

power of God going along with such constant endeavours ; at length the diligent hand may make thee rich. The grace that dwelt in the grandmother Lois, in the mother Eunice, dwelt afterward in their little son Timothy. (2 Tim. i. 5.) Though God is not tied by any bond of nature, yet fervent prayer is of a high esteem in the sight of God. The use of means directed by God, is a hopeful sign of mercy intended : where God chooseth to the end, he ordains to the means. He hath chosen us to be holy, that we might be glorious. (Eph. i. 4, 11.) However God deal with you in that particular request, yet be sure your care and pains will not lose a signal reward. Your prayers shall return into your own bosom ; and, I tell thee, God watcheth over such a family in a way of mercy and peace. His eye of grace is toward thee ; his holy hand will uphold thee ; his heart will bless thee. Unto his good pleasure commit thyself, and wait the success ; go on and prosper, thou blessed of the Lord.

SERMON IX.

BY THE REV. CHRISTOPHER NESSE,*

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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERS OF A SOUL'S SINCERE LOVE TO CHRIST ? AND HOW MAY THAT LOVE TO HIM BE KINDLED AND INFLAMED ?

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.—
Ephesians vi. 24.

THESE words may well be treated on without much preface, there being nothing in them which speaks any dependence upon or connexion with any thing that went before. Some form of benediction we find used by this great apostle, at the conclusion of every epistle ; (Rom. xvi. 24 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 23, 24 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 14 ; Gal. vi. 18 ;) and accordingly, having driven his excellent design, in this to the church of Ephesus, to a full period or issue, he first makes an affectionate address to God, and to the Mediator, in their behalf : " Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ ; "

* The name of the author of each sermon in this volume was not given till the publication of the fourth edition in 1677, some years prior to the death of the learned editor, Dr. Samuel Annesley. In that edition the author of the ninth sermon is printed MR. NEST. But in that age, amazing variations were discernible in writing the names of individuals ; a defect for which Dr. Edmund Calamy endeavoured to find a remedy in reference to the Nonconformists in 1727, by the publication of his celebrated " Continuation of the Account of silenced Ministers," &c. As, however, neither he, nor any other Dissenting historian, has, in the enumeration of Christopher Nesse's works, mentioned this sermon as a part of them, I should have felt some hesitation in ascribing its authorship to him, had not the peculiarities of NESSE's style been impressed on the whole discourse, in characters too palpable to be mistaken.—EDIT.

(verse 23;) and then leaves his apostolical benediction upon them: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:" (verse 24:) or, "The blessing of the eternal God be upon all the sincere-hearted Christians among you;" for so I look upon the latter words of the verse as a periphrasis of all real Christians; love to Christ being as essential to the Christian, as the rational soul is to the man. The only difficulty in the words, that will require our stay, is to inquire what is meant by *εν αθαρσια*, "in sincerity;" some refer it to the *χαρις*, "grace," mentioned at the beginning of the verse; as if it had been read, *εις αθαρσιαν*, "unto incorruption," or "to bring them to eternal life," or "until they come to a state of immortality:" so, many the ancients, and of the modern interpreters, Beza, Tremellius, and of others.

Others read it in conjunction with the "love of the Lord Jesus Christ;" making it a qualification or a discriminating note of that love, which is *sound, real, and sincere*, from that which is but *pretended, counterfeit, and easy to be corrupted* by every difficulty and temptation. And, accordingly, they translate, some in *incorruptione*; others, *absque*; a third sort, *amore non vitiato nec culpato*: all to the same sense with our English translation, "in sincerity."

There are others who consider this phrase apart by itself; some explaining it by purity of heart and conversation, others as denoting thereby the "duration of love," *tam prosperis quam adversis*, or "both in good and bad times." Piscator makes it a distinct branch of the apostle's prayer; as if he had said, "Grace be with all them," &c., "and life eternal;" taking no notice of the preposition that is added, and varies the construction. It is the conjecture of a learned divine, that the apostle, in adding this clause, hath some reflection on the Gnostics, who had mingled themselves with the Christians of Ephesus, and were, whatever they pretended, neither pure in their love to Christ, having mixed his doctrine with abominable corruptions, nor yet sincere and lasting therein, being ready, upon every blast of persecution that did arise, to deny him, and apostatize from him. I shall for the present, with Musculus, leave the matter indifferent, not only which of the two first, but of all the other fore-mentioned, opinions is fixed upon, finding no cause, so far as concerns my present purpose, to be peremptory in either; the apostle doubtless meaning none else by "lovers of Christ," but such whose hearts were sincerely and entirely affected to him, whether he intended to characterize them any further by *εν αθαρσια*, or no, which, I presume, might easily be manifested from other parallel places, where this grace is mentioned and understood properly, having no additional qualification made thereto; (1 Cor. xvi. 22; John xiv. 15, 23; xxi. 15—17; 1 Peter i. 8;) and from the design of the words themselves; for certainly he would not so solemnly have entitled the rotten-hearted hypocrites, that did only pretend love to Christ, unto the benediction of the great and blessed God. And if that stand good, we have enough for our purpose; and more need not be contended for.

Let this suffice, then, for their meaning. The subject-matter of them, whether you look to the first clause or the last, is very noble, and might

well deserve a large consideration ; but I am confined to this single use of them, which is, to make them the foundation of these two cases of conscience :—

What are the genuine characters of a soul's sincere love to Christ ? And how may that love to him be kindled and inflamed ?

And there are but two or three things that I desire to suggest, and then we shall immediately begin to treat upon them in their order.

1. Let it be considered, that there is a vast difference between these cases, and such others as do refer only to lower duties. When we inquire after the sincerity of our love to Christ, it is all one as if we were upon the search whether we are Christians, yea or not ; and whether, consequently, our portion doth lie in the divine promises or threatenings ; and what is our immediate duty, that, all other set aside, we must attend unto. And, again, when we seek for directions to help us unto the love of Christ, our inquiry is not, how we may order this or that inferior action, but how we may attain to saving religion and Christianity ; how we may escape the great damning sin of the world, and entitle ourselves to the love of God and Christ, and to all the rare privileges which belong to the communion of saints ; in a word, to the grace of God here, and to eternal life hereafter. (See 1 Cor. ii. 9 ; James i. 12 ; ii. 5 ; John xiv. 21, 23.)

2. Let it be considered, that it is not the distinct resolution of these cases that will be of final advantage to any person, unless there be added to the former an impartial soul-searching examination of themselves ; and to the latter, as the case shall require, a conscientious practice ; the resolutions given to cases of conscience about the right performance of duties being nothing else but the bare providing the food or physic ; and again the discoveries of men's states thereby, being but the presenting looking-glasses to them ; neither of which are effectual, or do any good but to such as faithfully use them.

3. Let me humbly mind you, that the more uncertainty you are at, touching your estates, when you have examined them by the CHARACTERS, the more diligence you are concerned to use in the practice of the DIRECTIONS. And let me add this, that where you cannot undeniably and demonstratively conclude the sincerity of your love, which I think few in comparison on this side of heaven can, there you must never lay by the advice about the last case ; no, not although your probabilities should be great : it being at the worst but an easy and sweet trouble to be still doing this great work over again, whereas it is irrecoverably dangerous and desperate, upon presumption that we have done it already, to leave it wholly neglected : and I beseech you, remember this useful rule,—that in all trials, which Christians make about grace, it is safer to want credulity than to be over-hasty therein.

The cases are two, and very fit to follow each other in the order that is given to them. I begin with the first.

CASE I.

What are the genuine characters of a soul's sincere love to Christ ?
And in order to the resolution thereof, I must premise these several

PROPOSITIONS.

PROP. I. *That there is a great deal of difference between love, as it is seated in the will or rational appetite, and the same act or principle of love as seated in the sensitive.**—In the former, it is a settled, rational, uniform, and deliberate motion, co-incident with the very natural act of the will itself; to love, as the great schoolman notes, being nothing else but *intensivè velle*, “to will intensely,” either person or thing. The motion of the will towards the object, as good and desirable, and the earnest embracing thereof,—this is rational love. And according to the various aspect which it hath thereto, either as present or absent, perfect or imperfect, it is called love of desire, or fruition, dependence, or complacency: and if the object be such as can or doth reciprocate affection, then it is friendship, or *amor amicitiae* [“the love inherent in friendship.”] But now take love, as it is an affection properly so called, and seated in the lower faculties of the soul; and so there is a great variety and inequality in its motions, much easier to be felt than expressed. Sometimes the soul is in a kind of ecstasy, rapt above itself; and then by and by it is flat and dull again. I note this first, for this reason,—that you may understand what kind of love it is that our inquiry doth proceed upon, namely, rational love; it being, as a judicious divine hath often observed, “not so safe for Christians to try their states by the passionate motions of grace in the lower parts of the soul, or the affections, as by the more equal and uniform actings thereof in the will itself,”† the *το ἡγεμονικόν*, “commandress” of the soul.

