man that despiseth the evangelical conditions, which fully pleased it, and re-united it with justice and truth. God hath confirmed those terms by an oath, that those that believe not 'shall not enter into his rest,' Heb. iii. 18. But he never took an oath that he that observed not the covenant of works† should not enter into his rest. Though Adam was under a covenant of works in his innocent state, yet he was not in such a state as to be under an utter impossibility of salvation upon the transgression of it, because God had provided a remedy in his Son. But he is now under an oath to punish every man that doth finally reject that remedy. The highest truth cannot deny one tittle of his word and oath.

(2.) Nor is it consistent with his wisdom. It is not agreeable to the wisdom of a prince to be reconciled to any rebels that will not suffer themselves to be reduced to their former obedience.

If God should change his dispensation, it must be because the terms are too hard, or the benefits not valuable enough. Neither of those can be; the conditions are most reasonable, the benefit the most precious, that God, in the conjecture of any creature, can give. It had been no act of wisdom to send his Son to satisfy his justice, if mercy should be so cheaply prostituted; if rebels could enjoy the favour while they cherished their rebellions; if the purchase should be given to those that dishonoured the purchaser, and salvation conferred upon those that contemned the Saviour. The wisdom of God would suffer, in undervaluing the meritorious blood of his Son, if he conferred the same favour upon those that despise it and those that esteem

\* Bolton, Direct. for walking with God, p. 387.

† Hooker's Effectual Calling, p. 366.

it, and placed swine, that trample his jewels in the dirt, in the same happy condition with those that lodge them in their dearest affections. What ground of praise for that manifold wisdom, so much celebrated in Scripture, in the mission of Christ, if any could be admitted into heaven without faith in him and love to him? God would declare his death to be rather an act of cruelty to him than kindness to us, since, if any were saved without faith in him, it would be evident that his death was unnecessary, since we could be as happy without him as by him.

(3.) Nor is it consistent with the honour of Christ. The very end of Christ's death is crossed by unbelief. He suffered the punishment due to our sins, that sin might not reign in us, as well as that the punishment might not reign over us. What benefit can we reasonably expect by his death, if we will not believe in him and renounce our sin, which is contrary to the end of his death? God would act contrary to the end of our Saviour's death, in giving to the goats the benefits his Son purchased for the sheep, John x. 15; and bestowing upon his enemies what he designed for his friends, John xv. 13; and sprinkling that blood upon those that tread it under foot, which was shed for the gathering together the sons of God, John xi. 52; and imputing the merits of it to impure wretches, that was intended for the purifying a peculiar people unto himself, Tit. ii. 14. When Christ died only for believers, in regard of the actual communication and application, it is a disparagement unto him, and a making his death in vain, to let the despisers of it have an equal share in the benefits of it, and make it as much a savour of life to them that will not value it as to those that do. What king, that offers reconciliation to rebels, by the intercession of his son, demanding the conditions of trust in his son and obedience to him, promising them not only upon it the pardon of their crimes, but the investing them with new favours, would not dishonour his son, as well as himself, if he admitted any one person of that rebellious pack without that trust and obedience to him upon which the pardon was offered. Let us, then, appeal to our own consciences, and ask them the question, whether they think it comely and worthy of God to save any against his word, his oath, his threatenings, the intention of the death of Christ, against all those terms upon which he is proffered to man?

(4.) Justice cannot but punish an unbeliever. As goodness cannot but smile upon an innocent creature, mercy cannot but hold open its arms for a believing penitent, so justice cannot but flame out against an obstinate rebel. As goodness would not be goodness if it rejected an holy soul, mercy would contradict its own nature if it thrust back a penitent believer, the proper object of it, so justice would be injustice if it spared a final unbeliever. And, as the *first*, viz., to act contrary to his goodness, it is impossible in the nature of God; the *second*, viz., to act against his mercy, is impossible in the settled method of God; so the *third*, to act against his justice, is impossible in the nature of God, say some, with much probability; but certainly impossible according to the revealed will of God. As the holiness of God cannot but hate sin, so the justice of God cannot but punish it: it would be some degree of love to impurity wholly to spare it. That God spares a sinner for a time, is for the manifestation of his patience, but especially upon the account of the mediation of Christ; for, as by him the world was created, so, after sin, by his mediation it did consist; without this the world could not have stood under the curses of the law. But to spare an obstinate rebel for ever, would evidence an approbation of his sin, as well as an affection to his person. God, therefore, having manifested that he will have sin punished, in the sinner, or the surety, and that he will

not pardon it without satisfaction, the punishment of an unbelieving rebel will be as unavoidable, as the punishment of Christ after he had entered himself as our surety. Since God did not spare the Son that he loved, when he would stand in the stead of sinners, can he spare the unbeliever that he hates, when he slights the Son that he infinitely loves, and thereby dares the justice of God, which he hath seen lie so heavy upon the Son of his affection? Could any dispensation from suffering have been granted, his only Son, a spotless surety, should have enjoyed the benefit of it; but that could not be, in regard of his immutable justice, after he was accepted by him in that quality. Since it was necessary his only beloved Son should be exposed to sufferings for the remission of the sins of others, it is as necessary the final unbeliever should be exposed to dreadful punishments for his own transgressions, and the slighting so great a remedy. The justice of God is inflexible in the punishment of sin,\* when the sinner remains obstinate and impenitent: the inflexibility is declared in the sufferings of Christ, which were necessary for remission. And though his sufferings, and the satisfaction thereby, were of infinite value, yet they are wholly useless for the eternal benefit of those that wrap up themselves in their infidelity and impenitence; faith and repentance being required as necessary conditions for the enjoyment of the fruit of these sufferings. When this mediation and satisfaction of Christ is wholly refused, or not embraced upon the terms on which it is offered, the only bar to the inundation of God's justice is taken away, whereby the soul lies naked to the overflowings of it.

(5.) That person which was the offered Saviour, shall be the judge and condemner of such as neglect the terms of salvation by him. What sanctuary can an unbeliever have, when the mediator of mercy appears as the infliker of punishment? 'He appears the second time to the salvation only of those that look for him,' Heb. ix. 28† (that affectionately look for his appearance), of those whose sins he bore upon the tree. Christ did never obtain any peace and pardon for those that persevere to the end in their infidelity. Such Christ is said not to know: Mat. vii. 23, 'I never knew you;' not to pray for: John xvii. 9, 'I pray not for the world,' *i. e.* for such as remain in their sin, and are separated from God by their unbelief. God hath promised to make all his enemies his footstool; and as he hath conferred upon him a power of asking for his people, so he hath given him a power of destroying his enemies, and committed all judgment to the Son: Ps. ii. 8, 9. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,' is the fruit of Christ's asking of God. As he gives him blessings for those that trust in him, ver. 12, so he gives him judgments for those that set themselves against him. God's mercy will not relieve any that are mortally wounded by his Son; and he that gives Christ the whole world upon asking, will not contradict him in his severest acts of dashing his enemies like a potter's vessel. As he had a love to shed his blood, so he hath a wrath to burn them that kiss him not with a kiss of homage. They are so far from having any share in his intercessions for mercy, that they have a dreadful interest in his pleas for wrath. He indeed prayed upon the cross for the forgiveness of some, he prays also for indignation to be poured out upon others, Ps. lxi. 23, 24. It is the cry of him to whom they gave gall for meat, and in his thirst, vinegar to drink, ver. 21. His blood hath a voice for the forgiveness of some, and for the punishment of others; it hath as loud a cry *against* them that undervalue it as it hath *for* them that do apply it. He cannot intercede for any but upon the account of his blood; his intercession is no other than the voice of his blood which

\* Amyraut. sur Heb. vi. p. 108, 109, improved.

† ἀπειθεῖς αὐτῷ, that affectionately look for him as one friend for another.

speaks in heaven. His blood will no more speak for them that slight it, than Abel's blood did for Cain that shed it. 'It speaks better things than the blood of Abel,' but only for those that are 'come to the Mediator of the new covenant and the blood of sprinkling,' Heb. xii. 24; nay, Christ is not able to save any but those that believe. 'He is able to save,' but with a restriction, 'those that come to God by him,' Heb. vii. 24, 25. Not able morally, as it is said, 'it is impossible to renew' apostates from the gospel 'to repentance,' Heb. vi. 4, 6. Not but that God can by his absolute power renew one that doth totally apostatise from the profession of the gospel, but in regard of his wisdom and righteousness it is impossible. So Christ is able to save none but those that come unto God by him. God hath put such a limitation in the covenant, agreed between himself and our Saviour; those only are to be justified that have the 'knowledge of his righteous servant,' Isa. liii. 11. He saves only his seed, those that are 'begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.' He can save only those that are his members, and faith only gives us an union to Christ, and so entitles us to salvation. Christ can never run counter to his gospel, and bless them whom the gospel curseth, or save them whom the gospel condemns. This would be a contradiction, to confirm the covenant by his death, and break it by his life; to walk according to the counsel of God when he was in the flesh, and defeat it when he is upon his throne. He that gave mercies according to men's faith when he was upon earth, will not give salvation to unbelief since he is ascended into heaven. His usual language was, 'Be it unto you according to your faith,' 'Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee.'

(6.) That which makes the sin against the Holy Ghost unpardonable in this world, makes final unbelief unpardonable in the other. A denial of Christ is joined with the sin against the Holy Ghost, Luke xii. 9, 10. Not that unbelief, and the sin against the Holy Ghost, are the same; for the one is pardonable in this life, and the other not. The sin against the Holy Ghost is, I suppose, accounting Christ an impostor, or a total apostasy from the doctrine of the gospel, after some approbations of it, and tastes of its sweetness in the understanding, Heb. vi. 4-6. But the final unbelief of those that sit under the doctrine of the gospel, puts them in the same state with the other: Mark iii. 28-30, 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.' 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,' Mat. xii. 31, *i.e.* may be pardoned; \* there is nothing in the economy of God to hinder it. The transgression against the law was a transgression properly against the Father, to whom the creation is ascribed, and who settled the law upon that occasion. Nothing in the wisdom of God repugns, but that the pardon of this kind of sin may be presented to men, and a Redeemer may be appointed to make a satisfaction to the Father for it, and the benefit of it may be enjoyed by men, upon their turning to God from whom they had revolted (and upon less conditions than this, no benefit could reasonably be expected by it, as was shewn before). As creation is ascribed to the Father, and consequently the law, so redemption is appropriated to the Son, and consequently the gospel. By his sufferings he paid the price, and by his resurrection he received the discharge, and an approbation of his sufferings, and of the conditions upon which the fruit of them was to be received by men. Unbelief is a sin properly and immediately against the Son; as Christ is the immediate object of faith, so he is the immediate object of unbelief. The sin against the Father is clearly more pardonable, according to this dispensation, than the

\* Amyraut. sur Heb. vi. p. 114, &c.

sin against the Son ; because here is a satisfaction made to the Father for the sins against the law. But though it be made and offered to men, yet they may give no respect to it, and by reason of the natural darkness of their minds not understand the high concern of it. But when the Spirit doth by a common work enlighten their minds, and make them in some measure see the comeliness, excellency, and necessity of the things the Redeemer hath done and suffered ; if after this they prefer their trifling pleasures before him, and will finally deny him in opinion, profession, or practice, what help can be expected ? The justice of God required satisfaction by blood for the breach of the law, because the law was, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death.' The Son therefore relieves men by his death for transgressions committed against the Father. The law of Christ requires belief in the satisfaction he hath wrought : faith is called therefore 'faith in his blood,' Rom. iii. 25. The Spirit presseth men to accept of this satisfaction made by the Son, doth accompany the ministry of the word, gives some touches to men, instils some motions into them, and this frequently ; for the law of Christ is not as the law at the creation was, the very day wherein thou neglectest or refusest to accept of this satisfaction, thou shalt die the death. The patience of God concurs with the offers made by Christ, and gives time of respite ; and the Spirit falls in to inform men of their undone condition, and persuade them to comply with the design of God. If then the new order of the Father, the satisfaction of Christ, the persuasion of the Spirit in the word, are all set at nought, what help can be looked for ? There is not a fourth person to step in with any operations. The whole Trinity, and their personal operations, are particularly offered and slighted, the mercy of the Father, the satisfaction of the Son, and the importunity of the Spirit ; since therefore there is no other God, no other Father, no other Son, no other Spirit superior to those, no other world under the government of another God, that any man can transport himself into (as a man may do upon the earth, pass into one country, when he hath offended the laws of another), where is there any relief ? It must be in acting those methods over again, exposing his Son again to suffering, and that doth not consist with the wisdom and majesty of God. But suppose he should do so, there is as little hopes that a man will accept of it then as now, considering the natural enmity against God. And upon the same account that he should die a second time, there would be no end put to the reiteration of his sufferings. Besides (as was said before) the conditions cannot be more favourable ; for God hath condescended to the lowest terms that you can suppose not only an infinite majesty, but a prince, nay, an inferior person can condescend unto, in the case of the revolt of a subject or servant. But the Scripture concludes the contrary, and therefore there must be a new scripture, a new declaration of God to give you intelligence of any design of God to reverse the sentence of this. When the law was broke, he made but one promise of the seed of the woman, and all the other promises in the word are but streams flowing, and channels cut, from this fountain ; upon the breach of that law the Redeemer stood between consuming vengeance and the law-offending creature, and God was willing to repair the breach of the first law by the grace of a second, and sent his Son to close the gap, and reunite him and his creature. But where is there any provision made for the retrieving the final contempt of this ? No revelation of God ever acquainted us with one counsel, or thought of God about it ; it is denied by the mouth of our Saviour. If there were any other remedy, the wrath due to the contempt of this would not *abide* ; but because it abides, therefore there is no remedy.

