

SERMON XL

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.—VER. 10.

THE coherence of these words I have formerly shewed you to be a relation unto what is said just before, 'He had purposed in himself.' What was it he purposed in himself but this, as the words may be truly read, 'to gather together in one all things in Christ?' I told you my thoughts were, that the Apostle did here, having spoken of God's decrees, of election in Christ, and redemption in Christ, &c., in the conclusion of the doctrinal part of his discourse, give you the sum of all God's purposes in himself, both towards Christ and us; and he expresseth it in this, that it was to 'gather all things in one in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.'

The great thing to be opened (which I have made entrance into) is, what is meant here by *gathering together in one*, which seemeth to be the adequate design and project of God's heart towards Christ and us for ever, and comprehensively to contain all under it.

That by 'all things in heaven,' and 'all things on earth,' angels and men are meant, I shewed the last time. I told you the word ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι implieth, first, a summing up of many numbers into one. I gave you an account of this.

God, intending to sum up all things in heaven and in earth in Christ, summeth up first all things in heaven and in earth in Christ's person, as the foundation of the other summing up of a mystical body too.

All sorts of divisions God summed up in Christ. God and the creature first, he cast them up into one sum; for he made God and the creature one Person.

He takes, in the second place,—whereas he had two reasonable creatures, angels and men,—the nature of a man and uniteth it unto God, and the condition of an angel; for that is his due too. That man (if he be united unto God) is called The heavenly man; he is not an earthly man, nor to be an earthly man, though for our sins he took frail flesh; but that which is his due is to be a man, and like an angel for condition. He summeth up the condition of things in heaven, and the nature of men on earth, in his own person.

Then come down to earth, and there you have Jew and Gentile; he summed up both in Christ, for Christ came of both. Jew and Gentile, all the world, Christ and all, had the very same great-grandfathers, those ten men that were from Adam to Noah. Thus he summed up all in his person.

When he had done, he summeth up of all a body to him answerable to his person; or rather a church, a city of the living God, a family to him, as the Scripture expresseth it. He takes of all things in heaven, and of all things in earth, and he makes them up unto Christ, as a Head, one body.

That Christ was the Head of angels, I shewed in the last discourse. That there is an association between angels and the saints, I shewed likewise ; and this under Christ as a Head. All these particulars I have largely opened ; I shall not stand to repeat them. Only there is one thing which I added not in the last discourse, concerning that of angels, and that is this, Why it is said *all things in heaven* ? You know, when we say all things on earth, it is all sorts of men, all ranks of men upon earth. Are there any several sorts of angels in heaven ?

My brethren, for certain there are several ranks of them ; what they are we cannot define, but that there are several ranks of them, that known place, and many others might be brought, Col. i. 16, 'By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.' The angels are called principalities and powers ; that we have an express place for in this first chapter of the Ephesians, ver. 21, 'He set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.' He expresseth these several ranks of angels, for there is *acies ordinata* of them, by the ranks that are here on earth, by way of similitude, so to convey it to our apprehensions. Some, he saith, are *thrones*. Thrones importeth kingly power, as we read in Dan. x. 13, 'He was the first of the princes,' speaking of one of the angels ; and likewise we read of an archangel. Some, he saith, are *dominions*, which are as viceroys ; and *principalities*, which among men were governors of provinces ; and *powers*, which were ordinary lower magistrates. He expresseth it by these ranks, not that there are but four, or how many we know not, but he conveyeth what is in heaven to us by what is on earth. Now, of all these sorts of angels, he hath taken some, (as perhaps of all these angels some fell, as of all sorts of things in earth some are gathered to Satan,) but of all sorts of things on earth, he gathereth some to Christ, and so in heaven too.—So much for that.

Now I must come to shew, that he hath gathered all things on earth *to Him*. That which I handled in the last discourse was but the gathering to a *Head*, as the word signifieth, of all things in heaven, with things on earth. Now, God hath taken all sorts of men on earth, and meaneth to make out of them a body unto Christ. And therefore he expresseth it by the word *τὰ πάντα*, all things ; because he takes all sorts of things and conditions whatsoever ; therefore he expresseth it, I say, rather by things than by persons, as implying all conditions of men.

The first great division upon earth, what is it ? It is both of Jew and Gentile. He will take of both these. I shall not need to prove it, for I shall meet with it again and again in opening of this place. In the very next words to my text, which therefore argueth that to be his meaning, he speaks of the calling of the Jews first, at the 12th verse, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ ;' there is the Jews. 'In whom ye also trusted,' ver. 13, 'after that ye heard the word of truth ;' there is the Gentile. It is a thing I must often speak to, therefore I will speak little to it now.

Come to the Gentiles. They are divided, we know, into many nations, which God hath made here upon earth. God takes, first and last, of all the nations upon the earth, to make up a body to his Son Christ. In Gen xviii. 18, there is a promise made to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. The like you have, chap. xxii., repeated again ;

for you have two places for it. And in Prov. viii. it is said, the delights of Christ were in the habitable parts of his earth, so the expression is, ver. 31. Wherever God hath earth inhabited, there Jesus Christ hath some from everlasting whom he did delight in, and shall do to everlasting.