PROP. II. *The acts of the will, in specie morali, derive their goodness or viciousness partly from the nature of the object upon which they are fixed.*—I do not assert this to be the only ground, whence they are concluded good or evil; for the principle, and the end, and sometimes the degree, of the act are all necessary thereto; but only that this is *one thing* necessary. Thus the willing of God, or any of those things which are in a direct order to his glory, is that [which] we call “the grace of love;” as, on the other side, when the will moveth towards any thing which standeth in opposition thereto,—this is that [which] we call “sinful concupiscence.”

PROP. III. *It is not barely the object, in itself considered, but as clothed with its proper excellences that agree to it and all its necessary relations, which the will in its motions must have respect unto, before any of those motions can truly be said to be gracious.*—For the nature of grace lies not in the act or motion of the will, simply and nakedly considered, but as it is suited and proportioned to the excellences of the object, and those relations which do inseparably belong thereto. For instance: *to delight in God*; it is not every act of delight which the soul may have upon the apprehension of him, such as a bare philosophical conception of God may sometimes raise the heart unto: but when

* *Voluntas nihil aliud est, quam intellectus extensus ad habendum et faciendum id quod cognoscit.*—SCALIGER *Exercit.* “The will is nothing more than the understanding extended to have and to do that of which it takes cognizance.”—EDIT. † BAXTER’S “Directions for Peace and Comfort,” Direct. 21.

the believing soul, having taken a view of the excellences of God, and its own sweet relation to him as a gracious Father, is carried forth in a holy rapture and exultancy of spirit. This is the *grace of delight*.

PROP. IV. *Though the love of God, and the love of Christ, are never found one without the other, yet is there a distinction necessary to be put between them; and that even as great, in proportion, as is between God and the Mediator, or between the last end and the principal means conducing thereto.*—The love of the soul to God is *amor finis ultimi*, ["the love of the ultimate end,"] or of such a being as it will be an eternal happiness to be united unto. The love of the soul to Christ as Mediator, is *amor medii principalis*, ["the love of the principal means,"] or of one by whom we may have access to God, and find our happiness in him. The formal reason of the former is the divine all-sufficiency and blessedness; but [that] of the latter, the personal excellences that are in Christ, together with his ability and willingness to free us from our undoing straits and exigencies, as we are in a state of apostasy and elongation from God. And, if I mistake not, the not observing this necessary distinction between the acts of the soul, as respecting God, and the same acts, *in specie*, or "in kind," as respecting the Mediator, hath occasioned much confusion in those answers which are given to this, and many such like inquiries; such arguments as are only proper to the one, being made use of to discover the sincerity of our hearts in the other.

PROP. V. *Love, as it is an act or habit of the will, and hath Christ for its object, is not properly the evangelical grace of love to Christ, unless it have respect to him, according to the various excellences of his person, and the several distinct relations which are by God invested in him.* Or thus: *The Gospel grace of love is not the intensive willing a naked Christ, but Christ as represented with his peculiar personal excellences, and with his various offices and relations unto us in the Gospel.*—This proposition undeniably follows from the third before laid down. But yet, because it gives some special light to help us to discover the true nature of this grace, and is intended as the foundation of some of those characters that will afterwards come to be insisted on, I must crave your patience, while I offer something farther for the confirmation thereof. That certainly is no true moral act which is not suited to the nature of the object: thus, for a man to love his friend no otherwise than he loves his beast, would not be a true moral act of love. And again: as plain a truth it is, that where the act of love doth not bear some gradual proportion to the various excellences of the object that it is conversant about, neither can that act have any moral truth or goodness in it. For instance: to love God or Christ with no higher love than we love inferior persons, whether friends, relations, or superiors in the world, —this were not sincerely to love either of them. (See 1 John ii. 15; Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26.) I add, in the last place, (which is no less evident than either of the former,) that where there are relations or offices necessarily invested in and inseparable from the person beloved, then, if our love doth not respect the object as under those relations and offices, it will be far from being love in sincerity. Some instances

will clear this also beyond contradiction : Suppose a woman that hath a husband, and she loves him no otherwise than one friend loves another ; and the case is the same between a scholar and his master, a servant and his lord, a subject and his prince ; if the affections be without reverence, obedience, and loyalty, will either of these be reputed true love ? Why, no more are such to be accounted the sincere lovers of Christ who do not bear an affection to him, in all his offices and relations. And this I take to be so demonstrative a truth, and of such necessary consideration in our present inquiry, that nothing could be spoken in judgment thereto, until we had first made our way unto it, and laid it down : I am sure it will be found fundamental to the right understanding the nature of sincere love to Christ, and the greatest part of the characters which are laid down in the scripture of this grace. It might now be here expected, and it is almost necessary, to give some account of Christ's personal excellences, and also of his offices, what they were ; and briefly to intimate what new qualifications each of them would put upon a Christian's intensive willing of Christ, which is but the *substratum* or matter of this grace. But I am not now to discourse the nature of this grace at large ; and so much thereof as is necessary will come in, when we lay down some of the characters of it : and I have but two things more, and then we come to them.

PROP. VI. *The love of the soul to Christ in sincerity is not any one indivisible act or habit, but a holy frame of spirit, made up of many gracious inclinations, carrying the whole soul along with it unto Christ, for union and communion with him.*—I told you in the beginning, that it is used here by the apostle as the periphrasis of a Christian, a brother, a real saint ; and therefore it is not a sudden and transient flash of the soul, or any one act, but comprehensive of much of that wherein the nature of Christianity doth essentially lie. This follows necessarily from the last proposition : and, indeed, to make faith or love to Christ such single physical acts as many do, as it renders the doctrine of Christianity perplexed, so doth it exceedingly tend to the amusing of the consciences of weak Christians, and, I am afraid, engender also to licentiousness ; it being too usual with such persons, who presumptuously conceive themselves to be Christians, because they discern, as they think, those supposed particular acts, to take up with them, and to grow remiss and careless in other duties, as essential to Christianity and necessary to salvation as those graces themselves. To conclude this proposition : you may note, that as love to God is the soul of natural piety, and is incorporated into every branch of it, so is love to Christ the very spirit that diffuseth itself through and animates all those duties which are required by the new covenant, and respect Jesus Christ as Mediator.

PROP. VII. *When we inquire after this love, by its genuine characters, you are not to understand thereby only such special properties as argue the essence of this grace a posteriori ; but you are to know that we understand it in such a latitude, as leaving room for all those arguments by which the conscience of a Christian may be resolved, whether this grace was ever truly wrought in his soul or not.*

And, these things premised, the characters which evidently discover whether we love Christ in sincerity are these that follow.

CHARACTERS.

CHAR. I. *We may know it by our former convictions.*—And the rule is this: Where love to Christ is sincere, there hath been a conviction of the soul's undone condition without him, and of the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to recover the soul out of that condition. (Isai. lv. 1; lxi. 1—3; Matt. xi. 28.) And wherever this conviction hath been fully wrought, and the wound made thereby regularly healed, there dwells sincere love to him. I put this first, as containing the original birth of evangelical love. I dare affirm, "No conviction, no love; no contrition of heart for sin, no affection in the soul for Christ." "Every degree of true spiritual love," saith a divine, that had well studied this point, "proceeds from a proportionable act of saving faith." (1 Peter i. 8.) And to the same purpose, saith Dr. Preston,—and he presseth it earnestly,—two things must concur to beget love. 1. The sight of Christ's willingness and readiness to relieve. 2. His ability and sufficiency to help. These two, *willingness* and *ability*, are the crown upon the head of Christ, when undone souls do first take delight in him; they are the sweet ointments of our Lord which, by their savour, do attract virgin souls to betroth themselves unto him. (Canticles iii. 11; i. 3.) Whatever men may vainly talk, it is brokenness of heart, and a sense of approaching ruin, that gives the soul the first occasion of acquainting itself in good earnest with Christ; (Acts ii. 36, 37; ix. 5, 6; Matt. ix. 12;) and when faith hath thereupon found the suitableness of Christ to itself, in its present state of misery, then the fire of love begins to burn. So that it is not a blind, casual passion, but a matter of right reason, mature judgment, and choice. It is not a frame of spirit that persons were delivered into they know not how; but such, whereof they that have it can give undeniable reasons; so that, if the question were put to any love-sick soul, as to the spouse in the Canticles, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" she could give an account, if not so glossy and rhetorical, yet as logical and rational as that which is there given. (Canticles v. 9, 10; i. 3, 12; ii. 3.) She hath seen that in Christ,—so much excellency in his person, and so much readiness and sufficiency, as resulting from his several offices,—which hath even ravished her, and made "him comely to her for delights," yea, "the very chiefest of ten thousands:" (Canticles v. 10;) and therefore she both can and doth clasp fast about him, and takes him for her Physician, Husband, King, Priest, and Prophet. "Since he is willing and fit to be my Saviour, O," saith the soul, "I will be his disciple, servant, subject, or any thing." Thus she can hold no longer, but falls down-right sick of love. (Canticles ii. 5; v. 4.) And this is the first character. Take it now, and ask thy soul, "Didst thou ever yet find thyself lost and undone? not able to bear up against the terrors of an accusing and condemning conscience; even dying away for fear lest God should spend all his arrows upon thee, and leave thee a horror to thyself, and an amazement to all about thee? (Deut. xxxii. 23; Job vi. 4; Psalm xxxviii. 2.) And was it in this dark

