

A TREATISE
ON
CHRIST'S INTERCESSION;
WITH A
Practical Application.

THE PREFACE.

CHRISTIAN READER,

I HAVE great need to apologize for this my undertaking, partly because of king Solomon's caution, Eccl. xii. 12, "And further by these, my son, be admonished; in making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh:" and partly because I have already obtruded several practical treatises upon the world in this critical age. But, in the passage just quoted, I suppose the wise man has a reference to subjects natural, political, or polemical. As for practical truths of a truly spiritual nature, they lie in a small compass; so saith he, verse 13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty, business, and happiness of man." True religion consists in a right principle and unreserved obedience, to which every soul should be devoted; and it also becomes ministers to preach and promote the doctrine which is according to godliness, to use wholesome words for people's edification, holding faith and a good conscience.* Nor is it inconsistent with their present work to transmit something to posterity by writing, that after their decease, generations to come may have the truths of God always in remembrance.† It is true, we have the sacred records of infallible scripture, but practical treatises of godly ministers have always been accounted most excellent expedients to propagate religion in the world, and have proved successful for attaining the end.

I have but a few reasons to assign for my present undertaking.

* 1 Tim. i. 4, 5, 19. vi. 3, 4.

† 2 Pet. i. 15.

1. The subject is exceedingly necessary ; our persons and our prayers would be lost, had we no intercessor ; we are accepted only in the Beloved ; if our Lord Jesus does not hand poor sinners to God, woe be to them ; no gospel doctrine is more necessary than this ; the very satisfaction of Christ will do us no good without his intercession.

2. Most people are ignorant of it, or forget it in their approaches to God ; when conscience, relations, or ministers, put them upon prayer, or sore afflictions or death force them to go to God by prayer, they understand little of the right mode of taking Christ along with them by faith, but go to God absolutely considered, or if they say for Christ's sake, it is but a compliment, they cannot be benefited by his mediation.

3. I find not, in all my acquaintance with books, any one treatise upon this subject ; systems of divinity mention it, and some others glance at it occasionally, but none that I have seen treat purposely on it, though it is one of the fundamental articles of our religion, and deserves serious consideration.

4. Providence hath cast me into a declining condition, and some infirmities which render me incapable of travelling abroad, and even among my neighbours, so that I cannot personally converse with my hearers, yet my heart is much carried out towards them, and to God for them, amongst whom I have laboured in public and private, above fifty years ; and having preached through the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, in relation to the great ordinance of the Lord's supper, and having finished it, I was moved, partly by own inclination, and partly by the importunity of some friends, to resume the thoughts of it, and put it into writing, which hath greatly increased and extended itself in my hands ; this point, I conceive, admits not of dispute, no such controversies having been raised about this part of Christ's priestly office as on the other about his satisfaction on the cross for the sins of men, and as I love not controversy, I need not meddle with the many intercessors of Papists, who distinguish between a mediator of satisfaction and a mediator of intercession, the former they say is proper to Christ, the latter is common to saints and angels.

Ah poor sinner ! how darest thou appear before the tremendous Jehovah ? Look to thy state and standing, tremble lest thou be found Christless, in duties, at death or judgment.

God is a consuming fire, thou art as dried stubble ; God a terrible Judge, thou art a guilty malefactor. When death sits upon thy lips, and thou must be gone into another world, Satan seizing thee, the law thundering, conscience accusing, worldly comforts leaving thee, divine vengeance meeting thee, as thou art passing out of time into eternal torments—what wilt thou do ? Then, if not before, “ the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrites.” Oh then your “ hearts will meditate terror,” asking, “ Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? Who amongst us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings ?” * But there you must dwell, there you must live in misery whether you will or not; death will not put an end to your being, but well-being. How glad would you be to be annihilated ? Oh, you will say, that I might lie in hell a thousand years, and even a thousand thousand years endure intolerable torments, so that after millions of years I might be set at liberty ; no, no, the door is shut, the gulf is fixed, there you are, there you are like to abide for evermore. Oh that you were wise to consider these things betimes, before they be for ever hid from your eyes. Ministers intercede for God with you to gain your consent, the Spirit strives with you, conscience checks, God affords helps, all these will be your accusers another day if you close not with Christ.

Particularly, my poor neighbours and hearers, let me now bespeak you with all the tenderness of christian affection, as one going shortly to give up his accounts. Shall I meet you at the right hand of the Judge among the sheep, or the left hand with the goats ? Whether would you hear, “ Come ye blessed,” or “ Go ye cursed ?” Are you content to be banished from God, or desirous to be admitted into everlasting communion with him ? Look on these as dying words of your aged pastor. O that he may meet with comfort another day, that he that sowed, and such as reaped may rejoice together.

I have but a few hints to leave with you, which I desire you to receive as the last legacy of a dying man, a friend, a preacher.

1. Thoroughly study your lost and lapsed state by your birth-sin ; you are estranged from God, and so continuing must

* Isaiah xxxiii. 14, 18.

be for ever banished from him at death : you must be changed or damned. *

2. " Search the Scriptures," there you find the way to heaven opened, the character of the saved, the black traits of the lost, with their promises, precepts, and threatenings ; lean not on your own fancies, but divine oracles. †

3. Examine your consciences ; enter into the secrets of your hearts, commune with them, bring your hearts to the rule and touchstone, spend some time alone upon it, be faithful and impartial, tremble at hazarding a mistake. ‡

4. Accuse and condemn yourselves, you will find great reason ; your sins are obvious to God and conscience, if you hide them, they will undermine you ; there are hopes that God will clear you, if you censure yourselves. ||

5. Renounce every sin ; it is sin that separates betwixt God and you, that is dragging you to hell, that is provoking the Most High against you ; crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. §

6. Enter into a covenant with God ; solemnly renew your baptismal covenant ; take God as your God, and give up yourselves to him, defer not one day, tell the Lord you are his by many obligations. ¶

7. Put no confidence in yourselves, or in any thing of your own ; judge yourselves most unworthy of the high favour of covenant relationship ; you may and must account yourselves even as dead dogs before God. **

8. Join with God's people ; stand not at a distance from those that God owns ; renounce vain persons whom God rejects, sit not with them, but love and choose the society of saints for whom Christ pleads. ††

9. Be much in prayer ; plead with God for a spirit of grace : Christ is God's gift, be thankful for him, beg of God that

* Ps. lviii. 3. Rom. vi. 23. iii. 19, 23. Matt. xviii. 3.

† John v. 39. ii. 22. Acts xvii. 11.

‡ Ps. iv. 4. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Gal. vi. 4. Zeph. ii. 3.

|| 1 John iii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 31. Prov. xxviii. 13. 1 John i. 8.

§ Isa. lix. 2.

¶ Ps. l. 5. Isa. xlv. 5. 2 Cor. viii. 5.

** Ps. cxvi. 16. Matt. viii. 8. xv. 27. Luke vii. 44. 2 Sam. ix. 8.

†† Ps. xxvi. 4. cxix. 63. Phil. ii. 15.

through him you may have pardon, peace, and heaven, without money and without price: will you not ask? *

10. Rest not satisfied without saving faith which gives interest in Christ: remember all men have not faith; some have a faith but not sincere; yet it is absolutely necessary, there is no living, no dying without faith. †

I only advert to these things at present, read the rest in this ensuing Treatise.

As for you that have a principle of grace, an interest in Christ, admire the riches of God's grace in him, still say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift:" ‡ it is the greatest gift that ever came out of the hands of God, or that ever was in the hands of man, without whom all gifts are but giftless gifts. Nothing you have will do you good without him, nothing you do is accepted without him. O admirable grace! Christ is the covert that shelters you from God's wrath: he is the King's favourite that makes you welcome into the King of Heaven's presence. It was for you he came from heaven to earth; it is for you that he is gone from earth to heaven, to prepare room and mansions for you; ¶ it was for you that he was man, and acts as God. It is worth observing that twice did that excellent word sound from heaven, once at our Lord's baptism, and again at his transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." § Mark it, he doth not say, with whom, as with his person, but in whom; that is, all that have interest in him, and come to God through him. O happy souls, come when you will, come in whatever condition you may be, and you may find relief and release. Be not discouraged with the splendour of divine and dazzling glory: God appears in the cloud on the mercy-seat, and the mercy-seat is above upon the ark, to secure sinners from the rigour of the law, and then Jehovah will meet sinners and commune with them. ¶¶

This is admirable condescension in God, and advancement of a Christian. I may say to you, "Why stand you gazing up unto heaven?" ** Be not idle spectators, but really cultivators of piety; imitate the blessed Jesus in his life, improve his

* John iv. 10. Isa. lv. 1. Rev. iii. 18.

† Eph. iii. 17. 2 Thess. iii. 2. Heb. xi. 6.

‡ 2 Cor. ix. 15. ¶ John xiv. 2.

§ Matt. iii. 17. xvii. 5.

¶ Lev. xvi. 2. Exod. xxv. 21, 22.

** Acts i. 11.

death and resurrection, follow him in your holy meditations and ardent affections, send your prayers and praises after him, and run patiently this race that is set before you, that you may arrive in the celestial Canaan, at the new Jerusalem, the city of the great King, where you shall be "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among you."* That this may be the result of all our adorations of the true God, through Christ, is the prayer of,

Thy soul's servant in the gospel,

OLIVER HEYWOOD.

* Rev. vii. 15.

CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

ISAIAH LIII. 12.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

THIS is an excellent chapter, referring to the blessed Saviour of mankind, giving an account of his birth, outward abject appearance, voluntary humiliation, bitter sufferings, together with the cause thereof, the persons for whom, together with their benefit thereby, his patience under all his sorrows, his violent death, his burial, his innocency, God's pleasure and design in all, the efficacy and blessed fruits of his undertaking, in the conversion and justification of sinners, and the method of free grace in the application of all the work of our blessed Redeemer.

The last is strongly expressed in the verse which I have read, including two considerations:—

I. The promise to divide him a portion with the

great, and the spoil with the strong; however low he might be, he should be highly exalted, lead captivity captive, and give gifts to men, even to the rebellious;* gifts of grace and glory, privileges which are the fruits of his purchase; and these are not merely free gifts from the Father, but merited by Christ at a dear rate, therefore it is added, "Because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors."

But here the question is asked, Whether did Christ by his sufferings merit this advancement? In reply I answer:—

1. Christ did not merit the personal union of the divine and human natures, or his original perfections, or his happiness with his Father, these were essential to him, he was invested with these before he suffered, and merit must precede reward.

2. Yet we may say that Christ's humiliation was the meritorious cause of his exaltation, so it is said, Phil. ii. 6—9, "He humbled himself—wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." But still, this must be understood, not so much with respect to his person, as to his church, which is his mystical body, over whom he is head, and which he quickens together with himself, "raising us up, and making us sit together, in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. ii. 5, 6. This is a great truth, yet some so understand the text, that these sufferings precede this advancement, not so much by order of causality as of antecedency, considering his exaltation as the consequence of his passion.

But however it is clear from the words:—

1. That Jesus Christ must be abased before he was exalted.

This is showed by the mouth of all the prophets,

* Eph. iv. 8. Psal. lxxviii. 18.

that Christ must suffer, Acts iii. 18. And this was the sum of apostle's preaching, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, Acts xvii. 3.

2. Christ's sufferings contained a pouring out of his soul unto death.

This refers to the bloody sacrifices under the law, given to Israel, which sacrifices were offered upon the altar, to make an atonement for their souls, Lev. xvii. 11. Thus Christ truly died, [*cum ejus evacuarentur venæ, sanguisque fundaretur*] when the blood of his veins was shed, especially when the soldier pierced his side, "and forthwith came there forth blood and water," John xix. 34. It was an undoubted death, that there might be certain and effectual fruits of his death.

3. Jesus Christ was "numbered with the transgressors."

He that was best was numbered with the worst; he was reputed a worse person than Barabbas a vile murderer, John xviii. 40. He was crucified betwixt two thieves as the very ringleader of them, so the scripture was fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors," Mark xv. 27, 28. Yea, he was rejected by most classes of men, he was esteemed most despicable, so that his own received him not.* But O let Christ be the more precious in our account, the more vile he became for us, 1 Pet. ii. 7.

4. Christ "bare the sins of many."

This load was laid on the innocent Jesus, he was made sin for us who knew no sin, 2 Cor. v. 21. He bore the burden which we must have borne, and which would have sunk us into eternal torments; yea, it would have sunk him but that he was the infinite God, and could bear infinite weight, and could satisfy infinite

* Isa. liii. 3. John i. 11.

justice; for it was the blood of God, of him that is God, Acts xx. 28.

5. Jesus Christ is advanced to the highest dignity after his sufferings,

When God raised Christ from the dead, he set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities.—Eph. i. 20, 21. There he sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high; from thence he will come to judge the quick and the dead.*

6. The exalted Jesus scatters his gifts or donatives among the sons of men.

This alludes to the triumphs of the Romans, wherein they scattered their bounty, the noble fruits of their large spoils. So doth Christ dispense and disperse precious gifts and gratuities,† the fruits of his glorious resurrection, ascension and session at God's right hand, sending forth ministers ordinary and extraordinary, instituting sacraments, seals of the covenant, sending down the Holy Ghost in cloven tongues, communicating spiritual grace, valuable privileges to believers, &c.

7. The great and strong, as well as poor and weak, need those important gifts of our exalted Jesus.

The great and strong may be considered:—

(1.) Properly in a natural sense: kings and princes are said to see his glory, Isa. lxii. 2, kings' daughters to be among his honourable women, yea the rich among the people intreat his favour,‡ this was literally accomplished in Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea an honourable counsellor, who were Christ's disciples.

(2.) Figuratively: the souls that have true grace, though poor in the world, are yet rich in faith and heirs of a kingdom; || even if persons be conceited of their goodness, and think themselves rich and strong he can batter down their confidence, make them poor in spirit,

* Heb. i. 3. † Eph. iv. 11. ‡ Psal. xlv. 9, 12. || Jam. ii. 5.

and fill them with true spiritual riches, as he did Paul and many others.

Thus much for Christ's humiliation, and the distribution of his spoils, the consideration of which I purposely wave.

II. The latter blessed fruit of Christ's exaltation, consequent upon his sufferings, is his intercession, a delightful subject little treated on and less considered; therefore I shall on purpose take it into serious consideration. The word [פָּנַע] signifies *occurrere*, to meet, obstruct, or hinder another's motion; and it is taken sometimes in a bad sense, as when a man hinders another in doing good, but here it is taken in a good sense, for Jesus Christ stopping the wrath of God that comes forth against poor sinners, and meeting God with a design to speak a good word for poor supplicants, so some render it in this sense, [*pro prævaricatoribus oravit, rogavit, obviam ivit, intercessit*] that Christ prayed, besought the father, met him with entreaties and intercessions, to be gracious to poor sinners, shewing him the value of his blood and sufferings.

Doct. That Christ and Christ alone makes intercession for transgressors.

Transgressors of God's holy law have a High Priest in heaven to intercede for them: in handling this point, I shall shew,

1. What this intercession is.
 2. For what transgressors Christ intercedes.
 3. How our Lord manageth this intercession.
 4. Why Christ only is intercessor.
- And so make application.

CHAP. II.

ON THE CHARACTER OF OUR INTERCESSOR, AND THE IMPORT OF INTERCESSION.

THE intercessor here meant is Christ himself in his own person, for the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity is also in some sense an intercessor; so Christ saith, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you [*ἄλλον παράκλητον*] another paraclete, or comforter."* But it is the same word which is applied to Christ, 1 John ii. 1, and rendered advocate—"If any man sin, we have an advocate [*παράκλητον*] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Christ is the advocate without us, the Holy Ghost within, and though they always go together, yet they are thus distinguished:—

1. According to the economy of salvation, Jesus Christ principally negotiates the affairs of believers with God the Father; the Holy Ghost is the divine agent with believers, to manage God's work in the world,—to testify of Christ, John xv. 26,—to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, John xvi. 8; and with respect to the church, to teach them all things, John xiv. 26,—to guide them into all truth, xvi. 13,—to comfort their hearts, therefore he is often called, "The Comforter."

2. Jesus Christ is in heaven sitting at God's right hand, and makes intercession for us, Rom. viii. 34. But the Holy Ghost doth make intercession, or interpellation, with the saints, by directing them what to say in prayer, how to speak, helping their infirmities "with groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii.

* John xiv. 16.

26. The Spirit indites the Christian's prayers for him, this is the blessed fruit of Christ's purchase; hence the Spirit is called the Spirit of his Son, sent forth by God into our hearts, "crying Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. Thus all the persons of the sacred Trinity carry on the same design.

But this work of intercession is more peculiarly appropriated to Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity.

And this word applied to Christ in the New Testament, where he is denominated *παράκλητος*, advocate or intercessor, hath a fourfold signification.