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To conclude this and the rest, a man can expect no relief from any attribute of God. A man must have a bar put to it, either by justice or mercy : by justice he cannot, because he despiseth that wherewith justice was satisfied, and puts from him that screen God placed between the flames of his wrath and the fuel of a sinner ; by mercy he cannot, for he hath sinned against the highest pitch of it, and refused the terms wherewith mercy is contented. The wisdom of God cannot relieve him, for he hath rejected that which was the birth of an higher wisdom than ever was discovered in the creation. His wisdom is as much bound to keep up the honour of his justice and truth, as the honour of his mercy. Shall he have it from patience ? Patience and longsuffering are not, in the very notion of them, eternal, but temporary. Shall he fly to goodness ? Justice is a part of God's goodness, for he were not good if he were not righteous. The truth of God to such is a very comfortless attribute, that turns the edge of all the threatenings against him, who hath despised his veracity in his promise. Is there any more hopes in the power of God ? It is that people frequently talk of, God is sufficient and able. It is true, he is able to do more than any creature can conceive. But though God hath a natural power, he hath not, we say, a moral power after his word is past ; he would not be just if he used his power against his truth ; as we would not count a man just who would do that by strength which he could not do with honesty. The great reason of men's security is their singling out one attribute of God, without considering the concurrence and combination of the rest.

(7.) The law strengthens the sentence of the gospel against an unbeliever. The moral law condemns every man that doth not believe what God reveals.\* We are to have no other gods before him, nor set up any graven image, nor fancy any [other] way and means of salvation than what God hath ordained. The gospel reveals the object of faith, the law then steps in and enjoins an entertainment of it, because it is the revelation of God. Christ tells the Jews that Moses accused them : John v. 45, ' Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust ; ' *i. e.* there is no need for me to charge you before God, you have one whom you think is your defender, will be your accuser for not believing in me. Moses, *i. e.* the law of Moses, meant properly of the ceremonies prefiguring him, and the prophecies in the books of Moses predicting him. But the law, taken singly for the law of nature, enjoins to believe whatsoever God discovers ; and the condemnation of men for unbelief will be by the law of nature, not as singly considered in itself, because it can so condemn only for the neglect of what it discovers ; it doth not discover Christ the object of faith, and therefore of itself cannot condemn for the neglect of Christ ; it judgeth men only for the violation of the immediate precepts of it, nor can the conscience of the best heathen, that never heard of Christ, accuse him for not inquiring after Christ, nor ever did, which doth accuse him for the breach of those rules which are evident by the light of it. But it condemns in concurrence with the gospel ; when the object of faith is discovered by that, and the evidence appears to be of divine authority, the law of nature urgeth the command to believe, both as we are bound to believe and obey the supreme governor, and also to preserve ourselves. And as it strengthens the command, so in the condemnation it strengthens the sentence. The law is quickened and spirited more by the gospel in its curses against an unbeliever. He must needs be miserable, which is condemned by the law, for the violation of its immediate precepts, and condemned by the law, in concurrence with the gospel, for the refusal of that.

\* Burges, *Vindiciæ Legis*, p. 262.

(8.) God hath discovered his anger more against this sin of unbelief than any, both in his own children and in the Jews.

[1.] In his own children upon an act of unbelief. Moses was barred out of Canaan for one act of distrust of God; and he whose prayers had prevailed for the reprieving a murmuring nation from destruction, was not heard for himself because of his unbelief. God refuseth in the least to listen to him, but commands him silence when he did but desire to go over Jordan to see the good land: Deut. iii. 26, 'Let it suffice thee: speak no more to me of this matter.' This resolution God backed with an oath, Deut. iv. 21. The reason is expressed to be, 'because he believed not God to sanctify him in the eyes of the children of Israel,' Num. xx. 12. Moses had not such a firm faith but he did sometimes stagger at those great things which were predicted to him. But this act of distrust being public, striking the rock when he should have but spoken to it, might have encouraged the infidelity of the people, to which they were prone enough, without the example of their governor to support them in it. This unbelief of Moses kindled God's anger against him. Before, God patiently bore all his excuses, when he first appointed him to deliver his people Israel, and answered his pleas, Exod. iii. 11, Exod. iv. 1, 10-12; but when after all he desires God to stretch out his own hand, as he had promised,—Exod. iii. 20, 'I will stretch out my hand,' which is the meaning of Exod. iv. 13, 'Send by the hand of him whom thou wilt send;' send by that hand that thou wilt send or stretch out; stretch out this hand of thine, for the hand of man is not able to perform it, wherein saith Dr Lightfoot,\* he denied the mystery of redemption, which was to be wrought by a man, the Godhead going along with him,—upon this, 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against him,' ver. 14. But his unbelief still took its progress, in taking Zipporah and his children along with him, which he would not have done in that condition, had he believed the promise of God, Exod. iii. 12, that the people should come to that place where he then was, in Midian, and serve God upon that mountain. Had he believed that promise, he would have left them still with Jethro till his return. For this distrust God sought to kill him, Exod. iv. 24, and not for the delay of circumcision, as some think, since God bore with the Israelites in the wilderness so long in the neglect of this ordinance, because of their frequent travel. If a particular distrust of God doth so incense him against his people, how must a gospel unbelief inflame him, which is a refusal or neglect of his Son, and the riches of his grace in him?

[2.] In the misery of the Jews. Why were they broken off from the root? Because of their unbelief, Rom. xi. 20. Not the crucifying of Christ, which was but a fruit of this sin. Had they believed after that guilt of blood, they had enjoyed the fruits of the mercy of God, by their faith in the Redeemer. This was the sole reason their ancestors were shut out from the typical Canaan. Not for their murmuring, idolatry, and multitude of provocations, but for their unbelief, the root of the other sins; no mention is made of their other rebellions, this only is the ground of God's oath against them: Heb. iii. 18, 19, 'So then we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.' What privileges had those people who are now cut off for this sin? They were chosen to be God's inheritance and portion, his vineyard, his spouse; he had 'chosen them above all people upon the face of the earth, to be a special people unto himself,' Dent. vii. 6. 'Them he had known of all the families of the earth,' Amos iii. 2. He was their lawgiver and their king, had nourished them in his bosom as a father, conducted them into Canaan, prescribed them a peculiar form of worship, secured them

\* Lightfoot's Gleanings on Exod. iv. 24.



from their potent enemies round about them; overturned Egypt for their deliverance, 'gave Ethiopia for their ransom,' defeated the designs of their enemies against them. When God sent enemies to oppress them for some grievous crime committed against heaven, as when they fell into idolatry, and filled Jerusalem with the blood of the prophets, and for that were carried captives to Babylon, yet after they repented and sought his face, he was gracious to them, repented him of the evil, restored them to their inheritance, rebuilt their temple, made their enemies to be their friends, provided a succession of prophets to acquaint them with his will, yea, left them not without prophets in the time of their greatest desolations. He had besides this chiefly promised the Messiah to this nation, of the seed of their fathers. His first intention of sending him was to them: Mat. xv. 24, 'The word of God was first to be spoken to them,' Acts xiii. 46. Christ did come of them according to the flesh, lived among them, distilled his doctrine in person for three years' space upon them, when he taught the Samaritans but two days, John iv. 40, chose the apostles out of that nation, that were to spread the gospel over the world. But since they would not believe in the Messiah, neither by his own sermons, nor the sermons of the apostles, their own land hath spued them out. They are exposed to the miseries of the world, the derisions of men; their temple, and with that their main worship destroyed. And though they have sought him, in their manner, a longer term of years than ever they were a people before the coming of Christ (they came out of Egypt about the year of the world 2470, were destroyed about the year 3990; so that there were about 1520 years from the time of their coming out of Egypt to the destruction of Jerusalem), yet they have no voice to relieve them, no prophetic message to comfort them, the face of God is veiled from them, as their hearts are veiled from him, no nation hath been destroyed for them as before, but they are harassed by all, not the least dawn of deliverance appearing to them. All the covenants and agreements made with their fathers seem at present to be cancelled; and from their rejection, God took occasion to call the Gentiles, and to engraft the wild olives into the covenant of salvation. The destruction of their city was remarkable. God picked out one of the most merciful emperors that ever swayed the Roman sceptre to be the instrument of his justice, rather than some notorious tyrant steeped in blood, and fleshed with slaughters, that the punishment might more evidently appear to be the hand of heaven, and not the effect of the cruelty of man.\* This heathen emperor took notice of the anger of God against them, by many prodigies, so that he said, he feared God would be angry with him, if he should spare them; and when he saw the blood spilt in Jerusalem, and the heaps of carcasses, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, calling God to witness, that it was none of his work and design to have so much blood shed. Eleven hundred thousand perished by the sword and famine, ninety thousand were sold for slaves. Never was the hand of God so heavy upon any people, as upon them, and this for their unbelief. And whereas their other captivities were not above twenty, thirty, or forty years in the book of Judges, and seventy years in Babylon, they have now lain above one thousand six hundred years as a forlorn and forsaken people: 'Wrath is come upon them to the utmost,' 1 Thes. ii. 16; he hath 'set on fire the foundations of the mountains,' and spent his arrows upon them, Deut. xxxii. 22, 23. What did their adoption, their glory, the law, the divine oracles deposited among them, the promises to the patriarchs profit them, after their unbelief? 'If God spared not the natural branches,' shall he spare the strange branches that believe not? Rom. xi. 21. How sharp

\* Fecinus, *de Relig. Christian*, cap. xxix. p. 51.

will his eternal wrath be upon the unbeliever, since his temporal wrath upon the Jew hath been so dreadful ! He will 'pour out his indignation,' and his wrathful anger shall take hold of them, Ps. lxi. 24. This discourse about the Jews proves our Saviour to be the Messiah, as well as the provocation of unbelief. This punishment must be for some grievous crime, greater than the causes of their other captivities. After their return from Babylon, they were not guilty of idolatry, or the slaughter of the prophets, till Christ came, whom they used worse than any of the prophets that went before him ; and all this is come upon them, not simply for the crucifying Christ, but not knowing or believing 'the things which concerned their peace,' Luke xix. 42. And they are in that destruction set forth as an example of the eternal wrath of God upon all final undervaluers of Christ, and neglecters of the things that concern their peace, as well as Sodom and Gomorrah in their temporal punishment, and destruction of their bodies by fire from heaven, are set forth for an example, 'suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,' Jude 7. In the Scripture there are always some things of a greater and eternal concern couched under the historical part of it. Who, in reading the story of Melchisedec's coming to congratulate Abraham for his victory, would have thought him to be so great a type of Christ, had not David, Ps. cx., and after him the apostle, Heb. vii., informed us of it ? Who would have regarded the destruction of Sodom, but as an effect of God's temporal justice, had not the apostle here informed us of its being a type of eternal fire ? In like manner this deplorable desolation of the Jews, is but a type of the miserable destruction of unbelievers to eternity, whatever privileges they might have enjoyed on earth, and howsoever dear to God they might have imagined themselves.

