

must be for the same end for which they were both spoken and acted by him, which was to bring us to a near converse with God: Therefore when the Spirit renews in our minds a gospel truth, let us turn it into a present plea, and be God's remembrancers of his own promises, as the Spirit is our remembrancer of divine truths. We need not doubt some rich fruit of the application at such a season; since without question the impressions the Spirit stamps upon us are as much according to God's will, Rom. viii. 27, as the intercessions he makes for us. Therefore when any holy thought doth advance itself in our souls, the most grateful reception we can bestow upon it will be to suffer our hearts to be immediately fired by it, and imitate, with a glowing devotion, the royal prophet in that form he hath drawn up to our hands: 'O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy servant, and prepare my heart unto thee,' 1 Chron. xxix. 18. This will be an encouragement to God to send more such guests into our hearts; and by an affectionate entertainment of them, we shall gain both a habit of thinking well, and a stock too.

A DISCOURSE OF THE CHURCH'S STABILITY.

And of Sion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her.—Ps. LXXXVII. 5.

THE author of this psalm, and the time when it was penned, are uncertain. Some think it was composed after the return of the Jews from Babylon, upon the erection of the second temple, and designed to be sung in their constant public assemblies; others think it was composed by David when he brought the ark to Sion as the repository for it, till the building of the temple, wherein it might honourably rest. It seems, whoever was the author, to be ecstasical. The penman breaks out into a holy rapture and admiration of the firmness and stability of the church. It is also prophetic of the Christian church, of the glory of it, the largeness of its bounds, and perpetual duration. The Jews ridiculously interpret it of literal Jerusalem, in regard of the excellency of its climate, the goodness of the air, being seated in the middle or navel of the earth, and the seat and spring of all the wise men, accounting all fools that were to be found in other parts. It is true, others were not wise with a wisdom to salvation; they were not instructed in the high mysteries of religion by God as those people were; but was there not learning among the Greeks, and wisdom among the Chaldeans, and a ripeness in mechanic arts among the Tyrians, which lived in the same climate with the Jews? It can by no means be understood of the material Jerusalem and Sion, that was ruined by the Babylonians, and though re-edified, yet afterwards subverted by the Romans, and the remainders of it at this day become a stable for Mahomet; and the bringing in those nations mentioned, ver. 4, overthrows any such interpretation, which never were enrolled in the registers of Sion, nor became votaries to the true religion while the walls of that place were standing in their glory. Sion was the place whence the law was to come, Micah iv. 2, a law of another nature than that which was uttered with thunders from mount Sinai. Sion was the place where the throne of Christ was to be settled,

where he was to be crowned king, Ps. ii. 6, and where he was to manage the sceptre, and 'rule in the midst of his enemies,' Ps. cx. 2; and therefore it is here celebrated as the figure of the Christian church, of that city which Abraham expected, 'whose builder and maker is God, Heb. xi. 10; and the Christian church is particularly called by this name of mount Sion, Heb. xii. 21, and believers are called the sons of Sion, Joel ii. 23. The psalmist speaks,

1. Of the great love the Lord bears to Sion, ver. 2.
2. Of the glory of the promises made to her, ver. 3.
3. Of the confluence of new inhabitants to her, ver. 4.
4. Of the duration and establishment of her, ver. 5.

Ver. 1. *His foundation.* The foundation of God, *i. e.* that which God hath founded, that Jerusalem which is of God's building, is seated in the holy mountain. The city was built before Jehovah conquered Canaan; but God is said to be the founder of it in regard of that peculiar glory to which it was designed, to be the rest of his ark, the place of his worship, the throne of the types of the Messiah, the seat whence the evangelic law was to be published to all nations, and the Messiah revealed as the redeemer and ruler of the world.

In the holy mountains. Jerusalem was seated upon high mountains. The palace of the kings was built upon Sion, and the temple, the house of the Most High, was built upon Moriah, and encompassed with mountains round about, Ps. cxxv. 2, an emblem of the strength and stability of the church. 'Holy mountains;' not that there was any inherent holiness in them more than in the other mountains of the earth,* or that they were naturally more beautiful and stately than other mountains, but because they were separated for the worship and service of God, and had been ennobled by the performance of a worship there before the building of the temple. It was upon Moriah that Isaac was designed for a sacrifice, and the most signal act of obedience performed to God by the father of the faithful. It was there also that David appeased the wrath of God by sacrifice, after it had issued out upon the people in a plague, for the numbering of them; and the very name *Moriah* hath something sacred in it, signifying either *God teaching* or *God manifested*, which name might be given it by God with respect to the manifestation of Christ, who was to come during the standing of the second temple.

Ver. 2. *The Lord loves the gates of Sion.* By *gates* in Scripture is meant the strength, or wisdom, or justice of a place. Gates were the magazines of arms, and the places of judicature. He had manifested his love to her in choosing that city before all the cities of Israel and Judah wherein to place his name, and have his worship celebrated; and that place in Jerusalem particularly where his law should be given by the Spirit to the apostles on the day of Pentecost; and to apply it to the gospel church, it signifies the special respect God bears to her, above all the rites, observances, and ceremonies of the Judaic institution. It was in this gospel church, the true Sion, that he 'desired to dwell,' and will 'remain for ever,' Ps. lxxviii. 17, which is a prophetic psalm of the gospel times, and the ascension of Christ.

1. The stability of the church is here asserted.† The church is not built upon the sand, which may fall with a storm, nor upon the waters, that may float with the waves, nor spread out as a tent in the desert, that may be taken up, and carried away to another place, but upon a mountain, not to be removed: Ps. cxxv. 1, 'Mount Sion cannot be removed.' It is built upon a rock, the Rock of ages, upon a mountain which is not shattered by waves

* Daillé Melange, part ii. page 354.

† Geierus in loc.

or shaken by storms ; upon Christ, who hath the strength of many mountains in himself.

2. The necessity of holiness in a church. What though the church be a mountain for strength and eminency, have the honour and privilege of sacraments, and be the ark of the oracles of God, it is not established unless it be a holy mountain. Holiness is the only becoming thing in the house of God. As it is consecrated to the glory of God, so it must be exercised in things pertaining to the glory of God. As the foundation is holy, so ought the superstructure to be. There was no filth in the framing it ; there must be no filth in the continuance of it.

Ver. 3. He speaks with some kind of astonishment of the glorious things spoken of her, or promised to her, and concludes it with a note of attention, or a mark of eminency, *Selah* ; ver. 3, 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.' No place enjoyed an equal happiness with Jerusalem while it remained faithful to its founder. It maintained its standing in the midst of its enemies ; no weapon formed against it was able to prosper. Heaven planted it, and the dews of heaven watered it ; it had a continual succession of prophets ; the best kings that ever were in the world swayed the sceptre in it ; it was blessed with more miraculous deliverances than any part of the universe ; the nations that loved it not yet feared its power, and feared the displeasure of its guardian. It was here the Son of God delivered the messages of heaven by the order of his Father ; it was here the Spirit first filled the heads and hearts of the apostles, in order to the conversion of a world from idolatry to the sceptre of God. But more glorious things are spoken of the spiritual Sion than of the material Jerusalem ; that had Christ in the flesh, and the gospel-church hath Christ in the Spirit. He went from thence to heaven, but he comes from heaven to visit them with his comforts ; he hath left the walls of Jerusalem in its ruins, but he hath not, he will not leave his spiritual Sion fatherless and comfortless ; John xiv. 18, his Spirit abides for ever with his church. Glorious things are spoken of it, when he pronounced it impregnable, and that the gates of hell, the power and policy of all the apostate angels and their instruments, should not prevail against her ; when he assured her he would be present with her, not to the end of an age or two, but till the period of time, the consummation of the world ; privileges that material Jerusalem could never boast of. Whatsoever countries have been applauded for secular excellencies, or been famous for wisdom, none can claim such eulogies as gospel Sion, where God hath declared his will, published himself a God of salvation, placed the laws of heaven, and poured out that wisdom which comes from above. These are glorious things, above human experience, above human desires.

The glorious things mentioned of the gospel-church are in ver. 4, where he speaks of the enlargement of her bounds, the increase of her inhabitants, and the numerous muster-rolls of those that shall list themselves in her service : 'I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me. Behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia : this man was born there.'

The time shall come when those nations that are most alienated from the profession of truth shall come under her wing, and pay allegiance to her empire. Strangers shall be brought into her bosom, not only Philistia and Tyre, nations upon her confines, but Egypt and Ethiopia, nations more remote. Nations born and bred at a distance shall be registered as born from her womb, and nursed in her lap ; distance of place shall not hinder the relation of her children ; and when God shall count the people of foreign nations, he shall set a mark upon every true believer, and reckon him as one born in Sion, a denizen of Jerusalem, though not a Jew in the flesh.

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me ; or rather among them that know me, or for them that know me, לִי יָדָע. I will remember them as persons enlightened by me, and acquainted with me.*

The psalmist reckons up here nations that were greatest enemies to the church, Rahab or Egypt, for so Egypt is named, Isa. li. 9, her ancient enemy, Philistia her perpetual invader. *Rahab* signifies pride or fierceness ; the fiercest people shall be subdued to Sion by the power of the gospel ; Egypt, the wisest and learnedest nation, the most idolatrous and superstitious ; men that rest in their own parts and strength shall cast away their idols ; Babylon, the strongest and most powerful empire, the subjects of which the Scripture often describes as luxurious, cruel, proud ; Tyre, the greatest mart, whose citizens were the greatest merchants ; the Ethiopians, the posterity of cursed Ham, whose souls are blacker than their bodies ; men buried in sin, benighted with ignorance, poisoned with pride ; the most fierce and envenomed enemies shall be brought in by an infinite grace, and make up one body with her, and shall be counted as related to her by a new birth, and be made members of her by regeneration ; this is properly to be born in Sion : ' This man was born there.' As without regeneration we have not God for our father, so neither have we Sion or the church for our mother. This is the great privilege we should inquire after, without which we are not in God's register. This second birth God only approves of ; he enrolls no man in the number of the citizens of Sion, nor endows them with the special privileges of it upon the account of their first, wherein they lie buried in the corruption of Adam, and are citizens of hell, not of Jerusalem. Again, this second birth is never without the knowledge of God : ' Among those that know me.' Ignorance is a bar to this enrolment ; he is no man that is not a rational creature, and he no regenerate man that hath not some knowledge in the great mysteries of God in Christ.

In ver. 5. 1. The honour of Sion is described by her fruitfulness.

1. In regard of the eminency of her births, she is not wholly barren ; she hath her births of men, and worthy men. The carnal world hath not exceeded the church in men of raised intellectuals ; Sion hath not been a city of fools. Dionysius the Areopagite hath been her production, as well as Damaris a woman. Kings also have been nursed at her breasts, that they might be nursing fathers to her by their power ; but the honour of Sion consists in the inward change it makes on men, dispossessing them of the nature of wolves for that of lambs, rendering them the loyal subjects of God instead of his active enemies. It is the glory of Sion that this or that man born in her was changed to such principles and such affections, that all the education and politeness of the most accomplished cities in the world could not furnish them with.

2. In regard of the multitude of them ; ' this and that man,' of all sorts and conditions, and multitudes of them, so that ' more are the children of the desolate than of the married wife.' The tents were prophesied to be enlarged, the curtains of the habitations of Sion to be stretched out, and her cords to be lengthened, to receive and entertain that multitude of children that should be brought forth by her after the sacrifice of the Son of God, Isa. liv. 1, 2 ; for that exhortation follows upon the description of the death and exaltation of Christ, Isa. liii.

2. The happiness of Sion. ' The Highest himself shall establish her.'

(1.) Security in her glory. ' Establish her.'

(2.) The author of that security and perpetuity ; ' the Highest ;' and that

exclusive of any other. 'The Highest himself;* all that are not the most high are excluded from having a share in the establishment of the church.

It is a work peculiar to him. It is not the excellent learning, strength of the wise or mighty men that are born in her, that doth preserve her, but God alone. He spirits and acts them; means God doth use in bringing in inward grace, means he doth use in settling the outward form: but such means that have in reason no strength to effect so great a business, means different from those which are used in the establishment of other kingdoms, whereby the hand that acts them is more visible and plain than the means that are used.† It is not the wit of man, which is folly, nor the strength of man, which is weakness, nor the holiness of man, which is nothing, can claim the honour of this work. God himself picks stones out of the quarry, smooths them for the building, fixeth them in their places. He himself is the only architect; his wisdom contrives it, his grace erects it, his power preserves it, and accomplisheth his own work. It is the highest; none higher to overpower him, none so high as to check and mate him.

Shall establish her. This cannot be meant of the literal or local Sion (though that indeed was preserved while the legal service was to endure, excepting that interruption by the Babylonish captivity, but now Mahomet's horse tramples upon it, and it retains none of the ancient inhabitants), but of the true mystical Sion, the gospel state of the church, which shall continue in being, as Christ the head of it hath settled it, till time shall be no more. Other kingdoms may crumble away, the foundations of them be dissolved; but that God which laid the foundation of Sion, and built her walls, will preserve her palaces, that the gates of hell, the subtlety of heretics, the fury of tyrants, the apostasy of some of her pretended children, all the locusts and spawn of the bottomless pit, shall not be able to root her up.