valley that thou camest first seriously acquainted with Christ? and didst thou see his bowels yearning to thee, (Jer. xxxi. 20,) and that he was fully able to set thee in the light of the countenance of that God whose terror was upon thee? (Acts ix. 5.) And under this conviction was it that thou didst first close with him? Why, this is love, not in pretence and compliment, but in sincerity: whereas, on the other side, if thy pretended affection wants this foundation; if it hath been always alike, neither more nor less; if that senseless conceit runs through thy soul, that thou hast loved Christ ever since thou wast born, and never didst feel the least stirrings of enmity against him; if education, custom, outward communion,* be all that thou hast to say to prove thy love; in faithfulness to thy soul, I warn thee to take heed of self-deceit, for surely "the root of the matter is not in thee;" (Job xix. 28;) and if thou wilt still presume, notwithstanding this confident denial, I have but one word more, and that is, to commend to thy serious perusal that judicious tract of Mr. Pinke,† on this very case and text; where these counterfeit grounds of love are fully convicted of insufficiency, and therefore I would not do it here again.

CHAR. II. *Where love to Christ dwells in sincerity, there hath been some sensible impression, taste, and feeling of the Father's love to the soul in him.*—I do not mean, the Father's love, as it lies in the womb of election, (Rom. viii. 30; ix. 13,) but as it hath broken forth in a powerful, actual vocation. The pedigree of a Christian's love to his Saviour is to be fetched from the Father's love to souls in Christ. (John xiv. 6.) "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) Christ himself, as Mediator, is but a means whereby souls may come to God, their final end and blessedness; (John xiv. 9; xv. 23;) and therefore, as the soul that loves him loves the blessed God much more, so, before we can fix upon him with full satisfaction, some beams thereof must light upon us; it being too great a difficulty for the soul to prevail with itself to trust all its concerns in the hands of a crucified Christ, and to be fond ‡ of him, until it hath gained some sweet assurance of the Father's love to itself in him. And hence it is that our Saviour tells us: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John vi. 44.) By "coming to Christ," I take it for granted, may be understood either faith or love; and these cannot be without the Father's drawing. What is that? Morally, it lies in the clear discoveries of his willingness to be reconciled to us in Christ; when, in conformity to his being "in Christ, reconciling the world to himself," (2 Cor. v. 19,) he is pleased to vouchsafe us his own beseechings of us to be reconciled, then he draws us. The promise, therefore, of reconciliation must first be made known; and by the sweet influence thereof the soul is allured with cheerfulness to throw itself into the arms of its Saviour: and this is love.

Try by this also: "Didst thou ever find those cords of a man, those bonds of divine and ravishing love, thrown upon thee? Didst thou ever see God to be thy happiness, and offering himself to thee as such, and so

* See Reynolds on Psalm cx. pp. 59, 60, &c.

† "Trial of a Christian's Sincere Love to Christ." ‡ *Found* is the incorrect reading of the third and fourth editions.—

EDIT.

alluring thee? Then thou art married to Christ; for this speaks thee united to God in love; and the end must include the means, and the greater the lesser.

CHAR. III. *We then love Christ in sincerity, when that affection in us is qualified according to the various excellences that belong to the person of our Lord.*—When it respects him according to the manifestation made of him in the gospel; namely, not simply as a person, who is historically made known to us by such a name; but according to the true character of him, as God and man in one person, Θεανθρώπος; as one filled with the Spirit of God, above measure, (John iii. 34,) by an ineffable unction; as one admirably condescending, and laying aside his Divine splendour and majesty, that he might appear “in the form of a servant, and be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” for the salvation of sinners; (Phil. ii. 6—8;) and, lastly, as one raised from the dead by God, (Acts v. 30,) made able, and declaring his high satisfaction in the access of sinners unto God by him: and so there are these four graces, which are always attendant upon and are, as it were, incorporated into the nature of this evangelical affection:—

1. *Humble and reverent admiration.*—It is an admiring love. Objects that are incomparably excellent do always first affect with admiration; and though that affection dissolve into love, yet doth it not usually wholly cease, especially if the object be not thoroughly comprehended. It is thus with thy soul, Christian, that art a sincere lover of thy Redeemer, and hast not set up some image of an ordinary person, in the place of him: thou admirest him, whom thou lovest, as never being able to comprehend his glory: (Canticles v. 16; Eph. iii. 17:) the Lord whom thou lovest being God as well as man, and man as well as God, and all this in one person: (John i. 1, 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16:) an object in whom heaven and earth are so admirably blended together, that the acutest reason loseth itself, and stands amazed at the union: whence we find one of the ancients thus speaking of it: “I know that the Word was made flesh; but how or in what manner this was done, I know not. Dost thou wonder that I profess my ignorance? Why, the whole creation is ignorant of it as well as I.”* And another of them gives this advice: “If reason go about to cavil, *προφερε (ἑτοιμην λυσιν) την πιστιν*, do not dispute, but apply thyself to the common refuge against cavils in matters of faith, even faith itself: God hath said it, and therefore I must and will believe it.”† These things considered, I dare boldly tell thee, that thou canst not love in sincerity, but together therewith thou wilt be under a holy rapture of admiration; and, together with thy love, thy admiration will be always increasing.

2. *Sweet and refreshing delight.*—It is a delighting, rejoicing love. (Canticles ii. 3.) “Love,” saith Aquinas, *est complacentia amantis in amato*, “is the rest and satisfaction of the soul in the object loved.” The nature of love lies much in delight. Thou canst not, Christian, love thy Lord, but thou wilt find thy heart even ravished with delight in him; as being one in whom “the fulness of the Godhead dwells,” *σωματικῶς*, or “personally,” (Col. ii. 9,) *non per efficaciam solum aut*

* CHRYSOSTOM.

† JUSTIN MARTYR.

assistentiam, sed per unionem hypostaticam ;* or not virtually, or only in a way of external help and assistance ; and being also one that had such an unction of the Spirit upon him, that hath fully fitted him for the delight of thy soul. (Canticles iv. 15.) And hence it is, that we find the spouse in the book of Canticles so often letting forth her heart in holy delight to her Beloved, as is manifested by her many loving compellations, and several other expressions, ("He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," Canticles i. 13,) too large and many to be mentioned here ; and therefore I refer you to the book itself.

3. *Ingenuous gratitude and thankfulness.*—It is a grateful and thankful love, as that which is begotten in the soul by the sense of Christ's unspeakable goodness and condescension, and which is also ever after fed and maintained thereby. Now the condescension of Christ lies in three things : (1.) In his voluntary undertaking the work of reconciliation and mediation with God for persons so unworthy. (Rom. v. 8.) "He took not on him the nature of angels ; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. ii. 16.) It was the cause of sinners which this great Lord undertook to plead. (2.) In his unwearied diligence, and invincible patience, in fulfilling the severe law of redemption, which he had submitted to. Though the injury that was done him by man was so great and manifest, and the terror of the Lord against him also so severe and unspeakable, "yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (Isai. liii. 7.) (3.) In being willing to communicate the benefits purchased thereby to sinful and rebellious men, upon such easy terms ; bidding us do nothing else but turn to God by repentance and self-denial, and believe in himself ; and then, whatever our sins had been, all the advantages merited by his death should be made over to us. (Matt. xi. 30 ; Rom. x. 8—10 ; Isai. i. 16—18.) Now, when all these are considered, (as by every soul that sincerely loves him more or less they are,) do they not sweetly affect with thankfulness, as well as love ? Christian, canst thou look upon such a Redeemer without some sense of an obligation laid upon thy soul thereby ? Wilt thou think one single and separate affection enough for him ? Or rather, will not thy heart empty itself into the bosom of the Lord, with love and thankfulness both at once, and each of them contending which shall outdo the other ?