Then come to nations; and there you have several kindreds. Now go, take all the kindreds of men that continue from the beginning of the world unto the end; God will take of all families and kindreds too. You shall find that the promise made to Abraham, as it runneth that *all nations* shall be blessed in him, so it runneth that *all families* of the earth shall be blessed in him too, and, as Peter interpreteth it, 'all fatherhoods;' so the expression is, Acts iii. 25. In Gen. xii. 3, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' The like you have in Gen. xxviii. 14. Twice it is said that all *nations* shall be blessed in Abraham, and in his seed; and twice it is said, all *families* shall be blessed—that is, all kindreds shall be blessed in him and his seed.

Then there are other divisions besides. There are several sorts and ranks of sinners. God hath excepted but one; and what is that one? Those that on earth become the serpent's seed, and so join issues with hell; those that sin against the Holy Ghost, and have the venom of this sin in their spirits, of revenge against God, such as the devil hath: except those, God takes of all sorts. It is a known place, Matt. xii. 31: He, through whose hands all the pardons of the world go, Jesus Christ, that stands at the sealing of them, saith, that 'all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.' He doth not only say, it *may be* forgiven, but he expressly saith, it *shall be* forgiven. God hath so ordered it, that as all mankind shall fall into all sorts of sin, so shall some of his elect do, some into some, and some into another; that you can instance in no sin, or way of sinning, or aggravation of sinning, which shall not be pardoned to some of the sons of men.

Then go, take all ranks, (there are other divisions yet,) take all ranks of poor and rich, kings and nobles, wise and fools; God takes of all these. He takes of fools, as he saith, Isa. xxxv. 8, 'Though fools, they shall not err' in that way. Natural fools, God takes some of them, and teacheth them to know Christ. 'Pray,' saith he, 'for kings, and all in authority,' 1 Tim. ii. 2; for God would have all men to be saved, all sorts of ranks.

Obs. 1.—See now, my brethren, of whom the Church universal consisteth, and see the glory and splendour of it: all things in heaven, and all things on earth; all nations, all families, all kindreds; whatsoever divisions you can make. You have it, Rev. v. 9, and likewise Rev. vii., where the Church universal is represented, perhaps under a particular way; yet, I say, you shall find it represented there. First, in the fifth chapter, the four beasts and the four-and-twenty elders, they cry unto Christ, they give glory unto him; 'for,' say they, 'thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood out of every kindred,'—there is families,—'and tongue, and people, and nation.' And all things in heaven come in too, ver. 11, 'And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne.' You have the like words, chap. vii. 9, 'I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb.' And ver. 11, 'All the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders.' The angels come in too. Men are nearer the throne; for if you observe it, the angels do stand about the elders. Men are nearer, because, as I said before, they have a nearer relation to Christ; he is in such a way a head to them as he is not to angels.

This, my brethren, is the glory and the splendour of this universal Church,

of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what should this teach us, by way of use and observation, but to long for that day when we shall all meet thus together; when God will bring men out of all parts of the earth, where thou shalt meet with some of thy kindred, some of thy nation, some that have been just such sinners as thou art? What a glorious day will that be! We account it a glorious day when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and Jew and Gentile shall make up one sheepfold, and Christ be one shepherd; and it will be a glorious day indeed. But the day that is to come, when Christ shall have all his children about him; when God-man, in whom all things are summed up in his person for excellency; and when men and angels and all shall be gathered up to him, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end of it, when that general assembly shall be full and complete, and he shall not want, no not the least joint, the least member; what a glorious day will this be, when God hath all his sons about him! He forbearth now opening the fulness of his glory, because he hath not all his sons about him: but when he hath them all about him, then he will bring forth all his riches, all the treasures of his glory. As you know Ahasuerus did, when he had the princes of the provinces before him in his great palace, Esth. i. 2. He was king of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces; and the text saith, 'He sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace; and he made a feast to all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him.' It seems it was a great occasion; whether to shew the greatness of his glory, or for what other end he calleth them up, they were all before him; and then he makes a feast, such a feast as never was read of. So, when God shall have all the princes of the earth, the first-born, before him; when men shall 'come from the east, and from the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in his kingdom;' then will God feast, then will he bring forth all his glory, and empty himself for ever.