Shall establish her. The word בנין signifies the affording all things necessary for defence, increase of victory, preparations of it, the knitting of it.

Doct. The gospel-church is a perpetual society, established by the highest power in heaven or earth.

It shall continue as long as the world, and outlive the dissolution of nature; she shall bring forth her man-child (maugre all the vigilancy of the dragon), which shall be caught up to God and his throne; and though she be forced to fly into the wilderness, yet a place is prepared for her habitation, and food for her support during that state, no less than twelve hundred and sixty days, or years, and this by no weaker, no meaner a hand than that of God himself: Rev. xii. 3, 6, 'Where she hath a place prepared of God.' That hand that catches up Christ the man-child into heaven, that hand that sets him upon the throne of God, provides meat for the woman in the wilderness. The head and the body have the same defender, the same protector, the same hand to secure them.‡ Or by *man-child* is meant the whole number of the believers, which were more numerous before she went into a wilderness-condition, the Scripture using often the singular for the plural, and the Holy Ghost expressing himself here according to the property of the woman, which is to bring forth one at the same time. The figure of the church notes stability; it is a square, and the length is as large as the breadth,' Rev. xxi. 16. 'The length, breadth, and height of it are equal;' the most perfect figure, noting perfection and duration. So it was described in the prophecy, Ezek. xlviii. 16 exactly four thousand five hundred measures on each side. All belonging to this city or church is reckoned by the number twelve, a

* Coccej. in loc.

† Foulng.

‡ Ribera in loc.

square number, equal on all sides; twelve gates, twelve foundations, twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, twelve stones to garnish it, Rev. xxi. 12-14, &c. A four-square figure is an emblem of unchangeable constancy. Things so framed remain always in the same posture, cast them which way you will, and among some of the heathens was reckoned as a divine figure;* and the character of a virtuous man in regard of his constancy was τετραγώνος.

The shutting of the gate of the new temple, Ezek. xlv. 2, after the God of Israel had entered in by it, is interpreted by some of the everlasting dwelling of the Lord in the church of the gospel among his people, and never departing from it, as he had done from the first temple.† None shall enter in to deface it, none shall prescribe new laws to it, none shall trample upon it. When God enters into the Christian church, he shuts the door after him; his presence never departs from it; his gospel shall never be rooted out of it. The church hath a security in its foundation, as being 'built upon a rock,' Mat. xviii. 16. It hath an assurance of preservation by the presence of the God of Israel, of 'Christ in the midst of her,' Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. 'The tabernacle of Sion shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken;' and that because 'the glorious Lord shall be a place of broad rivers and streams to it,' Isa. xxxiii. 20, 21.

The enemies of the church shall be consumed, that God may have his due praise. *Hallelujahs* are never sung with the highest note till the wicked and idolatrous generation be rooted out of the earth. *Hallelujahs* were never used, as the Jews observe, till the consummation of all things by the setting the church above the tossing of the waves, and the destruction of its troublers; when the glory of the Lord should endure for ever, and God rejoice in his works, Ps. civ. 31, 35. And therefore, when the blood of his children is avenged by his justice upon his enemies, and the smoke of antichrist riseth up before him, and the kingdom of God is for ever settled, *Hallelujah* is pronounced and repeated with a loud voice, Rev. xix. 2, 3, 6. Such a time will be, and God will establish and secure his church till he hath perfected his own and her glory.

This stability the church hath had experience of in all ages of the world: and it will always be said in her, Ps. xlviii. 8, 'As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish it for ever.'

In the handling this doctrine, these four things are to be done.

I. The explication. II. The proof that it is so. III. Why it must needs be so. IV. Use.

I. Explication.

1. This stability must not be meant of any particular church in the world. Particular churches have their beginnings, progresses, and periods. Many churches, as well as many persons, have apostatised from the faith; many candlesticks have been broken in pieces, and yet the candle not blown out, but removed and set in another socket. Particular churches have been corrupted by superstition and idolatry, rent by heresies, and scattered by persecutions. What remains are there of those seven churches in Asia which were the walk of Christ, Rev. ii. 1, but deplorable ruins? There is no absolute promise given to any particular church that it shall be free from defection. The church of Rome, so flourishing in the apostles' time, was warned to be humble, lest it became as much apostate as that of the Jews, Rom. xi. 21, 22. Nay, there are predictions of almost an universal apostasy:

* The Arcadians made *Jovis signum quadrangulum* (Pausanias de Arcadicis).

† Lightfoot, Temple, cap. xxxviii. p. 252.

'All the world wondered after the beast,' Rev. xiii. 3, 'and worshipped him,' ver. 8. And just before the coming of Christ, it will be difficult to find a grain of faith among the multitude of chaff, Luke xviii. 8. There is not one place which was, in the primitive times, dignified with truth, but is now deformed by error. Yea, the universal church hath been forced by the fury of the dragon, though not to sink, yet to fly into the wilderness and obscurity, yet hath been preserved through all changes in the midst of those desolations and deserts. It is not, indeed, so fixed in one place but the cords may be taken up, the stakes removed, and the tents pitched in another ground. It is spread through the world wherever God will set up the light of his gospel. Sion hath stood, though some synagogues of it have been pulled down; it hath, like the sun, kept its station in the firmament, though not without eclipses and clouds to muffle it. The church is but one, though it be in divers countries, and named according to the places where it resides, as the church of Ephesus, the church of Sardis, &c., which all are as the beams of the sun darted from one body, branches growing from one root, streams flowing from one fountain. If you obstruct the light of one beam, or lop off one branch, or dam up the stream, yet the sun, root, fountain remains the same. So though the light of particular churches may be dim and extinguished, the beauty of them defaced, yet the universal church, that which is properly Sion, remains the same; it remains upon Christ the rock, and is still upon the basis of the covenant; it is still God's church, and God is her God. When a people have forfeited their church privileges by barrenness and wantonness, and God in justice strips them of their ornaments, he will have another people, which he will form for his glory and fit for his residence. The gospel shall never want an host to entertain it, nor a ground to be made fruitful by it: Mat. xxi. 43, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' The kingdom of God is not destroyed when it is removed; but transplanted into a more fruitful soil. While Christ hath a body in the world, he will find a Joseph of Arimathea to embalm it, and preserve it for a resurrection. When the glory of the Lord goes off from one cherub, it will find other cherubims whereon to settle, Ezek. x. 4, 18. That glory which had dwelt in the material ark of the sanctuary departs from thence to find a throne in that chariot which had been described, Ezek. i. Nay, the departure of God from one church renders his name more glorious in another.* The rejection of the carnal Israel was the preamble to the appearance of the spiritual Israel; and the kingdom of the Messiah was rendered more large and illustrious by the dissolving of that church that had confidence in the flesh, trusted in their external rites, and patched the beauty and purity of divine worship with their whorish additions; just as the mortification of the flesh gives liveliness to the spirit, and the pulling up noisome weeds from a garden makes room for the setting and flourishing growth of good plants.

2. Though God unstakes the church in one place, yet he will not only have a church, but a professing church in another. 'It shall be said of Sion, This and that man was born there.' It shall be said of Sion by God; it shall be said of Sion by men. If Christ confesseth none before his Father but such as confess him before men, Luke xii. 8, shall he ever want employment? Shall the world ever be at that pass as to bear none that profess him, and so none to be owned by him at the right hand of his Father? Shall he by whom all things subsist, have none to acknowledge their subsistence by him? The world may be the inheritance of Christ, but scarce counted his possession, if there were not in some parts of it a body of sub-

* Rivet in Hos. i. x. p. 518.

jects to justify their allegiance to him in the face of a persecuting generation. Indeed, when the church was confined to the narrow limits of the carnal Israel, the profession of the truth was contracted to a few, though the faith of it might be alive in others; only Caleb and Joshua among the whole body of the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness asserted the honour of God, and maintained the truth of his promise, though the belief of it might sparkle in the hearts of others under the ashes of their fears, that hindered their discovery of it to others. It was another time reduced to one, and Elijah only had the boldness to make a declaration of the name of God, though there were seven thousand who had retained their purity, while they had lost their courage to publish it, 1 Kings xix. 18. But in the Christian church, since the number of elect are more, the profession will be greater in the midst of an universal apostasy of pretenders: Rev. xiii. 18, 'All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him,' *i. e.* the beast, 'whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb.' If their election be a preservative against an adoration of the beast, it is also a security against the denial of any such worship, and an encouragement to profess the name of Christ when they shall be brought upon the stage.

This profession may lie much in the dark, and not be so visible as before; as a field of corn overtopped by weeds, looks at a distance as if there were nothing else but the blue and red cockle and darnel, but when we come near we see the good grain shews its head as well as the weeds; but a professing people there will be one where or other. It is a standing law of Christianity, that a belief in the heart should be attended by confession with the mouth, Rom. x. 9. And the church is a congregation of people sounding the voice of Christ, as he was preached and confessed by the apostles. While there are believers, there will be professors in society together; some ordinances settled in being during the continuance of the world, as the supper, 1 Cor. xi. 6, implies a society, as the seat of the administration; baptism is a ceremony of admission into a society; the supper, a feasting of several upon spiritual viands. Officers appointed imply a body professing some rules, Mat. xxviii. 20. To what purpose are all these settled during the continuance of the world, if they were not somewhere to be practised till that period of time; and how can they be practised without a confederation and society? Without such a body all the ordinances and rules of Christ would be in vain, and imply as little wisdom in enacting them, as a want of power in not keeping up a society in some part of the world to observe them according to his own prescriptions. There will therefore, be, in some part or other of the world, a church openly professing the doctrine of truth.

3. This church or Sion shall have a numerous progeny. The spiritual Israel shall be 'as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered,' Hosea i. 10, which was the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 17, and renewed in the same terms to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 12. The church is a little flock in comparison of the carnal world, yet it is numerous in itself, though not in every place; for sometimes there may not be above three found to withstand the worship of a golden image; yet in some one or other place of the world, and successively, it shall be numerous; he will not lose the honour of the feast he hath prepared, though those that are invited prefer their farms and oxen before it, but will find guests in the highways; he will spread his wings from east to west, and 'in every place incense shall be offered to his name,' Mal. i. 11. The church is compared to the morning, Cant. vi. 10, which from small beginnings in a short time fills the whole hemisphere with light; and the promises concerning it run all that way. 'The hills were to be covered with the shadow of it;' 'her boughs are to be sent out to the sea, and her

branches to the river,' Ps. lxxx. 10, 11. It was to spread itself 'like a goodly cedar, and be a dwelling-place to the fowl of every wing,' Ezek. xvii. 23. Yea, a numberless multitude from all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, are to stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, 'clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,' Rev. vii. 9, adorned with innocence, and crowned with victory. No monarchy ever did, ever can so far stretch her bounds; nor hath the sun seen any place where it hath not seen some sprinkling of a church. Every kingdom hath met with unpassable bounds, but the ensigns of Christ have not been limited. The church was once crowded up in a narrow compass of Judea, but since that her territories are enlarged; her ensigns have flourished over many countries, Rahab, Tyre, Ethiopia, the vast circuit of Asia, and the deserts of Africa have been added to her empire; her progeny shall be hereafter as numerous as it hath been. When the devices of antichrist shall be more seen and perceived, they will be more nauseated; and many with Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do any more with idols?'

II. Second thing. That God has hitherto established Sion.

1. It is testified by its present standing, when other empires have sunk by age or violence.

God hath promised the stability and eminency of the mountain of the Lord's house above all the mountains, the strongest power, and most compacted empires of the world, sometimes signified to us by that title, Isa. ii. 2. And in the midst of his destroying plagues, and his milder anger with the church, she hath a charter of security: Jer. xxx. 11, 'Though I make a full end of all nations, yet will I not make an end of thee.' Further, the reasons why kingdoms and nations are pulled up by the roots and utterly wasted, is not only because they are inveterate enemies, but refuse her easy chains, and decline her service: Isa. lx. 12, 'The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.' The warrant for the execution of such is as firmly sealed by heaven, as the patent for the church's preservation; it is repeated with an emphasis. The persecuted church hath still been lifted up, when the Assyrian, Persian, and Greek monarchies have fallen in pieces, and left no footsteps of their grandeur. The prosperity of worldly kingdoms is no better than a fire of straw that blazeth and vanisheth; it hath but the brittle foundation of human policy, and an establishment by a temporary providence. The everlasting covenant and the basis of divine truth and love cannot be claimed by any but the church. Not a kingdom can be pitched upon in all the records of history that hath maintained its standing and triumphed over its enemies, and subsisted at such a rate, and by unusual and unheard-of methods, as the church hath done. Those that have been best guarded by laws, hedged in with the best methods of government, and armed with a strong power to protect them, have found something or other rising from their bowels, or enemies' power to procure their dissolution. But the church, though dashed against so many rocks, has yet floated above the deluge of those commotions that have sunk other societies. The kings of the world could never yet boast of a full conquest of her, or brag that she hath been subjected to the same condition with themselves. She hath borne up her head in the midst of earthly revolutions, and met with her preservation or resurrection where carnal interests have found their funeral. Those that have set their feet upon the church's breasts, or spilt her blood, have found their poison where they imagined they should find their safety. The Babylonish empire, which was God's rod for the correcting his people, saw herself in the chains of her enemies that night she had been sacrilegiously carousing healths in the sacred vessels of

the temple, Dan. v. 3, 30; and the Jews enjoyed a deliverer, where the Babylonians felt the force of a conqueror. Many such fatal periods may be reckoned up, both in sacred and human story, either for not protecting or persecuting that which is so dear to the Highest, who hath established her.