4. *Supporting hope and confidence.*—It is a hoping and confiding love ; it is not a languishing affection, but that which brings life into the soul from the fulness of that Christ it feeds upon. "Perfect love," saith the apostle, "casteth out fear." (1 John iv. 18.) There will not be so much as the shadow of fear upon the soul, when this affection is ripened into perfect fruition. And, in the mean time, as the degrees of it do increase, so is the soul heightened in its hopes, and tramples upon its former jealousies, fears, and discouragements. And to this sense some interpret those words : "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ?" &c. : (Rom. viii. 35—39 :) as if they were the exultation of faith upon the view

* DAVENANT *in loc.* "Not through efficacy and assistance only, but by a personal union."—EDIT.

of love's conquest, and victorious triumph over all its enemies. Love gives confidence of access to Christ, and unto God by him; and this confidence lies in the soul, as a cordial against all its faintings and despondencies: not that there may not be a sinking of spirits, and a swooning away for a time; but love will restore the soul again, and knowing Christ to be good, as well as all-sufficient for its condition, it will recover life and spirits again, and not suffer it utterly to faint under its own sad apprehensions. (Canticles vi. 12, 13.)

And this is the third character. Take now all these four qualifications of sincere love, and try yourselves by them.

CHAR. IV. *If our love be sincere, it is an affection which respecteth not a naked Christ, but Christ as Mediator; or, it is a hearty desire of, and complacency in, Christ, in all his offices, as King, and Priest, and Prophet.*—And of such moment is the right knowledge of this character, that, Christian, I must desire thee principally to study it, and pass a judgment upon thyself thereby. For, whatever fondness and sudden flashings of love thou mayest find within thee, they will not so clearly tell thee what thou art, as the knowledge of thyself by this mark. Take it for a clear truth, that if thou lovest not Christ as thy Sovereign Lord; if thy heart be not knit to him as thy High Priest with God; if thou hast not affectionately entertained him as thy Master and Teacher; in a word, if thou art not consecrated unto God by Christ, if thou art not a loyal subject, and a willing disciple; love in sincerity doth not dwell in thee; thou art still an enemy, and wilt so be judged. It is not fondness of expression, nor any outward compliment that men put upon Christ, which reacheth the New-Testament notion of love to Christ; but when as loyal subjects and willing disciples we are always doing the things that are grateful, and are obedient to him: this is love. And hence it is, that in so many places our Lord puts us upon trying our love by our obedience, by keeping his words and commandments; and speaks of libertines, infidels, the carnally-wise, rebels, and apostates, as enemies and haters of him, whatever their pretences are to the contrary. (John xiv. 15, 21; xv. 8, 10, 21, 23, 24; 1 John v. 3; Luke xix. 27; Heb. x. 28; John xiv. 23, 24.) And, verily, so essential is this to sincere love, that, unless you understand it, you will be able to give but a lame account of most of the scripture-characters thereof, (as, if I had time, I could easily demonstrate,) because they do all pre-suppose it. If thou wouldest know, therefore, whether this grace be in thee in truth, take thy heart, Christian, to Christ in every office, and try it, by such interrogatories as may result from the consideration of them; and this will tell thee thy case distinctly.

Begin first with Christ as High Priest; for this did lay the foundation of the other two offices; and if thou hast any love to Christ in sincerity, it was the sight of him in this that first kindled it. And thus bespeak thyself: "Didst thou ever, O my soul, seriously consider what Christ hath undertaken in thy behalf with the jealous God, whose face thou couldst not see, and live? Wast thou ever convinced, that all thy prayers, duties, outward privileges, and devotions were little worth, and could not have aught availed thee, unless by his own blood he had first entered within the vail, and made atonement for thee; (Heb. x. 10, 12;

1 Cor. ii. 2;) and then with the same blood went afterwards to the right hand of God, and put him in mind of his covenant, to procure actual grace, and peace, and adoption for thee? And is it a pleasure to thee, as well as thy admiration, to be always musing and searching what such an abyss of grace and goodness should mean? And in the midst of thy musings was it that thy affections first took this holy fire, and were even surprised into love? Is it by his mediation that thou findest thy expectations from God, and thy delight in him, supported? (Rom. viii. 34; Phil. iii. 7, 8.) And dost thou rejoice in him, as one whose goodness thou adorest, and whose favour with God, purchased by his own merit, thou admirest; and therefore art most willing to trust all thy concerns in his hands; and in all thy addresses to God comest leaning upon the arms of him, as thy beloved Mediator and Intercessor?" (Canticles viii. 5.) Why, thus to renounce our own righteousness, and to feel our hearts warmed into a further estimation of his; to attribute all our acceptance with God to him; briefly, to be intensively willing of Christ, and to look upon him with full satisfaction of spirit in all his priestly administrations;—this is sincerely to love Christ as our High Priest. And, on the contrary, to undervalue his blood either as needless *by presumption*, or as worthless *by desperation*; to be ascribing to ourselves, when we receive any kindness or favour from God; to doat upon our own worth and righteousness, as that which is sufficient without either Christ's righteousness, satisfaction, or intercession;—this is interpretatively to reject him from being our High Priest, and to hate the person of our Lord. (Heb. x. 28.)

Thus try yourselves, whether ye love Christ in his priestly office; and when you have done with that, take thy soul to his prophetic office; and make a further trial, by bespeaking thyself after the same manner. Thus: "Didst thou ever, O my soul, seriously consider that thou wast made for an eternal life, and that none could ever chalk thee out the way thereto, it being only to be learned in the school of this great Prophet? And thereupon hast thou wholly ceased from listening unto any other? and, as a loving disciple, hast thou found pleasure in seeking the law, even the word of thy salvation, at his mouth? Doth thy heart thoroughly savour his doctrine? And dost thou like the discipline of his school? Dost thou make it thy study to know, and lay it as a charge upon thyself to keep, the words of this great Master and Prophet? (John xiv. 23, 24.) And even now, that he is gone to heaven, and hath left his word in the scripture behind him, and hath sent his Spirit, and set up under-officers in his school, and precious ordinances for thy guidance and direction; dost thou value the scriptures above all other writings in the world, and witness thy esteem of them by thy daily perusal and study of them? Dost thou bear a reverence in thy breast to all Christ's offices and institutions? Dost thou account the mouth of Christ most sweet, and even delight to hear his voice in the scripture, and in every ordinance? And when thou hast heard, dost thou lay up what thou hast been taught as the faithful counsel of thy dearest Teacher, and rejoice therein? (Canticles v. 16; Psalm i. 2; Heb. ii. 1.) More particularly, what is thy carriage towards his Spirit? Dost

thou hear when he calls? And art thou tractable to all his motions? Dost thou grieve him, or art thou willing to be instructed and guided by him?" Why, thus to cease from leaning to our own understandings; to give up ourselves to Christ, and his Spirit in the scriptures, and in all the ordinances of the gospel; to be the serious and willing disciples of Christ;—this is to love Christ as our Prophet in sincerity. That is the second office.

Once more, to make the trial by this mark complete: and that will respect his kingly office: and this is as easy as either of the former; for, our loyalty and voluntary subjection to Christ as commanding and governing,—this is love; and the heart's rebellion against Christ, rejecting his dominion, murmuring against his laws, finding fault with his administrations, disturbing his subjects, and disquieting the peace of his kingdom, envying him the multitude of his subjects, and yielding no obedience to his commands;—all these are several branches of enmity against Christ as King and Sovereign. Put the case, therefore, home to thy own soul, if thou wouldest not be mistaken, and say: "Doth Christ rule within thee, O my soul, or doth self and Satan? Art thou glad with his sovereignty, or is it the yoke thou canst not bear? Do the laws of his kingdom bear away within thee, or is it the law of thy members and carnal self? (Rom. vi.) When both come in competition, whose command dost thou in the course of thy life most commonly fulfil? Whose kingdom art thou most delighted in the advancement of? Is it a pleasure to thee, that thy Lord doth reign, and that his throne is more universally exalted? Or else, doth thy heart rise against the advancement of Christ's kingdom? In whom dost thou find thy greatest delight? Is it rather in the company of rebels, that would pull the crown from the head of Christ, than in the humble and obedient subjects of thy Lord? Dost thou take Christ to be thy Prince and Sovereign? And dost thou love the peace and glory of his kingdom, as becomes an obedient subject of so great a Lord?" Why, this is intensively to will *Christum Regem*, or to love him as King. And this is the third office, and the fourth character. If you would make sure work, this is a rule which will not deceive you.