2. Why doth final unbelief render a man infallibly the object of the wrath of God ?

1. Because of the greatness of the sin. It is greater than any breach of the covenant of works can be.

(1.) It is a more manifest enmity to God's government of the world. When the covenant of works was transgressed, God as the rector required satisfaction by death and blood, according to the tenor of the violated law, and as a tender Father provided a surety to give a sufficient one, whereby to preserve his own rights which had been invaded, and relieve his creature which had been ruined. In not accepting the surety God had procured, we deny him the honour of his sovereignty, and the restoration of the rights of his government. We count him unworthy of any satisfaction, maintain our rebellion against him as justly grounded, and account ourselves innocent when we are criminal, since we will not own the satisfaction he hath procured, as if no satisfaction were due to him ; which must imply that either we account ourselves no offenders, or God none of our governor, or that we are able to make him a requital ourselves, which is also a contradiction to the rights of government, since he hath an authority to appoint what satisfaction he pleaseth, according to the law which was settled by him, and broken by man. Since God provided a surety for us wherein he could acquiesce, he had a double right, both as rector and benefactor, to appoint what conditions should be performed by the creature before he should be admitted to the benefit of this charter he had sealed by the blood of his Son. The not accepting these conditions is a manifest injury to him, as he is his governor, and a gracious governor ; because it is against not only a sovereign command, but a command of grace. It is as much his command to us to believe, as not to commit murder and adultery ; and the breaking this command speaks more of enmity to him than

the breaking the others. He hath settled it as an eternal law, and his full resolve 'that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John v. 23. That every man without exception should honour the Son in the work of redemption, as the Father in the work of creation; and 'he that honours not the Son honours not the Father which hath sent him.' He that denies the honour of faith to Christ, denies the honour of homage and fealty to God, and disparageth the government of his Father, who as rector of the world appointed him, and under the same quality accepted him. Christ is the immediate representative of God, the image of the glorious God. The laws of God and the laws of Christ are the same, Ps. ii. 3; the cords and bands belong jointly to 'the Lord and his anointed;' to reject the laws of the one is to violate the authority of the other. What is done against the representative is against the majesty of the person represented by him. The Lord and his anointed can no more be separated in their authority than they can in their essence. If the Father be in the Son and the Son in the Father, John x. 38, the reproach cast upon the one redounds upon the other, as well as the entertainment of the one is said to be the reception of the other: Mat. x. 40, 'He that receives me, receives him that sent me.' If God pleads the cause of his servants, if those who rise against Moses are said to speak against God, Num. xxi. 5, and the murmurings against him are called the 'murmurings against the Lord,' Exod. xvi. 2, 7, and the rejecting of Samuel was a rejecting the government of God, 1 Sam. viii. 7, can less be said of the neglect of him whom God hath sent, not as a servant from a lord, but a son from a father? What greater evidence of a rooted enmity can there be against the sovereignty of a prince, than after multitudes of rebellions, tenders of gracious terms, a long series of invitations to accept of him, a desire that they might be restored to the happiness they had forfeited; after all this not to be reduced to his sceptre? The case is the same with us: God hath provided all means necessary to our restoration; nothing is wanting but our own concurrence with it. The enmity is greater, since there is no failure on God's part, since he hath done more than he was bound as a creator to do, or had need to do; and is it not just that obstinate rebels, who will not observe the rules of his government, should fall under the rod of his wrath?

(2.) It is a high ingratitude. The transgression of the law was against the authority and goodness of God; this against his authority, and against a goodness of an higher elevation, springing up in bowels of compassion, spreading its arms wider than in creation, and offering to confer a more excellent and durable happiness; it is against the tenders of remission in the blood of the Son of God, which in the first transgression man had no knowledge of (for there was nothing of grace mentioned in the first covenant). And who will not judge it more criminal in itself to slight or neglect the grace of a prince, in conjunction with his authority, than to violate only the authority of a prince in breaking his lawful and just command? Would it not be a crime worthy the indignation of all men, if twice, thrice, nay, innumerable times, the sincerest tenders of the greatest good should be refused? Who would have compassion for such a refractory person? Is not unbelief the more horrible crime in them who acknowledge Christ for the Son of God, the mediator between God and them, whereby they are so far from rendering it in the least manner excusable, that they highly aggravate it?

[1.] Consider the greatness of the mercy. God prevented us by his love: 1 John iv. 10, 'Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;' procured a surety for us, who valued our redemption above the pleasure of the body he assumed, and appointed

him for us when we had a desire to persist in our rebellion, not only after we had offended him, but when we were in actual offences still against him : Rom. v. 8, 'when we were yet sinners ;' not only when we had sinned, but when we were still adding one crime to another ; and this surety hath expended his treasures to purchase our deliverance, hath submitted to death to prevent our suffering of it ; he hath 'abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10. He destroyed death, that had a power over us by the immutable sentence of the law, took away the right it had, despoiled the law of its power to condemn us, by condemning sin by the effusion of his blood on the cross, whereby the law had acquired a right of condemning us, and discovered the way to an immortal life, which we were estranged from by the darkness of sin, brought a message of peace from the bosom of the Father, whereby we might be eternal gainers. It is such a free mercy, that, if it had not been manifested, not God but we should have been the only losers. No mercy like it, no mercy can exceed it, no other mercy can equal it. 'So God loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son,' John iii. xvi ; a *so* beyond expression, a *so* beyond imagination ; nothing can surpass it but the sending him again to suffer ; and this only would be in circumstantial of repetition, not in the essentials and nature of the mercy.

[2.] From hence measure the greatness of the sin. The height, depth, length, and breadth of the mercy is the only rule to measure the dimensions of the sin against it by. The stronger and louder the bowels of mercy are which are slighted, the greater and blacker is the sin of despising him. The goodness of God in procuring, and the grace of God in accepting, a surety, are denied by this sin. Every act of it contemns the provisions of grace and contentments of justice, the attendances of patience, the tenderness of bowels, and the satisfactory blood of the Son of God. Is it not a strange carriage that when God is so merciful to offer remission, man should be so obstinate as to refuse it, and would rather die in his sin, hateful to God, and miserable for himself, than live by the Son of God, so acceptable to God and beneficial to man ; and when, besides the outward preaching of the gospel, there have been, by the common grace of the Spirit, some inward stirrings and approbation of the terms, which yet have vanished into a non-compliance ? The frequenter those motions, the greater the ingratitude added to the debts of all other sins contracted before. This unthankfulness for such a benefit is alleged as the cause of men's condemnation : John iii. 10, 'When light is come into the world, men love darkness rather than light.' When God hath provided a way to remove the guilt of their sins, the world will not part with the pleasure and profit of their sins. Can there be a baser requital than to be a partner with Judas in betraying him, with Pilate in condemning him, with the Jews in crucifying him ? What do we else but approve of all the barbarous usage he met with from the Jews, when we despise his authority in his evangelical command, refuse his person in his gracious proffers, and undervalue his sufferings by not applying them ?

Is not then a dreadful punishment of this sin very righteous ? By the law of nature, the greater kindness a creature receives, the greater punishment he doth deserve if he prove ungrateful. Since gospel grace exceeds all the benefits of creation, it is reasonable that the neglects of it should be attended with the greater punishment. When men will refuse the acceptance of it, and conformity to the will of God, which can only fit them for true happiness, a fuller measure of wrath is due to them that slight the fullest expense of mercy. Justice would not be justice if it used not them with the greatest severity that abuse grace with the greatest indignity : what is

greatest in the rank of sins, deserves the greatest misery in the rank of penalties. The greater benefit is conferred, the greater guilt is contracted by the neglect, and a stronger subjection to punishment in the order of justice. If it be a crime deserving a severe reflection to outrage an innocent person that never did us wrong, it is much more to spurn at a person who hath laid the foundation of our greatest good, and offereth that good to us upon the easiest terms. Such a carriage to a prince would be a greater indignity; how inconceivable a crime is it then against the King of kings, the Lord of glory, God blessed for ever, under all those inexpressible circumstances of innocence in his person, flames in his affection, kindness to the last drop of blood, and continued patience in waiting for our receiving the atonement! The rebellion of all other sins is wrapped up in this: John xv. 22, 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin;' so the gall of all other miseries is distilled into the punishment due to it. It is fit the furnace of wrath should be heated, to answer the flames of love which have been shooting towards them.

[8.] It is a sin against a clearer and fuller light and undeniable revelation. The gospel hath been first published by the Son of God in person, spread over the world by his apostles and their successors as the commissioners of Christ, entertained by multitudes in all ages since, transmitted to us in writing, delivered down to us by the contentions of our ancestors for the faith and the blood of martyrs. Nothing we believe in the world but it is upon less reason than we have to believe this. The belief of other things, for which we have little reason, and in some no reason, will aggravate our unbelief of those great things for which we have so much reason.

(1.) Heathens have had a less light, and abused it, and shall not escape punishment. This way of argument the apostle useth,\* Rom. i. 16-19, to assure unbelievers of a dreadful vengeance. Though the design of the gospel be nothing but righteousness, life, and salvation to the believer, yet it breathes as much wrath against the neglecter as it doth happiness to the embracer; and without any charge of injustice upon God. For others who had a less light than that of the gospel, which discovered to them the power and eternity of God, it rendered them without any apology for themselves. The closing their eyes against that natural light, or abusing of it, and keeping natural truth in unrighteousness, *i.e.* lying in their sins against all the beams of light from the creation, will subject them to eternal punishment. The heathens had nothing but the dim light of nature, the effluxes of divine patience; but they could not read the covenant of grace in the motions of the heavens and orderly seasons of the year; they could not behold the Sun of righteousness in the material sun in the firmament; the heavens discovered the glory of a creator, but not the grace of a redeemer; there were characters of divine wisdom and power in the frame of the world, but nothing of his grace and pardoning mercy; therefore they are not condemned for not believing in Christ, since a mediator was not made known to them. They were bound to no more than Adam was; but Adam was not bound to believe a supernatural mystery till God had revealed it: and it cannot be expected that they, who never had an account of Christ, should believe in him. 'How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' Rom. x. 14; and if they be under an impossibility of believing for want of a revelation, how can they be condemned for not believing? But the sentence against them is grounded upon their despising the voice of the works of nature, the common mercy of God, and his patience manifested in them, whereby he called them to some reflection upon themselves, and repentance

\* *Wren contra Catech. Racov.* sec. xxxvii. parag. 4.

for their iniquities. Since the law of nature was given man as a rule in creation,\* they shall be examined whether they have done the things agreeable to the law written in their consciences, and they shall be judged according to the several measures of the light of reason which they had; for it cannot be supposed that the barbarous nations that lived in a thick darkness, and had not the advantage of a polite and learned education to improve their reasons, shall have the same measure of judgment with those who had the waterings and dressings of a sounder education. (But neither one nor the other shall be judged according to the gospel, which exacts faith in the Redeemer). And according to this rule, not a man of them can escape; and if it were the only rule to try all men by, not a man, from Adam to the last that shall be born upon the earth by natural generation, can avoid the just condemnation of God, because not a man of them but hath, one way or other, and that several times, transgressed that law; for all are become guilty before God.

(2.) The Jews have had a less light than those under the gospel, though clearer than that of the heathens, and upon the abuse of this they shall not escape. The Jews who died before the coming of Christ, shall be tried according to the law of nature expressed in the decalogue, and that particular law of ceremonies given to them, wherein the Mediator was veiled. The Jews had the gospel printed in types and allegories, wrapped up in the pillar of a cloud; Christ was not come in the flesh, nor the Spirit poured out upon the world; they could not see the beauty of a redeemer for the smoke of their sacrifices, nor have a full prospect of his face through the grates and lattices of the ceremonies. There were also different measures of light among them, which may mitigate the condemnation of some, but not be a sufficient bar against a sentence of death.† For those of the Jewish religion, that did not believe in those promises or prophecies of the Messiah, in the time of the first entrance into Canaan, shall not have so great a punishment as those that lived after, when clearer prophecies were added. All judgment shall be according to the measure of light afforded; according to the measure of it, God expects a suitable return; for 'to whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required,' Luke xii. 48. Nor shall those that died in the wilderness, or first entered into Canaan, have so light a sentence as those of the old world, with whom the Spirit of Christ strove, but upon the account of one single promise given to Adam; whereas the other had an increase of promises to Abraham, deliverances to themselves, an addition of types to represent the things promised, and the intention of them, to their eyes, which were stronger and more unanswerable grounds upon which the Spirit did strive with them in those times. Those of the Jews who had the least light of revelation, shall have a smarter punishment than the heathens, who had the strongest light of nature: 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile,' Rom. ii. 9. As the Jew had the priority in privileges, so he shall have in the anguish prepared for the wicked. And many of them in the days of Christ in the flesh neglected him, not so much wilfully as out of ignorance, and prejudicate opinions of a conquering Messiah. If they could escape upon the witness of Paul, or rather upon the witness of the Holy Ghost, they should find relief; Paul would not deny his own writing, nor the Holy Ghost his own inditing: 1 Cor. ii. 8, 'Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;' no, nor Christ his own testimony upon the

\* Amyraut. in *symbol. Apostolic.* p. 222, changed.

† Amyraut. in *symbol. Apostolic.* p. 226.

cross, that they knew not what they did, Luke xxiii. 34. But can we call the Holy Ghost or the Redeemer to witness for us, if we believe not?

(3.) We have a clearer light than any of them had. It was indeed by his own Son that God spoke to the Jews, Heb. i. 2, but he did but begin to speak it; the stronger confirmations were afterwards by the gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out upon men: Heb. ii. 3, 4, 'God bearing witness from heaven' to the truth of his doctrine. We have the light of nature to answer for, we are bound to this as much as the heathen; they had no more of the light of nature than we have; the Jew had less understanding of the ceremonies than we have, they saw the types, and we have the manifestation of the substance, we have Christ in a plain letter and fairer print. We have the light of heathens, the light of the Jews, and a glorious light superadded to both those.