1. It signifies a deprecator, that is, one that deprecates evil that it may not fall upon another; so Jer. xviii. 20, "Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, to turn away thy wrath from them." This is Christ's work by impetration and intercession, "to deliver us from the wrath to come."* O what flames of wrath would seize on us, did not Christ restrain them! It was this angel of the covenant that prevailed with God, for turning away his wrath from Jerusalem: "Jehovah answered the angel with good words and comfortable words," Zech. i. 12, 13. Christ's prayer is always prevalent.

2. It means (*exhortator*) an exhorter, a persuader, and one that undertakes to prevail with another. The word also doth signify consolation; so Barnabas is called *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*, "a son of consolation," Acts iv. 36, so we read it: but it may as well be read, the son of exhortation, for he was very expert in persuading and exhorting—Acts xi. 23, 24, "He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord:" and it was effectual, for much people were added to the Lord. Thus effectual are Christ's

* 1 Thess. i. 10.

arguments with his Father for believers, as we shall hear anon.

3. The word signifies (*patronus*) patron, defender, or maintainer of another's person and cause, and this is the same with his being an advocate in a court of judicature, to vindicate another's right or title according to law. Thus Christ doth undertake the patronage of his despised saints, against all those that would in any case wrong or abuse them; thus all God's children may in him find grace to help them in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. It is of Christ that the church in all ages hath confidently asserted, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us."—Isa. xxxiii. 22.

Once more, the word is employed to denote (*intercessor, interlocutor*) an intercessor or speaker on both sides, especially betwixt two parties that have had differences, who interposeth betwixt them to make them friends, and take up the controversy; one that is concerned for both sides, and hath considerable interest in them, and doth offer his mediation: Job calls such a one a surety, chap. ix. 33, "Neither is there any days' man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." The word in Hebrew [מֹכִיחַ] cometh from a root that signifieth to argue or reprove, such a one as may state the question right between us: thus the Lord himself was the umpire betwixt Laban and Jacob, in rebuking Laban:* thus doth our blessed Jesus step up to be arbitrator, mediator, and referee betwixt God and sinners. This is the case; God and man are at variance in consequence of Adam's apostacy. "Now," saith the apostle, Gal. iii. 20, "a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one;" he appears the same wise, just, holy God, under every dispensation of reli-

* Gen. xxxi. 24.

gion, there is no difference among the persons of the sacred Trinity; but there is a sad controversy commenced betwixt a righteous God and sinning man. How must these be made friends? Infinite love and wisdom have found out an expedient that is sufficient to effect it, even the second person of the Trinity, assuming the nature of man, and interposing two ways:—

(1.) By suffering the penalty that man had deserved, and satisfying justice by his meritorious oblation of himself; “He offered himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,” Eph. v. 2; “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;” * “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins:” † and thus he hath reconciled God and man by his death on the cross. ‡ This is the mystery of mysteries, the mercy of mercies. But this is not the point on which I am now to speak, but another founded upon it, which is—

(2.) The intercession of Christ now in heaven; he is our advocate, because he is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John ii. 1, 2. Thus Christ is now in heaven to pursue the same design he had upon the cross, so that Christ’s intercession sets out the perpetual efficacy of his sacrifice, and the continual application of it to believers, himself demanding from his Father for him and his, what was formerly merited and now looked on as a debt due in consequence of what Christ hath done and suffered. Hence it is said, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” || It is mercy to us, but justice to Christ, who hath merited it for us, and doth claim it as the fruit of his purchase.

Yet more particularly, this intercession is twofold :
1. Interpretative or virtual ; 2. Direct.

* 1 Pet. ii. 24. † Eph. i. 7. ‡ Col. i. 21, 22. || 1 John i. 9.

1. Our Lord makes intercession more objectively and interpretatively or virtually, and this is by presenting himself to God in heaven; so saith that remarkable text, Heb. ix. 24, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." The high priests of old went into the holy of holies, and bore the names of the twelve tribes upon their breast-plate for a memorial before the Lord, Exod. xxviii. 30. Our Lord answers this exactly, and having finished his suffering work on earth, the justice of God was fully satisfied, and he now presents himself to the Father, in the name and room of all believers, and virtually speaks this language—"Here I am, having finished the work thou gavest me to do."* I have fulfilled all righteousness, accomplished prophecies, answered the types, and here I am demanding by right what thou hast promised me, not only for myself, but for those whom thou assignedst to me by the covenant of redemption before the foundation of the world; and this he demands as due debt, because an equivalent price is paid and justice itself can demand no more: though it came freely to us, yet was bought at a dear rate by Christ. See Rom. iii. 24—26.

2. Formally, properly, and directly, Christ makes intercession by praying for us. Yet this must not be understood literally, as though Christ did now, after the manner of humble supplicants, kneel down or prostrate himself, as he did in the days of his flesh, with strong crying and tears:† but some way making known his desires to his Father for the good of saints, whether by words or signs who can tell? but in such a way as is suitable to his glorified state. Divines generally

* John xvii. 4.

† Matt. xxvi. 39. Heb. v. 7.

conclude that Christ's intercession is his most gracious will and pleasure, strongly and immoveably expressed, that all his members, through the perpetual virtue of his sacrifice may be accepted of the Father, and admitted with him into heavenly mansions.* This is sufficient for us to know, only we may be sure as it is heavenly and glorious, so it is always prevalent and efficacious.

It may be further asked, whether Christ make intercession as God or as man? The reason of this doubt is, because it is said, 1 Tim. ii. 5, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

I answer, that doth not exclude his deity, but only assures believers of his readiness to undertake our cause because he is so near akin to us, being flesh of our flesh, and cannot deny our suits, or refuse to undertake our patronage, or intercession for us. He that put himself so near us in his incarnation, will not be a stranger now in interposing with the Father on our behalf.

But, as mediator betwixt God and man, it was absolutely necessary he should partake of both natures in his passion and satisfaction, for if he had not been man he could not have suffered, and if he had not been God he could not have satisfied: he must be God's fellow, and equal with God, † or he could not have managed these great works both on God's behalf and man's, therefore he saith, John x. 30, "I and my Father are one"—not only one in consent, but in essence, of one nature, and carry on the same design. "And no man knoweth the Father but the Son;" ‡ he was in the bosom of the Father, || and so knows his mind, and their mutual counsels, and will ask nothing but what is con-

* John xiv. 2; 3.

† Zech. xiii. 7. Phil. ii. 6.

‡ Matt. xi. 27.

|| John i. 18.

sistent with his will. The Son of man was in heaven as to his Godhead, even while his manhood was upon earth, and now his manhood is in heaven, his Godhead is with his church to the end of the world.* Besides, as the altar sanctifies the gift,† so the Godhead of Christ is that blessed altar that makes his death and our offerings acceptable to God; “we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, that serve the tabernacle,” Heb. xiii. 10: and “by him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,” ver. 15.

If it be asked, when Jesus Christ took this office upon him to be mediator or intercessor? I answer,

1. From all eternity in God’s decree or purpose, or in that covenant of redemption, contrived and agreed upon betwixt the Father and the Son, to which Christ consented; Psalm xl. 7, 8, “Then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me,” which the apostle interprets of Christ, Heb. x. 7, 9; and God the Father consents to it, and promised to Christ before the world began, what he would do for him and by him.‡ Accordingly, all believers are predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, and therefore are accepted in the Beloved, Eph. i. 4—6.

2. From the beginning of the world, as soon as Adam fell from God. God had threatened man, “in the day thou eatest, thou shalt die the death” ||—how came it then to pass that Adam lived? Doubtless, it was by virtue of Christ’s intercession, who was the promised seed, of whom God saith to the serpent, “It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;”§ meaning that Satan should put Christ to death, and Christ should gloriously triumph over the devil, both personally and mystically in his members: and this is

* John iii. 13 Matt. xxviii. 18, 20.

† Matt. xxiii. 17.

‡ Tit. i. 2.

|| Gen. ii. 17.

§ Gen. iii. 15.

the meaning of that passage, Rev. xiii. 8, which asserts that "the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world;" that is, Christ's satisfaction and intercession have been effectual for the salvation of believers in all ages, even before he appeared in the world, all sacrifices having referred to him.

3. In the fulness of time, when he was incarnate and manifested in the flesh. "The fulness of time is now come," as the apostle saith, Gal. iv. 4, 5; and though his main work was to redeem sinners, yet he preached the gospel, wrought miracles, and even in those days of his flesh, "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7, upon several occasions, as I shall shew hereafter.

4. Now he is exalted to heaven, our Lord is in his proper element of intercession. So saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 34, "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us:" that is his employment and our happiness. Yea, "upon his right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir."* So pleased is Christ with his church and gracious souls, that he hath their persons and concerns always present with him; this, this is the happiness of believers. This is a high privilege, a doctrine worth studying, for next to Christ's satisfaction upon the cross, a Christian's safety lies in Christ's intercession: Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Observe it, the completing of our salvation much depends upon Christ's intercession.

* Psalm xlv. 9.

CHAP. III.

ON THE OBJECTS OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION DENOMINATED TRANSGRESSORS.

A SECOND inquiry is, who are those that Christ makes intercession for?

The text saith they are transgressors, sinful men, that are fallen from God.

Quest. Doth not Christ make intercession for the holy angels, that keep their standing?

Answ. The scripture saith of Christ, that verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16.

It is a disputable point, whether Christ intercede for any except those that he redeemed; but the angels that never fell need no redemption, and the fallen angels are in a hopeless state—"They are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness."* As for the good angels, though they be perfect creatures, yet they are but creatures, and therefore mutable; and the language of scripture is, "His angels he chargeth with folly,"† that is, comparatively, with respect to himself, who only hath immortality.‡ The angels, though not actually yet potentially, may be charged with folly: they might possibly fall, but now they stand. Mr. Perkins saith,|| it cannot, however, be proved that they stand by the virtue of Christ's redemption, but they are under him as he is their Lord and King, and by the power of Christ, as he is God and their God, they are confirmed. Yet we may truly say that the angels are confirmed by Christ's mediation. Look on

* Jude, 6.

† John iv. 18. Vid. Caryl. in loc.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

|| Perk. on Creed, 202.

the angels in their creation, and they were naturally blessed, and from that they might fall, and many of them did ; but now look upon them in a supernatural blessedness, which consists in the vision of God, which they have obtained by Christ ; from this they cannot fall, and so are by grace become immutable. Thus Christ is a confirmer and supporter of the angels, which is by his intercession, so some understand, Col. i. 20.

But the persons for whom Christ particularly makes intercession are men, and transgressing men ; “ he made intercession for the transgressors.” Now, there are two sorts of transgressors among men : graceless, unconverted sinners—real saints.

1. Unconverted souls, strangers to God, that are still unsanctified, in their natural state, never yet in covenant with God. Now, it is a great question whether Christ makes intercession for these, because he saith, John xvii. 9, “ I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them that thou hast given me, for they are thine.” By “ the world,” may be meant those that are at present unbelievers as the rest of the world are, for these he prayeth that they should believe, as he had before prayed for those that actually did believe : but he did not pray for the finally impenitent, or those that should die unbelievers.

Yet there are two cases wherein Christ is said to pray for wicked transgressors.

(1.) For sparing them and giving them time and means of repentance, and many outward mercies ; so it is said of the dresser of the vineyard, when justice bids him cut down the fig-tree, Luke xiii. 7, 8, he answers, “ Lord, let it alone this year also.” The worst of men are indebted to Christ for their lives, seasons of grace, and calls to repent. O that men thought of this !

(2.) Christ prayed for his murderers and worst of

persecutors : “ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”—Luke xxiii. 34. Not that Jesus prayed for pardon absolutely, without respect to their repentance, but this is included, and his prayer was answered in the many thousands converted after his ascension.* Christ in heaven intercedes with his Father for the application of his work of redemption : his purchase prepares a plaster, his intercession applies it.

2. Another class of transgressors are those that are truly godly ; it is for them that he properly and directly makes intercession, as members of his body, purchased by him. This he doth for them in a peculiar manner.

You will say, Are sanctified souls transgressors ?

I answer, Yes. The best daily sin, and transgress God’s law in thought, word, and deed : “ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ;” and “ sin is a transgression of the law :”† only there are sins of wilfulness and sins of weakness. Sin hath not dominion over a child of God.‡ Every child of God is conscious to himself of great offences, and may sadly lament with the church, Psalm lxxv. 3, “ Iniquities prevail against us ; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away :” this is through Christ’s merits and intercession. This is a mystery.

Quest. How shall we know what our Lord prays for now, in the highest heavens, on the behalf of believers ?

Answ. We must be regulated by scripture line in this matter ; and the best way to ascertain it is, to observe what was Christ’s prayer for his church when he was on earth, and no doubt he pursues the same design now he is in heaven.

* Acts ii. 41, 47. † 1 John i. 8. iii. 4. ‡ Rom. vi. 14.

Now we may form some conjecture respecting it, by observing these few particulars :—

1. He says plainly, John xiv. 16, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” O blessed legacy! It is true, the influences of the Spirit came down in an extraordinary manner upon the blessed apostles and primitive saints; but all God’s children may expect the effusion thereof according to their measure, a spirit of conviction, illumination, and sanctification, of prayer and supplication, of assurance and satisfaction: you may expect this blessed Spirit to descend into your hearts as a precious fruit of Christ’s intercession.*

2. Audience of our prayers: “Whatsoever ye ask in my name, that will I do,” John xiv. 13, 14. This he doubles for greater security. Yea, there are two extraordinary expressions in John xvi. 23, “In that day you shall ask me nothing;” which some take for resolution in case of doubting, after the Spirit is poured down, which shall teach all things.† Hitherto they had asked nothing comparatively, ver. 24. Nay, he saith, “I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you,” ver. 26, 27. There is a mighty inclination in God’s heart to hear you of himself, besides my intercession, so that you need not fear audience.

3. Clear discoveries of God. John xiv. 20, “At that day you shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.” This is in answer to the good Philip’s request, ver. 8, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” It is true, Christ himself upon earth was the most lively image and portraiture of the Father,‡ but the Spirit makes further and fuller discoveries of God and Christ, ver. 21, “I will manifest

* Rom. viii. 9. Gal. iv. 6. † 1 John ii. 27. ‡ John xvi. 15.

myself to him;" yea, ver. 23, "we will come unto him," that is, the Father and Son, "and make our abode with him."

4. A spirit of remembrance. John xiv. 26, "He," that is, the Spirit, "shall teach you all things;" namely, all things necessary to salvation, edification, or consolation; "and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." O what a privilege is this to fortify our slippery memories, and bring up truths, as seed sown in the earth, to a blessed harvest! Thus Paul recollects a passage that our Saviour spake, no where else recorded, Acts xx. 35. Doubtless his disciples reflected on many things that Christ did and spake, which were not written.* And thus a seasonable remembrance is a fruit of Christ's intercession, which is a very great mercy.

5. Sweet peace and contentment in the spirits of believers. John xiv. 27, "Peace I leave with you." This is Christ's legacy, and no doubt but he will take care for having it dispensed to all his people. In the world they must have tribulation,† but in him they shall have peace, that peace which passeth all understanding. O what a calm doth Christ make in the conscience of a perplexed sinner—centering the soul upon the Rock of Ages! You can have no solid peace but by this method, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1.

6. Preservation from infection in the world, or prejudice by it. John xvii. 11, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those that thou hast given me;" ver. 15, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." O blessed word! Alas, we daily walk among snares and traps, allurements of a sinning world, oppo-

* John xx. 30.

† John xvi. 33.

sitions of a persecuting world, and temptations of Satan; and we have treacherous hearts, that are as tinder to those baits and sparks, unless divine grace prevent us: it is this that Jesus Christ now prays for on our behalf.

7. Union and communion of saints. John xvii. 11, "That they might be one, as we are." And this extends to all the saints in all ages; ver. 21, "That they all might be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee." As there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and all real saints are one mystical body, so Christ prays that they may be one in opinion respecting all fundamental truths, one in endeared affection to each other, and join in one mutual communion. O when shall this prayer be heard, that all that fear God may "be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."*

8. Further sanctification. John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Yea, ver. 19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified." Our Lord was to this purpose set apart to his mediatorial work, to be both priest and sacrifice, for the purpose of consecrating his saints to be a kingdom of priests, and to be more and more sanctified, purified from corruption, and dedicated to God. O what a blessed design is he driving on, "that we may be holy as he is holy,"† and at last arrive at perfection in holiness.

9. Conversion of more souls to God. John xvii. 20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe through their word." There are two things hinted in this text: (1.) That Christ prays for the actual conversion of those that were given to him by everlasting love: they shall at last be effectually brought home by the means of grace; John x. 16,

* Rom. xii. 10.

† 1 Pet. i. 16.

“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.” We poor Gentiles were God’s sheep in the counsels of heaven, to whom the gospel was shortly to be sent, and upon whom it must be effectual. O blessed day ! O happy design ! when “more must be the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife ;” * that is, the Jewish church. This is the fruit of Christ’s purchase and intercession. (2.) He prays for them when they are believers ; that the Lord would receive them, pardon and save them, that none of them might perish, but that all should have everlasting life. †

10. Christ intercedes for all his, that they may ascend with him into heaven. John xvii. 24, “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.” This is the top-stone of the Christian’s happiness. No doubt Christ ascended into heaven, not only for himself but for his church, and that not only to represent them, for “he hath made them sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ;” ‡ but he is gone before into those heavenly mansions to prepare a place for them, John xiv. 2, 3. And he looks on himself as not complete till all his followers be gathered to him ; he therefore prays for their perfect sanctification and admission by death into glory ; and then they shall be glorified together || with him, in their souls at death, in their bodies and souls at the resurrection.