2. No society but the church ever subsisted in the midst of a multitude of enemies. Has she not been like a little flock in the midst of many wolves, which, though they sucked the blood of some, yet could never reach the head or heart of the whole? The devil hath attacked her, without vanquishing her; shaken her, without ruining her. The biting of the serpent, according to the ancient promise, may bruise the heel, but not the head, and make an incurable wound in the mystical body. She hath been preserved in a hating world in spite of the enmity of it, by a divine wisdom that hath not regulated itself by the methods of flesh and blood. His feeding the Israelites in the wilderness was a figure of what he would do to his church, and he hath accomplished it to the gospel church as really as he did to the ancient Israel. While she hath been in a wilderness these twelve hundred years, and I hope somewhat upwards, she hath not wanted her manna, nor her rock; she hath been fed in her straits, and preserved in her combats; and as Christ reigns, so the church lives, and hath her table spread in the midst of her enemies. What is eleven hundred years' continuance of the Venetian government to so many thousand years' preservation of the church in the midst of atheism, paganism, antichristianism, ever since it was first born and nursed in Adam's family; and this hath been when her friends have forsaken her, when her enemies have been confident of her ruin, when herself hath expected little else than destruction, when she hath thought sometimes in her straits her God ignorant of her; when hell hath poured out a flood, the carnal earth hath sometimes found it their interest to help her, though their enmity were irreconcilable against her, Rev. xii. 16. The subtilty and power of her enemies, that have found success in their other projects, have met with an unforeseen baffle when they have armed against her. Men of the greatest abilities have proved fools when they have exercised their wit against her. Ahithophel's wisdom was great when on David's side, and changed to folly when he shifted sides against him. A secret blast hath been upon the projects of men when they have turned against her upon secular interests. In the greatest judgments which have come and shall come upon the world, when wonders shall be shewn in the heavens and in the earth, blood, fire, and pillars of smoke, when 'the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,' Joel ii. 30, 31; yet God will have a mount Sion and a Jerusalem, some 'that call upon his name,' ver. 32. Not the malice of her enemies shall impair her, because of God's power, nor the common judgments of the world under which others sink shall extinguish her, because of God's truth: ver. 32, 'As the Lord hath said.' Whence comes all this, but from God's having been her 'dwelling-place in all generations'? Ps. xc. 1. He was so to her from the time of Abraham to the introduction of his posterity into Canaan; he hath sheltered her as an house doth an inhabitant, or the ark did Noah in the midst of many waters. In all generations, Sion hath been impregnable; for he that is her dwelling-place hath formed the mountains, and 'from everlasting to everlasting is only God,' ver. 2; and though one generation pass and another comes, he is the same dwelling-place, and never out of repair, never will want repair; and therefore it is an astonishment that the devil, after so long an experience, should be such a fool as to engage in new attempts, when he hath found so little success in his former, and hath had so many ages to witness the baffles he hath received. What a fool is he, to think that her

defender should be conquered by a revolted angel, that lies under an everlasting curse !

3. The violences against her, which have been fatal to other societies, have been useful to her. This bush hath burned without consuming, and preserved its verdure in the midst of fire ; not from the nature of the bush, but the presence of Him that dwelt in it. It hath not only subsisted in the bowels of her enemies, but hath been established by means of the violence of men, and grown greater in the midst of torments and death. She hath not only out-grown her afflictions, but grown greater and better by them. The last monarchy, composed of clay and iron, clay for its earthly and miry designs, and iron for its force and violence, is the immediate usher of the kingdom of God, that shall never be destroyed, but stand for ever, Daniel ii. 41, 44.

(1.) She hath been often increased. Persecution hath lopped off some branches of the vine, but have been found more sprouting up instead of them that were cut off. Her blood hath been seed, and the pangs of her martyrs have been fruitful in bringing forth new witnesses. We have scarce read of more sudden conversions to Christianity, though indeed more numerous, by the preaching of the word, than by the shedding the blood of Christians. Eminent professors have sprung out of the martyrs' ashes. The storms have been so far from destroying her, that it hath been the occasion of spreading her tents in a larger ground. Saul's winnowing the church blew away some of the corn to take rooting in other places, Acts viii. 3, 4, like seeds of plants blown away by the wind, which have risen and brought forth their kind in another soil ; and it is no more than hath been predicted, Daniel xii. 1, 4, such 'a time of trouble that never was since there was a nation,' should be the time when 'many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased.' While other societies increase by persecuting their enemies, this increaseth by being persecuted herself : it 'grows as a vine,' Hosea xiv. 7. Though it be cut, the cutting hath contributed to its thriving. This rose-bush hath not only stood in the wind which hath rooted up other oaks, but the fragraney of it hath been carried by that wind to places at a greater distance. When Antiochus commanded all the books of the Scripture in the hands of any to be burned, they were not only preserved, but presently after appeared out of their hidden places, as they were translated into the Greek tongue, the language then most known in the world, and made public to other nations. Truth hath been often rendered by such proceedings more clear and glorious. The persecution of Sion's head, the Captain of our salvation, to death, was the occasion of the discovery of the gospel to the whole world. He was the great seed, that being cast into the ground became so fruitful as to spread his branches in all corners of the earth, John xii. 24. And that persecution which I suppose remains yet to be acted, and which will be the smartest, shall be succeeded by the clearest eruption of gospel light, wherein the gospel shall recover its ancient and primitive glory. The slaying of the witnesses shall end in an evangelical success, Rev. xi. 9, 10, &c. The world 'shall give glory to the God of heaven,' ver. 13 ; 'The kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Christ,' ver. 15 ; Christ shall more illustriously reign, ver. 17 ; the temple of God shall be opened in heaven, ver. 19. The spiritual Israel as well as the national, the antitype as well as the type, have multiplied under oppression ;* and, like an arched building, stood firmer by all the weights that have been designed to crush her.

(2.) She has often been refined by the most violent persecutions of her enemies.

She hath not only survived the flames that have been kindled against her,

* Decay of Christian Piety, p. 23.

but, as refined gold, come out more beautiful from the furnace, left her dross behind her, and hath been wrought into a more beautiful frame by the hand of her great Artificer. Like the sand upon the sea shore, she hath not only broke the force of the waves, but been assisted by them to discharge her filth, and been washed more clean by those waves that rushed in to drown her. She hath been more conformed to the image of her Head; and made fitter to glorify God here, and to enter into the glory of God hereafter. The church is to 'cast forth her roots like Lebanon,' Hosea xiv. 5. The cedar by its shakings grows up more in beauty as well as strength, and the torch by its knocks burns the clearer. Though the number of her children might sometimes decrease through fear, yet her true offspring that have remained, have increased in their zeal, courage, and love to God. Apostates themselves have proved refiners of them that they have deserted: Daniel xi. 35, 'And some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge and make them white.' The corn is the purer by the separation of the chaff; thus hath she grown purer by flames, and sounder by batteries.

4. When she has seemed to be forlorn and dead, God has restored her. When Israel was at the lowest, a decree issued out in Egypt to destroy her males and root out her seed, deliverance began to dawn; and when a knife was at her throat at the Red Sea, and scarce a valiant believer found among a multitude of despairers, God turned the back of the knife to his Israel, and the edge to the throat of the enemies. When the whole church as well as the whole world seemed to be at its last gasp, God preserved a Noah as a spark to kindle a new world and a new church by. When Jerusalem was sacked, the city destroyed, the people dispersed into several parts of the Babylonish empire, without any human probability of ever being gathered again into one body, yet she was preserved, restored, recollected, brought out of the sepulchre, resettled in her ancient soil, and recovered her beauty; which can be said of no other society in the world but this, whose deliverance and restoration hung not upon the will and policy of man, but upon the word of God, who had limited their captivity to seventy years, and promised a restoration. The blessing of God to Abraham and Sarah is set out as a ground of faith and comfort for the church's restoration and increase: Isa. li. 1-3, he will 'comfort Sion, and comfort all her waste places; and make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of God, that joy and gladness may be found therein,' as well as he did enliven the dead body of Abraham and the barren womb of Sarah. When the church hath been so low that men have despaired of seeing any more of her than her ashes, God hath produced a new remnant, he hath reserved a tenth to return, Isa. vi. 13; and from the hidden womb of the earth brought forth a new succession by the vigorous influence of the Sun of righteousness. And after the last attempt and success of the antichristian state, when they are jolly and merry at the church's funeral, Rev. xi. 10, they shall soon be amazed at her resurrection, ver. 11; as much as the high priests were at the resurrection of Christ, for the church can no more lie in the grave than her Head, the mystical body no more than the natural. His resurrection was an earnest of this, and this the accomplishment of that. Little difference in the time of their grave state; three days the natural body lay, three days and an half only the mystical shall lie before a full revival.

5. God never wanted instruments for his church in the due season. If Abel be butchered by Cain, God will raise up Seth in his place to bring men to a public form of worship, Gen. iv. 26. If Nebuchadnezzar be the axe to hew down Jerusalem, Cyrus shall be the instrument to build her up; when his time is come, he will not want an Ezra and Nehemiah to rear her walls,

nor be wanting to them to inspire them with courage and assist their labour, in spite of the adversaries that would give checkmate to the work. If Stephen be stoned by the Jews, he will call out Paul, an abetter of that murder, to be a preacher of the gospel, and he that was all fire against it shall become as great a flame for the propagation of it: one phoenix shall arise out of the ashes of another. When Arianism like a deluge overflowed the world, the church wanted not an Athanasius to stand in the gap and be a champion for the truth of the deity of Christ. When enemies rise up against the church from all quarters to afflict it, God raised others from all quarters to defend it, Zech. i. 19, 20. Yea, those that have been the instruments to support the antichristian state against her, by giving their power and strength to the beast, shall turn their arms against that which they supported, to 'make her desolate, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire,' Rev. xvii. 12, 13, 16. It is the same Christ that is king in his church, and the Spirit is not dispossessed of his office to furnish men with gifts for the defence and increase of it; he is still a spirit of government in magistrates, and the spirit of fire in ministers, for the church's interest. Now, since the church hath maintained its standing longer than any other empire, and that in the midst of its enemies, and hath been both increased and refined by the violences used against her, since she hath been so often restored and never wanted instruments for the rearing and protecting her, who can doubt whether the Highest hath not, and whether the Highest will not, establish her and cover her with his mighty wings?

III. The third thing, Why it must needs be so.

1. It is necessary for the honour of God. Those societies may moulder away, and those religions grow feeble, which have drawn their birth from the wisdom of man and been settled from the force of man, but a divine work must needs have a divine establishment. It is so,

(1.) If you regard it as his main design in the creation of the world. Can we think God made the world for the world's sake, that he pitched tabernacles here for a few creatures that could spell from all his works but a few and little letters of his name? Could the bare creation shew to man so much as his back parts? The most glorious perfections of his nature could never be visible in a handful of creatures, though never so glorious, no, nor in multitudes of worlds of a more beautiful aspect, without the discovery of the gospel and the settling a gospel church. How should we have known his patience, been instructed in his mercy, have had any sense of his grace, or understood the depths of his wisdom, or heard the voice of the bowels of his love, so as they are linked together in his nature? If God created the world for his glory, he created it for his highest glory: a bare creation, without a redeemed company of creatures, could never have given us a prospect of the great glory of his nature, nor have answered the end of God, which was the manifestation of his perfections. His wisdom broke out in the frame of all creatures, giving them life and motion; but his eye, when he made the world, was upon the manifestation of a greater wisdom which then lay hid in his bosom, and was not to be discovered but in the publishing the gospel, Eph. iii. 9, 10. The wisdom that broke out in the creation was but a scaffold whereon in time his wisdom in the glory of a church peculiar to himself should appear. All things were created for Christ as well as by him, for him and his glory as mediator and as head of the church, and therefore for the glory of his body. And his end in sending Christ was to 'gather all things together in him,' those things which are in heaven as well as those which are on earth, Eph. i. 10; and in order to that end he works all things: ver. 11, 'He works all things according to the counsel of his

own will.' This counsel and will of appointing Christ was the spring and rule of all his works, and therefore of creation, as well as the rest succeeding it. He that would upon occasion give the richest parts of the world for the ransom of Sion, as Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba, Isa. xxiii. 43, may well be thought to create those and other nations to lay a foundation for her. We know that soon after the creation the rest of God was disturbed by the entrance of sin, which could not come unexpected, unforeseen, and unpermitted. There had not then been any ground of rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, Prov. viii. 31, if he had not designed something else. But he provided in his counsel another rest, and in order to that suffered this first in the bare creation to be spoiled: Sion he chose, and Sion he desired as his rest for ever, wherein he would dwell, Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14. The end of God in creation was not certainly only to make a sun or stars, an earth bedecked with plants, and man, a rational creature, only to contemplate these works, but to render him the acknowledgments of his power and wisdom.* As a limner lays his chief design in the midst of the cloth, and fills the void places with many other fancies to beautify and set off his work, but those were not in his first intention, but his main design was the draught in the middle, surrounded with the rest. Now, when man by sin had made himself incapable of performing the work he had to do, God orders things so as to have a rest, to have a people to acknowledge him. Hence, perhaps, the forming of such a people is called by the term of a new creation, not only as it is an act of creative power, but as it was the chief design of the exerting his power in the creation of the world. 'His foundation is in the holy mountain,' Ps. lxxxv. 1; and shall the chief of his counsel be the conquest and triumph of Satan? Shall he, at the closing up of the world, be defeated of his main contrivance? Surely if there were a greater opposition to Sion than ever there was, he would exert a greater strength than ever he did not to be crossed in his principal aim.