Now, it is according to this light God doth proportion the punishment of unbelievers under the gospel. The judgment, according to the apostle, respects two sorts of persons: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'Those that know not God,' and those 'that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The heathens that knew not God, when they had light enough in the creation to know him: and they that obey not the gospel, whether veiled or open; as veiled, it takes in the Jews before Christ; as open, it comprehends all to whom the gospel is preached. The question shall be asked such persons, whether they did believe in the name of the Son of God as the only mediator; and those that shall be convinced of a final unbelief, or disobedience to the evangelical declarations, shall incur the more grievous condemnation, because to the transgression of the law of nature, will be added over and above, the transgression of a special command of God, respecting their recovery. According to the rule of justice it must exceed the condemnation of the rest; since they have lived in the bosom of the church, and besides the neglect of that common to them with the heathen, have rejected the mediator made known to them, and not to the heathen. If the light of the darkest of them be sufficient to convict them before God without any excuse, much more must the light, revealed by the word, aggravate the guilt of men that close their eyes against it. They have not only the discoveries of God in nature, but the discoveries of God in grace, to answer for. The more excellent the truth is that is disobeyed, the greater the sinfulness of the disobedience; Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were accounted as a strange thing.' If the choicest revelation that God ever made, did not aggravate the punishment, why should the apostle say, 2 Peter ii. 21, 'It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness,' if they were in the same condition, wherein they were before they knew it? But how reasonable and righteous is the misery of those who have not only had the outward declarations of the gospel, but some common illumination of their minds, some motions of the Spirit, some approbations of the doctrine? If Paul had mercy because his unbelief was in ignorance, what mercy can they expect whose unbelief is with knowledge? 1 Tim. i. 13. Not that his ignorance deserved a pardon, for who can ascribe any merit to ignorance? The crucifying of Christ, the most horrid wickedness that ever the world saw, heaps not that guilt upon men whose hands were red with his blood, that unbelief doth upon men, who in opinion pretend to acknowledge him. The crime of the one was extenuated by their ignorance, and the crime of the other aggravated by their knowledge, as also, by the frequency of the impressions made upon them by the word. Well, then, if heathens shall be condemned, who had only the material heavens, and the sensitive, and insensitive creatures upon the earth preach-

ing to them, who had only God in his works, and the Jews who had God speaking to them in legal ceremonies, what will become of those who have had the voice of God, Christ, and redeeming blood calling to them in the word, and neglected all ?

(4.) This sin is a refusal of the only way of expiation of sin. When the law was violated, a relief was provided in the gospel. Because the law uttered not one syllable of forgiveness, the transgression of the law was not an offence against pardoning mercy, as the unbelief of the gospel is. This relieving mercy could not have appeared in the world in a contradiction to the justice of God ; this, to speak according to the manner of men, would have made a war in the divine nature, without the sacrifice of the Son of God in our nature. For because he assumed not the nature of angels, the fallen spirits are exposed to the rigours of justice, without any relief of mercy. If Adam had truly repented of his crime, he could not have obtained pardon without the satisfaction of the law, which was as silent in the command of repentance, as it was in the declaration of a pardon. When, therefore, there is a remedy provided, and no other remedy but this, nor can be any other remedy ; since no valuable sacrifice can be imagined for the taking away of sin but this, those that neglect it, render themselves incapable of security, by shutting themselves out of the only refuge. In all human contracts, a promise is only received \* by assenting to and believing it. Though something may be taken from a man unwilling to part with it, yet nothing can be given to a man unwilling to accept it ; what right soever is transferred by the donor in a way of promise, is established by the other's assenting to it. If a prince promises a courtier a gift upon the performance of easy conditions, and he will not believe the word of the king, nor perform the reasonable conditions, the promise is not only void in itself, but the prince justly offended with his behaviour. Had the terms of the covenant been very hard, provided they had not been impossible, the damnation had been just had they been wilfully neglected ; but they are as reasonable as can be : repentance and faith. Is it not fit the justice of God should be acknowledged in its equity, and the holiness of God in its beauty, by a sensibleness of our crimes ; his grace in its freeness, by an acceptance of its provision ; and his sovereignty acknowledged by the payment of an homage to him ? Who would not count that rebel a sufferer by double justice who refuseth the pardon of his great rebellions, which he might have only for the acceptance of it, a sensibleness of his offence, and a sincere promise of his utmost service ? They are such reasonable conditions, that the honour of God, as well as the honour of a prince, would not be provided for, or have a salvo without them. If men will sell themselves to the slavery of a condemned sin, and a conquered devil, they can charge none with boring their ears to a perpetual misery, but their own folly. He that will choose to die by the sting of a fiery serpent, rather than live by the sight of the brazen one, can impute his ruin to no other but himself.

Christ hath made an expiation for sin, quenched the flaming sword that stopped the entrance into paradise. If men will not set their feet in that way, nor make any inquiries after it ; if they cast behind their back all exhortations to it, and never consider them in their minds, upon whom can they charge their destruction but upon themselves ?

If a man be in love with his misery, and will not stoop to him that would relieve him ; if he prefer his guilt before the expiation, his deplorable condition before a Saviour, his filthiness before a righteousness, it is juster that he should perish by the sin he chose, than be happy by a Saviour he refused.

\* *Illyric. de fide*, p. 125. sect. xxxi.



His own act is in the nature of a confession of the equity of God's sentence, since God hath linked the gospel and everlasting life so close together that the one cannot be received or refused without the other. They 'judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life,' by 'putting away the gospel' from them, Acts xiii. 46. He tacitly declares that he would rather have God angry with him than pacified, when he refuseth the only means of a reconciliation. And the justice of his punishment is evident by the value of the propitiation which he refuseth, it being that which was the salvation of all the ancient believers before the oblation of the sacrifice, valuable enough to be the salvation of devils; that which was so prevalent with God in our Saviour's first consent to it, as to turn the tribunal of justice into a throne of grace; that blood which, sprinkled upon the soul, can turn the edge of the angel's destroying sword; that pure and spotless sacrifice which is the feast of God in heaven, which is daily presented to him by our Saviour in his office of advocacy, 1 John ii. 1, 2. Can there be less justice than to inflict damnation upon those who wilfully neglect that which hath been the only way for the salvation of millions, and might be efficacious for theirs, if they would accept of it upon God's terms? Nay, they impose upon themselves a necessity of damnation, who cast away the means of salvation. How can his chains be knocked off, that slights redemption? How can he be washed, that stops by his infidelity the blood of Christ from flowing out upon him? What disease can be healed, if the only proper remedy for it be not applied? Is not he as much guilty of his own death, that rejects a medicine, tears a plaster off from his wounds, as he that cuts his own throat with a knife? They have but the fruits of their own wilfulness, and must at last subscribe to the equity of God's judgment, because the desert of it was their own choice.

3. What kind of misery this is.

It is

1. Inevitable. The end of the enemies of the cross of Christ is destruction, Phil. iii. 18. The righteous hath a 'sure reward,' Prov. xi. 18; the unrighteous must have as sure a punishment: 'perishing from the way' is the absolute issue of the 'kindling of his wrath,' Ps. ii. 12. Death will certainly enter in at that door; there is no more possibility of escape than for a man mortally wounded in a vital part to avoid death entering in at his wound. Every man must render an account before the judgment seat of Christ. Shall men render an account of their time, wealth, the abuse of the faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies? and shall they not as certainly render an account of that which is more precious than all these: the grace of God, and the blood of Christ offered to them and injured by them? Is there any shelter from the all-seeing eye of God, in the caves of the deep or under the mountains of the world? Poor Adam sought it in the thickets of paradise, but was forced to come out at the call, 'Adam, where art thou?' Gen. iii. 9, 10. What refuge can be imagined? The covenant of grace is the city of refuge against the pursuit of the covenant of works; that is our hope under our fetters for the breaches of the law, Heb. vi. 18. Where can we fix an anchor of hope to secure ourselves from the storms of this? The apostle puts the question indeed, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. ii. 3. But the resolution of it was above his invention; he knew not one tittle of encouragement in the whole book of God, though no man better acquainted with it. What do I speak of the apostle? The Holy Ghost himself, who indited what the apostle did write, knew none. The transgressions of the law subject men to a desert of condemnation; but this sin exposeth men to a necessity of damnation, since all the methods of God for procuring remission have been rendered

useless by the refusal of that merit that purchased it, and that mercy that appointed and offered it. When justice condemns in the law, a liberty of appeal is reserved to mercy in the gospel; if mercy in the gospel condemns for want of the conditions necessary to the enjoyment, what reserve is left? No way of relief but by injustice, which is not to be found in the divine nature.\* After man had wounded himself, and sunk down at the feet of the law, a promise was clapped in as a plaster; but is there a syllable in the whole Scripture of any other remedy? It never yet thought of any other security; God never revealed any other for the repair of his own honour, which suffered by sin; and why should the creature imagine any other for his own recovery? Yes; but we know not but God may have a reserve in his own counsel. Certainly men that pretend to believe the gospel must have some such conceit; they could not else be such desperate enemies to themselves as not to labour after a thorough work of faith. But would any but a prodigiously mad man run the hazard of such a conceit? What footing can such an imagination have after all God's declarations to the contrary? If the laws of a king threaten an unavoidable punishment for a crime, would not that man be a bedlam that would venture the transgression of it upon hopes of a reserve, when he finds not a syllable in the law for such an encouragement, but the whole design to the contrary? Necessity of state sometimes is a bridle to restrain the punishment of an offender; but the eternal order of God is so constituted that there can be no necessity upon him, for the advantage of heaven or earth, to remit the punishment of a final unbeliever.

Consider,

[1.] It is a God who hath passed his word. God never speaks but he intends to perform; his words shall stand before men's imaginations of security; his conditions he will not alter. He cannot save such men; his oath stands in the way; his repeated declarations are a bar against it. What greater obligations than an oath, and the oath of God, which is a swearing by himself? and as sure as I am God, and as sure as I live, I will do such a thing? Shall God deny his own deity for a rebel's security? Heb. iii. 18, 'To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?' They shall not enter into a gospel state, to have the benefits of Christ, who is the rest of God. Since the Scripture is written for our instruction, it concerns every man in a state of unbelief, and assures them, if it be final, they shall not set a foot within the gates of heaven. God never passeth his oath but to confirm what he is resolutely bent to perform; he swears to the promises, that the believers may have strong consolation; he swears to the threatening, that unbelievers may have dismal apprehensions. Some humbled souls think God is not so merciful as he declares; he swears to expel their doubts. Presumptuous persons think God is not so just; he swears to expel their vain conceits. This sin ties up, as it were, the hands of an omnipotent mercy from saving such a one. The apostle intimates that God is not able to save without faith (Rom. xi. 23, 'If they bide not still in unbelief, they shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again'), in asserting that God is able to graft the Jews in upon their faith. God is not morally able to do anything against his word and settled methods of his grace; and because God hath passed his word, and denounced those judgments which he executes, he is said to slay men 'by the word of his mouth and the breath of his lips,' Isa. xi. 4; and the sharp sword wherewith he smites the nations goes out of the mouth of Christ, Rev. xix. 15.

[2.] God hath promised to take the punishment of final unbelievers into his own hands. The revenge of injuries done by one man to another belongs

\* Whom oil and balsam kill, what salve can cure?—*Herbert.*

to God, and he will recompense them; the vengeance of injuries done to his Son doth as much belong to him. He values the obedience of Christ in his death too high to suffer men to slight it without the recompence of a certain indignation; and who can avoid the recompence he will inflict? Heb. x. 30, 31. What sanctuary can there be against the wrath of an all-knowing God, who hath promised Christ to take the work into his own hands, and be the destroyer of all his enemies? Ps. xc. 1, 'Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.' He will employ all his power against them. This power is ascribed here to the Father, not that the Son is unable to conquer his enemies, but to shew his mighty affection to the office of priesthood he had settled his Son in, and his resolution to maintain the rights of it, and revenge any indignity offered to it; also because acts of power are ascribed to the Father, as acts of wisdom to the Son. God cannot be true to his Son, nor true to himself, having passed his word to his Son, and published that word to us, unless he punished unbelievers. This is part of the honour God intends him, wherein he will take pleasure, as well as in seeing him sit gloriously at his right hand; and this he had assured men of before, that he would require exactly an account of their refusal to listen to the words of the great prophet which should speak in his name.\* And lest any think that, though it be unavoidable, if they fall into the hands of the living God, yet they may have some shelter from his fury; no, the right hand of God, his hand of strength and power, shall find out the enemies of Christ in their most secret recesses: Ps. xxi. 8, 'Thy hand shall find out all thy enemies, thy right hand shall find out them that hate thee;' none shall escape the being hurled into a fiery oven by the power of his hand. The psalm was anciently applied by the Chaldee paraphrast to the King Messiah. Who can rescue the soul that is grasped in the wrathful hand of God? What champion can keep off the blow, unless it be one that can match God in strength and power? Nor will God be diverted by the cries of obstinate rebels, when he was not persuaded by the strong cries and prayers of Christ to take the cup of suffering out of his hand.