Obs. 2.—Therefore, my brethren, long for this day, and let your hearts seek to be one of this number, not to be left out of this *all*. For your encouragement herein consider this, which is a second observation, That no condition can be said to be any hindrance to you from being in Christ. Thou canst object nothing against thyself, neither poverty, nor folly, nor want of memory and understanding, nor weakness, nor sinfulness,—I say there is nothing at all thou canst object against thyself, which may hinder thy salvation. Why? Because God takes all sorts of things on earth. Thou canst say nothing of thyself, but that there are some whom God hath saved just like thee. 'There is no difference,' saith he, Rom. iii. 22; he 'justifieth freely by his grace.' There is no difference; take a beggar and a king, they have the same shadow in the sun. Sins, my brethren, make no difference, the greatness or the smallness of them, to hinder salvation. Mountains bear no proportion, more than mole-hills, to the heavens, they are so high. If one were in the heavens, the earth would seem as a round globe; mountains would not be seen more than mole-hills are.

Obs. 3.—Again, in the third place, you may see here the infinite goodness of God to all, that he takes of all sorts of things, of all sorts of ranks; of angels in heaven, he takes of all things there; of all sorts of things on earth, in all their several varieties. This is a great respect God hath to his creation, in that he will do so. He created and made all things, and he made them all by Jesus Christ, and therefore he shall have the first-fruits of every one, and of every sort of thing. I take it to be part of the meaning, though not all, of that Eph. iii., where, speaking of this mystery, 'that all

men,' saith he, ver. 9, 'should see the fellowship of the mystery,' (having spoken of the calling of the Jew and Gentile before, ver. 8,) that mystery 'which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.' What cometh in afterward?—'who created all things by Jesus Christ.' He made all things by him, saith he, and therefore he will save of all sorts by him. He hath respect to the whole creation; he will have some of all sorts in it. Therefore, Acts x. 34, when they saw that God did save the Gentiles as well as Jews, what conclusion do they make out of it? 'Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.' And there is another reason intimated in the next verse following, ver. 36, 'The word,' saith he, 'which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; he is Lord of all.' Is he Lord of all? He will save of all sorts by him.

God, as he hateth nothing that he hath made, as it is his creature; so he will shew the freeness of his grace by saving all varieties of his creatures. For therein lieth the freeness of his grace, that no condition shall hinder. I conclude with that which the Apostle concludeth (Rom. xi.) all the doctrinal part of his epistle. He had shewed that Jews and Gentiles were both corrupt, in chap. ii. and iii. He had shewed that God would save both of Jew and Gentile, in chap. ix., x., and xi. How concludeth he? Ver. 30 of that 11th chapter, 'As you in time past' (speaking to the Gentiles, they take their turns) 'have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also' (speaking of the Jews) 'now not believed, that through your mercy they also might obtain mercy,' that both they and you might have mercy together; 'for God hath concluded' (it is translated *them*, but the word *πάντα* is) 'all,' Jew and Gentile, 'in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.' And upon this he doth, as we all should do: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' (and mercy too;) 'how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'

So much now for that part of gathering a body out of all sorts of things on earth and things in heaven. I have shewed you, in opening these words, first, that God hath summed up all in Christ, he cast up all as into one number in his person; which was the first signification of the words. He gathereth all things, both in heaven and on earth, as a church, as a family to him, as unto one head; that the word likewise signifieth.

There is a *third thing* that is to be added to the signification of this word; there is *ἀνά*, that he doth this again; there is a gathering together under one head again the second time; so the word signifieth. This same *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*, (as I remember Bishop Andrews in a sermon upon this text hath it,) saith he, the force of it is not only to signify a collection, a gathering of all; but it is a re-collection. It is true, our translators took not notice of it, they translate it simply, 'gather together in one;' but all know that the word signifieth *again*; 'to gather together again under one head.'

Now this gathering together again may import two things. *First*, a gathering a second time of all things in heaven and in earth. *Secondly*, it doth imply a scattering first; that he doth after his first gathering of them scatter all a-pieces as it were, severeth them one from another, and from himself. They are like members *disjecta*, like members rent and separated from their head; and then he gathereth them all together again, *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι* importeth *recollectionem*; they were scattered from Christ, and so gathered again to him, as to a head.

Against this interpretation there is this great rub in the way—that the angels, the things in heaven, never were scattered; why should they be said to be gathered together again, with all things on earth, unto Christ as a head? Therefore interpreters have been exceeding shy of interpreting ‘all things in heaven’ to be meant of angels. I must first remove this rub; it is the main difficulty.

There are two interpretations that may help to remove it. The first is this, that although both things in heaven and things on earth were not both scattered, yet if things on earth were, it may be said to be a gathering together of all; take them altogether *in sensu composito*, though not *in sensu diviso*. Some explain it by this similitude. Suppose two nations were united under one monarch, and one of them falls off, and turn all rebels unto him, and rend themselves away from that other nation with which they were at peace and union under that one head. As when those seven provinces revolted from the Spaniard, there were ten remained still firm unto him. If ever these seventeen, the seven and the ten, unite themselves together again, and subject themselves, as before, to him as their head and monarch, and lay down hostility against him, it might be said that here is a gathering of them all, a reducing of them all to their former obedience, though but one part fell off. This is a similitude that one giveth of it to explain it. The like you find in Calvin. Suppose you find, saith he, a house, a great part whereof were fallen down, and some stood still; if that part that is fallen be built up again, the whole house is said to be rebuilt. So it is here. And this is the first interpretation to reconcile this difficulty: that because men were scattered, that part of the house on earth, the family on earth, were scattered from him, which were once joined unto him, unto one head, unto Christ, (God united all, angels and men unto him,) yet now being gathered together again, all is said to be gathered together in one unto him.