Thus I have briefly hinted at the matter of Christ’s intercession in heaven being answerable to the petitions he presented to his Father upon earth, so far as we may conjecture by analogy when he is still carrying on the same design.

* Isa. liv. 1, 2. † John x. 28. ‡ Eph. ii. 6. || Rom. viii. 17.

CHAP. IV.

THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST MANAGETH THIS OFFICE OF INTERCESSION.

THE third general division relates to the manner in which our blessed Jesus manageth this glorious undertaking of interceding for his church, or particular believers.

I told you this word imports our Lord's being an advocate, and as an advocate he undertakes the patronage of a believer's person and cause, to bring him off clear before a court of judicature, to which it alludes. I shall accordingly prosecute it under these four particulars:—

1. An advocate is to hear the case stated.
2. He is to give counsel to his client.
3. To plead the equity of the cause.
4. To oppose the adversary, and to answer all accusations.

1. A solicitor, advocate, or intercessor, is to be thoroughly acquainted with the cause on all sides, he must not go blindfold about so important an affair, he must see to evidences, examine witnesses, weigh all circumstances, and to these things he must attend with due care, wisdom, and patience, that he may give a right judgment; he must also be well versed in the law, that he may legally manage the cause.

This is the case in the intercession of our Lord Jesus. He carefully regards what the soul which is his client, hath to say; Jer. xxxi. 18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning herself."* Christ as God knows the secret workings of the heart, he lays his ear at the saint's closet door; nay, he that searcheth the

* *Heb.* "In hearing I have heard."

the heart knows the mind of the spirit;* and saith to the poor client as Absalom in compliment, “see thy matters are good and right;”† for our Lord will not undertake a bad cause; nay, he will not only understand the client’s case, but make the client to understand it himself, else he will challenge him, and say, you know not what you ask. Observe this, our advocate doth not only understand law and justice, but he also instructs us in reference to what we must ask of God; and therefore we should come to him and say, “Lord, teach us to pray.”‡ He will not suffer us to espouse a wrong cause, no more than he will patronize us therein, but he will rectify our mistakes, regulate our suits, and then undertake the cause for us; and as he hears the case stated by the client, so he hears what the judge saith to the case. God is righteous; “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?”|| Our Lord Jesus understands both sides, and will see to it that nothing in this whole affair be done to the prejudice of either party.

2. The work of an advocate is to declare in the court, what is law, as well as know it, he must declare in open court before witnesses, how matters stand on both sides; thus doth our Lord—on God’s part he declares God’s displeasure against the sinner for violating the covenant of works, and the death, and the curse, due to him for it. As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse;§ we are all dead and condemned by the first covenant, children of wrath as all others are;¶ and then our Lord produceth another covenant, the law of grace, and confirms it, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned, and the wrath of God

* Rom. viii. 26, 27.

† 2 Sam. xv. 3.

‡ Luke xi. 1.

|| Gen. xviii. 25.

§ Gal. iii. 10.

¶ Eph. ii. 3.

abides upon him :”* this Christ declares before all in open court, that none may plead ignorance, and gives counsel to the client to look to the sincerity of his faith and repentance, or else he is a lost sinner, notwithstanding all the provision Jesus Christ hath made in the gospel dispensation. Thus the blessed Jesus is the counsellor, Isa. ix. 6, and advises his client what method to take, that he may be *rectus in curia*, found right and upon good terms in the court of heaven.

3. And when the poor sinner hath truly embraced Christ upon these terms, then our advocate pleads the equity and legality of the procedure, in justifying and acquitting the sinner according to this law of grace in the gospel dispensation, and declares that God may *salvâ justitiâ*, notwithstanding infinite justice, pardon the condemned prisoner, because an infinite price is paid for him, even the blood of God† (or of him who is God,) which is fully commensurate with divine requirements, the surety satisfies for the creditor, the king’s son dies for the malefactor at the bar, and demands a release for him according to law, so that our dear Lord makes that bold challenge in Isa. l. 7—9. “The Lord God will help me, who is he that shall condemn? He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me?” I have paid the utmost farthing, justice itself cannot demand more. I am able save to the uttermost all that come to God by me,‡ none shall perish for want of full satisfaction. I have given myself for sinners, and this is an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour ;|| God himself can ask no more, so that now I demand spiritual blessings as a debt, due upon my undertaking, through rich grace and mercy to the sinner. O blessed contrivance,

* Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 36.

† Acts xx. 28.

‡ Heb. vii. 25.

|| Eph. v. 2.

and hence it is that the pardoning of a believing sinner united to Christ, is declared to be an act of God's righteousness; Rom. iii. 25, 26, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." It is an excellent text, and repeated for greater emphasis. Christ offers this propitiation to God, and assures us, that as certainly as the believer hath saving faith, so certainly shall he be justified. This plea our Lord makes good.

4. But is there nothing to be said against all this? are there no accusers? Yes, and therefore our advocate and intercessor stands up to oppose the adversaries in this court, and to answer all objections. Now, there are four that bring in their pleas against the justifying of the sinner: justice, the law, Satan, and conscience. But our advocate nonsuits all these.

(1.) Justice pleads against the poor sinner, and saith I am injured, and all the attributes of God are violated by this man's sinning—holiness opposed, faithfulness questioned, mercy abused, wisdom and omniscience are slighted, and omnipotence provoked; while justice stands engaged to be revenged on the transgressor. This is the flaming sword in the cherubim's hand, "turning every way to keep the way of the tree of life,"* so that the sinner cannot be pardoned and saved till that be removed: but Christ our advocate is fully equal to his office, by his blood he quencheth divine wrath, and so delivers the sinner from the wrath to come.† "God," saith the apostle, Rom. v. 8, 9, "commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were

* Gen. iii. 24.

† 1 Thess. i. 10.

yet sinners, Christ died for us : much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." "He drunk of the brook in the way, and so lift up his head." * This wrath is an insupportable burden, and would press the creature to the lowest hell ; but Christ hath borne it, and it was the heaviest burden in all his sufferings—this made him cry out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death ;" † and put him to a non-plus, "What shall I say ? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" ‡ Thus God's wrath lay hard upon him for our sakes, but he hath fully answered the demands of justice, and now pleads what he has done on the behalf of those that do retain him as their advocate, and he is able to answer even infinite justice itself.

(2.) A righteous law pleads against the sinner. "The law worketh wrath ;" || it comes out thundering against the sinner, saying, he hath contradicted my just commands, and incurred the penalty of my threatenings, and the severest malediction ; it tells the sinner, with aggravating circumstances, all his offences of omission and commission, and fastens a curse upon him, saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." § Oh how formidable is this ! But behold suddenly after comes a relief by Christ, "who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." ¶ "His own self bare our sins, in his own body on the tree." ** O bitter tree to Christ, O blessed tree to us ! Thus our intercessor stopped the mouth of the law, answered all its demands ; it cannot now pronounce

* Psalm cx. 7.

† Matt. xxvi. 38.

‡ John xii. 27. Matt. xxvii. 46.

|| Rom. iv. 15.

§ Gal. iii. 10.

¶ Gal. iii. 13.

** 1 Pet. ii. 24.

the final sentence of condemnation upon the true believer: he perfectly answered its demands by his active obedience, and satisfied for our breach of it by his passive obedience. That is an excellent text, Rom. viii. 3, 4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," that is, through our inability to comply with it, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," not that he was a sinner, but in the likeness of a sinner, "and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," that is, as if we had personally obeyed it ourselves, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," namely, who live with uprightness in the general course of our lives, notwithstanding our many slips and failings. But Jesus Christ doth cancel this bond of the law, as to the malediction, though not as to the obligation of it, to believers. And as to its condemning power, Christians may give that bold challenge, 1 Cor. xv. 55, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(3.) The next accuser is Satan, who is called "the accuser of the brethren."* Sometimes he accuseth them to God, and oft to themselves. He is a subtle sophister that casts his fiery darts into our stubble souls, sometimes to kindle innate lust in our hearts into a flame, and then to terrify our consciences for sins committed. Sometimes Satan accuseth God to saints as formidable, and unapproachable, and unappeasable, otherwhiles he represents God to be all made up of mercy, to draw them either to despair or presumption. Often he accuseth poor sinning souls to God, as graceless and im-

* Rev. xii. 10.

penitent ; but most usually he accuseth Christians to themselves as hopeless and irrecoverable. What shall a Christian do in all these difficult cases ? He must have recourse to his advocate or intercessor, to rectify his mistakes, and nonsuit Satan. We have a notable text for this in Zech. iii. 1—4, in which observe,

[i.] Satan's action against Joshua the high priest, he stands at his right hand to resist him, that is, to be a Satan, an adversary to him.

[ii.] The ground of this accusation, "he was clothed with filthy garments," some guilt upon him, this gave the devil too much advantage for challenging him. But,

[iii.] Observe the angel of the Lord, Jesus Christ our advocate deals with him, first, By words, "the Lord rebuke thee," and by an excuse, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ?" As if he had said, Alas, he is but newly come from Babylon, and smells of the burning. Secondly, He confutes the devil by deeds, ordering his filthy garments to be taken from him, by remission of his sins ; and then to be clothed with change of raiment, by putting on him the pure robe of Christ's perfect righteousness ; and lastly, setting a fair mitre on his head, that he may boldly execute his priestly office.

And now, Satan, what hast thou to say against my servant Joshua ? His pardon is thy confutation, thy bills of indictment are all answered ; begone, thou infernal fiend, I have work for my servant to do, I have privileges to load him with. And thus doth our Lord take from Satan all the armour wherein he trusted—and thus he destroys the works of the devil—and thus the accuser of the brethren is cast down.* This doth our Lord for all his saints, and the like doth he against the devil's agents, wicked men, that are the saints' im-

* Luke xi. 22. 1 John iii. 8. Rev. xii. 10.

placable enemies : at present he will confound them, and at last “consume them with the spirit of his mouth and the brightness of his coming,” 2 Thess. ii. 8.

(4.) The last accuser is a man’s own guilty conscience. This is as a thousand witnesses—this is the bailiff to arrest him, the witness to accuse him, the under-judge to sentence him, the executioner to torment him—this, this is the poor sinner’s hell upon earth. O what nips and gripes hath the convinced sinner ! It makes him tremble with Cain, and endangers him to lay violent hands on himself with Judas ; for “a wounded spirit who can bear?”* Yea, the guilty sinner hath “a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”† His guilt constantly attends him as an infernal fury, he can no more flee from it than from himself ; and if his “heart condemn him, God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things.”‡ Well, but our Lord Jesus, the blessed Advocate, knows how to silence and to satisfy conscience, by his mediation and Spirit. The blood of Christ speaks better things to the conscience than the blood of Abel, Heb. xii. 24. The Apostle also says, Heb. ix. 14, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Nothing but a plaster made of the blood of Christ can pacify conscience ; and by this blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest, Heb. x. 19, 22. Christ by his merit and intercession pacifies his Father, and then by the influences of his Spirit pacifies the conscience of the sinner ; when the sinner’s conscience is like the troubled raging sea, Christ saith, “Peace, be still ;” this only makes a calm within. Thus our Lord Jesus is an advocate to purify

* Prov. xviii. 14.

† Heb. x. 27.

‡ 1 John iii. 20.

and pacify conscience, and make a man become a real friend to himself.

Thus our Lord meets those accusations on the behalf of his client.

But, mistake not, these impleadings are for different reasons. 1. Christ doth not encounter justice as an adversary, but to make it friendly to us, which yet we must stand in awe of. 2. He meets not the charge of the law so as to supersede it from being the rule of our practice, but only to deliver us from the curse of it. 3. He so opposes Satan as not to hinder the poor Christian's fighting against him, but to furnish arms and arguments against him. 4. He so meets the accusations of conscience as not to rock us asleep in security, but to be the more watchful, and establish conscience upon a sure basis.

I might further add, that when our blessed advocate hath thus cleared the Christian's cause in the court, then he demands a final verdict, to show his client, and satisfy him that all things are fairly carried, and he is cleared from all charges laid against him; and this is by divine testimony in the holy scriptures to the sinner's conscience, saying plainly, "Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee," Matt. ix. 2. And now the soul can make that bold and brave challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Rom. viii. 33, 34.

CHAP. V.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF CHRIST AS OUR INTERCESSOR.

BEFORE we proceed to the reasons for Christ becoming Intercessor, I shall briefly review the properties and qualities of an advocate engaged to intercede, that we may see how Christ is sufficiently qualified for this office; and indeed he is beyond the rate of mortals accomplished for this occupation.

Now there are ten several qualifications of Christ that make him fit for this work.

1. He is intelligent. He is very able, judicious, and skilful for managing this important concern. A novice or an ignoramus is not fit for so high an employment; they would but bungle about it, and please no side. An attorney must exactly know the laws of the land, the mind of the lawgiver, the custom of the country, and circumstances of both parties. Such a one is our blessed Jesus, well accomplished for this high office and difficult service: Isa. xi. 2, 3, "The spirit of the Lord rests upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,—and shall make him of quick understanding."* Christ is omniscient, and knoweth all things; he is well versed in the statutes of heaven, yea, acquainted with the decrees of God; for he was not only present in the grand transaction about recovering lost mankind, but sat at the council table, and interprets the divine will: "The only-begotten Son of God, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. All things

* *Marg.* Scent or smell.

are delivered to him of the Father as his great plenipotentiary; he is the Judge's Son, and knows his Father's pleasure; yea, he is Judge in the King's Bench, and Master of Requests; he can help his clients in all their concerns in that court: yea, he knows the client's case and cause better than the client knows it himself. He knows what is in man, what he needs, what he would say; for "he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for his saints according to the will of God," Rom. viii. 27.

2. He is just, righteous, and impartial; not taking bribes to pervert judgment, nor favouring some that are not to be encouraged, and daunting others that have the better cause: "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of the ears;" he acts not by hearsay or specious pretences, "but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth," Isa. xi. 3, 4. He will not be fee'd to embrace a bad cause; no, he is exact and punctual in his procedure; for as he is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"* in himself, so he is in all his pleas and actings, for he always did the things that pleased God. As for man, he challengeth his most carping adversaries, saying, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Yea, "the prince of this world came, and had nothing in him."† His greatest enemies cleared him; yea, Pilate, that condemned him, said, "I find no fault in this man." "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."‡ Fear not mistaking or miscarrying, if Christ be your advocate; never did any to this day detect him of any flaw or fault in managing what he

* Heb. vii. 26.

† John viii. 46. xiv. 30.

‡ John xix. 4. 1 Pet. ii. 22.

undertook, for he never undertakes any but a righteous cause, and manageth it righteously—you may venture all in his hands.

3. He is condescending, he is of easy access, good to be spoken to. Though “he dwell on high, yet he humbleth himself to behold things in heaven and earth.”* Christ is God’s fellow, “thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet took on him the form of a servant;”† and now he hears the requests of poor as well as rich, and espouseth the cause of the meanest peasant who is a humble client supplicating for grace and mercy. He despiseth not his prisoners that lie at his footstool; the lower they lie, the welcomer they are. Solomon’s mother bids him “plead the cause of the poor and needy;”‡ so doth our blessed Solomon effectually: “Though all kings fall down before him, yet he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper,” Psal. lxxii. 11—14. Since the world began it cannot be said that ever he rejected an upright suitor, for he hath said, and confirmed it many thousand times, “Those that come unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”|| It is very emphatical in the Greek,§ I will not, no, I will not reject either their persons or suits.

4. Another excellent qualification of this advocate is, that he is free, willing of his own accord to undertake any cause without any fee. You may have what you want of him “without money and without price.”¶ He prevents us with his “blessings of goodness;”** he begins his suit to us, and encourages us on, saying, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold.”†† He sells not law, but gives it, and it easeth his heart when he gets

* Psalm cxiii. 4—6. † Phil. ii. 6, 7. ‡ Prov. xxxi. 9.

|| John vi. 37. § 'Ου μὴ ἐκβαλῶ ἔξω.

¶ Isa. lv. 1.

** Psalm xxi. 3.

†† Rev. iii. 18.

custom of poor sinners. You must come to him *in formâ pauperis*, as poor beggars, and then you are most welcome: if you come to him begging, you will speed better than he that brings bags of gold and silver, I mean a conceit of their own merits. The poor publican that had but this word to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," sped better than the proud Pharisee, that had so much to say for himself, how good he was, and what good he had done.* Our Lord doth all gratis, and looks upon it as a disparagement to his free grace to have his practice bought and sold, as if he were mercenary: there is his free Spirit, his free pardon, free access and acceptance—all is free.