Besides, though Christ be clad in his priestly garments, he hath 'feet like brass, as if they burnt in a furnace,' heavy and hot to trample upon his enemies, Rev. i. 13, 15; he hath 'eyes like a flame of fire' to find them, and 'feet like brass' to crush them; so that upon all accounts the misery is unavoidable. The condition of the heathens renders them inevitably miserable; for, being 'without Christ,' they are 'without hope,' Eph. ii. 12. Faith in the promise is the foundation of the hope of blessedness; no freedom without it from the sentence of death to which the law hath adjudged us; no freedom from the spiritual death which sin hath engendered in us. It is as inevitable as the misery of devils; they perish because they have no mediator, and men perish because they will not receive a mediator.

2. Speedy misery. As Christ is a swift help, so he is declared to be a 'swift witness' against the unrighteousness of men, Mal. iii. 5. God is quick in his judgments where the gospel is contemned; the black, red, and pale horse—plague, war, and famine—followed the heels of the white horse, to cut off them that would not be conquered by the rider on it, Rev. vi. 2, 4, 5, 8. God is more quick and severe in his justice under the gospel than before; the former times before the exhibition of Christ were the times of God's patience, wherein 'God winked at the times of ignorance; but if his command of repentance and faith be neglected, nothing is to be expected but a severe judgment, Acts xvii. 30, 31. As he hath revealed his righteousness 'from faith to faith,' so he hath 'revealed his wrath from heaven,' Rom. i.

\* Deut. xviii. 19, אֲדַרֵּשׁ, I will diligently require it; אֲנִי, I myself.

17, 18. When he made a promise of the effusion of his Spirit in the times of the gospel, Joel ii. 28, 29, he couples with it a threatening of judgments as the fruit of the contempt of the gospel: ver. 30, 31, 'I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, before the day of the Lord,' *i.e.* from the time of the pouring forth the Spirit, and the contempt of his grace, there shall be a confusion in all parts of the world where the gospel is contemned, and that in a constant succession till the great day of the Lord. We may know to what cause to ascribe the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood in a nation. The same reason of the speediness of judgment holds in the case of a particular person; whosoever 'bears thorns and briers, is nigh unto cursing,' Heb. vi. 8. The good earth is said to be blessed by God; but the bad earth is not said to be cursed, that we may not despair, but 'nigh to cursing,' that we may hasten our fruitfulness. It cannot be long before the power of God will vindicate his injured mercy, and deliver men up into the hands of justice, to answer for the violations of his law and contempt of his grace. The time of God's waiting is bounded in narrow limits. The life is a short vapour, which appears a while and quickly vanisheth. What are a few days or years—yea, or Methuselah's age—to keep off the plague which shall last for ever? Unconceivably less than a grain of sand, compared with the whole mass of heaven and earth, if pounded into dust.

3. Sharp misery. It abides; the first wound is not so smart as a constant gnawing of a vulture. As the apostle could imagine no way to escape it, so he could not imagine any way to express it: Heb. x. 29, 'Of how much sorer punishment?' He leaves it to every man's fancy to screw it to the highest. So sore, that the malefactor shall feel it without being able to declare the torture of it. And thus Peter leaves it to men to imagine, since he was unable to express it: 1 Peter iv. 17, 18, 'What shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel?' and 'where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?' We can no more conceive the terror of the wrath due to this, than we can conceive the grandeur of that love which has been abused, and the dignity of the person of his Son which is injured by it. The most scorching receptacles in that fiery oven seem to be reserved for unbelievers: Luke xii. 46, 'The Lord shall appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.' A vengeance is due to such, Heb. x. 30, which is not a simple punishment, but one with rigour. It knows no mitigation; not a drop of a water will be allowed to temper the devouring flame. Hell would rather solicit for a further addition of wrath to one that despised the only begotten of the Father; a man's own conscience will tell him it is rather below than above his demerit. Though the punishment of sin against the law was a separation from God, yet this separation may admit of degrees; one may be further cast from God than another, into the depths and lowest dungeon of hell. The young man was in a nearness to the kingdom of heaven, yet not in it, but in a state of alienation from God.

(1.) God takes the punishment of such into his own hand. God will be a 'consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29. Fire is the sharpest of all the elements, insinuates into every part of combustible matter, and the wrath of God into every part of the soul; it devours with an invincible force whatsoever it lays hold on. Though God be full of goodness and mercy to them that believe, yet he is like a consuming fire to those that scorn the covenant of his Son; and with no less, but much more, fury will he consume the slights of that, than he did the despisers of the old administration. This sin puts God upon the discharging all his fury. The breath of his mouth, that before invited men, shall blow the fire: Isa. xxx. 33, 'The breath of the Lord, as a stream

of brimstone, doth kindle it.' It is not a simple punishment, but wrath abides, the wrath of an infinite God, infinitely understanding to invent, and of infinite power to inflict the bitterest pains; which must be more sharp than any in this life, because all the bars of patience which stopped the overflowing scourge, and the long-suffering of God upon the account of the mediation of Christ, shall abstain from any further exercise. It must be as sharp as justice armed with infinite power can render it, according to the capacity of the subject. What cannot Omnipotence do? As when the covenant is received, God is our God in the employment of his infinite perfections for us; so when the covenant is outraged, God is our judge in the employment of his infinite perfections against us. Patience shall not stir a finger, mercy will look contemptibly\* upon them. When the first covenant was broke, justice punished and mercy relieved; when the second is finally despised, justice inflicts the punishment, and mercy contemns the sufferer. That mercy which called them will laugh at their calamity, Prov. i. 24, 26, 27, 28. It is not vindictive justice, but tender mercy, which calls men to repentance. It is not vindictive justice men will seek in their distresses, but pity and compassion from their judge. But that attribute whereby God stretched out his hand in kindness, that attribute which men in their anguish will call upon for relief, will not only be speechless, but mock, when their fear comes. As justice joins hands with mercy in the pardon of a believer, upon the satisfaction of Christ, so mercy will join hands with justice for the punishment of an unbeliever that either spurns at it or neglects it. Justice shall hurl them in, and mercy roll the stone upon the mouth of hell. Mercy will mock them, and mocking is none of the lightest ingredients in the punishment of a malefactor. How heavy must that condemnation be, which is pronounced by a mercy turned into fury! Since God inflicts it, the punishment for the neglect of his grace will be suited to that joy he had in the effusions of it. We may measure his anger against the rebels by the delight he had in his Son for undertaking the work of redemption, and the joy he expressed upon his performing it. No greater honour could be bestowed upon his return to heaven than the seating him at his right hand, giving him power over all the angels, more terrible judgments than must fall upon them that despise the priesthood of Christ, so acceptable to God, which shall, by the decree of God, like Aaron's rod, the type of it, flourish for ever.

(2.) It will be suited to the greatness of what hath been contemned. As much as the covenant excels the other in grace and glory, so much shall the vengeance for the despising it exceed the punishment due to the transgression of the other. A heinous sin deserves intolerable plagues. Sins against the light of nature are of a meaner tincture than those against the gospel. There was a death without mercy for the transgression of the law of Moses, Heb. x. 28, composed only of the shadows of this; must there not then be an addition of vengeance to those that make light of the substance? The punishment in order of justice must be suited to the greatness of the crime. As it is a total injustice to let a crime pass with impunity, so it is a partial injustice to let it pass with a punishment less than it merits. The dignity of the person injured, the Son of God, and God in him, greatens the crime, and consequently the punishment. With what an infelicity must such an indignity to God be attended! We are not only to answer to justice for the violations of an holy law, but the expense of a tender mercy. And if an offence against God, as the author of our being, deserves at the hands of an infinitely offended majesty a just recompence of reward, much more must the rejecting the tenders of his grace, whereby as a fountain of goodness he

\* That is, 'contemptuously.'—ED.

would send forth richer streams of happiness than at the creation. We abuse that which we had not the least right to demand, nor God the least obligation to give. Some things the nature of God obligeth him unto. God might choose whether he would create man; but when he resolves to create a rational creature, the holiness of God obligeth him to create him holy. He may choose whether he would make a covenant of grace; but when he hath made it, his nature will not permit him to start from it. God might choose whether he would offer grace; and therefore the freer the grace, the blacker the abuse of it, and the sorer the punishment due to it. As there were liberal showers of grace, there shall be fuller vials of wrath; as grace to the utmost, so wrath to the brim. The devil, who had not the least share of created wisdom, by his abuse of it, rendered himself most accursed; and men by the abuse of grace, render themselves most abhorred by God. As where sin hath abounded grace is sweeter, so where grace hath abounded, and is not received, wrath is sharper, and the heat of wrath is proportioned to the flame of love. And as it is against the greatest mercy, so it is against a greater evidence of God's holiness and justice in the death of his Son. The end of the death of Christ was that 'God might shew himself just;' Rom. iii. 26, 'that he might be just,' *i.e.* known to be just. Now, after this public discovery of his justice, this sin is a daring his justice more than any sin under the law. Then there was only a verbal declaration of the justice of God; but in the death of Christ, the highest sensible demonstration of it to the sons of men.

(3.) It will be suited to the excellent rewards of faith. As the rewards of faith are so great, that neither ear hath heard, nor heart can conceive, so must the plagues for unbelief answer the greatness of those. The reward of Adam's obedience appears not to be any other than a continuance in that happy state in paradise wherein he was created; wherein it is like he might after some trial of his obedience have been confirmed by the grace of God, as the angels are in their glorious estate in heaven. As his reward seems not altogether to be the same which is promised in the gospel, *viz.*, a being with Christ for ever to behold his glory; so the punishment threatened upon his transgression of the command is not the same with the punishment threatened in the gospel; and though it was more than a temporal death, or a separation of soul and body, which seems to be too light a punishment for an offence against the infinite majesty of God, and would not have answered the enormity of the crime (could the pain of a few hour's satisfy God for a sin, whose guilt and filth would be perpetual without pardon and sanctification?); yet it was not so bitter a death as is threatened upon the breach of the new covenant; for all punishment follows the measure of the ingratitude and greatness of the obligation, which was not the same in his sin as it is in ours; and therefore it is expressed by the addition of death unto death: 2 Cor. ii. 16, 'The savour of death unto death;' a death with more pangs superadded by the gospel to the death inflicted upon Adam by the law. As those that have believed in the name of the Son of God, and walked according to that faith, shall be eternally freed from all the curses of the moral law, and the dreadful threatenings sprinkled in the gospel; so those that shall die in their unbelief, shall for ever lie under the curses of the one, and the executed threatenings of the other. We find that as the promises in the Old Testament were not so spiritual and clear, respecting for the most part the land of Canaan, and temporal goods; so the threatenings are not so sharp, respecting for the most part temporal losses and outward judgments. As the joys of heaven were, under that dispensation, veiled under temporal promises, so the terrors of hell were veiled under temporal

curses. But in the gospel there are clearer promises of an eternal glory, and answerable to them, there are more dismal threatenings of an eternal loss. There is 'utter darkness' to answer an 'inheritance in light'; a never-dying worm to answer to everlasting joys; rivers of brimstone to answer to rivers of pleasures; an eternal separation from God, and the everlasting society of devils, to answer to an eternal communion with God and the blessed angels.

(4.) It will be suited to the knowledge or means of knowledge men had. The heathens will have a single condemnation, for not improving the light of nature; the Jews a double, for neglecting that light, and the instructions of the law. A treble condemnation remains for them that neglect both these, and the discoveries of grace more glorious and plain, than nature or law with a richer manifestation ever could be. The damnation of the first will be a pleasure to the miseries of the last, who will have more than an ordinary damnation. To have Christ and his blood preached to men, engenders more knowledge than the instructions of the heavens, and the creatures of the earth, with a conscience guided by a dimmer light. Tyre and Sidon shall have a lighter sentence than Chorazin and Bethsaida; they might have reformed upon less means, when those were not converted by greater, Mat. xi. 21-24. Tyre, a place of knowledge, famous for excellent arts, from whence a greater part of the Grecian learning was derived; a place of notorious idolatry, whence the Jews had sometime drawn the contagion; a place of great pride and luxury, threatened with grievous plagues by God, Ezek. xxvi.; yet this place, though sinning against much natural knowledge, shall fare better than the cities of Judea. Sodom, the stain of mankind, a place soaked in the dregs of villany, who sinned against an eminent deliverance bestowed upon them for the sake of Lot, and also against many admonitions from that person, who could not but testify the vexation of his righteous soul for their wickedness, that would have committed wickedness with the angels, and that when they were under the judicial hand of God striking them with blindness, guilty of those abominations which likely not a man in Capernaum was guilty of; yet this hell upon earth shall have a milder hell at the day of judgment than unbelieving Capernaum, a place that had often given entertainment to Christ in the days of his flesh, blasphemed not his doctrine when they heard it, nor ascribed his miracles to the devil when they saw them, as the pharisees did; yet those, for want of faith, shall be more inexcusable than the other; the one offended against the light of nature, the other against the light of grace, published by the mouth of the only Son of God. The means of grace men have had, will sharpen the sting of conscience to pierce more deep: 'The word shall judge men at the last day,' John xii. 48. The doctrine of grace, and the instructions of the gospel, struck in upon their minds, shall rise up in their consciences, as so many witnesses against them. And though suppressed here by unrighteousness,\* shall, like fire buried in a heap of ashes, sparkle again, and make their consciences as a fiery oven, as the expression is, Ps. xxi. 9, and engender a more enflamed hell within them, than all other miseries can without them. Every principle of truth, whether approved of or no, shall be as the sting of a scorpion; all which meeting together, shall render them more self-tormented creatures than the worst of the Tyrians, or the most villanous rake-hell in Sodom, though there were no outward pain or misery to afflict them.