(2.) As he hath been the author and builder of Sion. Great kings have a particular care of the cities they have founded, for the honour and preservation of their name, and a testimony of their magnificence; with what choice privileges do they use to endow them! With what strong garrisons do they use to secure them in time of danger! And shall not the great God perpetuate that which he hath formed for his glory, to which he hath given a peculiar denomination of the City of God?† Nebuchadnezzar cannot be more industrious to enrich Babylon, which he had built by the might of his power, than God will be to perpetuate Sion, which he hath built for the honour of his majesty. God was the architect of this city, and gave the model. Christ was the builder of this city, and raised the structure: Heb. iii. 3, 4, He, *i. e.* Christ, built the house, 'and he that built all things is God.' God laid the platform of all things, much more of that which is dearer to him than all things. He laid the foundation of it by his Son; whereas the Jewish synagogue was formed by the ministry of Moses. He hath poured upon her greater treasures of knowledge, a fuller measure of the Spirit than he did before, that the knowledge of precedent ages was nothing in comparison of that which he lighted on the gospel Sion, in the fulness of time. The Spirit hath formed the church in the womb of the world, as he formed Christ in the womb of the virgin. The natural and the mystical body of the Son of God have the same author and original; not a stone fitted to be a part in composing this temple, but was culled out and polished by

* Charron. iii. Verit. lib. iii. cap. i. p. 16.

† Called by that title four times in the 48th Psalm, 1, 2, 8, 14, whence the psalmist concludes the establishment of her.

God, 1 Peter iii. 5. He that laid the corner stone, fixeth the 'lively stones' to become a 'spiritual house.' *Are built*; not built themselves; it is his house, because he built it, as well as his house, because he dwells in it, and rules it as the master of the family. Though the whole fabric of nature is God's work, yet the church is peculiarly, and by way of distinction, called his work: Hab. iii. 2, 'revive thy work;' and every stone in it is called his jewel: Mal. iii. 17, 'my jewels;' made so by his power, in working a real change; for by nature they were as unfit as the common pebbles of the earth. He is therefore peculiarly called the Creator of Israel, Isa. xliii. 15. As he hath maintained a creation revolted from him, notwithstanding all the provoking sins of men, so he will maintain a creation dear to him, notwithstanding all the bloody contrivances of men. Sion's inheritance is secured, because it is 'a branch of God's planting,' Isa. lx. 21. Things are preserved by the same means whereby they are first settled. Is it not, then, for the honour of God, to be the establisher of that, by the power of his might, whereof he hath been the founder by the strength of his arm. He made not use of the riches, power, and wisdom of the world, to lay the foundation of Sion; but as the Jews, he wrought, as it were, with a trowel in one hand, and a sword in the other, and erected her walls against the force and policy of hell and earth; and as he founded it without worldly advantages, and against the stream of corrupt nature, he knows how to preserve it, when the wit and strength of the world are contrary to it. It would be too low a conceit of the wisdom and power of God, to imagine that he should undertake so great a work, to be baffled in the end he designed to himself. His wisdom is as much concerned in honour to work wonders for the preservation of Sion, as his power was employed at first miraculously to lay the first corner stone of her.

(3.) As he hath been the preserver and enlarger of her to this day. Men think themselves concerned in honour to perfect those which they call their creatures, and often regard one act of kindness as an engagement upon them to successive acts of the like nature. It is not for the honour of any man to stand by a friend a long time, and to enjoy the glory of assisting him, and desert him at the last pinch. God set up the church after the fall in Adam's family, rather than create a new world to create a new church; he raised up Seth to propagate it, when Abel was taken off by the bloody hands of his brother; he preserved it in Noah's family in the midst of a corrupted and degenerate world, and settled it upon the foundation of the gospel in both. Upon the first promise in the family of Adam, Gen. iii. 15; upon the sweet-smelling sacrifice offered by Noah, Gen. viii. 20-22; not upon the symbol or type, the blood of the beasts, but upon the thing signified by it; and the preservation of the world promised after that sacrifice, was chiefly in order to the preservation of a church in it, as the creation of the world was in order to the erecting it; and therefore the rainbow, settled then as a sign of the covenant for the world's preservation from a flood of waters, is made the sign of the everlasting covenant of peace both in Ezekiel, chap. i. 28, and in the Revelation, chap. iv. 3, as a sign he would preserve his church from the multitude of waters, from the rage of the people, signified by waters in the prophetic part of Scripture, and from the floods that the devil should cast out against her. And thence it is that this covenant of her establishment is compared with that covenant God swore to Noah, and the faith of the church strengthened by reflection upon that, Isa. liv. 9. After this settling it in Noah, he fixed it in Abraham, and cleared up the promise of the Messiah with a greater evidence than to the ages before. He multiplied it in the fleshly Israel, and enlarged the bounds of it to a whole nation. After that,

he takes away the partition wall, and spreads her confines to the possession of the Gentiles, that 'the sons of Japhet might dwell in the tents of Shem,' according to his promise, Gen. ix. 27; out of the forlorn Gentiles, as stupid as stocks and stones, he raiseth up children, a great posterity, to Abraham. Those that he employed in the erecting Sion, and establishing the law that went out from her in the rubbish of the Gentiles, he struck off from all human assistances, all strength and power in themselves, when he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait there for a 'power from on high,' before they ventured to be witnesses to him, and publish his name not only in the uttermost parts of the earth, but in Jerusalem, the city where they were to abide, or in any part of Judea, Acts i. 4-8. They were not to speak a word of him in their own strength, or in any strength less than a power from heaven, which was to be given them by the sending the Spirit; and this he calls 'the promise of the Father,' as signifying his purpose to enlarge his church, as well as build it at the first, by himself and his own power. It is this, the promise of the Father, our Saviour there pitches their faith upon, and it is this our faith should be established in, in all conditions of the church.

Now hath God thus reared up a church out of the ashes of man's original apostasy, settled it among the murmuring and ungrateful Israelites that industriously longed for the garlic and onions of Egypt, as weary of the greatness of his mercy to them, and propagated it to the idolatrous Gentiles, filled with all unrighteousness, as bad as bad could be, as is described Rom. i. 29-31? To what purpose was the enlarging the church's patent, if he did intend the footsteps of her should ever be rooted out of the world? He picked out the weakest, poorest persons as the matter of it, that he might shew his own honour in preserving it; he hath yet supported her all the while she hath carried the cross of her Lord; he hath sent his Spirit to frame a succession of new materials for her. How fruitless would all this be, if he should let hell waste the temple erected for heaven? What! did he gather and enlarge the church only to make it a richer conquest, and a fatter morsel for the devil? How vain would his former kindness appear, if he should let it utterly sink as long as the world endures! It cannot be imagined, with any semblance of reason, that God hath taken all this care about the nursing and growth of the church from small beginnings, to let his darling be a prey to the mouth of lions, and be of no other use than to fatten his enemies.

(4.) In regard of the cost and pains he hath been at about Sion. Did the creation of the world ever cost him so much? Was there one tear, one groan, one sigh, much less the blood of the Son of God, expended in laying the foundation of it? When the matter of it was without form and void, the beauty of it was not wrought with a washing with blood. When God established the clouds above, and strengthened the foundations of the deep; when he gave the sea his decree, and appointed the foundations of the earth, the Son of God was by him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were among the sons of men, Prov. viii. 28, 29, 31. Not bleeding and dying. But this he must do; he must take human nature, be bruised in his heel by the serpent, and be a sacrifice himself, make an atonement for sin, before a stone for the building of spiritual Sion could be framed and laid.

What pains have been taken also in the effecting it! The birth of the church was a work of greater power than the fabric of the world. A few words went to the rearing of that. In the revolution of six days, it was set upon its feet; but many a year was God in travail before Sion was brought

forth. There was an enemy as potent as hell to deal with in setting it in Adam's family after man's apostasy; the corrupt nature, that had then got the possession of the world, to contest with. The world must be drowned, to bring it to a second nativity and establishment in Noah. The forming the church of the Jews was not without some pangs of nature; what signs and wonders, and great terrors, were wrought in its bringing forth out of Egypt, and striking off the chains of her captivity! Deut. iv. 34. What fire, blackness, darkness, tempest, that made a convulsion in the souls of those that were to be her materials! Heb. xii. 18, 19. And the bringing forth the Gentile church, and enlarging the cords and stakes of Sion, was preceded by the darkening the sun, the trembling of the earth, the opening of the graves, the suffering of that which was dearest to God himself.

No power was ever employed so signally in the affairs of any worldly concern as in the settlement of Sion. The devouring waves of the Red Sea have been made her bulwarks, and the sand, the grave of her enemies, hath been a path for her passage. The sun hath forgotten his natural race, to gaze upon her victories, Josh. x. 13. Angels have been commissioned to be her champions, and fight her battles, 2 Kings xix. 35. The whole host of heaven have been arrayed to fight for Sion on earth. The merciless nature of the fire hath been curbed, to preserve her children, when she seemed to be reduced to a small number; and the mouths of hunger-starved lions have been bridled for the same purpose, Dan. vi. 22. The proudest enemies to her have been vanquished by frogs and lice; and tyrants, that would lay their hands upon her, have been made, to their disgrace, a living banquet for worms, the vilest creatures, Acts xii. 23.

And indeed, after the malice of the devil had usurped God's right in the creation, and had drawn the chiefest of his sublunary creatures into an apostasy with himself, no less than an infinite power could be engaged against the greatest of created powers, if God would not forego his own honour, in suffering himself to be deprived of the fruit of his works. No less than infinite power could erect a church in the world. That God might have the fruit of his creation, he ordered this power to appear, struck down the gates of hell, sent his Son to rescue his honour, and his Spirit to polish stones for his temple. Every one that is fitted for this building, had almightiness at work with him before he was formed, Eph. i. 19, 20. Every stone was hewed by the Spirit, and the image of God was imprinted by a divine efficacy. Shall the fruit of so much power, and the mark of his own image, want an establishment? God would seem to be careless of the treasures of his own nature, wherewith he hath endowed her. Shall all this cost and pains be to no purpose? Were the gates of hell taken down to be set up again more strongly? and the chargeable counsels of God to be puffed away by the breath of Satan? Doth it consist with his wisdom to let Sion fall out of his hands into the power of her old oppressor? Men are more desirous to preserve the estate they have gotten by sweat, than that which is left them by inheritance, and are most careful in settling that which hath cost them more treasure and more labour. Jacob sets a value upon the portion he got with his sword and bow, Gen. xlviii. 22; no less will God upon that Sion he hath wrested out of the world by the might of his arm.

(5.) In regard of faithfulness, his veracity is engaged.

[1.] In regard of faithfulness to Christ the head. The Spirit was promised to Christ: Acts ii. 33, 'Having received the promise of the Holy Ghost;' *i.e.* the Holy Ghost promised to him by the Father. He received that which was promised; his receiving it from God implied the Spirit's being promised to him by God. To what end was this Spirit given him,

and sent by him? 'To convince the world of righteousness,' John xvi. 10, an effect necessary to the building of Sion. For this end he received it, for this end therefore it was promised to him. The promise would be vain, the performance of the promise, in the mission of the Holy Ghost, would be to no purpose, if the end for which he was promised, and for which he was sent, were not performed; if there should not be a perpetual number convinced of, and embracing that righteousness of Christ, which hath been manifested by his going to the Father.