There is a second, which I do find that both Calvin and others have, and is more hard to explain. I will do it as clearly and as briefly as I can. I shall express my meaning perhaps in somewhat a differing way from theirs, yet it comes all to one. And it is this. That even of the angels themselves there is a double knitting of them unto God. First, a common, that they and the devils (created once holy) had, and that Adam in innocency, and all mankind in him, had in common together. And the other is a special union unto God, and that by Christ. So that though there was not an actual scattering of them from that first union of theirs, but even that also held and continued firm; yet it was prevented by a further union, by a gathering of them in one in Christ as their head, unto God, that did fix them for ever to stand firm unto him.

I may express it unto you well thus: that God, to magnify his grace the more,—both his glorifying grace to angels and men, and supernatural grace to stand for ever, which is a supernatural grace,—did ordain, to exalt this grace, two several knittings, two unions and communions of his creatures, (made holy at first,) to himself: whereof the first was not sure nor steadfast, nor would not perhaps have held to eternity. They would have dropped off one after another, if God had let things go on so; there would have been a perpetual hazard of the angels departing and scattering from him. The things on earth actually fell from him, the other were in danger; and therefore God, to make all fast and sure, ordaineth a second union, and a gathering together again in Christ.

To explain both these knittings to God;—it will, as I said it would, contain

the whole design of God, both of creation and the instauration of the creature in Christ, and redemption and whatever else ;—to explain, I say, this double knitting to God, this knitting the first time, and knitting again, I shall do these two things :—I shall, *first*, shew you what union at first in common the good angels, and those that are now bad, and man, and all had with God. And then, *secondly*, the necessity of a further union for their perpetual and everlasting standing in grace, and their enjoying their full glory in heaven.

For the first, To shew what this same first union and gathering of all creatures both in heaven and on earth in common was.—It was by their creation and the covenant thereof ; that covenant that passeth between God merely as a Creator, unto them as his creatures, which was common both to good angels that stand, and them that fell, and man in his innocency, who also fell. Now, my brethren, this you must know, that although man was created on earth, and the angels created in heaven, in a higher condition of knowing and enjoying God ; yet so as, take them merely as creatures, and as a covenant shall pass between God the Creator and them, they are both under the same law of nature, so as they may fall from their condition as well as man ; and there was no law, either of nature or justice, between God and the creature, could any way oblige God to uphold and to maintain them. Thus slippery was the first union, simply considered as creatures. I need not stand to shew you how both angels and men were first united to God. Adam is called the son of God, Luke iii. 38, by creation. And the angels are called the sons of God, as they were first made, when they were holy and standing holy, Job xxxviii. 7. United then they were both to God.

And, in the second place, although we cannot say that there was a perfect association between angels and men then in the state of innocency, as now under the state of grace there is, (which I shewed you before,) and shall be for ever ; but that angels should remain in their heaven, and man should have remained on his earth : ‘The first man,’ saith he, ‘is of the earth earthly ;’ he speaks of man at best. I am not of the mind of some of those modern divines that have said, that the sin of the angels was this, that God did send them down upon earth to attend man ; this they stomached, and tempted man to sin, and that was their sin. There is no ground of that at all, to think that, under the law of nature, the elder should serve the younger. It is a privilege we have by Christ ; they are his ‘ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be the heirs of salvation,’ Heb. i. 14. Yet concerning the association of both then, we may say this, that it is most certain that the same things whereby Adam knew God, by the same things did they know God ; though also in a further degree, and in a higher measure. And therefore, as before I said there was an association both of angels and men in this respect, that angels themselves do pry into the things of the gospel, and so are present to our assemblies ; so likewise in this respect both angels and man then had a kind of association in this, that the angels themselves took in the glory of God from things here below. They rejoiced when they saw the world made, when they saw God to limn out the world, and fill up that first draught of the chaos as he did, and when he brought man in the lord of all. That you have an express place for, Job xxxviii. 7. He saith, that when the foundations of the earth were laid, the angels, that were created the first day with the heavens, shouted for joy : ‘The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’ They are called the morning stars, because they began early to glorify God, they were *matutina* ; and they are called sons

of God : it is said they all shouted for joy ; and if they shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid, certainly then when man was made they stood by as spectators to see God, I say, limn out the world, and perfect it in man's creation. So that though man should not have known, nor knew things from heaven, yet they knew things on earth ; and therefore in that respect there was some kind of fellowship, they partaking of the same things that we did, though not we that they did.