Well, then, it is a sore punishment: 'Then will he speak to men in his wrath.' When? When they 'take counsel against the Lord and his anointed, and cast away his cords from them,' Ps. ii. 5, he will 'swallow them up in

\* Reynolds on Hosea, Sermon vii. p. 158.

his wrath,' Ps. xxi. 9. The curses of the law brake men in pieces, but the rejected Son of God in the gospel, like a stone from an high ascent, grinds them to powder, Mat. xxi. 44. So that it had been happy for them if grace had never appeared to them, since they have gained nothing by it but a more stinging damnation.

4. Irreversible wrath ; it abides, permanent, not transient, not a volatile but a fixed wrath. As it is fire for severity, so it is unquenchable for duration, Mark ix. 43, 45. There is no more recovery from it than there is for a man shut up in a red-hot oven. If it be reversible, it is only so by God ; all the creatures in heaven and earth, in a joint combination, cannot blow away the fire that is not blown by man, as the expression is, Job xx. 26. God hath declared himself to admit of no remission without blood, Heb. ix. 22, what hopes, then, unless another redeemer can be provided to match Christ in as valuable a satisfaction, by the price of his blood ? This hath already been accepted as sufficient by the Father, seconded by the Holy Ghost in his solicitations, as an advocate to men to accept it. But suppose it were possible to offer an infinite ransom to God for the recovery of our souls. How is God obliged to accept that, since that which he hath appointed and accepted hath been refused ? There was no obligation upon him to appoint and accept the first, it was purely an act of grace ; there can be as little or less upon him to accept a second. He might have exacted the sentence of the law, that the soul that sins shall die, and never have granted any to stand in the room of the sinner ; and so he may still, if we consent not to what he hath approved. The sufferings of men for transgressions must be as bitter as the sufferings of Christ ; the law requires it ; but they must be more durable than his, in regard of our impotency for satisfaction. This impotency being eternal, the suffering must be of the same duration ; and though Christ suffered for the transgressions against the first covenant, and the temporary transgressions against the new, yet he suffered not for final unbelief and impenitency. 'After death the judgment,' Heb. ix. 27. The embracing the sacrifice of Christ is limited only to this life ; no offers are made after death. 'The axe is laid to the root of the tree,' in the time of the gospel, Mat. iii. 10. Patience under the law suffered the tree to stand, justice under the gospel brings the axe to the root, and what is not fit for the building is reserved for the fire. A tree cut off from the stock cannot be fastened on again to grow ; and it is not a wayfaring, but a 'dwelling with everlasting burning,' that every unbeliever is adjudged unto, Isa. xxxiii. 14. But suppose God should give a respite, and restore a man to life, and to hear the preaching of the gospel, what assurance is there that men would comply with the truths of God, if they had the habits of their old sins as strong in them as before ? Is it not too frequent to break solemn vows, as easily as Samson snapped in pieces the cords that bound him ; and that while they have been sensible of the gnawings of conscience ? If men 'believe not Moses and the prophets,' nay, a greater than Moses and the prophets, they would not believe the report of one licensed to come from the place of torments ; and as little believe, or quickly forget, their own feeling.

*Use.* First of information.

1. May we not see and admire the patience and goodness of God towards us ? Doth the wrath of God abide upon every unbeliever ; doth he lie under the iron mace of the law, ready to be crushed every moment, if God speaks the word ; hath a sword, edged with the bitterest curses, hung over our heads by the brittle thread of a frail life ? What if God had let the iron mace fall upon us and broken the thread, and made us possess the wrath that we had merited, not only by nature but by our infidelity ? This



patience would not have waited on us one moment had not that Christ we despised interposed himself for our reprieve, and presented the merit of his blood to stop the flood of divine fury. How have we been beholding to that God, whose grace we have abused, in bearing with us; and to Christ, whose bowels we have spurned, in soliciting for us while we were kicking at him? None of us but have been mightily beheld to God for his patience, and some no question for a pardon. How hath riches of goodness and forbearance waited upon us without any regret, to lead us to repentance, while we have stood it out in rebellion, Rom. ii. 4. He did not reckon with us for our debts, and by his long-suffering stopped the vengeance that longed to seize us. Had not our natural corruption rendered us fit to be clapped up in his eternal prison, when we were in our cradles, and our perversity exposed us to a greater punishment, when we have stood out in the maintaining of our forts against him? His threatenings continually pointed at us, yet are not put in execution upon us. It is not that we were not fuel fit enough for his wrath, it is not that he was ignorant of our crimes; for none but he, no, not our own consciences, knows what scores of talents we were indebted, and what demerit there was in every act of sin. Has he not arrested some who were less in his debt, put others' bonds in suit, and let ours lie by? Had he snatched away any present believer in his former state of infidelity, his condition had been eternally deplorable. Blessed be God for unwearied patience, that hath hitherto reprieved us; and blessed be God for overpowering grace, that hath secured any of us from that wrath which is due to infidelity!

2. May we not take notice of the extreme folly and madness of those that remain in a state of unbelief? It is folly in the judgment of our Saviour, for he couples 'fools, and slow of heart to believe,' in the rebuke he gives his disciples, who had already some principles of faith in them, though buried under the clods of some prejudicate opinions, Luke xxiv. 25. So folly and disobedience, or unbelief (as the word is sometimes rendered), are put together: Tit. iii. 3, 'Foolish and disobedient.' To follow any sin, upon which misery is entailed, is a senseless course; but to lie in this, which stakes us down to that misery, is as great a madness as it is a sin. As the loss of the soul is the most dreadful loss, so the neglect of the soul is the most unreasonable neglect. Men that will deliberate, and toss things of a worldly concern in their heads, will not employ time in the consideration of the things of another world; nay, will not so much as inquire into the corruptions of nature, or provisions of divine grace, and have their excuses ready framed to put back any invitation to the true path of their own happiness, as in Luke xiv. 18; as if they had entered a league, offensive and defensive, with the pleasures, profits, and lusts of the world against God.

(1.) Is this because any question the truth of the Christian religion, and think the maxims of it to be mere fables? which perhaps may be in the secret of many hearts, though the way lies not plain for an outward expression. Are you sure it is not of a divine stamp? Suppose it were not, is it any prejudice to your happiness? You are exhorted by it to live virtuously. This is that which philosophers by the light of reason have prized and practised. No man dishonours God by receiving a doctrine, so far as it obligeth to such a carriage; is there anything in the whole scheme which makes to the dishonour of the deity? Doth a Trinity seem too mysterious? Some heathens did not think it incredible, since something of that nature hath been published by them, derived from those that had, mediately or immediately, conversed with the Scripture. Do we understand the nature of angels; yea, the nature of our own souls, and what the distinction of the

faculties are ? and shall we presume to deny a doctrine linked with so many others highly agreeable to the reasons of men, because it is above our reach, as the nature of God is infinitely more than the nature of angels ? Or doth the death of the Son of God seem unreasonable ? Is there anything in it disparaging the honour of God ? Is not his faithfulness to his law, his love to his creature, the purity of his nature, and hatred of sin, mightily manifested hereby ? Is it repugnant to reason that a divine person may voluntarily assume a body, be in a low condition for a time, in that nature which he assumed, that he may be happy in that nature for ever after ? Or is it a thing altogether unknown among men, for one to answer for the faults of another, by an excess of friendship ? But if those things which you will not believe prove to be true at last, that the Son of God hath suffered by God's appointment for the expiation of sin ; that those that believe in him, and resign up themselves to his government, shall receive the benefits of it, and none else ; what a madness will you then think yourselves guilty of ! There is nothing in the whole frame of the Christian religion can make against your real happiness, supposing it were not true. But if it be true, the opinionative or practical slighting of it exposeth you to a most unexpressible misery. If the things revealed prove true, when it is too late to gather the blessed fruit of them, will a bottomless lake, a perpetual stinging conscience, be balanced by a few transitory pleasures on earth ? Is it not an unreasonable folly to deny a doctrine you cannot demonstrate to be false, and be in danger to feel a misery, that you cannot demonstrate but it may come upon you, rather than comply with those doctrines which cannot do you any prejudice in the great concerns of your souls, supposing they were not true ? It is a folly utterly to deny them till you can demonstrate there is no such thing as a Redeemer, that the Scripture is not the word of God, that no such condition as faith is required of men. But let me ask the question, Is there nothing that troubles your consciences sometimes ? Have you not some fears in your retirements ? (if such men have any retired inspection into themselves) do you believe those fears springing up in your consciences to have any ground or no ? If you think them groundless, why do you trouble yourselves with them without a cause ? Why can you not expel them ? If there be any just cause for them, and that they haunt you whether you will or no, why do you not look after a remedy ? Would you not yourselves account that man mad, who, lying under a troublesome distemper, would inquire after no medicine ?

(2.) Or is the reason of this neglect because you expect happiness from something else ? No man in his right wits can build his felicity upon any earthly foundation ; scarce any sort of rationalists ever did ; in God was felicity placed by them. It is as great a folly to expect happiness from anything else, as to expect water from dry ashes, or a heap of gold from a burden of straw. And can any more rational method be framed to bring us to God, than what Christianity affords us ? But since we acknowledge the truth of the Christian religion, and the authority of the Scripture, can we propose any good to ourselves by neglecting the grace of God offered in it ? Do you think Christ a Sun of righteousness ? Do you acknowledge that he is the purchaser of blessedness, and God the fountain of it ? Why, then, do any foolishly neglect the rejoicing in, and walking by that light, and drinking of those streams ? Would you not laugh at that man that would turn his back upon the sun, to warm himself by a candle, as though there were more heat to be expected from that than from the other ? Would you not stand astonished at one that should thrust away a rich wine from him, to

drink of a miry puddle? What we blame in others, we may charge ourselves with in spiritual things. To keep a distance from the fountain of life, is the way to continue in a perpetual death. How can we expect to benefit ourselves by anything, when we despise or neglect the only fountain wherein God hath placed salvation? What good can be proposed to ourselves by resting upon anything else, but the strengthening our fetters, gratifying our grand enemies, and binding over our souls to a perpetuity of wrath? Mercy will be displeased, God more provoked, and reigning sins strengthened to bring damnation.

(3.) Is it not a folly to neglect a necessary happiness which you may have? It is not only offered, but pressed; God importunes you, your consciences goad you on. It comes near to you, the divine mercy of the gospel encompasseth you round. Can there be a greater folly than to starve when we may have bread? to be willing to be shipwrecked in our bottom, rather than to pass into another vessel for a certain security? What do you think of Adam? Do you think him wise for preferring an apple before the delights of paradise? Let us put ourselves in the same rank, if we prefer a feather before a pearl, and endless misery before an happy immortality. No folly like that, to affect to be damned rather than be saved, when salvation may be procured, in some respect, upon easier terms for us than ever damnation can. Who can deserve a better character than that of a fool and madman, whose soul is not awakened to mind eternity by the sword of justice that glitters in his eye; but rather dares the sharp edge to do its worst, and this upon vile terms, to gratify some swinish affections? If our natural enmity to God, as governor of the world, hinders us from complying with his kindness, yet self-preservation should make us fear and endeavour to avoid his wrath; and no folly like that, to prefer our enmity to another before the security of ourselves. It is an unreasonable folly, and insensibleness, not to come up fully to the terms of that religion we expect salvation only by.

3. A believer must be infallibly happy, if an unbeliever be infallibly miserable. The same word that assures the deplorable state of the one, assures the blessed estate of the other. The remission which was conditional in the declaration, is upon faith made absolute, because the condition is performed; what was proffered to all upon the condition of believing, If you believe, you shall have eternal life, is made absolute upon believing, You believe, therefore you have eternal life. If the faith of believers under the Old Testament were saving in that obscurity, our faith under a clearer light, and more certain manifestation, must be much more saving. Salvation is as much the issue of faith by God's order, as damnation is the issue of unbelief; it is called, therefore, a 'believing to the saving of the soul,' Heb. x. 39. It takes hold of the mercy-seat, and hath both the veracity of God, and the pleas of Christ, to defend it, and keep its hands from being knocked off.

(1.) Is not that man happy who hath an union with Christ; who is transplanted from Adam, the condemned head by law, into Christ, the justified head both by law and grace? Shall a member of Christ perish any more than the head? or can the head be happy without the members? Was his natural body only concerned in that prophecy, that not a bone of him shall be broken? or shall his mystical body fare worse than that? Can hell ever be the dwelling-place of that which is the habitation of Christ? Eph. iii. 17. Shall wrath ever pierce into the intimate recesses where Christ resides? Shall the living waters which flow out of the belly, John vii. 38. (which is nothing but the Spirit received by believing), stream anywhere but to the ocean of blessedness? The fatness sucked from the olive-tree, Rom.

xi. 17, is not to render any combustible matter for wrath, but a preparation for glory. Oneness with Christ renders a believer in a manner as safe as Christ's righteousness doth himself; how can a believer miss of happiness, since by his union with Christ he is united to God, who is infinite blessedness in his nature, and the only felicity of his creature?