God also promised him a great posterity after his 'making his soul an offering for sin,' Isa. liii. 10, 11. A seed that he should see, therefore stable and perpetual, because always visible to him. A posterity was to follow his sacrifice, his cross was to give them being, and his blood was to give them life. God pawned his word upon the condition of his death; the condition was performed to the full satisfaction of God, his truth therefore hath no evasion, no plea to deny the performance of the promise in raising up a multitude of believers in the world, and such a multitude as shall always be seen with pleasure by him, as good and sound children, and the travail of the mother's womb, are by the parents. The truth of God is obliged by Christ's exact performance of the condition, as well as by the particular respect he hath to the glory of it; it was for the church Christ 'gave himself,' Eph. v. 25. It is necessary therefore that God should preserve and establish a church for him to the end of the world; that Christ might not, by any default of his Father, lose the end and design of his death, there shall be a generation of believers, a little seed lying in the midst of all the chaff, so God promised: Ps. lxxii. 17, 'His name shall be continued, וְנִשְׁמָר, as long as the world.' His name shall be propagated in a perpetual birth of children, it shall be found while the sun in the heaven keeps its station.

[2.] In regard of faithfulness to the church itself. How doth the word sparkle with promises to Sion in all her concerns! He hath promised an indissoluble marriage, the fixing a knot that shall never be untied: Hosea ii. 19, 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever, and that in judgment, righteousness, loving-kindness, mercy, faithfulness.' A marriage that shall never end in widowhood, so that judgment, righteousness, loving-kindness, mercy, faithfulness must first fail, before the church meet with an entire dissolution; *i. e.* God and the glorious perfections of his nature shall fail, before the church be forsaken and left to her enemies. She is no less assured of continual supplies and nourishment, and that by no meaner a hand than that of God himself: Isa. xxvii. 3, 'I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, I will keep it night and day.' (Nor a meaner dew than himself, Hosea xiv. 5.) Also without the failing her a minute; he would water her with doctrine to preserve her verdure and increase her growth. He would be her guardian night and day, in the darkness of adversity, in the sunshine of prosperity, so that Satan should not outwit, nor the craft and subtilty of heretics waste her; for it refers to ver. 1, wherein God promiseth her to punish 'the piercing serpent, the crooked serpent,' that by various windings and turnings insinuates himself to the destruction of men. And he adds, ver. 4, 'Fury is not in me;' he lays by his anger against her, as considered in apostate nature; the fury of hell shall not prevail where the anger of God is pacified, but her enemies shall be as briars and thorns before him. He hath a consuming fury for her enemies, though he hath none for his vineyard. Protection is in no less measure promised, and that not a temporary one, nor a bare defence, but with the ruin of her enemies, and treading them down as straw is trodden down for the dunghill: Isa. xxv. 10, 'In this

mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest.'* By *hand* is meant his power, and by *rest* is meant the perpetual motion of it for her, and that against the most furious, malicious, and powerful of her enemies : Mat. xvi. 18, 'Against the gates of hell,' against the wisdom of hell, gates being the seat of council ; against the censures and sentences of hell, gates being the place of judicature ; against the arms of hell, gates being the place of strength and guards. When Christ secures against hell, he secures against all that receive their commission from hell ; neither hell itself, nor the instruments edged and envenomed by hell, shall prevail against her ; she is secured for her assemblies in one part or other, when they gather together to hear the law, and to sacrifice : 'And I that am the Lord thy God, from the land of Egypt, will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of solemn feasts,' Hosea xii. 9 ; it is a promise to the church ; it was never yet, nor appears like to be performed to the ten tribes as a nation, but to their posterity, as swallowed up in, and embodied with, the Gentiles. The conquest of her enemies is secured to her, Ps. cx. 1. The promise is made to Christ of making 'his enemies his footstool ;' but made to him as David's Lord, and consequently as the Lord of his people, as King in Sion, and therefore made to the whole body of his loyal subjects. And all those things are of little comfort without duration and stability, which is also secured to her : Hosea vi. 3, 'His going forth,' *i.e.* the going forth of God in the church, 'is prepared as the morning,' מִן הַבֹּקֶר, stable ; his appearance for her, and in her, is as certain as the dawning of the morning light at the appointed hour. All the clouds which threaten a perpetual night cannot hinder it ; all the workers of darkness cannot prevent it ; the morning will dawn whether they will or no. Her duration is compared to the most durable things, to that of the cedar, the most lasting of all plants. Three times it is compared to Lebanon in the promise, Hosea xiv. 5-7. The cedar never rots, worms eat it not. It is not only free from putrefaction itself, but the juice of it preserves other things. Numa's books,* though of paper, yet dipped in the juice of cedar, remained without corruption in the ground 500 years. How shall that God, who always remembers everything, yea, the meanest of his creatures, forget his own variety of expressions and multiplied promises concerning his Sion ?

(6.) In regard it is the seat of his glory. It is 'the branch of his planting, the work of his hands, that he might be glorified,' Isa. lx. 21. His glory would have a brush, if Sion should sink to ruin. He sows her for himself, Hos. ii. 23 ; speaking of the church in the time of the gospel, not to the devil, to sin, to the world, but to his own glory. As husbandmen sow their fields for their own use, to reap from them a fruitful crop ; and therefore till the harvest be in, they take care to make up the breaches, and preserve them from the incursions of beasts. Though God hath an objective glory from all creatures, yet he hath an active glory only from the church. It is Israel, the house of Aaron, and those that fear the Lord, that the psalmist calls upon to render God the praise of the eternity of his mercy, Ps. cxviii. 2-4. He forbids the profane and disobedient world to take his covenant in their mouth, Ps. l. 16. None do, none can truly honour and acknowledge him but the church ; therefore the apostle, in his doxology, appropriates the glory that is to be given to God as the object, to the church as the subject : Eph. iii. 21, 'Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end.' So solemn a wish from so great an apostle, that it *should* be, amounts to a certainty that it *will* be. There cannot be a glory to God in the church throughout all ages, without the continuance of the church in all ages. God will have a revenue of glory paid him during the continuance of

* Sanct. in loc.

the world ; there shall therefore be a standing church during the duration of the world ; while he therefore expects a glory from the midst of his people, he will be a wall of fire round about them, and keep Sion, one where or other, in a posture to glorify him. What is the apostle's motive to this glory ? It is not a remote power, such as can act, but will not ; but a power operative in the church, in doing those things for her which she could never ask, nor think for herself : ver. 20, ' Now to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.' God hath a greater glory from the church than he can have from the world ; he therefore gives her more signal experiments of his power, wisdom, and love, than to the rest of the world. He had a glory from angels, but only as Creator, not as Redeemer, till they were acquainted with his design, and were speculators of his actions in gathering a church in the world. The church therefore was the original of the new glory and praise the angels presented to God : ' Glory in the church by Christ.' Musculus thinks that is added to distinguish it from the Jewish church, which was settled by the ministry of Moses ; as much as to say, God had not so much glory by the tabernacles of Jacob, as he hath by the church as settled by Christ. Or, *by Christ* notes the manner of the presenting our praise, and the ground of the acceptance of our praise. God accepts no glory but what is offered to him by the hand of Christ ; and Christ presents no glory but what is paid him by the church. It is the church, then, and the gospel-church, that preserves the glory of God in the world. If the church therefore ceaseth, the glory of God in the world ceaseth. But since God hath created all for his own glory, separated a church out of the world for his glory, appointed his Son the head of it, that he might be glorified, his church therefore is as dear to him as his glory, and dear to him in order to his glory ; in establishing it, therefore, he establishes his own honour and name. It shall therefore remain in this world to glorify him, afterwards in another to glorify him, and be glorified by him.

(7.) In regard that it is the object of his peculiar affection. Establishment of a beloved object is inseparable from a real affection. By this he secures the spiritual Sion, or gospel-church, both from being forsaken by him, or made desolate by her enemies, because she was *Hephzibah*, Isa. lxii. 4, *my delight*, or, *my will is in her*, as if he had no will to anything but what concerned her and her safety. As men engrave upon their rings the image of those friends that are dearest to them, and as the Jews in their captivity engraved the effigies of their city upon their rings, to keep her in perpetual remembrance, so doth God engrave Sion 'upon the palms of his hands,' Isa. xlix. 16, to which the Holy Ghost seems to allude. He so loves his Israel, that he who will be commanded by none, stoops to be commanded by them in things concerning his sons, Isa. xlv. 10. Not only ask of me what you want, but command me in the things that are to come ; the pleas of my promises of things to come, and your desires to bring them forth as the work of my hand, shall be as powerful a motive to me as a command from a superior is to an obedient inferior ; for it is to things to come, such things that God hath predicted, that he limits their asking, which he calls also here a commanding of him. There was a real love in the first choice ; there is an intenseness of love in the first transaction : Jer. xxxi. 3, ' I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' His love, which had a being from eternity, is expressed by words of more tenderness, when he comes to frame her ; loving-kindness, as if his affection seemed to be increased, when he came to the execution of his counsel. According to the vigour of his immutable love will be the strength of her

immutable establishment. This promise is made, not to the church in general, but to all the families of the spiritual Israel, ver. 1. Men are concerned in honour for that upon which they have placed their affection. Shall there, then, be decays in the kindness of that God, whose glory it is to be immutable? Is it possible this fountain should be frozen in his breast? Was there not a love of good will to Sion to frame her, to pick out their materials when they lay like swine in the confused mass and dirty mire of a corrupt world? Is there not also a love of delight, since he hath refined and beautified her, by imparting to her of his own comeliness, Ezek. xvi. 14. Is it likely this affection should sink into carelessness? and the fruit of so much love be dashed in pieces? Can such tenderness be so unconcerned, as to let the apple of his eye be plucked out? to be a lazy spectator of the pillage of his jewels by the powers of hell? to have the centre of his delight tossed about at the pleasure of men and devils? Shall a mother be careless of her suckling child? How then can that God, whose tenderness to the church cannot be equalled by the bowels of the most compassionate mother to her infants? Surely God is concerned in honour to maintain against a feeble devil, and a decrepid world, that which is the object of his almighty affection.

(8.) In regard of the natural weakness of the church. No generous prince but will think himself bound in honour to support the weaker subject; no tender parent but will acknowledge himself obliged in affection to take a greater care of the weaker than the stronger child. The gardener adds props to the feeblest plants, that are most exposed to the fury of the storms, and have least strength to withstand them. The powers of the world have always been the church's enemies; the wise have set their reason, and the mighty their arms against her; the devil, the god of this world, is so far from being her friend, that Sion hath been the only object of his spite. He contrives only floods to drown her, or mines to demolish her. Her own friends are often so darkened or divided, that they cannot sometimes for ignorance, and will not other times for peevishness, hit upon, and use the right means for her preservation. It is an honourable thing, then, for that God who entitles himself 'the Father of the fatherless,' to shew his own power and grace in her establishment. The fatherless condition of the church is an argument she hath sometimes used to procure the assistance she wanted: Hosea xiv. 3, 'With thee the fatherless finds mercy.' And the weakness of Jacob, urged by the prophet, excited repentance in God, and averted two judgments which were threatened against that people, Amos vii. 2, 3, 5, 6. It is no mean motive to him to help the helpless, this opportunity he delights to take; when there was no man to help, no intercessor to plead, then 'his own arm brought salvation.' When he saw no defenders, but all ravishers, no physicians, but all wonders, then should the Spirit of the Lord lift up a standard, Isa. lix. 16, 19.

To conclude; if Sion, the gospel church, were not of as long a duration as the standing of the world, God would lose the honour of his creation, after the devil, by sin, had made the creatures unuseful for those ends to which God had appointed them by his first institution. The wisdom of God had been blurred, the serpent would have triumphed, the kingdom of God had been dissolved, the enemy would have enjoyed a remediless tyranny, had not God put his hand to the work, and erected a new kingdom to himself out of the ruins of the fall. And since God was pleased to take this course, rather than create a new world, and hath laid the foundation of a new kingdom by drawing some out of that common rebellion the human nature was fallen into, and

that he might do it with honour to himself, hath sent his Son upon that errand, by his blood to bring back man to God, and his Spirit to make men fit for a communion with him, and hath backed his affection to the church with so much cost and pains for her welfare. If, after all this, God should desert his church, the dishonour of God's wisdom, the loss of the fruit of all his cost and pains, the weakness of his affection, or of his power to perform his promise, and the ruin of his glory intended by those methods, would be the issue, which would be attended with the triumph of his revolted creature and greatest enemy. This would be, if God should cease picking out some men for his praise, and keeping up his name and royalty in the earth.