5. He is ready, nigh at hand, within a call, he is not far to seek, when his client's necessitous case calls for his speedy help. You need not say, "Who shall ascend to heaven, to bring Christ down from above?"† He is not so included in those celestial mansions as to be excluded from his church on earth; for, saith he, "I am with you to the end of the world,"‡ He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks;|| he is still within a call, "a present help in time of trouble."§ "The Lord was ready to save me,"¶ saith good Hezekiah. Daniel, Jonah, the three children, and all the saints in all ages and straits, have found him so; he is ever at God's right hand, listening what petitions you have to present to him, and there he is ready to present you to God as supplicants.

6. He is compassionate, very sympathizing with all his members, he is not accustomed to daunt or damp the courage of any of his poor clients, but to allure them with the sweetest attractions; "Come unto me

* Luke xviii. 13, 14.

† Matt. xxviii. 20

§ Psalm xlvi. 1.

† Rom. x. 6—8.

|| Rev. ii. 1.

¶ Isa. xxxviii. 20.

all ye that are weary and heavy laden ;” * and when they come he deals gently with them, he even carries the lambs in his arms, puts them into his bosom, embraces them, and gently leads them that are with young. † So true is what is said of our High Priest, Heb. v. 2, that he can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way ; they cannot be more ready to confess sin, than he is ready to forgive ; his heart is still working for his sick and sorrowful church, and though he hath laid aside his feeling for himself, he still retains his fellow feeling, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, ‡ and cries, Oh ! in heaven, if his foot be trodden on upon earth ; hence it is that Christ pleads for his, not as a stranger, but as a kinsman, even as for himself with pathetic affection.

7. He is courageous and magnanimous, he dares encounter the most potent adversaries, none can daunt him, or put him out of countenance. If all the devils in hell come roaring against a feeble soul, the Captain of our salvation can encounter and will conquer them. Our David will overcome Goliath. He can silence the impertinent railings of reviling Rabshakehs, he hath conquered the proud Pharaohs, the Nimrods, Herods, and Antiochuses of the earth. Yea, he can quell the daring passions of a wicked heart, and the blasphemous objections foisted in, by the fiend of hell. Our advocate can even encounter and calm the thundering justice of an offended God, and pacify him towards the sinner, so God himself saith, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, “Fury is not in me,” that is, causeless or implacable anger against my church, “who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle ?” as if he had said, there is no opposing me by force, but I will direct my people to a right

* Matt. xi. 28. † Isa. xl. 11. ‡ Heb. iv. 15. Acts ix. 5.

method for reconciliation, "let each take hold of my strength," that is Jesus Christ who is called the strength or power of God,* as when one lays hold of the lifted up arm and keeps it from striking, "and he shall make peace with me." O the prevalence of the Son of God in his undertakings! Well may he make that bold challenge, Isa. l. 7—9, "Who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near unto me; behold the Lord God will help me.—Our advocate always comes off conqueror.

8. He is faithful. It is true he is kind to his clients, yet he will not flatter them nor bear with their mistakes or miscarriages; our Lord will not deceive us by telling us our cause is good, when it is bad, no, he is distinguished for plain dealing. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful,† he will be faithful to all his own, whatever becomes of hypocrites, and if his own miss it in any thing, he will rectify their mistakes. He informs us both of our state and cause. Thus he dealt faithfully with the seven churches of Asia,‡ he told them the best and worst of their case, he commends what is good, and condemns what is wrong in them, saying, "I have somewhat against thee." He is too just to undertake the patronage of a bad cause, or vindicate a hypocrite, but plainly exposes and utterly rejects them, as he did the Scribes and Pharisees. When men are not able to discover, he easily can. When the young gentleman, Matt. xix. 16—22, came in a good humour with that pertinent question, "Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" our Lord rectifies his mistake, and then discovers the unsoundness of his heart. He will by no means suffer his clients to go on under a mistake, but will

* 1 Cor. i. 24.

† 2 Tim. ii. 13.

‡ Rev. ii. and iii.

undeceive them. And this he declares before all the world, that men may know what to expect, and to put us upon inquiring both what we have to say, and to promote sincerity in all that draw nigh to him.

9. He is a constant intercessor and advocate. If he undertake the patronage of a person or cause, he will by no means desert them; all promises or threats of the adverse party can neither bribe nor deter him; no, nor can the unkindness or ingratitude of the client himself, alienate his affections, or so disoblige him as to remove them altogether: he may indeed withdraw for a small moment in a little wrath, but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them.* He may correct them sharply, but this is the fruit of his covenant love; in faithfulness he afflicts them, but will not cast off for ever; for having loved his own, he loves them to the end;† he saith it with five negatives in a breath, I will not, no, I will never, no never leave thee nor forsake thee, Heb. xiii. 5. Nay, he is constant in his intercession when we have intermissions in our prayers; he prayed for Peter when he was entering upon a temptation, and for his disciples when they were asleep. It would be a sad thing for us, if Christ were not more closely employed in his intercession, than we are in our prayers and devotions; he is constantly pleading; he ever lives to make intercession for us in the court of heaven:‡ he is still engaged.

10. He is prevalent and successful; he was never puzzled or baffled in any matter that ever he undertook to this hour, he hath always won the day and come off conqueror: even when Satan seemed to have the advantage in the desert, Matt. iv. how did the Son of God baffle him? He hath laid prostrate all his and our enemies; “Be of good cheer,” saith he, “I have

* Isa. liv. 7, 8. † Ps. cxix. 75. John xiii. 1. ‡ Heb. vii. 25.

overcome the world ;”* this he did mystically, as well as personally, yea for us and in us. He makes all his clients more than conquerors, even triumphers, always causing us to triumph in Christ our head.† Here is a blessed advocate indeed, that always bears away the laurel of victory ; if he speak *to man*, he speaks so as never man spake ;‡ if he speak *to God*, it is in this form, “ Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always,” John xi. 41, 42. The business is still carried forward on his side ; as soon as the motion is made, the request is granted ; let none of Christ’s clients fear miscarriage if you have him on your side as an advocate to plead for you, your success is certain.

CHAP. VI.

JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY INTERCESSOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

It was proposed in the last place, in discussing the doctrinal part of the subject, to assign reasons why Christ and Christ alone, must be the intercessor for transgressors.

1. Because such is the vast distance and disproportion betwixt the infinite God and finite man, that there is no approaching to God without an intercessor. Man’s only happiness consists in union to, and communion with God : “ It is good for me to draw nigh to God,” saith David ; || indeed, our only happiness is bound up

* John xvi. 33.

† Rom. viii. 37. 2 Cor. ii 14.

‡ John vii. 46.

|| Psalm lxxiii. 28.

in conversing with God, Psalm lxxv. 4. But what intercourse can there be betwixt the infinite Majesty and finite man, without a middle person to interpose? Kings on earth take such state upon them that they are not approachable by ordinary subjects without a favourite: but vast is the distance betwixt God and man, as we are his creatures, worms at his footstool, but he is “the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in that light which no man can approach unto.”—1 Tim. vi. 15. The highest seraphim cover their faces, as not able to behold the glory of his Majesty.* O how much less is such a clod of earth able to draw nigh to him? But that is not all; man is a guilty sinner, a condemned malefactor before a sin-revenging judge, sitting on his throne. Our God is a consuming fire,† we are as dried stubble: and if they of Tyre and Sidon durst not come to Herod without making Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, their friend, ‡ surely there is no coming near God without our heavenly Blastus. Luther was wont to say that *Deus absolutus*, an absolute God, or a God out of Christ, is very formidable. God never conversed amicably with any creature since the fall, but through the Mediator.

2. Amongst the creatures intellectual and rational, there is none fit for this employment, to intercede betwixt God and man, or for man with God.

(1.) The elect angels cannot. It is true, they are holy, happy, near God, and ministering spirits under him, to convey his messages to the saints, and to convey their souls into Abraham’s bosom; but as there is not a word in scripture of their interceding for us, so it is an office above them, they died not for us, and

* Isa. vi. 2.

† Heb. xii. 29.

‡ Acts xii. 20.

have no merits of their own to shew for us, on our behalf, for their very standing is of grace.

(2.) As for the saints departed, they cannot make intercession for us, because they know not our particular states here upon earth, neither can they hear our requests, therefore if we should pray to them to pray for us, we should substitute them in the room of God, because we ascribe that to them which is proper for him, namely, the searching of hearts, and knowledge of what is done on earth, which are God's prerogatives.

(3.) As for saints here upon earth, they have warrant and command to pray one for another, but they can bring nothing of their own of suitable value to procure the granting of their requests, nor can they come in their own names, as deserving any such mercy either for themselves or others; but for the merits' sake of Christ only. So we may say with Eliphaz, Job v. 1, "Call now if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?"

3. Another reason is, because Jesus Christ and he alone is qualified every way to make intercession. He is qualified by his divine and human nature hypostatically joined together in one person. "He is over all, God blessed for ever,"* God of God, equal with God, distinguished by personal properties, for he is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" † so that he hath peculiar interest in and prevalence with the Father, being one with him, ‡ not only in harmony and consent, but in nature and essence: and then his human nature was assumed on purpose, that he might sympathize with us, "and be a merciful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," Heb. ii. 17. This is the first part of Christ's priestly office, in-

* Rom. ix. 5.

† Heb. i. 3.

‡ John x. 30.

tercession is the latter, wherein he shows the price he hath paid, and demands the fruit thereof for believers. None else were capable of being what our Lord was, and doing what he did.

4. Because Christ and Christ only comes under a sealed commission for this office. "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," Heb. v. 4. God gives him a peculiar commission to be a priest, ver. 6. He hath a good warrant and an indisputable title to bear him out in all the parts of his office; yea, he was instituted in another manner than other priests, even by an oath*—an oath of fidelity betwixt Father and Son, which as it confirms it, so it adds to the formality of it. Where is the person that can show such a patent, under the broad seal of heaven, to be agent for Jehovah upon earth, and solicitor for the saints in heaven? He "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man," John v. 27. And doubtless our dear Lord will be faithful in his office, much more than Moses as a servant; for Christ is a son over his own house, and therefore hath special care of it.†

5. Because there is a special union and relation betwixt Christ and believers. He is the head, they are his members‡—and it becomes the head to plead for the members. They are children, he is their elder brother||—it is requisite he should own them, and act for them that are helpless. They are his subjects, he is their king—they are his servants, and espouse his cause, and he espouseth theirs: he hath undertaken the patronage of all his saints, and their defence against all the enemies of their salvation. This interposition for them is not occasional or accidental, but purposely, as one part of his office, and they daily need his help.

* Heb. vii. 23, 21. † Heb. iii. 5, 6. ‡ Eph. iv. 15. || Gal. iii. 26.

6. Because God designs his saints for very high honour, namely, to be his special favourites.* Abraham was his friend: these only shall be familiar with him; he will communicate to them his secrets, which he will not do to others. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?"† One reason is, that Abraham may plead with God for Sodom and the safety of Lot. Thus the Lord made Moses, Elijah, Noah, Daniel, Samuel, and many others, his secretaries, and intercessors for others. "This honour have all his saints, to be a people near unto him."‡ And those that are preferred to be courtiers in the King of heaven's palace, must have one or other to bring them into favour, and help them out at a dead lift, for they are often put hard to it; as Moses, when God seems to rebuke him, and say, "Let me alone;"|| yet he would not, but goes on with his suit. And why so? Doubtless Moses knew he had a friend in the court that pleaded for him, and he found good success. Well, but by whose means are their prayers so prevalent? Surely not for their own worth or importunity, but for Christ's sake. So Daniel pleads, chap. ix. 17, "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake;" that is, Jehovah, or the blessed Jesus. And thus God hath honoured his saints to be prevailing intercessors through Christ both for themselves and others; and this hath been a credit to religion, and profit to many.

7. Yet once more; Christ is our intercessor that he may be honoured and rewarded for all his sufferings here on earth: so saith my text, Isa. liii. 12, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered

* John xv. 15.

† Gen. xviii. 17, 19.

‡ Psal. cxlviii. 14. cxlix. 9.

|| Exod. xxxii. 10.

with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." This, with the first part of the verse, seems to be a recompense of Christ's humiliation, at least a consequence upon it; as if it had been said, It is most fit that he that interposed to die for believers on earth, should be exalted to God's right hand and intercede for them in heaven, and that authoritatively: Phil. ii. 6—11, which is a full comment on this text—"He humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God hath highly exalted him—that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God owns it as a debt due to Jesus, to be owned as Lord by all men, as the fruit of his sufferings and obedience. This Sun of righteousness was eclipsed, that he might shine with more resplendent glory in the heavenly horizon. It was always accounted an honour to be priest of the most high God; thus Melchizedeck was greater than the patriarch Abraham, for the blessing of him speaks so much; "and without contradiction the less is blessed of the better:"* Melchizedeck was higher than Aaron; but Christ is higher than both, as the apostle there proves. Our Lord is both king and priest, and is said to be a priest upon his throne; he therefore manageth this mediatorial office in a princely manner, commanding what is for the good of his church: "thus he bears the glory."† "For all power is given to him in heaven and earth."‡ And as God hath thus honoured, so doth he expect men should honour him in this high station, as our intercessor. But more of this hereafter.

* Heb. vii. 1—8. † Zech. vi. 12, 13. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.

CHAP. VII.

INFORMATION FURNISHED BY THE DOCTRINE WHICH HAS BEEN STATED AND CONFIRMED.

THE application of what has been advanced may be, first, by way of information in these four points concerning Jesus Christ.

1. This office of Christ as intercessor, hath been of ancient standing, from the beginning of the world, or at least from the fall of man; long before his incarnation, father Abraham saw his day; David in spirit calls him Lord;* yea, the whole ceremonial law represented Christ to the senses of the Jews: the high priest going into the holy of holies, and people standing without clearly represented this;† so our Lord Jesus was the true minister of the sanctuary of old, and now of the true tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched, not man, Heb. viii. 2, this is the holiest of all, ch. ix. 8. Signal and various were the appearances of Christ to the prophets and patriarchs in the Old Testament; every slain sacrifice spake Christ's death, and the sprinkling of blood, the sprinkling of conscience for remission of sins. "They did all eat the spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ," 1 Cor. x. 3, 4; not that the rock followed them, but the water out of the rock, and Jesus signified by that rock. Yea, how often did the blessed Jesus appear visibly as man to his saints of old, as a prelude of his incarnation; that man with whom Jacob wrestled, was the angel of the covenant, even God himself, therefore he calls the place Peniel, for saith he, "I have

* John viii. 56. Matt. xxii. 43.

† Luke i. 9, 10.

seen God and was preserved," Gen. xxxii. 24, 30. He had power with God.* And it was Jehovah that Abraham stood before, to plead for Sodom, Gen. xviii. 22. And all the saints in all ages of the world have had the same intercessor; so that it is not a new invention, though a gospel revelation, for they of old had the same essentials of religion without us, that is, without our gospel discoveries they could not be made perfect,† only ours is in a clearer character; so that Christ is always busy and never weary of his blessed work of intercession; it is no burden to him, though he hath been constantly employed from the beginning of the world to this day, and will be to the consummation of all things, as long as the meanest saint shall live upon earth; and when they are all gathered into heaven, he will deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to God the Father, and so God shall be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28, in his essential kingdom as before the world began.

2. Christ's expiation and intercession are of equal extent. He intercedes for all for whom he satisfied justice, and none else. It is true, as was said before, the vine-dresser interposeth for sparing the vineyard one year longer, and Christ prayed for his enemies, "Father, forgive them;" but both were in order to their spiritual and eternal good: for repentance was intended in sparing, and included in forgiveness, for we cannot imagine that Jesus Christ should pray for pardon to the murdering Jews, continuing impenitent. He therefore prays for sinners in order to their conversion, but for converted souls, as before described. Divines tell us of a threefold love that God and Christ have towards man:—

(1.) A love of benevolence: so God hath no pleasure

* Hos. xii. 3—5.

† Heb. xi. 40.

in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should return and live.* And Christ saith of Jerusalem, “How often would I have gathered thee?”† Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,‡ which he expresseth many ways.

(2.) A love of beneficence, in doing good to all, and “his tender mercies being over all his works.”|| To the worst of men and heathens, “He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave rain from heaven.”§ All partake of his general bounty.

(3.) There is a love of complacency and delight; this is what the Lord is pleased to manifest towards his saints, and chosen ones; this also is for Christ's sake, through his satisfaction and blessed intercession; of these it is said in Eph. i. 6, “Wherein he hath made us accepted, *εκαρίωσεν*, restored us to favour, in the Beloved.” These are the persons in whom the great and holy God takes pleasure above all persons and things in the world; they that are upright in heart are his delight, yea, the very prayer of the upright is his delight.¶ These are they for whom Christ hath laid down his life, and these are they whom he bears on his breastplate in the presence of Jehovah. There are some that are not for a universal intercession, while they favour a universal sacrifice or propitiation; because they cannot deny but many will perish for ever, which yet could not happen did Christ pray for them:** but they leave the death of Christ in the hand of man's free will, assisted only by general grace to make it effectual. We, however, believe that his sacrifice is as effectual as his intercession, and that he died for none but those for whom he prays, his in-

* Ezek. xviii. 23.