CHAR. V. *If we have a fellowship with Christ in his honours and dishonours, or in his joys and sorrows, then is our love not feigned unto Christ, but in sincerity.*—True love, if I may be allowed so to speak, mixeth concerns: my meaning is, that it makes another's joys and sorrows to be mine, as well as his: they may write "hatred" upon themselves, who are regardless whether it go well or ill with Christ's interests in the world. No communion with Christ, no love. Even the personal reproaches and abuses which Christ endured here below, though so many hundred years since, do yet affect them; and they that love him have a sympathy with him in them. Neither is it his joy alone that he was personally advanced by being raised again from the dead, and taken up to glory, to sit therein at the right hand of God, but theirs also. (Luke xxiv. 52; Acts ii. 26.) Tell a loyal wife, that her husband is honoured, and her heart will leap at the tidings that are brought to her. It is good news to love-sick souls to hear that Christ is now in

glory; they savour the advancements of their Lord, according to those words of Christ himself to his apostles: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I." (John xiv. 28.) They are glad by faith to see the Sun of Righteousness after a dark and cloudy morning in his meridian altitude. (John xx. 20.) They die, and are crucified with Christ in his death; (Rom. vi. 3; Gal. ii. 19;) and they feel a reviving of themselves in the resurrection of their Lord; and hence it is said of them, that they are "quickened together with him," and that they "sit together in heavenly places with him." (Eph. ii. 5; i. 20.) We read of Mary, that she went weeping to the grave of her Lord; but hearing that he was arisen, she came away rejoicing: (John xx. 11; Matt. xxviii. 8;) and no otherwise was it with his disciples. Christ doth not triumph alone in his ascension; but all such as love him share therein together with him. And as they share with Christ in his personal joys and troubles; so do they no less when any of his concernments in the world do either prosper, or else are trampled upon and clouded. It is as the arrows of death to see either his laws, ordinances, officers, or subjects trampled upon. The reproaches of the rebellious world reproaching their Lord fall upon them, and are as so many darts struck into their own souls. (Psalm xlii. 10; lxix. 9.) This is that which successively feeds their joys and sorrows, that it goes well with the militant church here below, or that a cloud of displeasure and persecution is spread over it.

CHAR. VI. *Where love to Christ is sincere, there Christ is accounted by the soul to be its treasure; and there is a longing desire in every such soul of the nearest communion with him.*—I put both these together, though there be a very clear distinction between them, for brevity. It is a truly conjugal love, which can neither bear with distance, nor brook any rival. And this is the meaning of the spouse in that double expression, calling him "the chiefest among ten thousand," and professing him to be "altogether lovely." (Canticles v. 10, 16.) The soul that loves Christ may love other things, and esteem them lovely; but she will say of none, that they are "altogether lovely," but only of her Lord. When one asked Alexander to show him his treasure, the report is, that he pointed to his friend Hephæstion: the treasure of a soul that sincerely loves Christ, is Christ himself: *Deus meus est omnia*, or "My God is my all," saith the soul that loves God as his ultimate end. Hence is that of David: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) *Christus meus est omnia*, or, "My Christ is my all," saith the soul that is upon inquiry how to find acceptance with God. Whence is that of Paul: "Doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. iii. 8.) It is the proper motto of a love-sick soul, "None but Christ:" the sincerity of a Christian's love lies in giving a pre-eminence to the Redeemer, whom it loves above every thing else. The soul that loves Christ, values nothing in comparison of him, no, not his own benefits. *Meretricius amor est, plus annulum quam sponsum amare*, or, "It is a note of a harlot, to prefer the portion before the person." And that is a no less true than noble speech of the devout A Kempis: *Nobilis*

amator non quiescit in dono, sed in Christo super omne donum, or "The worthy and noble lover values not Christ so much by what he brings, as by what he is himself." The soul that loves Christ, loves ordinances, because they are the "banqueting-house" of her Lord, wherein she is often refreshed by him; (Canticles ii. 4;) she loves the privileges of the gospel, because they are the purchase of her Lord's blood. (Canticles iv. 1, &c.) She loves her own graces, because they are the rare ornaments which Christ hath put upon her, to render her beautiful, and fit her for his own embraces; and yet, after all, her language to Christ is, "Not thine, but thee:" she will not so value them, as to forget Him that gives them; Christ is her centre, and therefore she rests not, but will lay by, and *through* all to come to him; she can scarce forbear a fit of impatience sometimes to think of that distance that is still between them. "Make haste, my beloved," saith the spouse to Christ, "and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." (Canticles viii. 14.) And such another ejaculation is that, where the whole church is brought-in crying to Christ: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." (Rev. xxii. 17, 20.) While our hearts dwell below upon the thick clay, and have no daily desires to send forth, as doves from the ark, for communion with Christ, there is little sign of sincere love to him.

CHAR. VII. *We may know our sincerity in love, by the value we put upon ourselves, as well as upon Christ.*—If our interest in Christ be the rule by which we value ourselves, that will argue true love: when this makes it day in our souls, that Christ smiles upon us; and, on the other side, when this spreads the darkness of the night over us, that he hides his face from us; then we love him. David loved God heartily; and, therefore, when God smiled, he rejoiced; and when God hid his face, he was as much troubled then as before delighted. (Psalm iv. 6; xxx. 7.) It is thus in every relation, where there is sincerity of affection as the bond thereof, and a dependence between them of the one upon the other. It is thus between a prince and a loyal favourite; between a husband and a loving wife. It is thus between the love-sick soul and Christ; when she enjoys him, then none so lightsome in countenance as she. According to the nature of love, her affections are hardly concealed; they are even too big for her heart to cover, and therefore she can scarce withhold herself from a holy exultation before every one that meets her. Whereas, on the other side, if Christ but withdraws; if she calls, and he gives no answer; if he seems to avoid her company, and to despise her familiarity; what then? O then her joy is turned into gall, and her pleasantness into wormwood; then her countenance grows dark and sable, and her thoughts within her are full of horror, dejection, and confusion; she goes up and down like a person almost distracted, and every place is made to echo to her griefs and mournings; she goes from ordinance to ordinance, and from one watchman to another, and proclaims to them all the sickness of her soul, if peradventure she may recover again the sight of her Beloved. All this and much more with incomparable elegance you may read described in the Song of Solomon. Thus, as the marigold opens to the sun in the firmament, so doth the heart of a sincere Christian to the Sun of Righteousness, Christ in glory.

CHAR. VIII. *Where love is sincere, the soul will be often on the wing of meditation, and busied in the contemplation of Christ.*—It is an old rule and a true one, *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat*, or, “The soul dwells as much where it hath fixed its love, nay, more there, than where it hath its most natural operation.” Christ, and the believer that loves him, live as if they had but one soul betwixt them. It is not the distance between earth and heaven that can separate them; true love will find out Christ wherever he is; when he was upon the earth, they that loved him kept his company; and now that he is gone to heaven, and out of sight, those that love him are frequently sending up their hearts unto him. And, indeed, they never think themselves intelligent in any thing that is worth the knowing, until they have made their souls much acquainted and familiar with their crucified Saviour. (1 Cor. ii. 2.)

CHAR. IX. *There will be a willingness to part with all for him.*—How many goodly things do persons of all sorts condemn for some one thing which they love! Amnon, Ahab, and Haman, are three great examples of this. (2 Sam. xiii. 2; 1 Kings xxi. 4; Esther v. 13.) Take but one instance, and it shall be of a covetous man: why, he disregards all the learned accomplishments in the world for a little gain; he thinks himself better, when he hath got that which comes out of the bowels of the earth he treads on, than that which comes from the mansion-house of God, in the heaven above him; and, therefore, how familiarly and easily will he part with the one to choose the other! No bonds of nature or religion are enough to restrain him. (Acts xx. 24.) It is the resolution of a soul that loves Christ, that nothing shall part them. They are habitually martyrs already; and if he put them to it, it is not life itself that they will account too precious to lay down for the sake of him. (Matt. x. 37; Rev. xii. 11.) All the waters and floods of persecution, temptation, and affliction shall not quench their flames of love. (Canticles viii. 7.) Witness those words of Ignatius: *Πῦρ καὶ σταυρὸς*, &c.; or, “Let fire, cross,” &c., “and all the torments, which by men or beasts can be inflicted on my body, yea, and add to them what all the devils in hell can do upon it, if it were by solemn sentence of excommunication delivered to them; yet would I go through them all, to come to the bosom of my Lord.”