2. It is for the exercise of the offices of Christ that Sion should be established. He is prophet, priest, and king, which are all titles of relation. Prophet implies some to be instructed, a priest some to offer for, and a king some to be ruled; put one relation, and you must necessarily put the other. If there were no church preserved in the world, he would be a nominal prophet without any disciples, a king without subjects, and a priest without suppliants to be atoned by him upon earth. Now Christ is the 'wonderful Counsellor, the everlasting Father,' and 'the government is laid upon his shoulders.' To what end? 'To order and establish the kingdom of God,' Isa. ix. 6, 7. All the strength and vigour he had, as it was from God, so it was intended for God: Ps. lxxx. 17, 'Thou madest the Son of man strong for thyself.' And the reason is, because, though God hath given up the administration of things to Christ, yet he hath not divested himself of his right, nor can; for God is the chief Lord, and the relation of creatures not ceasing, the relation of Lord and Creator cannot cease. And therefore, since the right of God continues, the grant of the uttermost ends of the earth to be the inheritance and possession of Christ, includes not only a gift, but an office, to preserve, protect, establish, and improve his possession for those ends for which he had the grant, and to prevent all that may impair it. As he had a right and strength, by the order of God, to rear it, so he hath an office and power to establish it, as well as to erect it; and Christ is 'the same' in all his offices, 'yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8; the same in credit with God, in faithfulness to his office, the virtue of his blood, the force of his arm, and compassions to bleeding Sion.

(1.) It is his part, as a prophet, to establish it in doctrine. It is his part externally to raise his truth when it lies gasping in the rubbish of error, and refine his worship when it is daubed with superstition and idolatry. Internally to clear the understanding to know his truth, quicken the will to embrace it, rivet the word in the conscience, and inflame the affections to love and delight in it. Certainly the promise of the abiding of his Spirit implies the efficacy of his operation while he abides. He is to provide against the subtilty and rapine of foxlike heretics, that they spoil not the tender vine, Cant. ii. 15; and to furnish the church with gifts for the preserving and increasing her. The perpetual exercise of this prophetic office he promised them, when he gave the apostles a charter for his presence 'to the end of the world,' Mat. xxviii. 20; which was in relation to their ministry and their office of teaching. Since he promised his presence with his ministry to the end of the world, he will have a church to the end of the world, to enjoy the benefit of that promise to be taught by them. It consisted not with the wisdom or faithfulness of Christ to promise a perpetuity to that, if he knew it were to be cut short before the end of the world. And this himself also assures the church of in all its variety of states: Rev. ii. 1, 'These things saith he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.' Not only seven stars at one time, or seven

golden candlesticks in being together, but in all the successions of the church to the consummation of the world. And as he describes himself by this title when he speaks of the church of Ephesus, which was the first state of the church, not only assuring her of his holding her star, and walking by her candlestick, but all the rest that were to follow, so he doth renew the same expression in part when he speaks of the church of Sardis, which is the rising of the church from the apostasy wherein it had been covered in the Thyatirian state: Rev. iii. 1, 'These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars.' The seven spirits of God signifies the gifts for the building and perfecting the church still in the hand of Christ, which should be in a more plentiful way poured out than for some time before, as they were in the first reformation. He is still, therefore, as a prophet, walking in the church in all ages; not only in the first foundation of it by the apostles, but in the reformation of it, after it had been buried in superstition and idolatry. And at the restoration of the church in the world, there shall be 'a pure river of water, as clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb,' Rev. xxii. 1, *i. e.* pure doctrine, without any mud and mixtures.

(2.) It is his part as a priest to establish it in the favour of God, and look to the reparations of his temple. The church is his temple. A temple is the proper seat and the proper care of a priest. He is 'a priest still upon his throne,' Zech. vi. 13, and that for ever. As he hath therefore something to offer, so he hath always some for whom he offers. Who are they but his church? His prayer on earth, John xvii., was but a model or draught of his intercession in heaven; one part of it is for preservation of them 'through the truth' of God, John xvii. 17. The keeping up the gospel in the world, in order to a sanctification of some, is the matter of his intercession, which is one part of his priestly office. And we cannot imagine his plea for his church to be weaker on his throne, it being also a throne of grace, than it was for his enemies when he was upon a cross of suffering. The compassions annexed to his priesthood remain still, Heb. iv. 15. If his office be perpetual, the qualifications necessary to that office are as durable as the office itself, as long as there is any object for their exercise. To what purpose are his compassions, if he should not pity her for whom they were designed, and for whose behoof he was furnished with them? He cannot be faithful to God in his office, if he be not merciful and tender to Sion in her distresses. He certainly pities her as he would himself, were it possible he should be in an infirm condition. He must lose his soul before he can lose his pity; and the church must cease to be his body, before she can cease to be the object of his compassions. He hath the same sentiments now that he had when he called to Paul from heaven, Acts ix. 4. It was not then, Why persecutest thou *mine*, but 'Why persecutest thou *me*?' Nor is it so now; as the relation continues the same, so doth the compassion, so do his sentiments, so do his cares. To what purpose doth he as a priest sit upon a throne of grace, if he did not shew grace to his Sion against the cruel designs of her enemies? As God pities us when he remembers our frame, Ps. ciii. 13, 14, so no question doth Christ, when he remembers Sion's oppressions, as a distressed child is the object of the father's pity. Add to this, that since the death of Christ was one part of his priestly performance, and that the virtue of his sacrifice is as eternal as his priesthood; what a disparagement would it be to him, and the virtue of his death, if ever the world, while it stood, should be void of the fruits of it? There can be no moment wherein it is not valid to expiate the sins of some men, and therefore not a moment wherein the world shall be without a Sion, whose

sins are expiated by it. Should the standard of Sion be snatched away and torn by the powers of darkness, what would become of the glory, what would become of the virtue of the Redeemer's death? Would God consecrate him so solemnly by an oath to be a priest to so little purpose? How could it be for ever, if the execution of that office should be interrupted by the cessation of a church, as long as the world stands upon its pillars? Would it not be an empty title, if the end of it were not performed? We cannot imagine the falling of Sion, but we must question the merit of his death, the truth of his exaltation, the strength of his intercession, the faithfulness of his office, and the sincerity and candour of his compassions.

(3.) It is his part as a king to establish Sion in being, and govern her. The prophets always testified that 'of his government there should be no end.' If the church should cease for one moment in the world, what subjects would he have to govern here? Can he be a king without a kingdom, or a governor without subjects, to bear a voluntary and sincere witness to his name? If he be king in Sion, he will also have a Sion to own him, and a Sion to rule in; not only a conquest of the serpentine brood and infernal powers was promised, but the total and perpetual victory, Gen. iii. 15. 'The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head.' When the head is bruised, there is no more wisdom to guide, or force to spirit the arm and the other members of the body. It was a promise made not only of Christ to man, but of a complete victory to Christ, that he should outwit the serpent's wisdom, and utterly discomfit the serpent's power. If the conquest were not perfect and perpetual, it could not be called a spoiling of principalities and powers, as it is Col. ii. 15, but an interruption or temporary check, whence they might rescue themselves. He is therefore said to 'still the enemy and the avenger,' Ps. viii. 2, * *i. e.* make them utterly silent, not knowing what firm counsels to take, or what successful orders to give. And it being his end to destroy the works of the devil, the destroying the works must be the root of the being and preservation of the church. Did Christ then rise as a conqueror out of the grave, and sit down as king upon his throne, to let the devil and the world run away with the fruits of his victory? Will he be so injurious to himself as to let his throne be overturned by his enemies? and to let the adversary of Sion repossess himself of that which he hath been so powerfully and successfully stripped of? Christ, being king, cannot be chased out of his kingdom, nor wants power to keep it from being utterly wasted. To be the governor of Sion was as much in his first commission as to be her redeemer, Isa. xlix. 10. He was to feed and guide his flock, which is often in Scripture put for ruling. Christ, as king, will never leave beating up the quarters of hell till he hath utterly routed their force, and made the partizans of it his footstool, and thereby established Sion beyond the fears of any tottering. Therefore, when he speaks of the church of Smyrna, which was to have a sore conflict with the devil, and feel the smart of him for ten days, understanding those ten ancient persecutions of the church, he assumes a new title for her encouragement: Rev. ii. 8, 'These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.' I was the first that lifted you and embodied you for the war, and I will be the last to bring up the rear; I was first in raising you, and I will be the last in preserving you. Fear not the terror of those persecutions, though they be to blood and death; I was used so; I was dead, but I am now alive, and I live for my church, to behold her battles, to procure her victory, and to crown those that shall fall in the fight against her enemies. Christ, in encouraging

* I make no scruple to understand the whole psalm of Christ, since the apostle hath interpreted part of it of him, Heb. ii.

them to suffer for him, assures them of the security of a church; the devil should not waste the whole, but cast some of them into prison, not all, and that for their refining: ver. 10, 'The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried.' Christ lives still, and acts as king for the security of Sion, and preserving a generation to serve him, till the time comes that is promised, Rev. xxii. 3, that 'there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it,' and then 'his servants shall serve him' with a full security from all trouble.

3. The foundation of Sion is sure. It is founded upon Christ, the corner stone. Christ is called the foundation, 1 Cor. iii. 11. The apostles are the foundation, Eph. ii. 20. Christ is the foundation personally, the apostles doctrinally; Christ meritoriously, the apostles ministerially; the apostles in regard of the publication of the doctrine, Christ in regard of the efficacy of the doctrine, whereby the church is established.

(1.) The church is engrafted in Christ, united to him, one with him; the parts of it are reckoned as his seed: Ps. xxii. 30, 'A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord as a generation.' As if they had sprung out of his loins, as men naturally did from Adam's; that as Adam was the foundation of their corruption, so shall Christ be the foundation of their restoration. They shall be looked upon as the children of Christ, and Christ as their Father, and, as father and children, legally counted one.

The church is his own body, Eph. v. 29, 30. In loving and establishing the church, he loves and establisheth himself. Whatsoever is implanted in nature as a perfection, is eminently in God. Now, since he hath twisted with our natures a care of our own bodies, this care must be much more in the nature of Christ, because his church is as nearly united to him as our members to the flesh and the bones; and he hath an higher affection to his mystical than we can have to our natural bodies. Christ will no less secure and perfect his own body, than a man would improve the beauty and strength of his natural body, to preserve it from wounds, from being mangled or scarified, unless it be for the security of the whole. If he did not do it, it would be a hatred of his own flesh, which never any man in his right wits was ever guilty of. The eternity of Christ is made the foundation of the church's establishment: Ps. cii. 27, 28, 'Thou art the Son,* and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.' There could be no strength in the argument, without union and communion with him. The church is settled upon him as a foundation, and therefore is of as long a duration as the foundation upon which it stands; the conjunction is so strait, that if one fails, the other must, especially since, as Christ is the head, the church is his fulness, Eph. i. 22, 23. Sion cannot be complete but in him, and Christ cannot be complete without her. A foundation is of little use without a superstructure; a building falls not without a discredit to the foundation upon which it stood. Sion's completeness depends upon the strength of Christ, and Christ's mystical completeness depends upon the stability of Sion; he will not leave himself an imperfect and empty head.

(2.) It is founded upon the covenant: upon that which endures for ever, and shall survive the funeral of the whole world. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the church is founded upon that which shall not pass away, 1 Peter i. 23, 'The word of God,' &c. Not such a word as that whereby he brought forth light in the world, and formed the stars at the creation; a word that engaged him not to the perpetuating of it.† This covenant is more firm than the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth. The stars

* Qu 'same'?—ED.

† Turretin, Sermons, p. 330.

of heaven shall dissolve, the sun shall be turned into darkness, the elements shall change their order for confusion ; but the church, being founded upon an eternal and immutable covenant, shall subsist in the midst of the confusions and flames of the world : Isa. liv. 10, 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my covenant of peace shall not be removed.' It is more established than the world. The apostle clearly intimates it in his commendation of Abraham's faith, when he tells us, 'he looked for a city which hath foundations,' by virtue of the promise of a numerous seed, Heb. xi. 9, 10, as if the world had no foundation in comparison of the church. It is beyond the skill of hell to raze up the foundation, and therefore impossible for it to beat down the superstructure. Adam fell under the strength of the serpent's wit, but he could by no promise lay claim to stability, as the church can by an immutable covenant for her support.