† Matt. xxiii. 37.

‡ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

|| Ps. cxlv. 9.

§ Acts xiv. 17.

¶ Prov. xi. 20. xv. 8.

** Caryl on Job xvi. 21. p. 393.

tercession being for the drawing out and bringing home the benefit of his sacrifice, to those and to all those for whom he offered himself to God. But I waive controversies.

3. If Christ be the only advocate and intercessor for his church and souls, then it is a great affront to the blessed Jesus to substitute any others in this office; it is arrogance intolerable to degrade the blessed Jesus, and ascribe this office to angels or saints departed. Alas, they know not our cares; the dead know not any thing; * “ Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not.” † Papists say, Yes: those heavenly inhabitants see all things in the world, *in speculo Trinitatis*, in the glass of the Trinity; but this would make them omniscient, and so gods. Now we read of some things that even angels themselves know nothing of, and that is of the day of judgment, the day and hour of it. ‡ Indeed, where do we find that ever God deputed angels or saints departed to hear people’s prayers, or to present them to God? No, they never did nor will arrogate this office to themselves. When John fell down before the feet of the angel, he was twice forbid and rebuked, with this reason, “ See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant——worship God.” || And those glorious and glorified spirits give due deference to the mediator of the covenant in this weighty affair. None hath right by office to be advocate but Christ, none hath interest so prevalent in God as Christ, none hath merits to produce, none died for sinners but Christ. No, say Papists; none except Christ is the mediator of redemption, but saints departed are mediators of intercession: however, the Holy Ghost asserts that Christ sustains both characters

* Eccl. ix. 5.

† Matt. xxiv. 36.

‡ Isa. lxiii. 16.

|| Rev. xxii. 8, 9.

—1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself for all.” Observe it, it is he only who gave himself for all, who intercedes for transgressors: nothing but Christ’s blood can plead for us.

O what horrid blasphemy in that mad prayer:—

By the blood of Thomas Becket,
Which he did spend,
Make us, O Christ, to climb
Where Thomas did ascend.

This needs no confutation; but were that perfidious traitor a holy martyr, it savours of horrid blasphemy, and is no other than the doctrine of demons, 1 Tim. iv. 1, as Mr. Joseph Mede fully proves in “The Idolatry of the Last Times.” Read him and Mr. Perkin’s “Reformed Catholic,” tom. 1. fol. 603; for I love not to rake in this puddle.

4. Then high is a believer’s privilege, if Christ be advocate and intercessor for transgressors. Penitent believing souls shall certainly speed in prayer, and come off well in whatsoever cause they engage. It is a comfort to us, to know that a godly friend prays for us. How was the Reverend Mr. Hildersham encouraged, when, being daunted in the first sermon he preached, the thought occurred to him, such a good man is praying for me? How much are God’s children quickened and comforted by the communion of saints? Even blessed Paul saith, Rom. i. 12, “That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.” When a weaker Christian hears his particular case devoutly insisted upon by a stronger before the Lord, how doth it erect his hopes that God will hear? but much more when by faith he is persuaded Christ is pleading his cause. When the poor Christian can hardly get out a sensible word,

well, he thinks, but my advocate can make good sense of this sorry stammering, which I call praying: for our advocate takes it in good part, as a father doth the child's broken expressions, passes over weakness, spells out his meaning, and bids him welcome. Thus he dealt with Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 14, "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter, I did mourn sore as a dove:" but this confused lamentation was prevailing rhetoric in the ears of God. Christ his friend in heaven, and the Spirit working in the heart will prevail. He that hath given his Son for them, and his Spirit to them, how shall he not with them also freely give us all things? * Christians have a large charter—all things are theirs. † Whatsoever they ask they shall have; our Lord rather challengeth his disciples for asking too little, nay, nothing comparatively, rather than too much.—See John xvi. 23—27. O who would not be a serious Christian? Who would not seek for an interest in Jesus Christ? Nothing shall be left undone that may contribute to the Christian's happiness. If all the saints on earth, and all the angels in heaven interceded for you, it would not stand you in so much stead as Jesus singly, God's beloved Son; he owns you as his peculiar treasure, a people near unto him. ‡ Clear up your title to him, prepare your hearts for him, remember you are the favourites of the Saviour, open your mouth wide and he will fill it; || improve this liberty, enter into the King's palace, § come and welcome into the presence chamber, improve your interest in him, for your own souls, your relations, and the church of God; be not shy, let not Satan discourage you, or your unworthiness damp your spirits, but

* Rom. viii. 32.

† 1 Cor. iii. 21.

‡ John xv. 14. Psalm cxlviii. 14.

|| Psalm lxxxi. 10.

§ Psalm xlv. 15.

come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help you in time of need. —Heb. iv. 15, 16.

CHAP. VIII.

THE SUBJECT APPLIED FOR THE CONVICTION OF CARELESS SINNERS.

THERE is reason for lamentation over poor graceless, Christless souls, who derive no saving benefit from Christ's intercession. Woe, ten thousand woes to that soul for which our Lord will not speak one good word ; though the eternal God comes against unbelievers as a roaring lion, and the wrath of this great King, the King of kings, is as messengers of death, yet our Lord Jesus will leave them to the smarting stroke of divine justice. That I may awake the poor sinner, consider,

1. Thou wast a transgressor from the womb, * estranged from God, going astray as soon as born, before thou couldst go, speaking lies, † before thou couldst speak, having a corrupt principle inclining to sin, and an imbecility to perform any good work, without strength ; ‡ yea thy carnal mind is enmity against God, || thy heart secretly rising against any thing that is truly good, and the better it is the more thou dislikest it, dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ : § this is thy case by nature, and dost thou expect Christ will intercede for thee ?

* Isa. xlviii. 8.

† Rom. v. 6.

§ Eph. ii. 2, 12.

† Psalm lviii. 3.

|| Rom. viii. 7.

2. Thou hast added thousands of actual sins to this thy original stock, and art daily increasing thy guilt, provoking God to wrath, so that innumerable evils do compass thee about, * stop the current of mercy, and may stop thy mouth in pleading for good. Any one of those sins is enough to ruin thy soul; but thou art one of those that provoke God to anger continually, yea, it is to be feared thou art provoking to anger the Angel of the covenant,† by thy unbelief and impenitency; how then canst thou think he will plead for thee?

3. Thou knowest that a real change doth always attend a relative change; thou canst not be in Christ except thou be a new creature:‡ thy old frame and new state can never accord: you must be created in Christ Jesus to good works.|| How can dead men perform acts of life? and how can dead works please the living God? No matter what thy professions or privileges are, all signify nothing without being a new creature; § and do you think Christ will patronize the devil's slaves?

4. Canst thou hide thy depraved heart under the colour of a flattering tongue? Cannot the heart-searching God quickly find out thy hypocrisy? Suppose thy conscience accuse thee on the approach of death, and thou begin to cry, Lord, Lord, have we not been so and so good? Have I not some oil in my lamp? Do I not sit among thy guests? When the King said, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? The man was speechless:" ¶ so wilt thou be.

5. Hast thou not reason to fear that our Lord Jesus will plead against thee, rather than for thee? and the

* Psalm xl. 12.

† Isa. lxxv. 3. Exod. xxiii. 21.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.

|| Eph. ii. 10.

§ Gal. vi. 15.

¶ Matt. vii. 22. Luke xiii. 26. Matt. xxv. 11. xxii. 11, 12.

wrath of the Lamb is a scorching wrath. A woe out of Christ's mouth is heavier than the woe of the law : it is the Mediator's vengeance, and this, as one saith, is double vengeance. When Christ himself, who pleads for his own, shall say, These sinners have pretended friendship, but have trampled my blood under their feet ; and shall say, bring these men out and slay them before me : how terrible the result ! *

6. Will not thy own conscience plead against thee ? Will not thy language be, Alas I was told of this day, ministers warned me, necessity urged, conscience sounded an alarm, I was summoned to worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; † I, however, took no notice but neglected duty or carelessly performed it ; I am convicted in mine own conscience, and cannot answer it ; and I am sure the judgment of God is according to truth, which accuseth me, and I am not able to answer it ; I cannot plead not guilty, there is a witness against me in mine own bosom ‡—what shall I say ?

7. Will you at last fly to the throne of grace erected in the gospel ? This indeed would now relieve, if you have recourse to it in due time and in due order ; but if you make a mockery of it, and come but by halves, and not in gospel sincerity or universality, this will not help you, or if you put it off till death summon you, it will be too late : make sure work here—think not to put it off till death. He that now offers life upon easy terms, and swears he wills not the death of a sinner, || will then swear in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest : § and men's fawning or howling can never reverse the sentence ; you must endure the torment.

* Heb. x. 29. Luke xix. 27.

† John iv. 24.

‡ Rom. ii. 15. || Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

§ Heb. iii. 18.

You will say, God forbid, I hope better things, I hope Christ will make intercession for me as well as other sinners, alas, I am a sinner as all others are ; I know I cannot answer for myself, but I hope Christ will answer for me, I will believe right.

I answer, Thou mayest presume without any ground, and lull thyself asleep in that gospel cradle that was made for the ease of troubled consciences.

But let me ask thee,

(1.) What hath it cost thee to get possession of this hope ? What despair hath preceded ? Hast thou been kept prisoner under the law, shut up to this faith ? * Hast thou ever seen thyself lost and condemned, without other relief except casting thyself into the arms of Christ, after much struggling ? But if it be an easy indifferent faith, it is but a conceit of thine own head. Most men are not willing to take any pains to find out the state of their souls, but are content with a general notion that Christ is theirs, they are willing to believe it, and persuade themselves to believe it, without trial : this is a false faith and will deceive them.

(2.) It is true all men are sinners, but all are not unconverted sinners ; sin hath not dominion over real saints, † they love it not, live not in it, hate it, fight against it. But alas, a carnal heart gathers encouragement to continue in sin, because grace abounds. ‡ At least this sort of reasoning serves to excuse some while sinning : because all are sinners, I am but like others, I cannot help it, let him that is without sin cast the first stone, I hope God will not be severe to mark it, because it is natural. But to a good heart these are rather aggravations of sin.

(3.) What haste do you make to get this matter well dispatched off your hands ? The wise man gives good

* Gal. iii. 23.

† Rom. vi. 14.

‡ Rom. vi. 1.

counsel, Prov. vi. 1—5, “ Deliver thyself when thou art come into the hand of thy friend, go humble thyself, and make sure thy friend—give not sleep to thine eyes,” Oh, but how many nights do sinners sleep at uncertainties, and put off this great work of securing their interest in Christ, till it be too late ; they put off convictions, follow the world, find something else to do, and so lose their opportunity and their souls.

(4.) Most know not what a believing prayer means: “ Lord, have mercy upon me,” or “ God, forgive me my sins,” or some such short compliment must serve their turn ; they know nothing of wrestling with God, by secret groans, sighs, and tears, and exercising faith upon our blessed advocate that he may intercede for them. Most are too proud to humble themselves at God’s footstool ; the wicked, through the pride of his heart, will not seek after God.* Others slight it, and think it more ado than needs ; and say, “ What profit should we have if we pray unto him.”† They that come off with less, fare as well as those that make so much ado puling and whining.

Well, sirs, if this be your frame, you put Christ out of office ; as to yourselves, you think you need him not to stand your friend, you can shift well enough without him, else you would take more pains, and be more thoughtful to engage him to be on your side.

Ah poor graceless, Christless sinners, what will you do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation that shall come from far ? “ To whom will ye go for help, and where will ye leave your glory ? Without me, saith God, they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain.”—Isa. x. 3, 4. O, sirs, that will be an astonishing day, when the world shall be all in a flame, when the Judge shall descend

* Psalm x. 4.

† Job xxi. 15.

with a shout, shall call up all nations, proclaiming, "Arise ye dead and come to judgment," shall set the goats on the left hand, and the sheep on the right, and part them to heaven or hell, with "Come ye blessed," and "Go ye cursed," without delay or debate. Without this blessed advocate pleading for you, you must certainly be confounded; one word from your Judge will summon you, his omniscience will detect your deceit, his justice will sentence you according to desert, and his power will execute that sentence, and your torments shall continue to eternity! And who is able to alter or reverse that dreadful sentence? O poor sinner, think and think again, of that solemn day, and fly from the wrath to come; set thyself to task, examine thy conscience, study gospel terms, call thy sins to remembrance with grief, hatred, serious confession, and self-condemnation; post to the city of refuge, lay hold on the horns of the altar, give up thyself to the Lord. O that guilty malefactors condemned already by the gospel law, and leading to execution, would open their eyes, see their danger, and dread the consequences thereof! Think and think again, sinner, how many accusers thou wilt have at the great day—justice, Satan, law, conscience, will bring in large indictments; ministers, friends, creatures will be as so many witnesses, yea, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom thou now thinkest will plead for thee, will plead against thee; his incarnation, holy life, preaching, and miracles—his agonies, prayers, tears, condemnation, and crucifixion—his resurrection, ascension, session at God's right hand, and coming to judgment, will all with one consent bear their testimony against thee, and how wilt thou be able to answer all these? Will thy prayers, tears, good wishes, reformation, or alms-deeds, stand thee in stead to bring thee off? They are all ciphers, ex-

cept Christ, as the main figure, be set before them. Nothing will avail but Christ to intercede for thee. Consider what astonishment seized on Belshazzar, when he saw the hand-writing on the wall—"His countenance was changed, his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."* Even so will it be with thee, when this writing is read: "TEKEL," that is, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting: MENE, thy days are numbered: PERES, thy soul must be divided from thy body, and both from God." O dreadful day! Tremble, O tremble now, to think of it! The day of grace is past, the Spirit will strive with you no longer, heaven is shut upon you, hell is open to receive you, justice orders an arrest for you—all the world cannot secure you. Who can be bail for you? as Eli said to his wicked sons, 1 Sam. ii. 25, "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" as if he had said, If only man be wronged, man can right it, and reconcile the persons; but if the offence be against the supreme Judge, what man will dare to interpose as moderator, or who shall make himself a judge for him? No, no, that work has ceased for ever: none but he that is equal with God can be a prevailing advocate. See to this as you love your immortal souls.

* Daniel v. 5, 6.

CHAP. IX.

EXAMINATION PROPOSED TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER JESUS CHRIST BE OUR INTERCESSOR.

IT is a case of conscience of great importance, to know whether we have an interest in Christ, as our advocate, to intercede for us ; for unless Christ plead for us, neither our persons nor our performances can be accepted now, nor will he plead for us at the last day before the great tribunal ; and then we are cast and lost for ever.

In resolving this weighty case, I shall propose to you these ten questions :—

1. Hath the Spirit of Christ pleaded and prevailed with you ? If hitherto you have stood out against the gracious pleadings of the Holy Ghost with your souls, to convince and convert your hearts, do not imagine Christ will plead for you ; for these run parallel, and answer each other. Christ will not own you as brethren, except you be God's sons by regeneration ; you must be members of his body, otherwise he will not own you. He prays not for the world, but for those that God hath given him by conversion.* The Spirit of God conquers those for whom Christ intercedes. Sin hath alienated us from God—grace unites us to him. The poor blind man could say, “ Now we know that God heareth not sinners,” John ix. 31. The loudest vociferations of unconverted souls, he regards no more than the howling of a dog, or the roaring of a bear.† They scorned him, and he slights them ; so he saith, Prov. i. 24, 28, “ Because I have called and ye refused, then they shall call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”

* John xvii. 9.

† Amos viii. 3.

This is a *lex talionis*, a just requital. Souls without sincerity are none of the favourites of heaven; you must yield yourselves to God, or think not he will condescend to you. He hath sent his Spirit in his word to treat with sinners, and this is, τὸ παράκλητος, the intercessor for God, as Christ is our intercessor with God; and the Spirit's plea is, to "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," John xvi. 7—11. Have your souls been thoroughly convinced of your being under the power of unbelief, whatever your pretences have been to faith, and that you must have a righteousness better than your own, even Christ's, or you are undone and condemned for ever? Deal faithfully with God and your own consciences. Hath the Spirit of God, by conviction, taken you off all false bottoms? hath it dismounted you from your conceits and vain imaginations, levelling every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ?*

2. Are you the persons that plead against themselves? Christ will be advocate for him that doth most censure, accuse, and condemn himself at God's bar: so the text, 1 Cor. xi. 31, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." This would put the devil out of employment, and God himself in kindness would not charge the sinner with that with which he hath charged himself. Conscience is as a thousand witnesses; it first arrests and impeacheth him before God's tribunal, produceth more against himself than all the world can accuse him of or knows of, in consequence of which he applies the threatening to himself; he saith, I am guilty, and obnoxious to God's wrath, I am silenced, and have not one word to say for myself

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

why sentence should not be executed: the Lord is righteous if he cast me into hell this instant; my mouth is stopped, and I am become guilty before God.* Now doth the blessed Jesus interpose and plead for the poor sinner, and this is of divine appointment, in compliance with the order, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom."† You will say, how is this consistent with 1 John iii. 20, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things:" so that it should seem the supreme Judge will much more condemn us? I answer, this text speaks of a passive condemnation by an accusing conscience, when men stifle it, and do what they can to avoid or evade its censures, which was the case of Cain, Saul, and Felix, that found out diversions, and were loth to attend or yield to its remonstrances; but when a man is active in self-condemnation and joins with it, when he takes the part of God and conscience against himself, this is a great duty and good property, and God will take such a soul's part, and our Lord Jesus will intercede for it. What sayest thou, soul? dost thou voluntarily arraign thyself, hold up thy guilty hand, ingenuously confess thy sins, own hell torments as the proper fruit thereof? Canst thou find nothing good in thyself for which God may acquit thee, and wilt thou justify God if he condemn thee? Then thou art the person of whom Jesus Christ will undertake the patronage. But if thou justify thyself as the Pharisee, saying, God, I thank thee I am not so bad, or so great a sinner as others; then saith our Lord, Plead for thyself, and bring thyself off if thou canst: here is a poor self-condemning Publican standing afar off, not daring to lift up his eyes to heaven, crying out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"‡ This is the man

* Rom. iii. 19.