CHAR. X. *There will be a willingness to stoop to the meanest offices, for the service of Christ.*—“Love,” we use to say, “stands not with majesty;” it did not do so in the person of our Saviour, when he washed and wiped his disciples’ feet; (John xiii. 5, 6, 14;) and those that love him will not think it much to conform to his example; they will not think they can ever stoop too low for the sake of him. (John xxi. 15.)

CHAR. XI. *If it sticks not barely in the person of Christ, but reacheth to all that have an union with him.*—If it be to Christ mystical as well as personal; if you love their persons, their graces, their fellowship, &c. “Tell me,” saith the spouse, “where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon.” (Canticles i. 7.) She delights to be led forth with them into the green pastures of his ordinances, and to feed together with them. If she hath any thing, it is all theirs, who have an equal interest in Christ with herself. (Acts ii. 44, 45.) She will make use of her graces,

substance, and all, that fellow-members may be refreshed. It makes them of catholic spirits. The apostle is peremptory, and brandeth them all as liars that pretend to the one of these without the other. See 1 John iv. 19, 20; v. 1; John xiii. 34, 35.

CHAR. XII. *We may know it by its concomitants.*—Sincere love goes not but in the company of every other grace: it either presupposeth, or strongly implieth and inferreth, the whole duty of a Christian. *Diligere Christum*, saith Aquinas, *est Christo in omnibus se subijcere, et regulam præceptorum ejus in omnibus sequi*; or, “To love Christ, is to fulfil the whole law of Christ.” (John xiv. 15.) It is a most comprehensive grace; it is the abstract of the new creature, the whole image of God. In one word: it is the substance of the divine workmanship upon the soul. They are but ciphers, and signify nothing in Christianity, who are without it. Briefly: to love Christ, it is in some measure to partake of every grace, and to be a Christian altogether.

These are the characters: some I have omitted, and in others I have been brief, because I would reserve a little room for the second case. Give me leave but briefly to suggest a few things for satisfaction of one doubt, and I shall presently come to that. Will some say, “If this be love in sincerity, who then loves him aright?” It is no less dangerous to draw out the description of a grace so as none can find it, than to leave it so as none may suspect the want or absence thereof in themselves; and upon that rock, they will tell me, I have split in the decision of this case, there being hardly any one that can go from *character* to *character*, and say, after a thorough search, “Now I know that I am a lover of Christ in sincerity:” for answer to which scruple, I shall barely suggest a few considerations.

1. *It is most certain and notorious, that there is much counterfeit love abroad.*—And it was not the least part of my design to unmask it. Characters serve as well to convince the presumptuous, as to establish the sincere and upright. There is much in the world that looks like love, that is not: such are those vagous affections that are to a *Christ in general*, and not to Him as King, Priest, and Prophet: and those counterfeit affections, which are to Christ upon the sole arguments of education, custom, which are as truly in a Turk to his Mahomet, and serve as well to justify the Jew in his blasphemy against Christ, as the Christian in his pretended love of him: (for love to Christ, say divines, is not so much to be measured by the degree and fervour, as by the grounds and motives :) and also that barren love which works up the soul to no measure of obedience unto him; and, lastly, that which allows Christ but the world’s leavings in our hearts, every thing being constantly preferred before him: and what a vast number of persons go no further than these!

2. *Many persons are truly gracious, who yet know not whether they have any grace or not.*—It requires more skill to search out the nature of a grace, and to find it in ourselves, than barely to exercise it; the former are works of much judgment, and require a deep acquaintance with our own hearts; whereas to the latter, it is enough if a person be but of an ordinary understanding, and an honest heart. Besides, graces have their degrees, like the waters of the sanctuary; (Ezek. xlvii. 3—5;) and

where grace is very shallow and little, it is exceeding difficult to know that there is any at all ; and such persons should do well, who are so weak, rather to spend time in the exercise of grace, than in trying whether they have grace or no ; for commonly it is but labour in vain.

3. *There are no souls in whom this grace is really planted, but they have all these characters drawn upon their hearts to know it by, more or less.*—I do not say, they can find them in themselves, and know they have them ; but only, that they have them. And of this I need give no further evidence than what you will easily find yourselves, if you will but study the nature of love to Christ, by the rule of it laid down in the fifth *proposition* premised, and by the third and fourth *characters* ; for I am well assured that Christ cannot be loved as therein described, unless all these particulars mentioned be either antecedent thereto, or connexed with it.

CASE II.

And so I come to the second case ; namely, *How we may get our love to him kindled and inflamed.*

And I shall proceed in the resolution of this, by these four steps.

I. I will discover the danger of being without this grace.

II. I will add some moving considerations to provoke all that love their souls, to look after it.

III. I will give directions to them that have it not, how to get it.

IV. I will add a few more directions for them that have it, how it may be increased and inflamed.

I. I begin with the first, which I will dispatch by these two steps :

1. By discovering the heinousness of sin. 2. The terror of the punishment due thereto.

1. Now, that you may understand the first, besides what hath been said in the fore-mentioned tract, proving it to be a sin against the Father's love and wisdom, the whole work of the Son, and the special economy of the Holy Ghost ; I add,

(1.) *It is a sin utterly subverting the whole design of the Gospel :—*Casting a scorn upon the grace of all the three Persons, and not so much as acknowledging what was done by them as worthy the least acceptance, it writes “vanity” upon all the promises, and is a frustration to the design of Christ in that noble dispensation ; there being nothing that he did more aim at than to testify his own and his Father's love to us, and to recover from us our love to them again. (John iii. 17 ; 1 John i. 3.)

(2.) *It is interpretatively a confederacy with Satan against God and Christ.* (Matt. vi. 24 ; Acts xiii. 10.)—The proper and grand wickedness of the devil being his opposition to the design of God in glorifying himself by the salvation of mankind through Christ, which yet, so far as we are haters of Christ, we are in our measure guilty of, as well as he. (Heb. x. 28.)

(3.) *It is a complicated sin ; many sins in one.*—Such as are foul ingratitude, rebellion ; it being the casting off the sovereignty of a rightful Lord ; cruelty to Christ, and, as it were, a kicking him upon the bowels, a *Christicidium* ; and to ourselves, (Prov. viii. 36,) the tearing

out our own bowels with our own hands, spiritual uncleanness and adultery; (James iv. 4;) it being a treacherous revolting from Christ, after profession of marriage to him.

(4.) *It is a sin which opens the door to all wickedness.*—Resistance of the Spirit, contempt of the gospel and them that bring it, slighting of ordinances, treason against Christ as King, and implacable bitterness and enmity against his subjects and children. (John xv. 18, 19.)

(5.) *It is an irrational sin.*—Or such for which there cannot be the least apology; because Christ was lovely in himself; (Canticles i. 13, 14; v. 9, 16;) did much to engage our hearts to him; earnestly entreated us to place our affections upon him; sending his messengers to woo us; bestowing gifts upon us, like a king, to oblige us; (1 Peter i. 4;) and making almost incredible offers of much more that he would do for us; yea, finally, threatening us even with *Anathema Maranatha*, (1 Cor. xvi. 22,) if we withhold our hearts from him. And can such a sin after all this be extenuated?

(6.) *It is a sin brought forth and nursed by the foulest abominations.*—Such as spiritual darkness, and ignorance; (1 Cor. ii. 8;) notorious infidelity, as to the doctrine of the gospel; (John v. 43, 44, 47;) horrible pride, self-righteousness, idolatrous and carnal self-love.

(7.) *It is a sin against all our covenants and engagements.*—Especially our baptismal bond, wherein we did solemnly promise Christ our hearts, and that in opposition to all others; (2 Cor. xi. 2;) the bond of Christian ingenuity, self-love, and proper interest, profession, and relation, as we bear his name in the world.

(8.) And, lastly, *It is a sin utterly inconsistent with the presence of any one grace in the soul.*—It being impossible that any thing should prosper, where this weed hath once settled and rooted itself. You may as well expect to find branches without a root, as the graces of the Spirit without love. Thus very briefly you have an account of the danger of being without love to Christ, from the nature of the sin.