And then, again, if there were not a fellowship, nor ever should have been,—and we have no ground at all to think so that I know of,—yet this is certain, there was a peace amongst them in these two kingdoms of God, of which he was monarch and lord. Though they remained distinct and divided, yet notwithstanding they were at peace, they were not at hostility, they were gathered in peace under one Lord then, both men and angels, and so united unto God. And they did glory in the good of man certainly ; as they sung at the birth of Christ, 'Peace on earth, and good-will towards men ;' they shouted when man was made, if they shouted when the foundations of the earth were laid. So that you see there was a common union, both to God, and some way among themselves ; there was a peace at least.

But you will say unto me, This first union, was this in Christ ? The word *again*, you will urge, will imply so much,—they are gathered again to a Head in one in Christ. Was he the Head, then, both of angels and men in creation ?

For that I answer, *first*, it was not absolutely necessary, (though the force of the word will hold.) They were gathered unto one Head, God ; for in I Cor. xi. 3, you shall find that God is called the 'Head of Christ,' and so of all things else, of all men and angels ; he is the supreme Head of all, above the rest. They were gathered unto one Head, God ; that is certain then. But that they should be gathered first unto Jesus Christ as a Head, as God-man, that is not necessary. It is true that the second gathering is in him as a Head.

Yet, in the *second* place, there is much in the current of the Scripture, which I shall have, sometime or other, opportunity to allege, that even Jesus Christ was the 'corner-stone' of the creation, both to men and angels. If he would not have been a creature, God would not have made a creature else. The meaning of it is not as if that he should not have been incarnate, if man had never fallen ; but that neither men nor angels should have been made if Christ had not been to have been incarnate, which was at once ordained together with him. I could name many places for it. Rev. iii. 14, speaking of Christ, 'These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.' You have the like, Col. i. He reckoneth up all the uses of God-man, and he saith, ver. 16, that 'by him all things were created, visible and invisible,' (there is the first gathering unto him ;) and then, ver. 20, he speaks of reconciling all things in heaven and on earth, which is the second gathering, and the same with that in the text.

But then another question will be this : Was Jesus Christ the Head of the creation ? What scripture is there for that ?

For that I will give you but this place, I Cor. xi. 3, &c. Saith he, I would have you know, for perhaps it was a thing they did not so much consider, that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. He speaks of Christ as God-man ; for so only God is said to be his head. He doth not only say he is the head of the elect angels and men, but of every man, and that by the law of creation ;

for as the man by creation is the head of the woman, so is Jesus Christ the head of the man; therefore ver. 8, 9, saith he, 'The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man.' He speaks of creation expressly. So we elsewhere read, 'All things were created by Christ, and for Christ,'—that is, by virtue of him. For as he was the 'Lamb slain from the beginning of the world,' that he might redeem it, as he did those that were before he was incarnate, so virtually he might have an influence into the creation also, he being to be incarnate.

So now, my brethren, you see the *first gathering* how it was. But then you will say, If he was their head in creation, there is this difficulty yet, why did they not then stand? Why did not he preserve them, being their head, by virtue of being the head of the creation also?

The answer to that is easy, and it is this. He was their head by creation, but in a common relation, but by way of eminency, as being the chief of the creation of God, and as the Lord and heir of all, in a natural way, by a natural due; and therefore, notwithstanding it was his due thus to be their head, it went no further; he left them to the course of nature. But now his being a head a second time, in this second gathering, it is by a special protection, undertaking to preserve them in a more peculiar manner, and that in a supernatural way, to bestow supernatural glory, and if they fall to redeem them, as he did the sons of men. So that now, by a natural due of his, he was the head in creation; by a special undertaking, by a special protection, (as I may so express it,) he becometh a head in the second gathering; and therefore he will be sure now to hold them fast enough. Thus you see what this first gathering in Christ was; you have that explained as briefly and as plainly as possibly I could.

Secondly, We come now to the necessity of a second gathering, both of angels and men.—Still the difficulty will be on the angels' part; of men, (you know they falling,) there is no difficulty at all about them.

To represent this necessity unto you, my brethren, it is thus in a word. All things, angels and men, though they were by the common tie of creation, being made holy, knit unto God; yet only by no other term of justice or union, no stronger than what was simply due to the creature as the creature, and as it was meet for God as a creator to carry himself towards the creature. It was not *ultra debitum*, beyond the due of the creature, as the school-men express it. Now, therefore, it was not a due to the creature, nor no obligation by the law of creation that was between God and the creature, that he must uphold it; but that he might leave it to shew itself what it was to be a creature. What assistance, therefore, he giveth to uphold and to confirm in grace, and perpetually to stand, is above the bargain, above the covenant of creation, above the obligation of nature; it is wholly supernatural, and it is of grace; it is more than nature's due. So that, as I said before, though the angels themselves were created in heaven, as man upon earth, yet they stood by the same common law, and no otherwise, that man did upon earth. It is true, indeed, this of the angels, they had stronger natures and were built of stronger matter, and so were less subject to fall; they were more able to stand; yet still, if left but to the mere assistance that by the covenant of nature God was to give them, though in heaven, they would fall as well as man. See a scripture for this, wherein angels and men are compared together, Job iv. 18. It is a scripture which in this argument divines have recourse unto, and I shall have recourse unto it afterward. 'Behold,' saith he, 'he put no trust in his servants; his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay?'