† Job xxxiii. 24.

‡ Luke xviii. 13.

that I will plead for and justify, not the other. See the difference of these.

3. Art thou laid under the sense of thy wants and great exigencies? "The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick."* They that are *recti in curia*, right in God's court, need not an advocate. This follows on the former; due sensibleness is the fruit of conviction; and indeed "the Son of man is come to seek that which is lost."† All are lost, but he finds none savingly except those that feel themselves in a lost condition. The poor sinner saith, with David, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep;"‡ then Christ will seek and save him. And indeed none will seek for a surety but the debtor—none desires or much cares for an advocate but he that is a necessitous client—none stands upon relief but the beggar. Let a Laodicean professor come in, he will say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" || nay, then, saith Christ, here is no work for me, shift for thyself. O, but saith the soul that is poor in spirit, and seeth himself in a forlorn state—woe is me, I am the chief of sinners, the least of all saints, if a saint, an ignorant, impotent, vile wretch: how am I estranged from God? how long have I been the devil's vassal? My fear is, that I am in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity; other lords have had dominion over me: § I see nothing but bare walls about me; help I must have: whither shall I go? to whom shall I flee? Where is the advocate that will undertake my desperate cause? that hath interest in the Judge, and may bring me off clear who am a condemned malefactor? Is there any to be found that can draw up a petition to the Judge for my life, for the life of my

* Matt. ix. 12.

† Matt. xviii. 11.

‡ Ps. cxix. 176.

|| Rev. iii. 17,

§ Acts viii. 23. Isa. xxvi. 13.

soul? "Men and brethren, what shall I do?"* are there any hopes? "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"† Eternal salvation is now the great concern, all other things are but trifles. It is to such sensible souls as these that our Lord reveals himself to bring them off.

4. Hast thou regarded Christ and studied his mediatorial office? Christ will not lead sinners blindfold into this privilege: as they know their danger, so he will make them know their remedy. Indeed, Christ crucified is the chief object of the Christian's knowledge: "I determined," saith Paul, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified:"‡ and again, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection."|| Yea, it becomes the Christian also to regard Christ at the right hand of God, and his employment there. § But observe it, it is not enough to know these things notionally, but they should also be known experimentally and practically, so as to be transformed into the very nature and image of Christ, to be buried with him by baptism into death, to rise with him, and walk in newness of life: being dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord:¶ so to rise with him, as in some sense to sit with him in heavenly places,** not only as he represents us, but as our hearts are with him, "seeking the things that are above," our affections there, our desires and delights above.†† Our Lord bears none upon his breastplate in the holy of holies, but such as are united to him, and conformed in their measure to his mediatorial undertaking, for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,‡‡ that is, he is naturally one with him in love, and spiritually one by faith, as

* Acts ii. 37.

|| Phil. iii. 10.

** Eph. ii. 5, 6.

† Acts xvi. 30.

§ Col. iii. 1.

†† Col. iii. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

¶ Rom. vi. 4—11.

‡‡ 1 Cor. vi. 17.

Christ dwells in his heart by faith ; * hence, saith the apostle, Gal. ii. 20, “ I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.” Conformity to Christ is an inseparable attendant of relation to Christ ; for this is a certain rule, whosoever hath a true interest in one of Christ’s offices, purchases, or undertakings, hath also a title to, and benefit from all : for God will not parcel out his Son’s merits or undertakings as men do in selling their commodities in shops, that measure out as much as suits the customer’s turn, and leave the rest—nothing in our Lord is such refuse commodity. You must have all or none, and what comes not within the reach of experimental feeling, may be gathered from what a Christian feels sensibly in his own soul : for example—he that feels the fruit of Christ’s office, as Prophet and King, may conclude he is also his Priest, that he died for him on the cross, and intercedes for him in heaven ; when the soul is savingly illuminated, sin mortified, the heart quickened, then you may conclude that Jesus Christ is improving his sacerdotal office for you, in his intercession at God’s right hand ; for our Lord saith to Peter, “ If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” † Mind this, look at what you feel in your own hearts, if you would know what Christ doth for you in heaven.

5. Hast thou retained Christ as thy advocate ? No counsellor can justly plead the client’s cause, except he be retained and have fees. It is true, Christ takes no fees yet faith retains him, and he will not plead your cause except you act faith upon him ; it is by faith that the king is held in the galleries ; ‡ sincere faith appropriates Christ, it takes him aside and engageth him to be a friend ; “ My beloved is mine,” saith the believer, “ and I am his ;” || I will not go to God without him, yea,

* Eph. iii. 17. † John xiii. 8. ‡ Cant. vii. 5. || Cant. vi. 3.

if I have him, I have God ; “ My Lord and my God,” he loved me and gave himself for me ;* I would not for a world be without a title to Christ, I must have him or I am undone ; “ what things were gain to me, those I count loss for Christ ;”† O that I may be found in him as the poor client in his advocate ! Alas, I am only as a briar and cannot stand before the consuming fire of divine justice, but I am resolved to take hold of thy strength, that I may make peace with thee, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. O for a well-grounded faith ; “ Lord, increase my faith ; help my unbelief ;”‡ if I had but faith as a grain of mustard-seed, I should remove mountains ; however, I will reach after my dear Lord, I will follow after, “ if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus ;”|| I will pursue apace, and when I have got hold of him, I will hold him fast, and not let him go, until I have brought him into my mother’s house, that others may be delighted with him as well as I.§ Lord, thou hast said, that those that come to thee, thou wilt in no wise cast out ;¶ I come to thee, draw me, draw me with cords of love ; surely thou dost not use to reject clients, Jesus Christ makes intercession for all that come to him :** I am not worthy to be received, but I have thy promise to accept me, which is thy bond, and I will sue it while I retain mine advocate, and renounce all others ; I hope it is not groundless presumption, for thou didst at last accept and commend that woman’s faith, who resolutely followed thee, though she had no command, promise, or example in particular, yea, she had some checks, yet depending on thy compassionate nature, thou didst graciously own and commend her, Matt.

* John xx. 28. Gal. ii. 20.

† Phil. iii. 7, 8.

‡ Luke xvii. 5. Mark ix. 24.

|| Phil. iii. 12.

§ Cant. iii. 4.

¶ John vi. 37.

** Heb. vii. 25.

xv. 21—28. Lord, it is thine office and proper work to be thus employed, and I will retain thee.

6. Doth the Spirit of grace make intercession within you? This is a great truth that Christ makes intercession for none in heaven, but those that pray by the assistance of the Spirit. These always go together, Rom. viii. 26. 27, "Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities,—it maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered: and he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Christ at God's right hand, and the Spirit in the hearts of believers, have the same object in view. It is not the gift of prayer, but the grace of prayer, that God takes notice of; it is not our own spirit, but the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father,* and this is the Spirit of his Son, namely, Christ, he knows and owns the least whimper of his Spirit working in his children's hearts, and will echo to it above. None can rationally expect that our Lord should plead for such as plead not for themselves; nor is it any kind of pleading that is owned, but praying in the Holy Ghost,† depending upon and feeling his enlivening influences. The body of the sun is in heaven, its beams dart upon earth, and draw up sap into trees from the roots, and make the earth fruitful: the person of Christ is in heaven, but his Spirit is in the hearts of believers, actuating their faculties, and drawing up their hearts to God in duty. O what strong and powerful reflections God-wards doth the Christian feel! he is often beyond nature, and above himself, in a transport of grief, desire, joy, and delight in God; whence comes this? surely not from any power the

* Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6.

† Jude, 20.

Christian can exert of himself; the third person of the Trinity is at work within, as the second is at work above, carrying on the same design. It is true, sometimes the exercise of grace may be intermitted, and the Spirit's assistance suspended when Christ is employed for the gracious soul; but there is the habit of grace, where the Spirit assists and Christ intercedes for men. Dost thou then pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord?* dost thou groan and bewail with bitter lamentations for sin, with earnest supplications for mercy? is thy heart lifted up in thankful acknowledgments of mercy? Jacob had power over the angel, and prevailed.† How was that? the text saith he wept and made supplication, yea, he wrestled and in a sort wrested a blessing out of his hands.‡ Almighty God suffers himself to be overcome by weak and sinful creatures, this comes to pass by the Holy Ghost joining with believers in their prayers, and the Lord Jesus in heaven pleading their cause, by which they become prevalent, and have power with God. If the fire of God be on the altar of the heart, the smoke of this incense comes with the prayers of the saints, and ascends up before God out of the angel's hand.|| If thy heart be carried out to God, then thou art upon Christ's heart. Our Aaron bears the names of the children of Israel upon the breastplate of judgment, when he goeth into the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.§

7. Dost thou regulate thy prayers and conduct according to the will of God? Do not think that Jesus Christ will patronize thy petitions if thou counteract his pleasure; if thou study the precepts thou mayest plead the promises. The love of any sin spoils the

* Lamb. ii. 19.

† Hos. xii. 3, 4.

‡ Gen. xxxii. 24.

|| Rev. viii. 3, 4.

§ Exod. xxviii. 29.

fruit of our prayers. If you regard iniquity in your hearts, God will not hear your prayers.* Disown sin or he will disclaim you. "God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God and doth his will, him he heareth."† Not that you can expect to be sinless, but sincere haters of sin, fighters against it, that it may not have dominion over you. More particularly, your prayers must be regulated according to the will of God for matter, manner and end; "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts."‡ The Pharisees prayed to be seen of men, they had their reward; it was a poor reward to be applauded as saints, when they were arrant hypocrites.¶ Besides, you must bottom your prayers on scripture precept, promise, or precedent; for if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us, and then we know we have the petitions we desired of him, 1 John v. 14, 15, that is, we may be assured our petitions are filled up in heaven, and shall be granted in God's due time, for which it becomes us to wait; for God's preceptive will is the rule of our petitions, his disposing will is the rule of our submission. He bids us pray, "Thy will be done,"§ and Christ himself saith, "Not as I will but as thou wilt."¶ It becomes not beggars to be choosers, but we should refer ourselves to God, and say, the will of the Lord be done, God is wiser than I am to know what is good for me, and when is the fittest season to bestow mercy. If thy will be melted into God's will, thou mayest pray with Luther, *fiat voluntas mea quia tua*, let my will be alone mine, because it is thine, there shall not be two wills betwixt us, I freely resign up my will to thee. Then you may be assured Jesus Christ takes

* Psal. lxvi. 18.

† John ix. 31.

‡ James iv. 3.

¶ Matt. vi. 5.

§ Matt. vi. 10.

¶ Matt. xxvi 39.

your cause in hand, and it shall succeed—see to this in a special manner: for if you contradict his will, you invalidate Christ's intercession as far as it respects yourself, for Christ doth nothing but what is according to his Father's commandment.*

8. Art thou an advocate for God, and the interests of Christ? All the saints are Jerubbaals, pleaders against sin and idolatry.† True Christians must earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints;‡ they must not be neuters or ambodexters; if you expect Christ should take your part, you must take his. When the question is asked, "Who is on the Lord's side?" do you as the sons of Levi, "gather yourselves unto the Lord?"|| do you separate yourselves from sin and sinners, as David, who could say, "I have not sat with vain persons—I will not sit with the wicked;"§ God forbid I should be confederate with God's enemies? Nay, do you resolve by God's grace to resist unto blood, striving against sin?¶ do you contend hard for precious truths, pure ordinances, and practical godliness, wherein the glory of God and welfare of souls are nearly concerned? In indifferent things Paul will become all things to all men, but to false brethren in weighty cases, he saith, Gal. ii. 5, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." The pious soul is peremptory for God, will not yield a hair, nor leave a hoof behind, where the essence of religion is concerned, and the honour of God. This is indeed a Shibboleth, it may come to this, that you must either sin or suffer; and if you confess him before men, it is as certain that he will confess you before his Father, otherwise he will

* John x. 18.

† Judges, vi. 32.

‡ Jude, 3.

|| Exod. xxxii. 26.

§ Psal. xxvi. 4, 5.

¶ Heb. xii. 4.

not, Matt. x. 32, 33. Do you sympathize with Christ and his members? Doth the care of all the churches lie upon you? * Are you like minded with the saints, naturally caring for the good of souls? † Do you prefer Jerusalem above your chief joy? Do you pray for the peace of Jerusalem? Are you the Lord's remembrancers to give him no rest, till he establish his Jerusalem a praise in the earth? ‡ If you will not plead Christ's cause, how can you expect he will plead yours? Hath not Christ deserved that you should speak a good word for him? not accidentally or by the by, but purposely, and expressly; the Psalmist saith, "Prayer also shall be made for him," || that is, not for Christ personal, but for Christ mystical, his church, cause or interests. You are no real member of Christ, unless you duly regard his cause; your own concerns will be swallowed up in his; but if you mind your own things, and not the things of Christ; § if you mind your trades, profits, preferments, and matter not whether religion sink or swim, our Lord will leave you out of his prayers. If men be careless of Christ, he will be as regardless of them, for truth hath said it, "Them that honour me, I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. ¶"

9. What experience have you had of returns to your prayers? God never answers prayers, but on the account of his Son's intercession. Now if you have truly found that the Lord hath given a gracious answer to your prayers, you may infer your interest in Christ.

Ques. But how may a Christian know that his prayers are answered in mercy?

* 2 Cor. xi. 28.

† Psal. cxxxvii. 6. cxxii. 6. Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

§ Phil. ii. 21.

+ Phil. ii. 20.

|| Psal. lxxii. 15.

¶ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

Ans. If thy heart be prepared or established, God then causeth his ear to hear.* When the soul takes more delight in God himself, than in the mercy solicited. When the soul is eased of its burden, on pouring out its complaint before God.† When the mercy is brought to our hands through insuperable difficulties, as in Abraham's having a son.‡ When God facilitates the producing of the mercy, as in Israel's deliverance out of Egypt.|| When God dips the mercy in covenant love. When God is seen in the mount of extremity.§ When the mercy prayed for and obtained, leaves the soul in a more humble, fruitful, thankful frame. When a holy flame of love and zeal descends from the altar to the hearth of the heart,¶ and many more evidences, experienced by the gracious soul, which cannot be here recited. And indeed I dare appeal to the praying saint, whether he have not found some satisfying testimonies coming along with the mercy prayed for, whereby he may perceive it comes in mercy, from peculiar love, either from the soul's qualification for it, the means and manner of its coming, the season and circumstances attending it, together with the effects and consequences thereof; all which will demonstrate this truth, that some mercies come in answer to prayer. And what then? was it the goodness of the prayer absolutely considered, that obtained the mercy? No such thing, it was only Christ as the meritorious and efficient cause, by the Spirit's assisting the Christian in prayer, as the means and condition of audience of prayer: so that the whole praise is due to Christ, to God in Christ, as the object and author, and mediator, procuring these good things for us. What workings

* Psal. x. 17. xxxvii. 4.

† 1 Sam. i. 18.

‡ Rom. iv. 17.

|| Exod. ii. 23. xi. 3.

§ Psal. lxxxvi. 17. Gen. xxii. 14.

¶ 1 Chron. xxi. 23.

of heart have you in endearedness of soul to him? Can you truly pronounce that sweet doxology, Eph. i. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenlies, ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, in Christ;" that is, places or things, more properly. Are your hearts more endeared to Christ for every mercy you receive from God, as being the fruit either of Christ's purchase or intercession?