2. I argue it from *the terror of the punishment.*—And certainly the just God hath proportioned the evil of this, to the quality of that. Study well these few places of scripture: John iii. 19; Matt. xxi. 41; Heb. ii. 3; x. 28, 29; xii. 25; Rev. ii. iii. throughout. O the terrors of the Lord, that will one day be heaped upon the haters of his Son! (See Rev. vi. 16.) But we need not look any further for this matter, than into the awakened conscience of a rebel against Christ in a fit of desperation: what scorpion-lashes doth such a man's conscience give him! O the heat of this burning caldron! With what rage and fury doth it break forth on every side, until the soul is even become a hell to itself! "And wouldest thou not love Christ," will enraged conscience then say, "so lovely in himself, and so full of love to thee? Couldst thou see him sighing, bleeding, sweating, dying for thy sake, and yet not love him? Couldst thou spurn at such bowels, and condemn such prodigious mercy? and that when this love would have opened to thee the door of glory! how great, how infinite, glory! and when the rejecting of it would infallibly plunge thy soul into misery; how dreadful, how intolerable! Was ever madness like thine, O my soul?" will

conscience say. "Certainly hell is too easy a punishment for such a serpent, such an incarnate devil as thou art. Well may God rejoice to be avenged on such a wretch as thee, and make thee to drink up the very dregs of his indignation; while others that 'dwell in God' shall 'dwell in love,' O how will God be nothing else but fury, and wrath, and vengeance to thee! Thou shalt one day (and that day such as never shall have an end!) hear Justice call upon Omnipotency still to add more flame to thy torment!" Thus conscience will look backward and forward, and even wreak itself, with the most dismal flaming language that it can find out, upon the haters of Christ. And is not that a dreadful sin, which shall thus set a man against himself, and put a sword into the hand of cruel conscience to cleave the soul in pieces? And is not that a dreadful punishment, when a man shall become his own accuser, judge, and executioner? when conscience shall burn so hot within a man, that he shall be a terror to himself, and an eternal amazement? And yet, alas! what is all this to the immediate impressions of the wrath of God upon the soul? when He that hath said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," (Rom. xii. 19,) shall grasp the soul in his dreadful hand: which might be farther improved, and be demonstrated to be incomparably the sorest part of the punishment.

II. But I come to the second particular, which was, to lay down some moving considerations to provoke such as love themselves to love Christ; and, besides the particulars last mentioned,

1. Consider *who it is that I plead for this day*.—Sirs, I do not call you to doat upon thick clay, filth, and vanity. I do not plead to gain your hearts to one that is not worthy, or hath not deserved that you should place your affections upon him: if you can make either of these manifest, hate him and spare not. But I plead for one who is, (1.) Glorious and excellent: if you doubt it, read his character, Canticles v. 9. What sayest thou now? Is he not altogether lovely? Is there any blemish to be found in him? And if thou mistrustest the judgment of the church, sure thou canst not doubt of God's. Hear his sentence: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matt. iii. 17.) He knew of whom he spake, for he was his Son; and he doth not say, he was pleased with him only, but *well-pleased*, that is, delighted, and satisfied. (See Prov. viii. 30.) And was he worthy of God's love; and dost thou doubt whether he have deserved thine? (2.) Consider, he is one that died for thee; first, to purchase thy love; and since is gone to heaven, where yet he doth not cease to call upon thee, and invite thee to bestow thy heart upon him. Were he excellent, but proud, it would be little to thy advantage; but he stoops, and wooes, and entreats thee. It is a day of the gladness of his heart when he prevails but with one soul to close with him: and all the rage of his persecutors did not grieve him more, than you will, if you stand it out against him. (Isai. lv. 1; Luke xv. 20; Acts ix. 4; John v. 21, 26.) (3.) Consider, he is one that hath the power of thy life and death in his own hands; and this is one part of his covenant, upon which thy life or death depends; as offered in the promise, so he waits; but as love is the condition of it, so if thou hearkenest not, thou lovest thy

share therein; and what thou choosest, be it life or death, thou shalt certainly have.

2. Consider, *what it is I plead for*.—Why, all that I ask is love; and will you deny Christ that? I call thee to think well of Christ, to desire him, to take complacency in him, to breathe after union and eternal communion with him; and which of these dost thou think too much for such an object? Or where canst thou place them more fitly than upon him? What is he worthy of, if not of this? Did ever death content itself with such a recompence? Was ever any debt easier paid, any service so easily performed, as this,—only to love? Hath God made Christ a King, Priest, and Prophet? and is that all which thou must do, to partake of his love in him, to love him in those relations? and wilt thou stick at this? Hast thou any other way to the bosom of God but by him? and yet, rather than thou wilt come thither by love, wilt thou damn thy soul by hating Christ? Is not the enjoyment of God worth the labour of love? (1 Thess. i. 3.) Shall all go, rather than be saved by love to thy Redeemer?

3. Consider, *what he will do for thee, if thou art a sincere lover of him*.—He comes not to court thee, and flatter thee to thy loss; but his reward is great, and he brings it with him. (Rev. xxii. 12.) Give me leave to tell thee some particulars thereof. (1.) If thou wilt love him, he will betroth thee to himself in dearest love; (Hosea ii. 19, 20;) he will be thy bridegroom, and thou shalt be his bride; (Eph. v. 32;) it is not all thy filthy garments, rags, or poverty, that shall hinder; (Zech. iii. 4;) but he will be to thee the covering of thine eyes; (Gen. xx. 16;) and a gladness of heart shalt thou be unto him; (Zeph. iii. 17;) thou shalt be the joy of Christ himself; (Rev. xxi. 9;) for “as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” (Isai. lxii. 5.) (2.) He will dwell with thee: (John xiv. 23, 24;) husband and wife dwell together, and so do the betrothed soul and Christ: “I in them, and they in me,” saith Christ. (John xvii. 23.) Now this is a privilege which carries many in the womb of it; such as are these: (i.) Intimacy and daily familiarity; Christ and Christians take their meals together; (Rev. iii. 20;) there is no communion so near, as that which is between them: (Eph. v. 23;) “One spirit.” (1 Cor. vi. 17.) (ii.) Maintenance and provision. “He is worse than an infidel, that provides not for his own house.” (1 Tim. v. 8.) All that live under the same roof with Christ have their daily bread provided for them at his charges; and he hath said, that he will never leave them. (Heb. xiii. 5.) (iii.) Protection. Every man’s house is his castle; they are under safe covert that dwell with Christ. (iv.) Counsel, guidance, and direction: this great husband dwells with all his family according to knowledge; (1 Peter iii. 7;) for he teacheth them all his secrets, and shows them his covenant. (Psalm xxv. 14.) (3.) He will interest thee in all his own riches, purchases, possessions, and dignities; together with his person, he offers heaven and earth for a dowry. All things are his by purchase, and thou shalt be a co-partner or co-heir with him, when thou art espoused to him. (Rom. viii. 17; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.) (4.) He will manifest the highest indulgence and tenderness towards thee. (Isai. liv. 7, 8.) Not all thy cross

walkings (if through temptations it shall so fall out) shall put him upon any more than a momentary departure from thee ; for he hath resolved that his faithfulness towards thee shall never fail ; (Psalm lxxxix. 33 ;) and therefore when thou seemest almost lost, and ready to despond, he will return to thee again ; and the more time he hath lost by absence, the more full will his heart be of ravishing love and affections to thee. (Canticles vi. 3.) (5.) He will turn all to thy good : neither thy sins, though many and great, nor thy miseries, though overwhelming and discouraging, no, nor, lastly, shall death itself be ever able to make a divorce between thee and him ; but serve as a passage to thee, when thy work is done, into the bride-chamber of thy Lord. (Rom. viii. 28, 38 ; Phil. i. 21.) And now tell me, hast not thou reason to love him ?

4. *Consider but thy case, while this virgin affection to thy Saviour is wanting.*

(1.) *Thou multipliest thy whoredoms and thy abominations continually.*—For what are thy intensive willings of other things, but so many acts of spiritual adultery, and base prostitutions of thy soul to thy dishonour and disadvantage, while other things usurp the room of Christ ?

(2.) *Thou art a treacherous hypocrite and deceiver.*—Forasmuch as thou pretendest to the eye of the world to be Christ's, and yet art nothing less than his.

(3.) *You lay a bar in against yourselves, and the acceptance of all your duties.*—When “faith works by love,” (Gal. v. 6,) then is obedience illustrious, and meet for a gracious acceptance. That obedience which owes no part of itself to love, is worth little, and brings-in no more than it is worth.

(4.) *You make bonds for yourselves in death, and lay up terrible reproaches in your consciences against the day of judgment.* (Job xxvii. 6.)