IV. The use. 1. Information.

1. If the church hath a duration and stability, then ordinances and ministry are perpetual. Ministers may be thrust into corners, clapped up in prison, hurried to their graves, but the sepulchres of ministers are not the graves of the ministry. A ministry and a church, ordinances and a church, cannot be separated ; they run parallel together to the end of the world ; for Sion cannot be supposed without divine officers and divine institutions ; the one cannot be established without the other. Christ 'walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,' Rev. ii. 1, in the seven states of the church, to the end of the world.* As there are seven states of the church, so there are seven stars in the hand of Christ for all those states ; the ministry have the same support, the same guardian as the church herself. What was in the Ephesian and primitive state, is also in the Sardian state, the state of the church rising from corruption of doctrine and ordinances : Rev. iii. 1, 'These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars.' Christ hath still stars to shine, and seven spirits to gift them ; *hath* at present, not *had* ; *hath* in the state we are, which seems to be the end of that Sardian state. It is true, the church is in a wilderness condition, and hath been so for above twelve hundred years ; but hath she yet seen her funeral ? No ; she hath a place for her residence, and food for her nourishment, and both provided for her by that God that framed her, by that God that stood by her in the pangs of her travail, and sheltered her man-child from the fury of her enemies : Rev. xii. 6, 'And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.' They should feed her ; she is not starved in the desert, she hath manna to comfort her, her caterer to provide her food, and some to administer the banquet of the word and sacraments to her. For any member of Sion to deny a ministry, and deny ordinances, and therefore to neglect them, is to conclude her dead in a grave, and not living in a desert, utterly famished and not fed. Though there be a smoke in the temple, a cloud and obscurity, the truths and ordinances of God not so clear, so efficacious as they have been, as some understand Rev. xv. 8, or as they shall be, yet there is a temple still. A smoke in the temple supposeth a temple standing, and ordinances in it ; the obscurity of a thing nulls not the being of it, nor a cloud upon the sun the stability and motion of it. He that denies a church, a ministry, and divine ordinances in it, must first charge Christ with falsehood, when he promised to be with them to the end of the world : Mat. xxviii. 19, 20, 'Alway, even to the end of the world.' Not to sustain their particular persons to the end of the world, but

* I do not question but that the whole is prophetic ; it would not else be called mystery, as it is Rev. i. 20, were it meant of those particular churches.

their doctrine, in a succession of some to teach and baptize by virtue of authority from him ; for to that doth the promise and command refer, and not unto the continuance of the apostolical dignity, or of their extraordinary gifts of miracles, but the duration of their standing work till the top-stone were laid with the loud acclamations of grace, grace. The church shall no more want a ministry in the desert, than she wanted a prophet in Babylon.

2. The doctrine of the establishment of every member of Zion is clearly confirmed. He that establisheth Zion counts up every man that was born in her. Every child of Zion is in the same state and under the same promise as Zion herself. The promise of stability to Zion is not to be understood of the firmness of her palaces, but the duration of her inhabitants ; as when God is said to build a house, it is not to be understood of the rearing the walls, but increasing the family : Exod. ii. 21, ' God made them houses,' *i. e.* gave them children. Every renewed man, every one truly born in Zion, stands upon the same foundation of the covenant, hath the same charter with Zion herself, and therefore upon a surer ground than any particular society of men in the world : Ps. cxxv. 1, ' They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever.' He is upon a better foundation of security than the church at Ephesus or Smyrna, Pergamos, or Sardis, which have lost their footing, and their places know them no more. A believer enjoys other privileges with Zion ; but the patent runs here for his stability in the favour of God, and runs high by removing all fears in the negative, ' cannot be removed,' and confirming all confidence in the affirmative, ' abides for ever.' No name writ upon God's hand, no name presented on Christ's breast, shall be razed out, no fruit of his death shall be lost, no devil shall steal from him any part of his purchase. As he hath blood enough to redeem them, so he hath power enough to preserve them ; the same blood that is the cement of Zion, the same hand that built her, the same head that influenceth her, secures every one of her true-born children. They are all in the same posture and upon the same foundation with Zion herself.

3. How great is the folly of Zion's enemies ! They judge of her by the weakness of her worldly interest, and not by the almightiness of her guardian. They stand against a God, that, in decreeing the stability of Zion, decreed the ruin of her opposers, and can with as much ease effect it as resolve it. The stone which is the foundation of this kingdom shall break in pieces the image of all worldly glory, the policy of all worldly wisdom, and the force of all worldly power, Dan. ii. 35, 44, 45. It shall make the mountains of the world as a level, and dust underneath it. Chaff may as well stop the wind, and force it to another quarter ; stubble may as well quench the fury of the flames, as the enemies of Zion be victorious over the God of Zion. As he hath a ' fire in Zion ' to warm her, so he hath a ' furnace in Jerusalem ' to consume her enemies, Isa. xxxi. 9 ; a fire to burn his people's dross, but a furnace to dissolve his enemies' force. Pharaoh is an example to all generations, to warn them not to struggle with those whom God resolves to patronise. How did he further his own destruction by his hardness, and the deliverance of the oppressed by his fury ! How often is the violence of her enemies the occasion of the manifestation of God's glory, and the settling Zion's security ! Had not Pharaoh been so furious, God had not manifested the glory of his power, nor his Israel enjoyed so miraculous a safety. It is true, the church is weak, but the arm that holds her is the strongest in heaven and earth. Her outward interest is small, but her interest is twisted with that of her Lord. An enemy shall find more mischief from mud walls, under the protection of a valiant arm, than from stone walls under the guard of an infant. How foolish is it for a man to think to break a rock with his

fist for hurting his shins, whereby he bruise his hands as well as his legs ! How foolish is it for men to beat the bushes about a lion's den, whereby they will be sure to rouse him ! God dwells in Sion. From thence he 'roars' to the 'shaking of heaven and earth,' the powers of the world, when he will manifest himself to be 'the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel,' Joel iii. 16.

4. What a ground is here for prayer ! This sets an edge upon prayer. No petition can more comfortably, no petition can more confidently, be put up, than for Sion's establishment. Prayers for particular persons, or for ourselves, may want success ; but supplications for Sion never miscarry. They have the same foundation for an answer that Sion had for her stability, viz., the promise of God. They are agreeable to that affection which shall never be removed from her. How believingly may we cry out, 'Be it unto Sion according to thy word !' There is no fear of a repulse. Whatsoever God denies, he will not deny that for which he hath so often engaged himself. It may be for the good of the church that so great a person as Paul should lie in chains, and his fetters conduce 'to the furtherance of the gospel,' Philip. i. 12 ; but it can never be for the interest of Sion, or for the interest of Sion's God, that she should be crushed between the teeth of the lions, and that which he hath redeemed by the blood of his Son, be a prey to the jaws of the devil. God hath entitled Sion by the name of 'a city not forsaken,' Isa. lxii. 12. And as we have his promise for her settlement, so we have his command for our earnestness : ver. 7, 'And give him no rest, till he doth establish Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth.' And he prescribes us to back that by our prayers, which he had promised : ver. 1, 'For Jerusalem's sake, I will not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness.' Our desires in this case are suited to his resolves, and run in the same line with his immutable decree ; he will have no rest in himself, nor he would have no rest from us, till this be accomplished. We cannot call upon God with a greater confidence for anything than for that church that shall outlive the funeral of the world, and survive the frame of nature that shall lie in ashes.

5. What a strong ground is here for trust ! Look not so much upon the condition of Sion's walls as upon her foundation ; not upon her present posture, as upon her promise-charter ; not upon her as a weak vine, but under the hand of the Highest as the vine-dresser. Look not upon the feebleness of the flock, but upon the care of the shepherd ; nor upon the fierceness of the lions, but upon the strength and affection of her guardian.

(1.) Let not our faith rest upon appearances. Flesh will then make a wrong judgment of God. Providences are various, and should our faith be guided only by them, it would have a liveliness one moment, and faint the next. As the promise is the stability of the church, so it is only the stability of our faith. The authority of the word is the life of our faith, and not the sense of any particular providence in the world. A faith built upon protecting providences is a sensitive faith ; a faith built upon the promise is a spiritual faith.

(2.) Yet the experiences God hath given us hitherto of the continuance of the church may be called in to bear witness to the truth of the promise. He hath before conducted his Israel into Canaan, when Pharaoh meditated their utter ruin, or their continuance under his chains. He fed them with manna, and watered them with a rock in a desert, that afforded no earthly assistance. The preserving the vine could never be ascribed to the vine itself, in which there is no strength, nor to the foxes, in whom there is no pity ; but to the keeper of the vineyard. We have reason, therefore, to trust God, but not

at all to trust man. Is it from man or from God that the church hath subsisted so long in the world, a little flock in the midst of many wolves, among enemies more numerous than her friends? What a small number hath the church had in any age to mate the multitude of her enemies, what wisdom to countermine their policy, and what power to repel their force? The church is not weaker now than it hath been. The sons of Sion were always sheep. Sheep have not the strength of lions to resist, nor the swiftness of eagles to fly away from danger. The danger cannot be greater than it hath been. There were always dragons that spat out their venom, and lions that opened their mouths against her. The devil never wanted diligence, nor the world enmity, to overturn her. Could she for one moment have subsisted in the midst of so many furies, had not God been her shield and glory? Call to mind how often God hath healed her diseases and bound^{up} her wounds. Let us rest in that promise, which hath so often been made good by his power, which he hath in many ages displayed upon as great occasions of danger as Sion can be in. Let us live believingly under his wings, and fear not our own weakness or our enemies' strength.

(3.) We have greater ground of confidence than the church of Israel had. In the day of Israel's trouble by Shalmanezzer, the prophet comforts the church in her anguish by the consideration of the Messiah, who was to assume the government, though many years after, Isa. viii. 22, ix. 1, 6. Shall a promise, that was to stay so many ages for performance, be a ground of trust and confidence to a tottering church then? And shall not the staggering church have more ground to rest, since the Messiah is made the head of the corner, and hath the keys of hell and death delivered to him? What a base thing is distrust, then, against so many assurances of stability, and the experience of a multitude of ages. Grasp the promise, plead it earnestly, shew God his written word which he hath sent from heaven; he never yet disowned it, nor ever will. Methinks the voice, God is able to deliver Sion, sounds too much of distrust. If we know no more than God's power, we know not so much as the devil doth; he knows his power, and he knows his promise. Let us therefore first eye the promise, which God loves, and the devil fears, and then call in his power to back his word.

(4.) Regard not man. Too much eye upon him implies too little upon God, as if God's word were not enough to create and support a confidence, without the buttresses of secular strength. All dependence on man is either upon a broken reed, that cannot support itself, or a piercing reed, that wounds instead of healing, Isa. xxxvi. 6. It is a dishonour to God, and provokes him to lengthen a misery and retard a deliverance. The nearer Sion comes to a final settlement, the more God will act by himself, either without instruments, or in a more signally spiriting instruments, that himself shall be more visible in them than themselves. 'The Highest himself shall establish her.' If he be the Highest, he is fit to be trusted by us; if he will do it himself, it is fit we should couple none with him. The nearer the time comes wherein God will appear himself, the more we should depend upon him himself; the exercise of faith should be strongest, when the promise, the object of faith, is nearest its meridian. Let us be more careful to keep our faith from sinking, and let God alone to keep his church from sinking.

Use 2. Of comfort. The church's patent is singular; the greatest worldly society could never shew the fellow of it: 'The Highest himself shall establish her.' There is not such a clause in the settlement of any nation. Why should we be afraid, then, of the joint conspiracy of men or devils: He that hath laid the foundation, can and will preserve the superstructure, not only because he formed it, but because he hath promised it. When Christ would

reveal to John the future condition and conflicts of the church to the end of the world, he appears like a conqueror, with all the ensigns of authority and power about him, Rev. i. 13-16. He hath 'eyes like a flame,' to pierce his enemies; 'feet like brass,' to crush them; 'a two-edged sword out of his mouth,' to pierce them; and this while he is in the midst of the seven candlesticks; the several alterations and periods of the church to the end of the world, to preserve and cleanse them.

1. Here is comfort in the confusions and troubles of the world. The shaking of heaven and earth were the harbingers of the appearance of Christ for redemption, and laying the corner-stone of Sion, Hag. ii. 7. The same methods will be used when he shall come to lay the top-stone, and complete all the fruits of redemption, Luke xxi. 25, 26, 28. The confusion of the world is the restoration of Sion. A storm or rushing mighty wind preceded the plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon the apostles, for the blowing the gospel into every corner, Acts ii. 2. Never were the disciples in so hopeless a condition as before the resurrection of Christ, the ground of the church's stability. They then expected to see his face no more. What commotions and thunders are described in the Revelation before the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and God pitch his tabernacle among men! But he suffers not those commotions to be raised in the world by the ministering angel till the servants of God be sealed in the forehead, for their preservation in those confusions which shall be the ruin of their enemies, Rev. vii. 2, 3. The ark may shake with the motion of the oxen, but it cannot fall. Noah's ark may be tossed by the waves that drown the world, but not sink, and at last 'rest upon the mountains of Ararat,' Gen. viii. 4, of אָרָר and רָטַט, *i.e.* the curse of terrors, the removal of fears. Christ came not to the disciples but in the fourth watch of the night, and that when the ship was tossed by the waves, and was tugging against a contrary wind, Mat. xiv. 24, 25. It is no hardship for Sion to be in a boat beaten by the sea, when Christ walks upon the waters, and bids her 'be of good cheer,' saying, 'It is I, be not afraid.' An earthquake preceded the deliverance of Paul and Silas out of prison, Acts xvi. 26; and lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, earthquake, and great hail, shall accompany the opening of the temple of God in heaven, and the manifestation of the ark of the testament in that temple, Rev. xi. 19.