Comparing men and angels together, saith he, the angels had two advantages : they were, first, by nature made of stronger stuff ; alas ! man dwells in a house of clay, a house of cards, that is easily tumbled or blown down ; but they are built of a house of marble, that is stronger and abler to stand. Secondly, they had this advantage, that they were God's servants in a more peculiar manner ; so they are called his, because they were his servants about his throne, at court. Man was his subject, but they were his household servants then in a more peculiar manner, and therefore nearer God. Yet, notwithstanding these advantages, saith he, God could put no confidence in them, he could put no trust in them ; and he had a great deal of reason not to trust them, for you know how a great part of things in heaven served him when they fell. He chargeth them that fell with folly, with damnable folly ; he spared them not, for he laid the guilt of sin upon them, and threw them down to hell, as Peter saith ; and he chargeth the other with possible folly, as I shall shew anon.

So that you see by the law of creation—(for it is that law which he disputeth there ; ' Shall a man be more pure than his maker ? ' It is the words immediately before, in the 17th verse ; he bringeth it in, indeed, to another purpose ; yea, but take God as he is a Maker, the one as the clay, the other as the potter)—he is no way obliged to make them stand as they are of themselves, but they are creatures that are not *stable*, as the word signifieth, and as some translations have it. You see then the angels,—and there was sufficient proof for it,—that by that law wherein they were first gathered to God, by that knot, by that covenant—it was too slippery—God could put no trust in them ; all the angels might have served him as the devils did.

Again, there is this intallible reason, for it is an inseparable property of the creature, by an essential defect that cleaveth to it, that it is mutable, it is changeable, and may be tempted to sin. I call it a property of the creature, for in James i. 13, 17, compared together, you shall find that it is made the property of God alone to be immutable and without shadow of turning.

Now then, my brethren, you see that for these angels, if God would be sure of them, if he would put confidence in them, there must be some further knitting of them to him, by some further covenant, some further medium, by some higher law than this merely of creation, that passed between them as creatures and him as their Creator. There needed therefore a second gathering. Out of this that hath been said, you see then, that although they were not actually scattered, yet they were in danger ; they had need therefore be fixed in a head ; they are glasses, and they had need of a bottom, which might keep them from falling ; and these morning stars, the Lord Jesus Christ had need hold them in his hand, or they may fall down from heaven, as Lucifer, that great devil, did. They needed supernatural grace to confirm them ; it is not their due by nature ; it is not their due by creation. And by whom should they have this grace ? By whom should they have this protection ? Why, from him whose ministering spirits they are ; his ministering spirits, he calleth them so because he hath a special interest in them ; they are not our ministering spirits, it is nowhere said so. They are sent indeed for our good, but they are his ministering spirits ; he hath a proper interest and title in them ; he is the fountain of grace, and everything that hath anything by participation is reduced to that which hath it of itself. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is that man of grace ; he is the fountain of all grace ; therefore if they have supernatural grace, they must have it from him, and therefore in him. When the Apostle had reckoned that he

had created all things in heaven and in earth, he addeth that still in him all things consist, angels and all; the standing they have, this consistency, it is from the Lord Jesus Christ, Col. i. 17. He is the corner-stone of both the buildings, both that in heaven and that in earth.

For, my brethren, let me give you the reason of it. It is only Jesus Christ's natural due,—it is his natural due, only being the natural Son of God,—that after he is united to the Son of God, God should be engaged by a law, a law of nature, to uphold him, to be impeccable, to be put out of the danger of falling. It is only proper unto Jesus Christ; it is his law of nature, for he is the natural Son of God. It is his privilege to have life in himself; so you have it, John v. 26, 'For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' No creature hath so that it can stand of itself; therefore he having life in himself, if they stand and continue to have life, they have it from him.

Likewise, let me say this unto you, that the fulness of the glory in heaven, which is by a union with God, the angels could not attain to it, nor had it by the law of their creation; it is supernatural to them. The Papists ascribe it to the use of free-will, and to their merit; but it is above the due of the creature, as the best divines hold it. This utmost glory in heaven, that beatifical vision which we shall have after the day of judgment, and which the angels are brought unto *tanquam ad terminum*, as unto their utmost happiness, this is only Jesus Christ's natural due. So to see God as Jesus Christ himself doth, (and with the same kind of sight shall his members see him, though for degree he exceedeth, as we are anointed with the same Spirit that he is, though in degree, he above measure;) that sight which is thus proper to Christ, is the transcendent privilege of the Son of God. It is peculiar unto him, and it is by virtue of him we have it, both angels and men.