(2.) Is not he infallibly happy, who hath everything removed that may render him eternally miserable? Justice is stopped from any inundation upon such a person, since he answers the terms wherewith justice was satisfied. It would not longer retain the name of righteousness, if it acted so high a piece of unrighteousness as to deny its own agreement, and refuse the plea of that satisfaction it hath already accepted, and demand the debt Christ hath already paid. The tribunal of justice is to faith changed into a throne of grace, where justice and mercy sit both together, justifying and embracing a believer, Rom. iii. 26, for such Christ hath fixed a rainbow about the throne of God (as was elsewhere observed), an emblem of peace, Rev. iv. 3, to shew his mindfulness of the covenant when he comes to judge upon his throne. That whereby any son of Adam is condemned, is silent in regard of a believer. The law can no more plead its curses, against the blood of the Redeemer. Honey comes out of the belly of that lion instead of its fiery terrors, since Christ pronounced a freedom from guilt; for justification is at the instant of a sincere believing: John iii. 18, 'He that believes on him is not condemned.' *Is not*, in the present tense. He is not in a state of condemnation, therefore in a state of justification. Sin also (which is the corner-stone and foundation of hell) hath received a deadly wound, and is every day more feebly gasping; for believers 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' and 'therefore there is no condemnation to them,' Rom. viii. 1. The venom of his nature is cured, as well as the guilt contracted by sin; the biting of the old serpent infected the blood of mankind with a serpentine venom, so that every man may in some sort be said to be the seed of the serpent; but by faith the guilt is not only taken away, whereby we become obnoxious to God, but the venom of our nature, which corrupted the mass of blood.

(3.) Is not he infallibly happy, whose person and services are accepted by God? Eph. i. 6. If faith in Christ makes any an amiable object of God's love, it must certainly make him a prepared subject for God's glory. How can God make a person eternally miserable, with whom he is well pleased? As justice cannot but thunder against an obstinate rebel, so mercy cannot but embrace a penitent and believing supplicant, who brings a righteousness before God, that pleaseth him infinitely more than the whole world. He that stands unblameable before God, by the righteousness of his Son, cannot be eternally miserable by his own sin. What tender father can condemn his own child? Such a relation doth faith make between God and the soul, by a double title, both of regeneration and adoption, John i. 12. Sonship is upon receiving of Christ, 'He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about,' Ps. xxxii. 10. Mercy twines about every part of him.

(4.) Is not he infallibly happy, whom Christ, who is the Judge of the world, nether can nor will condemn? As he is not able, in regard to the unalterable method of God, to save an unbeliever, so he is not able, in regard of the same method, to condemn a believing person. The order of God is settled, and this is the rule of his proceeding; when he comes to judge, flaming vengeance is to be rendered to those 'that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thes. i. 8, neither of which characters a believer falls under. He is by covenant to justify men by the knowledge of himself, Isa. liii. 11, or by faith in himself; will Christ violate the cove-

nant of redemption so solemnly made? Would he proceed so far as to confirm it on his part by his death, to break it by his life? walk according to the articles of it when he was in the flesh, and defeat it when he was upon the throne? He cannot but be as willing to bestow mercy upon earth, now he is in heaven, as he was when he was upon the earth; and his language was then, 'Be it unto you according to your faith;' not only let that disease be removed, or that mercy granted, but intimating by that general grant the established order of his Father, that faith should not be denied the highest blessings that can be given.

(5.) Is not he infallibly happy whom God cannot condemn, neither in regard of his truth, nor in regard of the honour of Christ? Not in regard of his truth, since all the promises in the book of God belong to believers, because they are 'yea and amen' in Christ their head. God hath spoke it, and will never repent of what hath passed from his lips: Ps. ii. 12, 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,' *i. e.* in his Son; and God wants no more a faithfulness to make good his word, than he wanted mercy to pass his word. His truth, which was before on the side of justice, is now second to his grace, and stands as firm to make good the evangelical promise to him that performs the condition, as it is engaged to make good the legal and evangelical threatenings upon them that want it. He puts the interest of men in the hands of Christ, 'that the promise might be sure to all the seed,' Rom. iv. 16. Nor in regard of the honour of Christ: if God cannot save an unbeliever, who crosses the ends of Christ's death, without disparaging the undertaking of his Son, he cannot, according to his eternal order, destroy a believer, who answers the ends of it, without the same reflection. It would not be a just dealing with him in the rights of his purchase, to refuse the benefit of it to those that answer the conditions of enjoying it, and place the sheep that hear his voice in the same calamity with the dogs that snarl at him. Shall the blood of his Son be shed for the 'gathering together the sons of God,' John xi. 52, and not sprinkled on them? God is more in love with the person of his Son, and more pleased with the blood of his Son, than to cast a dishonour upon the one or the other. The honour of God is as much concerned in saving every soul that bathes itself in the blood of the Redeemer, as in condemning every one that tramples upon it.

(6.) Is it possible that he should be miserable, who designs and endeavours to glorify God according to his own direction? How can we glorify God but by faith, since man by his fall had made himself unfit to glorify him any other way? This honours God more than Adam could, had he stood in innocency, who could never have returned God an higher honour of his perfections, than he could have gleaned and collected from the creature; whereas this owns him in his glorious manifestation in his Son, and returns him an acknowledgment of the more glorious expense of his grace, and fuller display of his excellency. He that trusts in Christ, is 'to the praise of the glory of God,' Eph. i. 12. Is it possible God should put that soul to the greatest misery, that endeavours to bring him the greatest glory? Faith kills the enmity in the heart towards God, and shall a God of infinite love, who inspired the believer with all the faith and love he hath, cherish enmity in his breast against one that lodgeth him in his dearest affections, and destroy his own production? Who can imagine that a God of infinite goodness should be behind-hand with his creature in affections?

Well then, the salvation of a believer stands firm; hell and wrath shall not touch those that are anointed with the blood of Christ, and sheltered in so inviolable a sanctuary. Adam might sooner have been condemned in his innocent estate, than a Christian in a believing state, since God hath, besides

a single word, laid upon himself great obligations by frequent repetitions of his promise by all the prophets, Acts x. 43, and besides hath confirmed it by the blood of his Son. Again, as the punishment of an unbelieving rebel is as unavoidable as the punishment of Christ, after he entered himself as an undertaker for us, so the salvation of a penitent believer is as certain as the acceptance of Christ, after he performed what as a surety he undertook for. He hath unlocked the gates of heaven, that were shut till the shedding of his blood. The angel's sword that guarded paradise, turns every way to let the believer in, as it turned every way before to keep a rebel out from the tree of life. The veil of the temple was rent in twain by the force of the cross, whereby there was a view of the holy of holies. A believer hath a prospect of heaven while he lives, and an entrance into it when he dies; it is 'through his name,' if we believe in him, that 'we receive remission of sins,' Acts x. 43; he that hath remission cannot lie under damnation.

Use 4, is of exhortation. Be sensible of it.

1. Be sensible of the misery. Let every unbeliever consider that he hath the character of a condemned person upon him, for without faith Christ speaks no more comfort than the thunders of the law, but more terror than all the curses of that can speak. The text speaks it plain: 'He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him;' *pœna damni*, in the first, *pœna sensus*, in the second; there is a God of life, a heaven a place of life, but he shall never see the face of God with comfort, or enjoy the satisfactions of heaven. The deprivation of the heavenly Canaan, when a man comes to understand it, must much more affect the soul, than the deprivation of the earthly Canaan affected Moses. How sad will it be to be hurled from a pinnacle of prosperity, to a dunghill of poverty in a moment! What do you think were the sentiments of Adam, when on the sudden he found himself fallen from a serene state into a sea of horrors? Such will be the thoughts of men, when they see themselves cast from heaven for want of faith, who before seemed to be in the suburbs of it by an external profession. Men are naturally now secure, and have rather a faith in their own hearts, than a faith in Christ, and cry Peace, in spite of God, who proclaims a curse: Deut. xxix. 19, 'Bless himself in his heart.' But with what rage will conscience at length lash and spring up a perpetual hell within them, that will condemn upon a deathbed, as God's viceroy, and God at last condemn as the supreme governor; that will ten thousand times more gnaw an unbeliever for his infidelity, than the worst heathen for all his other sins. The nearer a man is to happiness, the more afflicting is the loss of it, and the more tormenting when it is for a vile and an unlovely lust. How I am expelled from the presence of God, who lately had a door opened to it, by the blood of the Redeemer! Justice locked not the door of heaven upon me, till I turned my back upon it, and pulled it after me. That which might have made me as happy as an angel, I refused wilfully, to make myself as miserable as a devil. This will be the sad lamentation of a man obstinate under the preaching of the gospel. How great will the misery be, when justice shall plead the dishonour of God, and mercy charge thee with the abuses of his grace! When all the attributes of God shall pursue him, whom a little before they waited to receive; when Christ, who would have been a stone of building, shall be a stone of bruising, and shall crush by his wrath those that would not be wooed by his mercy; when he shall appear in the majesty of a judge, he will cut the hearts of those that despised him in the quality of a Saviour. Those that have been only under nature's light, without the least twinkling of the gospel, will be, in comparison of such, in a state of innocency, and under a more easy damnation. As Christ shed

not his blood in vain, was not exalted in vain, pleads not in heaven in vain, so he is not entrusted with a power in vain; 'all power is given him in heaven and earth,' in pursuance of the gospel, upon which he founds the commission of the apostles, and assures them of his assistance in their work, Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, either for the happiness of the entertainers, or the misery of the neglecters; to break in pieces by his rod those that will not bow down to his sceptre: for in refusing ourselves the happiness of salvation, we refuse Christ the glory of his death and the honour of his authority. And consider, the more Christ is resisted, the deeper will the condemnation be. When we find Cain sinking under the load of the blood of an innocent person, murdered by him once, and see men whose hands have been imbrued in the blood of wicked wretches, to be in hell alive, when their consciences are awakened to a consideration of their guilt; what will it be then to be many a time, as by every act of infidelity, guilty of the blood of Christ? Nothing but woe can remain for that man, who hath the blood of Christ, so highly valued by God, pleading against him; it is greater than all the misery which can happen in this life. If we are sick, sickness is but a deprivation of health; if poor, the poverty is but the deprivation of wealth; but if unbelievers, we deprive ourselves of God, and of ourselves: the good we lose by it is a greater good than we can lose by any worldly misery. We offer the highest violence to ourselves, and reject the true felicity of our nature, by refusing an adherency to God as the chiefest good, and to Christ as the only way to the fruition of him. Faith only kept David's heart from fainting, Ps. xxvii. 13. Unbelief, then, can be no cordial for any in a dying hour; since by refusing a Saviour he makes himself utterly incapable of salvation.

2. Be sensible of the equity and justice of this misery. We can never be affected with any pronounced woes, unless we first judge God just; and truly the punishment is as deeply merited at the hands of God, as his kindness in his Son was undeserved by us. If justice might equitably punish men for breaking the laws of the Creator, it might much more punish them for slighting the overtures of an appeasable Creator, and the performances of an appeasing Redeemer; and what is more reasonable than to have that inflicted upon men, which was inflicted upon the Saviour they make so light of!

(1.) There is no want on Christ's part. There hath been by him satisfaction enough for the payment of our debts, and merit enough for our restoration to our happiness. He hath done all things necessary for the salvation of the world: he hath expiated sin, which plunged it into misery; he hath presented his death to God as a sacrifice of infinite value, sufficient for all the world, and by opening the throne of grace, hath given liberty to approach to God, and solicit him for the application of the benefit he hath purchased; he hath also purchased the Spirit, sent him into the world to renew his solicitations to men, who seriously calls them to the partaking of this salvation, and declares it to be a thing very agreeable to him, that men should come in to him. He came not intentionally to condemn any man: John iii. 13, 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;' to proclaim the riches of the grace of God for the salvation of men.\* But in regard of the event, indeed he is their judge, to which men provoke him by their obstinacy; whence it is said, John ix. 39, that he came 'to judge the world,' *i. e.* in regard of the event. As the intention of a physician in prescribing sovereign medicines for the mastering the disease is to heal the patient; but if the patient neglects those restoratives, and swallows poison in their stead, this

\* Tarnov. in loc. p. 311.

is not the physician's, but the patient's fault. The title of our Lord Jesus in his first coming was Saviour, not Judge; he presented men with that which might warrant them from condemnation; but if they will not rejoice in their happiness, they exclude themselves from the benefit; and by not embracing the ransom God hath provided, they expose themselves to pay that satisfaction in their persons which the law exacts. The satisfaction of Christ they cannot plead, because the conditions of it are not embraced; they must therefore pay what the law demands, which would else be insignificant, and the honour of God's justice would suffer in their safety. When, therefore, every offer of mercy shall accompany men to the tribunal of the judge, and this charge be heard from his mouth: \* I have redeemed you by my blood, and you have trod it under foot; I have invited you to faith and repentance, but you would rather wallow in the excrements of sin; I have called you by the motions of my Spirit, and you have proved rebellious; I have encouraged you by promises of great reward, but you made no account of them; wherein have I been wanting? With what face can any man now lay the fault upon God? As when a king proclaims pardon to a rebellious city, upon the condition that they yield up themselves to his son; as it is equity that those that surrender themselves should have the promised benefit, so it is just that those that wilfully resist so easy and reasonable a condition, should fall under the threatened penalty; they have no reason to charge their ruin upon any want of clemency in the king, since the proffer was made to all, but upon their own obstinacy, because they perish by their own folly.