10. Hath the grace of God kept thee humble and vile in thine own eyes? You will never prize Christ, till you despise yourselves: our Lord will not be all in all with you, till you be nothing at all in your own eyes: you must go out of yourselves in every performance, or you will not appear in Christ. That is a notable character of a thorough-paced Christian, Phil. iii. 3, "For we are the circumcision," there is heart sanctification—"which worship God in the spirit," there is scriptural adoration—"and rejoice in Christ Jesus," there is well-grounded exultation—"and have no confidence in the flesh," there is the bottom and top grace of self-denial. Indeed, let a Christian's accomplishments be angelical, his enlargements seraphical, his obedience exact and universal, yet he mars all if he boast of them, trust to them, and do not go out of himself to Christ for justification and acceptance: our Lord will say of such a one, he is resolved to stand upon his own bottom, he needs none of my satisfaction or intercession, see what he will make of it, his best righteousness is but finite, and will not answer the demands of infinite justice. Surely the self-condemning publican will speed better than the vapouring Pharisee: he that is of least account in his own eyes, is of highest account in God's. The apostle Paul knew how to stand upon his punctilios whilst he was a Pharisee, and was ready

to say with the proud papist—*cælum gratis non accipiam*, I will not have pardon and heaven at free cost, I will give my merits, my penny shall be in exchange as a valuable consideration for what I expect from God, or else I will have none of it; nay, I can do more than God requires, and have some works of supererogation to spare for others that are defective. Well, thou proud beggar, thou needest none of my alms, go to another door, thou shalt go without from me: I will reserve my gifts for them that are poor in spirit, and will be beholden to me. But Saul became another man, when divested by conviction and conversion of all his towering imaginations, and made a Paul, that is, little in his own eyes; yea, nothing at all, though not behind the chief apostles: yea, less than the least of all saints, the chief of sinners: yea, he even at present accounts his best accomplishments and attainments but as dung and dross.* Yet mistake not, as though graces and duties, issuing from the Spirit of God, and practised by the believer in the state of grace, are such contemptible things in the eyes of either God or man; but if set in Christ's room, they are put out of their place, and to be disowned. Alas, saith the believing soul, what are my best duties without Christ, but as a cipher without a figure, a body without a soul, a sacrifice without fire? I despair of access to God, or acceptance with God without Christ: he hath said it, and I feel it, "without me you can do nothing:" and I am only accepted in the beloved: in myself I am as an unclean thing, and all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags: God may justly cast me off, and spread dung upon my face, even the dung of my solemn feasts.† When I have even fasted, prayed, obeyed,

* 2 Cor. xii. 11. Eph. iii. 8. 1 Tim. i. 15. Phil. iii. 8.

† John xv. 5. Eph. i. 6. Isa. lxiv. 6. Mal. ii. 3.

and done my best in acts of religion ; yet my Lord hath taught me, and I see need to comply, “when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants.”—Luke xvii. 10. Our best works are not available to justification, nor to take off the guilt of one sin : my only confidence is in Christ, his merits and atonement must satisfy for my guilt, his intercession must make way for my approach to God : in this new and living way must I draw nigh to him. O for a true heart, and full assurance of faith. *

CHAP. X.

DIRECTIONS OF A GENERAL NATURE RELATIVE TO THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

THESE directions are, in the first place, intended to urge careless sinners to look after a saving interest in Jesus Christ, that their guilty souls may have some protection from the flaming sword of justice.

Secondly, To instruct pious persons—

1. In what cases we must employ our advocate.
2. How we must conduct ourselves under this glorious privilege.

I. This is a certain and solemn truth, that some souls are without Christ, † that is, without a saving interest in him. Ah poor sinners, how can you live, how dare you die, and how think you to appear before the tremendous tribunal at the great day without an advocate? Can you defend your conduct? No, no,

* Heb. x. 20, 22.

† Eph. ii. 12.

how can man be just with God? If he contend with you, you cannot answer for one of a thousand.* He is too wise to be deceived by cunning hypocrites, he is too strong to be conquered by the world's daring champions. Either you must take this Benjamin along with you, or you cannot see your sovereign's face with comfort. What shall I say? What words shall I use to persuade you to accept of Christ as your advocate? I have discovered your dangerous state in what has been advanced; loth I am to leave you in this naked, condemned state: how can you escape if you neglect so great salvation?† I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, as you love your own souls, and would come off at the great day with comfort, look after a title to this blessed advocate.

I shall urge, first, some arguments; and secondly, give some directions in this case.

1. Consider that not one drop of saving mercy can descend to your souls but through Christ; you are ready to cry, Mercy, good Lord, mercy—that is the thing you want, but as Jehu said to Ahab, “What hast thou to do with peace?”‡ So, poor sinner, what hast thou to do with mercy till thou be engrafted in Christ, through whom all saving mercy flows? God will not cast a propitious eye upon thee, but through a mediator. It is very observable in the time of the law, that,

(1.) None might come into the holy of holies, where the mercy-seat stood, but the high priest, which signifies, we have nothing to do with mercy but through Christ our High Priest.

(2.) The high priest must not come near the mercy-seat without blood, || to show that we have no right to

* Job ix. 2—4.

‡ 2 Kings ix. 18.

† Heb. ii. 3.

|| Lev. xvi. 14.

mercy but through the expiatory sacrifice of Christ's blood.

(3.) The high priest might not upon pain of death, come near the mercy-seat without incense ; * for there is no mercy to be expected from God without the incense of Christ's intercession ; mercy swims to us only through the blood of Christ. You may cry, and crave, and be loudly importunate for mercy, but you will be nonsuited unless you have a title to Christ. Consider this, sinner, and haste to the city of refuge, lest the avenger of blood overtake you.

2. You are in daily need of supplies of mercy, you cannot live a moment without some help from heaven. " In God we live, move, and have our being : " † we need common mercies, meat to nourish us, clothes to keep us warm, beds for lodging, houses to shelter us from the heat of summer and the cold of winter ; we need seasonable weather for seed-time and harvest : and we are daily forfeiting these mercies into the hands of justice, yea, and our lives also. It is worth observing, that when Noah had offered his sacrifice, and God is said to smell a sweet savour, that is, only through Christ the mediator ; it is added, " I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake : " he also promiseth seed-time and harvest.—Gen. viii. 21, 22. Alas, sirs, without Christ your very blessings are cursed ; ‡ though they be materially blessings, yet they are formally and eventually curses, unless perfumed with Christ's intercession : the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, let it be never so sumptuously furnished. || Nay, you are indebted to Christ's intercession (in some sort) for the sparing of your lives, else you had been in hell before this day, but this is

* Lev. xvi. 13.

† Mal. ii. 2.

† Acts xvii. 28.

|| Prov. iii. 33.

only common intercession for the worst who remain on probation, and will not hold long.

3. Consider therefore, you have a time, and but a time, to get an interest in this blessed Jesus to intercede for you: when your short life is expired, and your advocate is to seek, you are lost for ever. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.* The great assizes hasten apace—as yet you may find an advocate—tarry till your breath be stopped, and your state is hopeless: he that you may now have for your advocate, will then be your Judge, and will be inexorable. Now bestir yourselves, set matters straight before you, come into the court, get hold of Christ: you may have him, you must have him, or you will be undoubtedly cast, condemned, and executed. Oh remember the foolish virgins that went too late to seek for oil, and found the door shut; after all their crying, “Lord, Lord, open to us,”† they found no entrance, because they had missed the right door, Jesus Christ the true door of the sheep.‡ Get in at this door, or you will be shut out for ever.

4. You will be every day less and less capable of looking after this intercessor. You think a few words at last must needs oblige him to interpose for you; if you have but time to say, “Lord, be merciful to me for Christ’s sake,” you conceit such a compliment will then charm him to be your friend. Alas, by your sinning you daily harden your own hearts, set God at a further distance from you, increase your guilt and provoke God against you. || He may now say, go to the gods whom you have served—what right have you to call upon me? Have you gratified Satan all your days, and do you think to take sanctuary under my wing

* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

† Matt. xxv. 10, 12.

‡ John x. 7.

|| Heb. iii. 13.

now in a storm? Getting a title to this blessed advocate, is not with a word by the way, it will cost you hard tugging to obtain this privilege. Look to yourselves, get this highly important affair adjusted in God's way and time, or take your leave of it for ever. Now or never.

5. Consider the cares and griefs the Son of God underwent, that he might be in a capacity to become an intercessor for you; not but that Christ could have spoken a good word for man, if he had not been incarnate, but that he may effectually, according to divine ordination, undertake this office, he must put himself into our nature, continue a season on earth, suffer death for us, endure God's wrath and the curse of the law. "It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."*—Heb. ii. 17, 18. And shall the eternal Son of God become man, endure such contradictions of sinners, live a sorrowful life, be betrayed, accused, condemned, spit upon, bear the cross, be nailed to it, and die to redeem us, rise again, ascend to heaven to intercede for poor sinners, while transgressors so much concerned, neglect and slight him, or do not employ him? God forbid.

6. Our Lord still follows the suit, using all means and methods to prevail with sinners to accept of him for their intercessor. How many affectionate sermons did he preach in the days of his pilgrimage? Yea, he wept over Jerusalem, uttering those affecting words, "O that thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!"† What bowels of love

* See Heb. v. 2.

† Luke xix. 40, 41.

are yearning over poor sinners ! and since his ascension he hath sent his Spirit to move men's consciences, and his ministers, as ambassadors, to beseech poor sinners to be reconciled to God*—and will not all this prevail ? Who ever heard of a counsellor court a client at this rate ? And whether is this profit to him, or advantage to you ? It is true, it is a pleasure to his heart to do you good, but you will reap the benefit by it. O gratify then the heart of Christ, which he takes as a recompense for all his pains, and show not yourselves ungrateful.

7. The terms he requires are easy, safe, and honourable, upon which he will be your intercessor, yea, such as nothing shall hinder but your own wilfulness. All that he demands is your cordial accepting of him : John i. 12, “ But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” What can be easier ? here are no fees to be paid. Will you say you will have none of him ? Doth he call you to give him any thing but yourselves ? and are you not his own by right ? Doth he bid you part with any thing but your lusts, which are your greatest enemies ? What say you now ? what rational objections can you make against this blessed bargain ? The fault is your own if you be not happy : for so himself hath determined it, John v. 40, “ And you will not come unto me, that you might have life.”

Object. Doth he not say, John vi. 65, “ No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father ?” How can I believe except God give me grace ?

I answer, God's free grace and man's duty are very consistent. Phil. ii. 12, 13, “ Work out your own

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

salvation, with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." God gives men natural faculties and lays them under moral obligations, and if they wilfully neglect God's appointed means, the fault will be charged on them, not on God, who is an absolute sovereign and free agent, and is beforehand with them: and they that will not do what they can, have no reason to charge God for not doing what they cannot; their own consciences will be sufficient witnesses against them, since men will not bestow a thought upon it, but judge themselves unworthy of eternal life,* and seem careless and unconcerned whether God show mercy, or Christ intercede for them or not; they will not ask a question, or stir a foot towards Christ, so that their destruction is of themselves, and they must be condemned as wicked and slothful servants.† I do therefore entreat you, charge and command you, in the name and by the authority of my sovereign Lord and Master, to whom we must shortly give account, that you put not off any longer, but immediately take God's mode of securing Christ, the darling of heaven at God's right hand, to become your friend, as you hope to speed now and another day in that celestial court.

Some directions were next proposed to be given on this subject, that Christ may be chosen as intercessor by sinners; and I might refer you to the marks of such as have interest in Christ's intercession, as helps also to obtain it—namely, the Spirit's pleading and prevailing with men, sensible sinners taking God's part and pleading against themselves, lying under a sense of want, studying Christ's mediatorial office, with experience thereof, laying hold of him by faith, and so retaining him; the Spirit helping our infirmities, re-

* Acts xiii. 46.

† Matt. xxv. 26.

gulating our prayers and conversation according to God's will, being an advocate for Christ and his interests, consciousness of acting suitably to returns of prayer, and denying ourselves in all. These are not only characters of the Christian for whom Christ intercedes, but due qualifications necessary in those that expect that our Lord should intercede for them; be sure you look after them, or else you miss your end.

But besides these, I shall lay before you these seven considerations to help you in an affair so important as this.

1. Solemnly consider what are the essentials of prevailing prayer. It is not rattling over a form of good words, but the main essentials of a right prayer are these four:—

(1.) The subject or person praying must be a child of God; “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”* The person must be pious, in favour with God.

(2.) The act of praying must proceed from a heart engaged to God, with holy hands, without wrath or doubting;† for right ends: the primary end, God's glory; the secondary, our good, according to God's word, with submission to his will.

(3.) It must be praying in the spirit, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit helping our infirmities.‡

(4.) That which must crown all, is depending by faith on Jesus Christ sitting at God's right hand to make intercession for us, this is a right prayer. Now unless you weigh the due qualifications necessary to a right gospel prayer, you will slight it, and pass it over as a compliment. Oh, but when the Christian bethinks

* Prov. xv. 8.

† Jer. xxx. 21. 1 Tim. ii. 8.

‡ Rom. viii. 26. Jude, 20.

himself what is requisite in right prayer, he will make conscience of all, for he believes that if any of these be wanting his prayer is lost, and he is undone, for Christ will not intercede for those souls that do not pray aright, at least in the main. Consider this.

2. Endeavour to impress on your spirits, the vast difference and consequences of God's accepting and rejecting of prayers. God disowns the prayers of a graceless guilty soul; "When you make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood," Isa. i. 15. To the wicked God saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?"* Alas, what have I to help me in my distress but crying to God for aid, and if he turn his back on me, and disown me, what will become of me? But as for God's children, a sigh, a groan goes to the heart of God, being offered up in the name of Christ; if the soul cannot speak out, but cry, Abba, God hears—Hezekiah bid but chatter like a crane or a swallow,† but God heard and owned him. Whether company would you rather be of, in the day of your distress, or in the hour of death? Surely this matter is of some concernment now, and you will find it so then.

3. Thoroughly examine your consciences with reference to your spiritual state. Be not content with imagination or may-bes; it may be Christ is my advocate, it may be not, and so leave the matter at utter uncertainties: by which you may either be continuing to live in a fool's paradise, and so die with a lie in your right hand,‡ or be left upon the rack of uncertainties; but as far as may be, put the question out of question. "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be repro-

* Psal. l. 16.

† Isa. xxxviii. 14.

‡ Isa. xlv. 20

bates," ἀδοκιμοί, unapproved, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. The decisive trial belongs to God, but the disquisitive belongs to us. And as you would not be found under a mistake at last, deal faithfully with yourselves now: lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. Try by your having or wanting the conditions of the new covenant, by characters laid down in scripture, and such marks as God's children have tried themselves by, see whether your experience will answer theirs. Be not partial, but faithful; there is deceit in general propositions. Will not a tradesman search his books? Will not a lapidary prove his precious stones? Drive the matter to an issue, form this dilemma, either I am, or I am not a child of God, either I have Christ to be my advocate, or I have not; if I have, how came I by this privilege? What scripture evidences can I give of such a thing? I must be tried another day, I will now prove mine own work, that I may have rejoicing in myself alone and not in another;* but if you cannot find it out this way, appeal to God, the searcher of hearts, as David did often; "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart;"† let me know the best and worst of my condition; I cannot deceive thee, let me not deceive myself.

4. Get a distinct knowledge of Christ's mediatorial work, and of the manner in which all his three offices of Prophet, Priest and King, are concerned in his intercession, for though they be in some sort distinguished, yet they are not divided. It is true, we make Christ's intercession the second branch of Christ's priestly office, but therewith is joined the former part, namely, his sufferings upon the cross, for he carries his blood into the holy of holies.‡ Thus his sacrifice goes to qualify him, and secure his success as intercessor.

* Gal. vi. 4. † Psal. xxvi. 2. cxxxix. 23. ‡ Heb. ix. 12, 24.

Nor must we exclude his prophetic office, for all the promises of illumination, guidance, and direction, are the blessed fruits of this office of Christ, as prophet, which yet our Lord prays for, "for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen."* As to his kingly office, he sits as priest upon his throne,† and all the good that souls receive from him descends from his kingly office, as power against sin, defence against temptation, protection while we live, and deliverance from death: so that all the offices of Christ are inseparably connected with his intercession, at least in the application of the benefits accruing to souls thereby: so that you must not only respect the second part of Christ's priestly office singly in your addresses to the throne of grace, begging the benefits of Christ's intercession, but you must act faith on all his three offices, for obtaining good at God's hands. Alas, sirs, you have too low conceptions of Christ's intercession, if you look upon him in a single capacity, speaking a good word for you as one man doth for another: no, you must own Christ as having authority, not only as God equal with the Father, but acting as prophet, priest, and king at God's right hand, and procuring our good by virtue of his office; consider this in all your addresses to him.

5. Consider the vast distance betwixt the infinite God and you. In point of nature or being, God in his essential perfections is inconceivably great and glorious; read and consider Isa. xl. 12—27, where you have a most elegant comparison betwixt the great God, and worm man: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the

* 2 Cor. i. 20.