I will give you both Scripture for it and reason. John i. 18, 'No man hath seen God at any time.' It is translated *no man*, but it is *none, οὐδεις*, hath seen God; you may take it of all creatures at any time. 'The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' If angels had seen God as Christ seeth him, they might have declared him: it had not been Christ's peculiar prerogative to help us to that sight, if the angels had had the fulness of that beatifical vision which the Lord Jesus Christ hath, and bringeth all unto at last.

And, my brethren, I will give you this reason for it. (Another scripture there is, it is Ps. xvi., it is a psalm of Christ, and he it is that saith, 'At thy right hand there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; he was able first to speak that speech.) There is, I say, the greatest reason for it that can be. The angels did not, by the law of their creation, receive that full sight which now they have in heaven, not by the law of their creation; though they that stood might have it at first, but it is probable otherwise. There is this evident reason, for otherwise those angels that fell had never fallen. Had they been filled with the sight of God which the saints of heaven shall be for ever filled with, it had kept them from sinning. Why? Because there had not been a possibility of thinking there was any other good, not a possibility of it. If the creature knew God to the uttermost,—knew God as we shall know him one day, as we are known of him,—and saw his face with that clearness as Christ, the saints, and angels in heaven now do, they could not have turned their thoughts upon anything else. Therefore you must suppose there was but such a sight and knowledge of God as they might entertain a thought of some better good thing; for the

will of any creature, whether sinning or otherwise, must still be pitched upon some good. Therefore the school-men do rightly say that the utmost beatifical vision of God doth captivate, doth swallow up the mind. When we see God to the full, we shall be so in love with him that the heart shall never turn off from him. That 'fulness of pleasure,' those 'rivers of joy,' carry the soul away with a torrent for ever; it can never go back against the stream. The love of God constraineth. Now you see the angels did fall, and therefore certainly that fulness of the sight of God they had not; and if it had been by virtue of their creation they would have had it. To think that it should be by their own works, we know no such covenant; it is that, as you see, that is proper to the Lord Jesus Christ so to see God, he only lying in his bosom: by virtue of him men see God, and shall see God; by virtue of him angels see God.

And so much now for that, why there was a necessity of their being gathered unto Christ, as unto a head, a second time: both that they might have confirmation in grace, that God might put trust in them; and, secondly, that they might have fulness of glory, and that beatifical vision, that might make them impeccable, and without danger of sinning for ever.

There is yet somewhat more in that first of Colossians, (I confess I need not meddle with it, for it is out of my text, but yet it cometh fitly in.) It is said, 'He reconciled all things, both in heaven and in earth.' Interpreters are very shy here of interpreting it of angels, because they needed, they say, no reconciliation, for reconciliation doth suppose enmity. Therefore to speak to this a little.

This reconciliation, you see, is more than a second gathering; what need had they of this? Bishop Davenant saith of it that there was *reconciliatio analogica*, something that had the shadow of it, something like it. I shall give you my sense of it thus: when God had experience that the angels fell from him, and fell from him so at a clap, Why, might he think, they will all serve me thus, if they be left to the law of their creation; they may drop away thus, and turn rebels one after another, and as I have lost man, so I may lose all the angels too; it is in their nature to do it, the creature is apt to do it; I see experience in some of their natures already, made of the same metal with them. Now, my brethren, this must needs be supposed, that God is not contented with his creature, taken merely in itself, it breedeth a kind of *simultas*, a kind—I cannot call it of grudge, because there is no sin—but a kind of unsatisfiedness and displicence. Therefore the Scripture doth not only speak of the evil angels that fell, that God put no confidence in them; but it speaks plainly of the good angels, that God put no confidence in them, seeing the evil angels' fall, Job xv. 15, compared with that place I quoted before, Job iv. 18, 'Behold,' saith he, 'he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight: how much more abominable and filthy is man?' Whom doth he call saints here? He meaneth the angels. It is the same paralleled speech with the other, 'He put no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly.' And it is plain he meaneth the angels by saints here, for he opposeth them to man; 'how much more abominable and filthy is man?' They are called in Scripture the *saints of God* oftentimes, as in Dan. viii. 13, 'I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said to that certain saint that spake,' &c. Then saith he, 'the heavens are not clean in his sight.' By heavens he meaneth angels too, or at leastwise they may be meant by heavens, for in Scripture often they are; as the devils are called the *gates of hell*, so the angels are called *heaven*, from the place where they are.