(2.) No want of evidence and declaration of the salvation purchased. If there were not sufficient arguments to work upon men's understandings, nor persuasive motives to induce their wills to embrace it; if there were not a demonstration of an invincible necessity of their belief, their condemnation for infidelity would not appear to be just. But there is sufficient evidence; 'light is come into the world,' and hath exposed to the view of men the treasures of grace and glory, the most alluring motives to prevail upon their wills; but their affections carry them to error and darkness, upon which the Scripture lays the cause of men's condemnation, John iii. 19, and calls it a self-judgment: Acts xiii. 46, 'You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.' Ignorance sometimes excuseth,† either when the things we are ignorant of we are not bound to know, as what is the just magnitude of the sun; or when they are not sufficiently revealed, as who Melchisedec was; but when that which concerns our clear duty, and choicest happiness, is with a full evidence of truth set clearly before our eyes, is it not our own fault if we regard them not? Such an ignorance is affected and voluntary, and leaves a man in judgment without excuse; and is so far from diminishing the fault, that it rather aggravates it. Why are any ignorant, when the doctrines of the gospel have been represented to them, and it was their undeniable duty to know and receive them? If the sun shines upon the world, and discovers the treasures of the creation; if men will shut their eyes, and will not behold them, is that the fault of the sun, or of the men?

(3.) It is a voluntary and wilful refusal, and therefore a consent to the punishment. Unbelievers are excluded from heaven, and locked up in misery by their own consent; not formal and explicit, but virtual and implicit. They voluntarily neglect the performance of those conditions upon which a right to heaven is founded, and willingly continue in that state which subjects them to eternal misery. Whosoever refuseth the conditions, refuseth by that act the privileges which depend upon those conditions. He that will

\* Pont. Meditat. part i. medit. 14. p. 94.

† Daillé sur Jean iii. serm. x. p. 39, &c.



not pay a pepper-corn per annum for an estate of a considerable value, when it is all the rent demanded, wilfully deprives himself of the right of tenancy. He that will not sue out the pardon of his crimes upon easy conditions enjoined him, deprives himself of the benefit of the prince's proclamation, and justly perisheth, because, as the conditions are the fruits of the greatest mercy in the prince, so the refusal is a demonstration of the greatest hatred in the rebel. Those that choose to gratify Satan in his triumphs over them, rather than please Christ who hath bled for them, perish by their own wilfulness. The Scripture chargeth it upon this score: Christ would gather men, but 'they will not,' Mat. xxiii. 37, 38; God doth not destroy Israel, but Israel 'destroys himself,' Hos. xiii. 9. The Holy Ghost, in the close of the canon of the Scripture, lays it there: Rev. xxii. 17, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely.' If any man will, he may have it; if he hath it not, it is because he doth not will it; and he that doth not will it, doth consequently will the waters of death; and what is more reasonable, than that those who will not accept of a tendered salvation should not enjoy it? The whole design of Scripture is to publish God's willingness to impart the fruits of the death of Christ, and upon the close the Holy Ghost puts the question, whether they will partake of them or no. As much as to say, God hath discharged himself; let men look to it, they will be found at last the wilful cause of their own ruin.

*Obj.* But we have no strength of our own to will; God only gives faith.

*Ans.* God may urge us to believe; we are bound to be obedient to whatsoever is his declared will, as a rule for our obedience. He gave Adam strength to believe whatsoever he revealed; he is no more bound to repair that strength (but where he pleases) than he was bound to send Christ to redeem, after man by his revolt had plunged himself in misery. He may require of man the honour due to him, and is bound to bestow no more upon man than man can challenge as his due. It is true, when God would create a rational creature, the holiness of his nature doth oblige him to create him holy; but his holiness doth not oblige him to repair man, who hath forfeited all to justice, and had his blessings seized into the hands of his offended Lord. God is not therefore bound to turn every man's, or any man's will. Yet the refusal of God's gracious tenders is in every unbeliever wilful, because he makes not use of that strength which was left in him, after the fall, by the mediation of Christ. There is indeed an utter impotency in man as fallen; you find no footstep of one good thought, one good inclination, in Adam after his fall; he had no mind to approach to God to implore his mercy. Instead of confessing his sin, he palliates it, Gen. iii. 9-12. Conscience forceth him to acknowledge it; not to charge himself humbly, but to discharge himself upon God; he mentions not the name of God with any respect in all that discourse. Thus man considered in Adam, purely as fallen, hath not one thought morally good; so that the apostle might well say, that 'we are insufficient of ourselves to think a good thought,' 2 Cor. iii. 5. But there is some restored power by the interposition of Christ, as he is 'the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world,' John i. 9; whereby he may have some thoughts and inclinations materially good, if he will follow the conduct of that common light; he hath a faculty to think of what God reveals; he hath sometimes some kind of velleities, but he doth not improve and pursue them. He puts by those things when they are represented to him by the Spirit of God; he cannot endure to have his thoughts dwell upon them, and is unwilling to direct his affections and inclinations to a divine object. The corrupt habits in his will wholly sway him another way. If a man were willing, and God unwilling; if he did

seriously seek God, and call upon him (as he might direct his cries to God, as well as to creatures), and God had said, he would give him no share in Christ, then man had reason to complain. But it may be truly said, that no man at the day of judgment can, with a full witness of conscience, say, Lord, I have sought thee to the utmost of that power thou didst vouchsafe to me after the fall. I would have believed in Christ; I prayed for faith with strong cries and tears; many a time I went to ordinances with a desire and hopes to have it bestowed upon me; I have waited at thy gates for the moving of the Spirit upon the waters of my soul; I have grieved that I have not been seized by him, and thou wouldst not bestow faith upon me: can we think any man can say so at the last day? Without question, no unbeliever can have that plea; his own conscience will fall in with the judge, and charge his unbelief upon a *would not*.

(4.) This voluntary refusal is out of affection to some unworthy lust. And this reason clears the equity of God's justice in their punishment. If Tories and robbers will not accept of a pardon, because they would live idly by their rapine, and pilfering their neighbours, rather than content themselves with some honest employment, they increase by such a carriage the equity of that justice which shall be armed against them. This is the case, John iii. 19, 'men love darkness;' they will not believe, because they will not be hindered from breaking the divine law without any regret. No question but many would receive the gospel for the benefit of remission which it offers, but not for the mortification of the old man with its lusts, which it enjoins. A true believer rejoiceth in the benefit of pardon by the gospel, and tastes the sweetness of that doctrine, but embraceth it as well for the renewing grace of it, for the unloosing his chains, changing his spiritual death into a spiritual life, and an heart imprinted by sin into an heart engraven with a new law; for he embraceth Christ for the main ends of his death, which were a restoration of the holiness as well as the happiness of nature; to 'purify a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works,' as well as to 'redeem them from all iniquity,' Titus ii. 14. The unbeliever is quite contrary, and neglects a Saviour because he would retain his sin; he would be willing to have Christ for a pardon, but without a yoke. But doth not such a frame put an end to all disputes against the equity of God's justice? Is it just that he that will not have a restoration of God's image should have a restoration to the felicity of paradise, to live for ever with the original? Or that he should be exempted from the misery due to his sin, who would retain his violent inclinations against the honour of God, and practically declare he would rather lose all the fruits of the blood of God than the pleasures of sin? And will not the consciences of many men charge them with this at the last day, and force them to say, Lord, I had some apprehensions of the truth of thy word, and the necessity of Christ, yet I was loath to forsake a beloved Delilah for them. I was willing to believe in him for salvation, but not to conform to him in obedience; fleshly and spiritual lusts engrossed my will, which should have been inclined to thee.

(5.) The dignity and peculiar design of the person proposed clears the justice of the punishment. The Son of God, and his design peculiar for man. If a prince should take a great journey to deliver a galley-slave from his fetters, and he refuse acceptance, would not all men judge him worthy of the chains he loves? Or if a king should go a thousand miles in much hardship to court a nasty beggar, and receive a refusal, would not all men count her worthy of perpetual rags and sordidness? The case is the same here. The design of Christ was peculiar for man: devils are excluded. A reward was promised him: pardon and justification was promised as a re-

ward to him, which he, being innocent in his own person, was not capable of, and therefore was peculiarly intended as a gift to man.

Let every man, then, in an unbelieving state, be sensible of the equity of this misery he exposeth himself unto. Be sensible that Christ hath not been wanting; that there is sufficient revelation of the will and kindness of God, that your refusal of him is voluntary and wilful, and with the greatest indignity, undervaluing him by low and base affections, and such a person who is of infinite dignity, and intended his kindness peculiar for man; and therefore he that will wilfully refuse so rich a sacrifice of God's provision for the satisfaction of his own justice, cannot but acknowledge it reasonable to be made a sacrifice himself to that justice he hath offended. An eternal misery is merited by him who rejects a God of infinite goodness, a Christ of infinite value, and an heaven of infinite duration.

3. Let your sense of unbelief rise up to a detestation of it, and a labouring after faith. Why should God be kept out of the exercise of his sovereignty, and Christ hindered from the rights of his purchase? Why should not the Redeemer have the things that belong to him, since he hath 'bought us with a price'? 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Put not off the seasons of grace. Let us not harden our hearts against the offers of mercy, lest we come short of the promise, as they did to whom the gospel was preached in types, because they mixed not the word with faith; they looked upon the typical part, and looked not beyond it to the thing signified, Heb. iv. 1, 2. If they entered not into rest because they believed not a gospel in types, how shall we be admitted into rest, if we believe not a gospel in substance, stripped of the obscuring shadows? As there was no remission unless Christ had shed his blood, so there is no participation of that blood without applying it by faith. It is to this the Spirit presseth us: it is a pity to resist so comfortable a solicitor. Can we behold a Saviour bleeding upon the cross for our security, and not give him the small honour of the faith he requires? Christ as crucified doth not save us, but Christ as believed on. Though the fire hath a warming property, yet we must approach to it if we will partake of its heat. Though a medicine hath an healing virtue, yet it is not healing as it is in the glass, but as received in the stomach. We partake not of Adam's contagion but by natural generation; we partake not of Christ's holiness but by spiritual regeneration, the form whereof is faith. Without faith we continue under the power of Satan. There are but two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of Christ, Col. i. 13. Unbelief subjects us to the one, and faith estates us in the other. If faith quencheth the fiery darts of Satan, Eph. vi. 16, unbelief exposeth us as a mark to every arrow. The longer any man continues in unbelief, the more unfit will he be for faith. The natural hardness will grow into judicial, and the stone we bring with us into the world more rocky, more insensible of the strokes of the law, or the balsam of the gospel. As walking unworthy of the light of nature provokes God to give men up to a sensual brutishness, Rom. i. 21, so opposing the light of the gospel provokes God to give men up to a spiritual devilishness. The more spiritual the discovery of grace, the more spiritual are the judgments upon neglect. No duties are acceptable without faith. It is as impossible to please God by the humblest devotions without faith, as it is to get to heaven by the most soaring righteousness without Christ. God smiles upon nothing unless offered to him in the name of his Son, Col. iii. 17; and who can offer anything in his name that hath not faith in his blood? Without Christ we can do nothing, John xv. 5; without union to him, which is only caused by faith, whole heaps of sacrifices are cyphers, and amount to just nothing. God did not enjoin

Adam prayer, confession of sin, and sacrifices at the first meeting after the fall, till he had uttered the promise of a Mediator as the object of faith, whence all those other duties were to flow, which were natural to him in a state of innocence, or instituted with a particular respect to the Mediator, and present state of Adam. Faith was to be the ground of his obedience; for, having by his apostasy rendered himself unable to obey any, he must first believe, that he might have a new strength, and a new principle of obedience to other commands; which evidenceth the vanity of those men that depend upon a self-righteousness, and a formal set of duties, without regarding the Mediator of God's appointing. No duty acceptable without faith. Faith rendered Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's, and made it accepted, while unbelief rendered the other fruitless. Miseries attend this state in this life, which prepare for the miseries of a future. Let us, therefore, embrace the grace of the golden sceptre, lest we be crushed by the weight of the iron rod, and kiss the Son, lest we feel his wrath. 'He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'