2. Here is comfort in persecutions. Persecution is yet for a while the lot of the church; a sea and a wilderness are yet the passage to Canaan. The first promise to Abraham of a numerous seed, was with the comparing it to 'the dust of the earth,' Gen. xiii. 16; dust that is trampled upon, dust that is removed by a puff of wind. But the next was by comparing it to 'the stars in heaven,' Gen. xv. 5, that are bright, and fixed, and have their orderly motions. Before the introduction of the Philadelphian state of the church, or brotherly state (which it is likely we are not far from), the promise of glory to them that overcome intimates a combat, and the promise of Christ's confessing the names of such before his Father implies a time before the period of the Sardian state, wherein the church is to bear a signal testimony to the truths of Christ in the way of a conflict, Rev. iii. 5. The glorious state of the church at the resurrection of the witnesses shall be preceded by such a calamity as shall be the terror of the godly, and the triumph of an enemy devoted to a sudden and unexpected destruction, Rev. xi. 9-12.

Persecutions make way for Sion's stability. Never was she firmer and purer than in the time of the apostles, and those immediately following them, when the witnesses for the truth, to the loss of their blood, were as numerous as the survivors. She was then, when the flood was cast out against her, 'clothed with the sun, and crowned with a crown of twelve stars,'

Rev. xii. 1, 2. Such troubles now may dim the outward splendour, but increase her inward spirit, and refine her to that temper she was in in the primitive ages of Christianity. Prosperity was never much the church's friend. Poison was flung in her dish when she gained an earthly felicity, and the fondness of great ones. Her stability consists not in this, but in the graces and spirit of Christianity. That which established her head established the body. Her Captain ascended not from mount Olivet till he had suffered on mount Calvary. The church was never described so glorious in her outward attire as her greatest enemy, that is clothed in scarlet and decked with gold, Rev. xvii. 4. Sion's glory is internal : Ps. xlv. 13, 'The King's daughter is all glorious within.' All those persecutions that are yet to come upon her shall not demolish her walls. The rigours of her enemies, and the treasons of her pretended friends, have not yet expelled her out of the earth. She hath not yet sunk, though her masts have been sometimes cut close to the deck, and her visible pilots flung overboard into the sea ; and shall she sink when she is not far from an entrance into the harbour ? She hath been ' a brand plucked out of the fire,' Zech. iii. 2. She was plucked out of the furnace of Babylon, and shall be plucked out of the furnace of mystical Babylon. Though she should be mown down as grass by the scythe of her enemies, yet the presence of Christ shall be as rain upon her, to make her sprout and spread after all her afflictions, Ps. lxxii. 6. Though she had been in the midst of the fire, she never yet was, nor ever will be, consumed. She hath had joy in her disgraces, and greatness by her flames. She hath always had a God to inspire her with vigour, to sustain her weakness, and prop her by his arm, and hath often swam to a safe harbour in a tide of her own blood. Is not that God still a sufficient defence, and the promise a sufficient charter against the violence of the world : 'The Highest himself shall establish her ;' himself by his own arm, and himself by his own methods.

3. Here is comfort in the deepest designs of her enemies : 'The Highest himself shall establish her.'

If he be the Highest, and employs himself as the Highest, there is none so high as to overtop him, none so high as to outwit him. Though their union be never so close, and their projects never so deep, yet God's being with the church is curb enough for them, and comfort enough for Sion : Isa. viii. 9, 'Associate yourselves together, O ye people, &c. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought ; speak the word, and it shall not stand ; for God is with us.' God's presence with Sion blows away all. God was with the ark in its captivity, and made it victorious in its chains. It crippled Dagon, the Philistines' idol, 1 Sam. v. 4, and made them return it to their disgrace, which they thought they had seized upon to their honour. While God is a strength to the poor, 'the branch of the terrible shall be brought low, and their blast be but as a storm against a wall,' Isa. xxv. 4, 5. He can hasten their ruin by their own subtilty, and catch them in their own net, Ps. xxxv. 8 ; or he can turn them to glorify the church as much as they hindered her, Isa. xxv. 3. They are sometimes compared to bees, Ps. cxviii. 12, Isa. vii. 18 ; and he can make them afford honey as well as a sting. They are bees for their wrath, and bees for their weakness, and many times bees for her profit. Sometimes he makes 'the house of Jacob as fire, and the house of Esau as stubble before him,' Obad. 18. It is not more natural to the serpent's seed to spite the church, than it is natural to God to protect her ; their malice cannot engage them so much in attempts against her, as God's promise engageth him in the defence of her. What can weakness do against strength, folly against wisdom, hell against heaven, and a fallen Lucifer against the highest God ?

4. Here is comfort to expect the glory of the church : 'The Highest himself

shall establish her.' 'The mountain of the Lord's house shall be lifted up on the top of the mountains,' Isa. ii. 2. In the last days it shall be more glorious than any mountain dignified by God : above mount Sinai, where the law was given, the terrestrial mount Sion, where the temple was built ; mount Moriah, where Abraham had a type of the death and resurrection of Christ ; mount Horeb, where Moses by prayer discomfited Amalek ; and mount Pisgah, where Moses had a prospect of Canaan. Abraham's conquest of the four kings, Gen. xiv., seems to be a figure of the church's victories, when the captive *Lots* should be rescued, and Sodom itself should be something better for Sion. Then shall Christ meet her as King of Salem, King of Peace, with the blessing of the most high God. Then shall he, as he did at the feast in Cana, turn the church's water into wine. 'Idols shall be utterly abolished,' Isa. ii. 18 ; dross and mixtures in doctrine and worship purged out : Rev. xxii. 1, 'The river of the water of life shall be as clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God, and of the Lamb ;' 'the everlasting gospel preached,' Rev. xiv. 6 ; called *everlasting*, because it shall never more be clouded and obscured by the foolish inventions of men. 'There shall be no more sea,' Rev. xxi. 1. The troubles of Sion, signified by a stormy sea, shall cease, and 'a new heaven and a new earth' be created. There shall be multitude of conversions : Rev. xi. 15, 'The kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Christ.' The breath of the Lord shall come in to many, and make them 'stand upon their feet,' Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10. There shall be a greater presence of God in ordinances, for the earth 'shall shine with his glory,' Ezek. xliii. 2. Holiness shall sparkle in her, for 'the glory of the Lord shall be upon her,' Rev. xxi. 11. His holiness to purify her, and his power to protect her. Persecutions without and divisions within shall cease. Satan shall be bound, his force restrained ; he shall not wander about with his cloven foot, Rev. xx. 3. The 'sea of glass,' which was mingled with fire, with the fire of worldly persecutions, with the fire of intestine animosities, shall be as 'clear as crystal,' Rev. xv. 2, Rev. xxii. 1. He will then have magistrates no longer carrying on the interest of the god of this world, but the interest of the church, whom he calls his princes, Ezek. xlv. 8 ; his, because set up by a more immediate providence ; his, because acting designedly and intentionally for his glory ; no more pinching his people, and making a prey of his Sion, but laying down their crowns at the foot of his throne ; and, to complete all, there shall be a perpetuity in this spiritual prosperity ; only between the beginning and completing it, Satan shall be let loose, but for a little season, Rev. xx. 3 ; and after this it shall not have one blow more from hell, but the devil must for ever give over nibbling at her heel. Now the church never yet found such a state suitable to those promises and predictions. Some great thing remains to be accomplished, which the world hath not yet seen, nor the church experienced ; but that truth that will not lie, that truth which cannot lie, has assured it : 'The mystery of God shall be finished,' Rev. x. 7. The church hath hitherto been gasping in the fire and in the water. She has lived, but as wrapped in a winding-sheet. The saints under the altar have cried a long time for the vengeance of the temple to recompense their blood. There is a time when this Lazarus, that hath lain begging at the door of the rich and mighty, shall be mounted up to a better state. Sion shall enjoy a resurrection, and fling off all badges of a funeral, for 'the Highest himself shall establish her.'

Third use of exhortation.

1. Take heed of apostatising from Sion ; from the doctrine and worship of Sion.

If God shall establish her, stability is not to be found out of her. To

depart from her, is to leave a firm rock to find security in a quicksand ; to leap out of a stout ship in a storm, to expect a preservation in the waves ; to turn our backs upon heaven, to seek ease in the bowels of hell. The altar at Damascus is cast down, and Jeroboam's altar is demolished, when that at Jerusalem stood. To stay in Sion, is to be exposed to the gunshot of men and devils ; to run from her, is to seek to the devil for protection, and run into the mouth of all the artillery of God, that is set for the establishment of Sion. If we are Christians, no force nor violence should separate us from her:

2. Let us love Sion. There is nothing the Scripture uses more as an argument to separate our affections from the world than the uncertainty and fading nature of it. The perpetuity, then, of the church should be a motive to place our affections there, where they shall never want an object, and which we cannot love without loving her head and her establisher. The Jews in Babylon would rather forget themselves than their city and temple, Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6. Our affections to gospel Sion should be more tender, since God hath poured out more of his Spirit upon her, and she is more amiable in his eye. That which the Jews so much affected is perished. But the true Sion is eternal, and shall flourish for ever. The Highest himself hath an establishing affection to her. Let our affections to her equal the malice of the enemies against her, since we have greater incentives to love her than they can have to hate her. While others cry, 'Raze, raze it even to the ground,' let us at least testify our affections, and if we have not her standing walls to love, let us not estrange our tenderness from 'her very dust,' Ps. cii. 14. There is a pleasure to be taken in her stones, because they shall be again set in their place, a favour to be shewn to her dust, because it shall be again compacted and enjoy a resurrection. For the Highest that hath promised to establish her, will not desert her in her ruins: ver. 16, 'When the Lord shall build up Sion, he shall appear in glory.' We have therefore more ground to favour her dust than to admire the proudest palaces.

3. Let us desire the establishment of Sion more than our own private establishment.

It is the sign of a gracious spirit, to 'look not only on his own things, but the things of others,' Philip. ii. 4. And what things of others should be regarded, if the things of Christ and his spouse be overlooked? No private person hath any promise of establishment but as he is a denizen of Sion, as one born in her. In desiring therefore the welfare of Sion, we wish and make way for the establishing of ourselves ; our interests are common with hers. Her prosperity therefore should be the first and last of our wishes. When we wish the stability of Sion, we wish the honour of God, the continuance of his worship, the glorifying his name which is deposited in that cabinet. The glory of God cannot flourish if the church perish. How base then are those, that if they can swim in a worldly prosperity, care not if the church be drowned in tears and blood ; that clothe themselves and regard not her nakedness ; that provide an earthly Canaan for themselves, and care not what desolate desert Sion sits weeping in !

4. Let us endeavour the establishment of Sion. It is a grateful thing to a prince to favour his favourite. Let us be as forward to enlarge her territories, as the devil and his instruments are to increase the suburbs of hell. The Highest himself will establish her by himself ; we must therefore take those methods which are agreeable to the chief preserver. A compliance with the enemies of God was never the way to secure the interest of Sion. A divine work in a divine way will meet with divine assistance. To contribute to the establishment of Sion is a work honourable in itself, since it is

the work of God himself; it is an imitation of the highest pattern. In this we are associates and co-workers with God. For the Highest himself shall establish Sion.

A DISCOURSE UPON THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.—Exod. XV. 9, 10.

AN anniversary commemoration of a memorable deliverance falling upon this day, hath caused a diversion of my thoughts, to look back not only upon a mercy never to be forgotten, but to look forward to that deliverance which is to come, parallel to this in the text. Israel was a type of the church, Pharaoh a type of the church's enemies in all ages of the world, both of the spiritual enemy Satan, and of the temporal, his instruments.

The deliverance was a type of the deliverance that Christ wrought upon the cross by his blood; also of that Christ works upon his throne, the one from the reign of sin, the other from the empire of antichrist.

This was the exemplar of all the deliverances the church was to have. As the Assyrian should 'lift up a staff against Jerusalem, after the manner of Egypt,' so the Lord should lift his rod up for them 'upon the sea, after the manner of Egypt,' when 'the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing,' Isa. x. 26, 27, when the power of the enemies shall be destroyed by the strength of Christ. The Lord himself makes it his pattern in those victories he is to gain for his people. When he calls upon his arm to 'awake as in the ancient days,' when he 'cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, and made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over,' Isa. li. 9–11, then 'the redeemed of the Lord shall come with singing unto Sion;' the song of Moses, while they stand upon a sea of glass, a brittle, frail, and stormy world, Rev. xv. 3. And our Redeemer makes this his pattern and rule when he comes to tread the wine-press in wrath, and make them drunk with his fury, that then he would 'remember the days of old, Moses and his people, when he divided the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name,' Isa. lxiii. 1, 2, 11, that his power may be as glorious in the latter as it was in the former, and all deliverances of the church from the beginning to the end be knit together to be an everlasting matter of praise to his name.

This historical narration is to have a more universal accomplishment; the deliverance from Egypt is promised to be fulfilled a second time, and God would act the same part over again, as also their deliverance from Og king of Bashan, after the ascension of Christ: Ps. vi. 22, 'The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people from the depths of the sea.' This is after he had ascended, ver. 18; when he came to 'wound the head of his enemies,' ver. 21. So Isa. xi. 15, 'The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams; and make men go over dry-shod.' Nilus with its seven streams was the glory of Egypt, and Rome with its seven hills is the glory of the papacy, Rev. xvii. 9. So