(5.) *You make your damnation necessary :* there being no congruity to any of the divine attributes, much less to the offices of Christ, that that man should ever be saved, who never had any sincere affection to him.

These are some of the considerations, which may be of use to them that have no spark of love yet kindled in their hearts. There are a few of the other kind, which may provoke to get this love inflamed where it is : such are these :—

1. *Consider, the love of Christ to thee was a growing, increasing love.*—I do not mean in respect of the habit, but in the outward demonstration thereof. The nearer he was to his death, the more exuberant in love ; and when he rose again, his heart did overflow with tender indulgence ; as appears by the meltings of his bowels towards Mary and over Peter ; and much more may we believe him now to be full of them, now that he is at the right hand of God.

2. *There is more loveliness in Christ, than ever thou canst find out or fathom.*—When we have let out our affections to the utmost, there will still be more than we can find affection for ; our love to eternity will have something of admiration mixed with it.

3. *It is all you can return to him.*—It is all he looks for at our hands. That which lies in love, and which flows from it, is the whole that is required to complete Christianity.

4. *The more you love him, the more lovely you are unto him.*—Then hath Christ the highest complacency in us, when our hearts are under the greatest raptures of love to him.

5. *It is the honour of a man to love Christ superlatively.*—It is the sweetest part of our lives, and that which Christ values us more by than by any thing else : it is heaven on earth.*

6. *According to the measure of your love, so will all the rest of your services and graces be.*—That is, either more or less, better or worse. Love is like the master-wheel in an engine, making the whole soul to move faster or slower.

These are the considerations of the last kind. Will some say?—"O, but what shall we do to get this blessed affection into our souls?" which was the third thing proposed : and in order thereto, I offer these

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Be well acquainted with the nature of this great duty.*—The great mistake of the world lies in this,—that is thought to be love, which is not ; and thence men and women grow bold and confident, and value themselves more than they ought. I have given in my best assistance, so far as the nature of the first case would permit, to prevent mistakes in this matter, before ; and therefore I will not do it over again. Only remember, if you would not miscarry, that it is not a naked Christ, but a Christ advanced by incomparable personal excellences, and clothed with his offices of King, and Priest, and Prophet, that is **THE CHRIST** to be loved ; and you cannot well miscarry. This is that damning mistake of the world ; they love Christ, but not as dignified by God with any of his offices.

DIREC. II. *Be much in the study of yourselves.*—What you were originally, and what you are since become through your own miscarriage, wilfulness, and folly. Take your souls to the glass of the law, and go from one precept to another ; and when you have done there, go to the gospel : and be sure you do not deal slightly, but understand thoroughly how much you have offended. And when you have well studied the number and quality of your sins, then consider the justice and holiness of the eternal God, which you shall understand by the same law and gospel, where they speak the Divine terror against offending sinners ; but more especially shall ye know it by going to the cross of Christ, and wisely and seriously considering the horror of that punishment which Christ there endured ; for we never know as we ought the evil of sin, and our misery thereby, until we know what he endured to make an expiation for it. Do this, and do it faithfully. They that never knew themselves,—they are most certainly without love to Christ : and it is enough to prove it ; because, unless this foundation be first laid, they can see no sufficient reason for it.

DIREC. III. *Get a true conviction concerning thy own ultimate end and happiness.*—Where it lies, namely, not in the objects of sense, (Matt.

* *Beatus est, qui intelligit quid sit amare Jesum, et contemnere seipsum propter Jesum.*—A KEMPIS *De Imitatione Christi*, lib. ii. c. 7. "Blessed is that man who understands what it is to love Jesus, and for the sake of Jesus to despise himself."—EDIT.

xvi. 26,) but in the beatifical vision of God. Possess thy soul, by scripture-light, of the grand importance of securing thy interest therein : while you think your happiness lies any where else than in God, it will be irrational to love Christ, because his purpose and design is to take our hearts from the pursuit of all but God. And until you know God to be your happiness, you will never understand *the best* reasons (that I may not say, *the only*) that you have to love him. That man loves Christ best that most fully knows God to be his eternal Rest and Blessedness, and loves him as such.

DIREC. IV. *Get a gospel knowledge of Christ.*—Both what he was originally, and what he hath stooped and humbled himself to be for thy sake ; why he came into the world, how he lived and died, and what was the covenant between the Father and him ; how he is exalted and honoured by God, and what great things are promised both by Father and Son to all that in Christ sincerely draw nigh to God. O the sweet gales of affection which, by spiritual meditation upon Christ, will begin to blow within us ! We cannot muse upon Christ's dying, and rising again, and inviting us to love him, but the fire will burn : a considering faith in Christ will naturally bud and blossom into love.

DIREC. V. *Believe the reality of his love to thee.*—I mean, that he did all that ever he did for thee out of a hearty and real affection to thee ; and that he still desires to have the match made up betwixt thy soul and himself. This fond prejudice, whereby souls put discouragements upon themselves, is that which spoils many a match. Do not weaken thy soul by making difficulties where there are none. If thou hearest Christ inviting, stir up thyself, O thou convinced soul, as if thou heardest him even calling to thee by name. Believe it, that Christ is never better pleased than when he is loved ; and that he came no less to procure thy love than to testify his own. The way to love Christ in good earnest is to believe that he is so in his offers of grace to us.

DIREC. VI. *Understand the world thoroughly, and be jealous of thy own heart therein.*—Remember that of the apostle, who knew what it was to love Christ, as well as any man ever did : “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John ii. 15.) We may well enough add, “ Nor the love of the Son.” We may offer to our Lord *cor fractum*, or “ a broken heart ;” but we must not presume to desire him to accept our *cor divisum*, or “ divided heart.” Remember that Christ and the world are two, contrary each to other ; and the single stream of love cannot run two contrary ways at once. If our hearts be not crucified to the world, the love of Christ will never live within us.

DIREC. VII. *Be much in attendance on those means or ordinances, wherein Christ is evidently set forth, and by his Spirit wooing souls to love him.*—If faith comes by hearing, so no less certainly doth love. Christ most commonly honours his own ordinances and officers, in making up the match between himself and souls ; so he did Paul. (2 Cor. xi. 2.)

DIREC. VIII. *Go to God and Christ for love.*—When you have gotten your hearts well warmed with the use of all the fore-mentioned means, then go to God and Christ, and turn thy meditations into petitions.

Plead hard and heartily all those moving *considerations* which were set down to usher-in these directions. God delights to honour prayer in this great work of his, in drawing souls to Christ. "No prayer, no faith:" and it is as true, "No prayer, no love, no marriage to Christ."

I have done with the *directions* of the first kind; and have therein almost prevented myself from going any further; it being a rule in the spiritual, as well as the natural, growth, that we are nourished by the very same that gave us our first beings. If we know by what means we came by our love at first, and have but appetites whetted-on to a further growth, we need little more. And therefore having first persuaded you carefully to continue to practise-over the fore-mentioned directions, I only add:—

DIRECTIONS.

DIREC. I. *Consider much your own experiences, and the great advantages you have made by this grace.*—I need not tell what they are, because ye know them well enough already; and the sense of past advantage will best quicken to future diligence; which is the second direction.

DIREC. II. *Be constant in the exercise of that love ye have.*—The best way to strengthen any habit, is to be often repeating its acts. We cannot do any thing better to increase love, than to be often acting love.

DIREC. III. *Get faith more rooted.*—And that will make your love to be more inflamed. If you would have fruitful branches, you must keep the root of the tree fat; and if you would have any grace to thrive, you must be sure to strengthen faith.

DIREC. IV. *Take heed you be not willingly guilty of any known wickedness against Christ.*—For this will cause Christ to withdraw; it will occasion in thy heart a jealousy, and that will be an abatement of thy love. Be conscientiously diligent in all known duties.

DIREC. V. *Get thy heart daily more thoroughly crucified to the world, and better acquainted with heaven and the love of God.*—The more you love God, the more you will and must love Christ.

DIREC. VI. *Be much in the communion of saints.*—And then, especially when together with them, thou mayest look on, and admire the love of thy crucified Saviour in the Lord's supper. They that are most where Christ is to be enjoyed, love him best.

And these are briefly the heads of DIRECTIONS in answer to each of these inquiries: they might have been more largely insisted on and pressed; but this defect must be supplied by yourselves.

Remember, again,—and with that I will conclude,—that it is not the knowledge of these directions that will advantage you, but the serious and diligent practice of them. And so "grace be with all them that," in the diligent use of these means, get and inflame their "love to the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."