Now, saith he, these heavens, these heavenly creatures, these holy ones, the angels, they are not clean in his sight; he seeth a possibility in them of sinning. And as he repented that he made man when he saw man fall from him, so when he saw some of the angels fall from him, there was just ground of repenting for making angels; for, saith he, all these may fall too, if let alone. He could take no contentment in them. Here is some ground for a reconciliation, to take away all this discontent. God could not love them perfectly, unless they could stand for ever. Why? Because he must so love as some time he must hate; and that, you know, is not every way perfect love; *amare tanquam aliquando osurus*. Therefore now, as it is not only called mercy to deliver the creature out of misery, but it is truly mercy to prevent from misery; it is more than goodness to do so—it is mercy. Mercy respecteth misery, either misery that it may fall into, as well as mercy to deliver out of it; it is analogically mercy, though the other is more properly mercy. So there is *quædam analogica reconciliatio*; whether this was by the blood of Christ or no, I will not now stand to dispute. This is certain, Christ needed not to have died to preserve angels in their standing; the necessity was only on man's part for satisfaction; there is a plain place for it, 2 Cor. v. 14, 'In that he died for all, we conclude that all were dead.' That he died thus out of necessity, it must be for them only that are dead. Yet, dying for men, there might be this overplus in it, that for the merit of his obedience's sake, he having relation to angels, they might have, not a satisfaction, but a benefit by it. And if it be true, which some divines—not Papists only—say, that he did *mereri sibi*, merit for himself, he hath the benefit of his death; being exalted on high, he hath a double right to glory; so likewise he might for them too.—And so I have done with this thing, *things in heaven*, the angels; and thus much for them.

I will but anticipate a use, or observation or two.

Obs. 1.—The first is this, Has God now purposed in himself, as the text telleth you here, such a great and vast price as this is, and is this the story of the purpose of his heart? (and I have not told it out.) My brethren, I appeal to you all, whether the heart of man could ever have invented such a story as this is: One God, making the creature one with himself; and, the creature falling from him, making him one again; in making of all things, in summing up of all in Christ, that is the founder of this gathering again, making up a body of all things in heaven and in earth unto the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot stand to lay open the particulars of it; you have heard it. The text saith, 'He purposed it in himself;' it could have come into no one's heart but his; it was hid in God, it was purposed in himself; the 'wisdom of God,' therefore, it is called, Eph. iii. 10.

Dost thou not believe that there is a God? Come hither, let this convince thee. Could all intelligible natures, all reasonable creatures, invent such a story as this? You think the Gunpowder-Plot to have been a plot so desperate that it must have been hatched in hell, it could not be formed in any man's brain. My brethren, this plot here could be hatched nowhere but in heaven, and in the heart of God. Go, and take angels and men, lay all your heads together and make such another. Such a God, such a Christ, thus great, having such a kingdom made out of all, both in heaven and earth, scattered from him, and reduced again; how infinitely doth this set out God and Christ! It is beyond the thoughts of men and angels to invent such a thing as this. No story ever had such a winding up as this. Read all histories, all romances, that men are pleased withal, they have not the shadow of such a plot as this. Take all the plots of all the great ones of the

earth, and all their petty plots come to nothing. The wisdom of the world is foolishness in comparison of this. We preach wisdom, saith the Apostle, in a mystery, which none of the princes of the world knew; their wisdom comes to nothing before this, it all vanisheth. To set up so great a monarch that hath alliance to all his subjects, and to make him king of all the world, of both worlds, and to have some out of all in heaven and in earth to be made subjects unto him, and he in his own person to have all things in him; and they falling from God, he being able to knit them all again a second time. 'Without controversy,' saith he, 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'great is the mystery of godliness.' What is it? This very thing I have spoken of. It is first, 'God manifested in the flesh,' God and man summed up in one. It could never have entered into the heart of man or angel to have a thought that the Son of God should have taken a creature up into his own person thus, and such a creature as all should be summed up in him. 'Justified in the Spirit,' that is, at his resurrection. 'Seen of angels,' to be their head. 'Preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world,' to be the head of them on earth by faith too. This is a mystery without controversy; no man that readeth it or heareth it, but he must fall down before it. This is not man; this is not the wit of angels; this is, without controversy, from an omniscient understanding that knoweth all things, and hath infinite depth in him. Nay, my brethren, of all the arguments that ever fell upon my understanding to convince me that there is a God, there is none like unto this.

Obs. 2.—A second observation is this, See the several steps of the goodness of God to his creatures in these three particulars, which that which I have handled doth shew. First, there is his simple goodness as he is a Creator, communicating himself unto them as to creatures by the law of creation, but not beyond their due as creatures. This was the state of Adam in innocency, and this was the state of the angels that fell. Then, secondly, there is a further degree of goodness shewed,—which becometh grace, which hath a peculiarness in it, it is supernatural, it is beyond the common tie of creation,—to keep them from falling; this he shewed to the angels that stood, when he let the other fall, which prevented them from falling. Well, but there is a third degree beyond all; that is, when actually they did fall, as the elect of the sons of men did, then here is riches of mercy, to gather them all to himself, in him again, and that by his blood. This is the mercy, this is the top of the mercies of God; and the truth is, to shew forth this, he shut up all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all. It was but to shew mercy so much the further. There was his mercy in preventing this, but there is infinite depth of mercy in recovering out of this; when they were all scattered from him, to gather them together again.