† Zech. vi. 13.

hills in a balance?—Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.—All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” —How magnificently doth scripture decipher this glorious Majesty of heaven? and how diminutively doth it speak of man? yea, nobles, judges, princes in all their pomp, he makes them nothing, yea vanity. But how much more inconsiderable are inferior persons? Which of us then dare presume to approach this King of kings without a spokesman, a middle person? But then consider what further distance sin hath produced, betwixt the holy God and such impure beings as we are; “God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.”* And what are we but masses of sin? How can we then expect that God, this sin-hating God, should look towards us with any respect? surely a glance of his eye would confound us, there is no coming near God without a mediator, and this mediator must stand on even ground with both parties; this is Jesus Christ and none else; think of this that you rush not irreverently into the presence of the great God; yea, consider Jesus Christ is the infinite God, though he became man, yet now glorified, and you cannot have slight thoughts of him, but adore him, as well as come to God by him.

6. You must remove out of your souls and hands whatsoever is offensive to him, or a hindrance to you in your employment of Christ for your advocate; especially away with sin, all sin, heart-sin, life-sin, if you expect a share in this branch of the covenant promise, you must cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;† if sin reign in you, Christ will not

* Hab. i. 13.

† 2 Cor. vii. 1.

plead for you; "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?"* no, never expect it, if thou do not renounce sin, he will renounce thee. He will not own that soul that loves sin, if you regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you.† He will not be a patron of sin, though he will be an advocate for sinners, that have fallen out with sin; and hate it with a perfect hatred. Yea, you must abstain from all occasions of sin, and appearances of evil.‡ Get disentangled from the world, the men of the world, or things of the world that would ensnare you, and divert you from God. Yet one thing more, if you would have Christ stand your friend, renounce your own righteousness; never think of Christ's pleading his merits for you, if you think to plead your own merits with God, these are utterly inconsistent; so saith the scripture, Rom. iv. 4, 5, and Gal. v. 3, 4, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace;" some say it means the ceremonial law, others the moral law; doubtless "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth:"|| I know this point is much debated, but scripture leads us out of ourselves for justification by Christ alone, you must be found in him, or you are lost for ever; "Not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9, that is, by faith as the instrument to receive Christ only, it is the object that justifies, not merely the act, the *τὸ credere*, in the sense of Arminians, who dethrone Christ to exalt faith.

7. Down on your knees and entreat that this blessed Jesus may be your advocate; Christ is to be suppli-

* Psal. xciv. 20.

† Psal. lxvi. 18.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 22.

|| Rom. x. 4.

cated, not bought. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."—John iv. 10. Consider, friends, is not Christ the eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world, worth asking? Why should our Lord charge you as he did his disciples, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing?"* Indeed, you ask nothing if you ask not Christ, and you ask no favour if you ask not in the name of Christ. If you were hungry, would you not ask daily bread, if thirsty, would you not cry out for drink? if you were prisoners, would you not ask for liberty? if condemned and ready to be executed, would you not account your lives worth petitioning for? Come, friends, fall down on your knees, and confess your sins, as having merited hell and damnation; but since God hath held forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin, tell the Lord how much you need him, humbly bespeak him with tears in your eyes and sorrow in your hearts, after this manner: Lord, I am among the fallen sons of Adam, condemned as soon as conceived, an undone creature, lost by the first apostacy, having added to the first sin many thousands of actual transgressions, every sin deserves thy wrath and curse, I deserve damnation; but my case is not like that of the fallen angels, thou hast sent thy only well-beloved Son to redeem lost mankind, he interposed betwixt flaming wrath and guilty sinners, he endured that which would have sunk sinners eternally into torments, and I hear he is at thy right hand to intercede for sinners, I am a miserable, helpless, hopeless sinner, "with thee the fatherless find mercy,"† thou biddest all welcome that come to thee in his name, he hath successfully managed this work of mediation, and carried thousands of souls to

* John, xvi. 24.

† Hos. xiv. 3.

heaven, whose case was as forlorn as mine; O give me Christ or else I die, give me Christ and I shall live, for he and none but he can bring me off at the bar of thy justice.

CHAP. XI.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST BECOMES A PRIVILEGE TO A CHRISTIAN.

ACCORDING to the division which I have made in treating this part of my design, I proceed to consider what concerns the people of God peculiarly, and which may lead to the following inquiries:—

1. In what cases should a Christian have recourse to Christ's intercession?

2. How a Christian should conduct himself in the enjoyment of this glorious privilege?

For the first of these, I am at a great loss, not what to say, but what to leave unsaid, not for want of matter, but the abundance of occasions; for there is no state nor occurrence of a Christian's life but affords fresh matter and occasion to employ Jesus in his important character of intercessor, and our dear Lord is ready to help in every situation and strait.

Only I desire this may be remembered, that Christ is not only a pleader for us, but an author of the mercies we want and crave; he doth not only ask the Father to bestow such blessings upon us, but he with his Father communicates them to us: so that we must not

only pray for such and such mercies for Christ's sake, but we must pray to Christ together with the Father, for he saith, "I the Father are one."—John x. 30.

Now, though the indigencies there are in the course of a Christian's pilgrimage be innumerable, yet I shall reduce the proper occasions, on which a Christian sensibly needs our Lord's intercession, to these twenty heads :—

1. In the case of original guilt and depravity of nature. Alas, saith the soul, I come into the world woefully stained with guilt and pollution; "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me:"* how shall I get this taint by natural birth taken off? But the gospel assures me, that, "If through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded to many."—Rom. v. 15. Whether Christ takes off the guilt of original sin at our birth, I know not, but he takes it off from all true penitents and believing souls that sincerely embrace Christ, and are members of his body: blessed Jesus, take me into that number.

2. In awful blindness and darkness. Alas, by nature I am woefully blind and ignorant; I can see no beauty in the things of God, no excellency in Christ, nothing of the mysteries of grace, I am blind and cannot see afar off, am travelling blindfold into utter darkness; O merciful Saviour, thou art the light of the world, the sun of righteousness, come dart down thy beams of grace into my soul, turn me from darkness to light; enlighten mine eyes, that I may not sleep the sleep of death, give me the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; that the

* Psal. li. 5.

eyes of my understanding may be enlightened, that I may behold spiritual objects in a gospel glass, for my spiritual knowledge is very imperfect.*

3. In the case of perverseness and stubbornness of the will. Woe is me, saith the Christian, my will is unruly and ungovernable; some are willingly ignorant, I pray God I be not so. But, however, my will is only imperfectly renewed; "The good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." Come then, dear Jesus, make me truly willing in the day of thy power; I find some poor faint wishes, some little inclinations towards thee, but feel that I cannot perform what I wish—thou canst work both to will and to do: thou blessed Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, carry on this happy beginning of a willing mind unto perfection; that as there is a readiness to will, so there may be a performance.†

4. In case of daily infirmities, and the unexpected breakings out of corruptions. O how many are my transgressions and my sins? "Innumerable evils compass me about;" every moment am I committing sin in thought, word, or deed, in omission or commission. Is it possible such vast numbers of sins should be pardoned? Yes, I will look up to my advocate, who is the propitiation for our sins, and is able to save to the utmost; he was never nonplussed with the multitude or magnitude of sins—Lord, thou canst abundantly pardon, or multiply to pardon as we multiply to sin; Lord, take away mine iniquity for it is very great: I will not despair, because I have a God to do with.‡

* 2 Pet. i. 9. John viii. 12. Mal. iv. 2. Acts xxvi. 13.
2 Cor. iv. 6. Eph. i. 17, 18.

† 2 Pet. iii. 5. Rom. vii. 19. Psal. cx. 3. Phil. ii. 13.
Heb. xii. 2. 2 Cor. viii. 11.

‡ Psal. xl. 12. 1 John ii. 2, 3. Heb. vii. 25. Isa. lv. 7.
Psal. xxv. 11.

5. In the case of deadness and distractions in holy duties. Alas, where is the Christian that finds not sad wanderings from God in duty? Vain thoughts lodge in us, and will not be shut out when we would be most serious; such dead flies mar our best pot of ointment: in the best sacrifices there is more smoke than fire. Well, but the Christian applies himself to our New-Testament Aaron to take away the iniquity of his holy things, to perfume prayer with his much incense. At all times, when the soul opens to its beloved, his hands drop with myrrh, sweet-smelling myrrh, and God smells a sweet savour from it, being offered in Christ.*

6. In slavish fears. God's children are very subject to these: a spirit of bondage returns again;† sometimes the terrors of the law and the lightnings flash in their consciences—Job, David, Heman, had their alarming seasons. When the spirits are agitated, especially when guilt is brought home, and Satan tears the wounds, what must a person do in this case? He must run to the city of refuge, to the horns of the altar, to shelter him from the grounds of his fear. David saith, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”‡ Here we may have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x. 19, 22.

7. In sad apprehensions of apostacy from God. The Christian having mournful experience of the treachery of his own heart, the violent assaults of Satan, and the weakness of grace, and having seen the dreadful falls of famous professors, cannot but fear he also may fall away. This fills the soul with sad apprehensions, which yet are a good preservative against apostacy,|| but his only refuge and remedy is Christ's intercession,

* Jer. iv. 14. Eccl. x. 1. Exod. xxviii. 38. Rev. viii. 3. Cant. v. 5. Gen. viii. 21.

† Rom. viii. 15.

‡ Psal. lvi. 3.

|| Heb. iv. 1.

Luke xxii. 31, 32, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." See, Christ was interceding, when Peter was most in danger of apostacy: so that the sincere Christian may make that bold challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"—Rom. viii. 34—36.

8. In case of omission or intermission of duty. This is too oft the case of good men; they slight motions of the Spirit, and omit waiting on God in the season of duty, through some worldly incumbrance, as Martha, troubled about many things,* or through negligence: and conscience is sorely afflicted with this, and judgeth that the Lord will not own them; but Christ prayed for Peter when he was in temptation, little disposed for prayer; and doubtless our Lord prayed in his agony for his sleeping disciples:† and we read, Isa. lxi. 24, "Before they call I will answer." Mark it, here is sovereign grace; God is not tied to wait his people's actual praying, for Christ interposeth to prevent thousands of evils, which we know nothing of.

9. On approaches of public calamities. Such a day oft falls out, and prudent persons oft foresee these public evils, and are greatly appalled.‡ Alas, misery is coming on the nation, and we shall be involved in the common calamity, whither can we run? Who shall avoid or abide this approaching storm? Surely the gracious soul flees to his strong hold, gets into the ark, and there he is safe, God looks on the rainbow and remembers his covenant;|| there is a rainbow round about the throne, and he looks on his saints in covenant through the Mediator, Rev. iv. 3. He can hide them in the hollow of his hand till all calamities be overpast.

* Luke x. 40. † Matt. xxvi. 44. ‡ Prov. xxii. 3. || Gen. ix. 16.

10. In personal afflictions. These may befall the best of men, such as poverty, shame, censures of men, loss of relations, long and tedious afflictions of body, acute pains that may put the best of men hard to it. What shall I do in this case? Is there any hope or help? Whither must I go? Why, still thou must go the same road, to God in Christ, this was Job's refuge and remedy, Job xix. 25, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," he is speaking a good word for me, either to moderate the affliction, or to remove it, or however to sanctify it, that it shall do me no hurt but good. Remember Isa. lxiii. 9, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence," that is, Christ, "saved them." Fear not you have a good companion.

11. In desertion, which indeed is the heaviest trouble that can happen to a poor soul. "When thou didst hide thy face, I was troubled;"* no wonder, for in his favour is life, then the want of it must be death. David saith, his spirit was overwhelmed;† Heman saith, "while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted:"‡ what must a person do in this forlorn state? still he must centre on Christ the rock of ages. As terrible as God looks, he commands the light to shine out of darkness, when you can behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. If you walk in darkness, you must stay yourselves on your God: || get under Christ's wings, the wings of the cherubim, then you are safe, and he will make your position pleasant.

12. In spiritual conflicts. Alas, the feeble Christian is in great hazard of being borne down by Satan, the world, and the flesh; he is set sometimes with his back to the wall; these intestine wars strike up con-

* Psalm xxx. 7.

† Psalm lxxxviii. 15.

‡ Psalm lxxvii. 3, 4.

|| Isa. l. 10.

trary alarms in his soul, and make him at his wits' end, not knowing the issue. Whither now must the soul go for a reserve, but to the Captain of our salvation, * who can with a word of his mouth confound all the soul's enemies? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." † He alone can lead captivity captive, he hath spoiled principalities and powers, he triumphed over them upon the cross, ‡ much more when he is now at God's right hand. The believing soul hath benefit thereby, and is more than a conqueror through him that loved us; this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. ||

13. In relative concerns. How solicitous is the Christian for those that depend on him, or are related to him? O what shall I do for my husband, wife, son, daughter, brother, or friend, who is as mine own soul? "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" § How can I see the damnation of the members of my family? Alas, what can I do for them? "I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow of heart, for my poor kindred after the flesh." ¶ Well, I know no other course I can take for them, than put them into the hands of Christ the mediator, to hold them up to the Father for converting and pardoning grace. O that Christ would take these children and bless them! there is grace enough in the covenant for all. Is not my child, in a sense, clean by relation to a poor weak believer, and dedication to God? **

14. In the enjoyment of privileges. I confess divine Providence hath cast my lot under a pleasant sun-

* Heb. ii. 10.

† 1 John iii. 8.

‡ Eph. iv. 8. Col. ii. 15.

|| Rom. viii. 37. 1 John v. 4.

§ Gen. xvii. 18.

¶ Rom. ix. 2, 3.

** 1 Cor. vii. 14. Matt. xxviii. 19.

shine of powerful preaching, lively praying, baptism, and the Lord's supper, dispensed according to divine institution, which might make me fat and well-liking, but alas I am barren, dead, and hard-hearted still, nothing will do except the Spirit of grace breathe upon my heart. "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon thy garden that the spices thereof may flow out."* Dear Jesus that walkest in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, † reach this breast of mine, and let my heart long after thee, bring down some illapses from above, as the fruits of Christ's ascension and session at God's right hand, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ. ‡ Send thy Spirit from above, (according to thy prayer and promise) which may lead us into all truth, and bring all things to remembrance, and prepare my soul for glory. ||

15. In the want of ordinances. Such a day hath been, and may come again, when persons shall find a famine of the word, when they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and not find it. § When poor souls shall faint for want of the bread of life, what shall we then do? Our business is to feed on Christ the bread of life: his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, ¶ he needs no channel of ordinances, but can drop down immediate influences from above, that in days of famine we may be satisfied. ** He can feed his children in the wilderness with suitable and sufficient manna: if you have the marrow and design of ordinances in Christ, you have all and in all. ††

* Cant. iv. 16.

‡ Eph. iv. 10, 12, 13.

§ 1 Sam. iii. 1. Amos viii. 12.

** Psalm xxxvii. 19.

† Rev. ii. 1.

|| John xiv. 26. xvi. 13.

¶ John vi. 48, 51, 55.

†† Col. iii. 11.

16. In sharp divisions and controversies amongst professors. This goes to the heart of a gracious peaceable Christian, who desires to live in love and unity with all. O it is sad to see the the seamless coat of Christ rent in pieces; for the divisions of Reuben there are great thoughts or searchings of heart.* What shall a poor soul do in this case? surely get alone and lament it; "Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them."† Espouse catholic principles, maintain a charitable spirit; but above all have recourse to Jesus Christ our common Saviour, and entreat that he by grace would irradiate men's minds with saving truths, sanctify their hearts, mortify their corruptions, and establish their souls on a right foundation, both as to doctrine and principle, and Christ is the only foundation, 1 Cor. iii. 11—13, Eph. ii. 20, 21.

17. In the public concerns of the church. The good child of God cannot but bear the state of Zion upon his heart; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."‡ The pious man is like Eli, he sits trembling for the ark of God, he loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Alas, what can such a poor insignificant creature as I do? well, I will put it into the hands of my Lord Jesus, who dearly purchased the church with his own blood, and now sits at God's right hand to intercede for it. O God, look after thy spiritual Zion, "and make thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, for the Lord's sake."|| that is, for Jesus Christ's sake.

18. In great undertakings. Sometimes it is so that Providence calls some Christians out to unusual employments, such as they are sensible of their own inability to manage, and would rather shift them off,

* Judges v. 15, 16.

† Rom. xvi. 17.

‡ Psal. cxxxvii. 5.

|| Dan. ix. 17.

as in the case of Moses to be a magistrate, and Jeremiah to be a prophet,* they both excused themselves; such a case may frequently fall out, what then must a person do? Why he must first consult the clearness of his call to that station, and when that is scripturally clear, he must have recourse to Jesus Christ, by whom kings rule, and who sets up officers in his church as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers,† as the fruits of his ascension; now you must go to Christ, both for a commission from him, and for qualifications to manage it to God's glory and the church's edification.

19. In case of God's refusing to answer your prayers. It hath been thus with some of God's servants; the church saith, "Also, when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer:"‡ Job and David sometimes complain of this, and this is a sore affliction, but alas, what have they to help them but importunate prayer? If prayer have lost its virtue I am undone. But man, consider, the answer may be deferred, yet not denied; and withal reflect upon the motives, end, and manner of thy praying, it may be thou didst pray amiss; thy business now is to put it into the hand of thy advocate, it will not miscarry if it be by faith lodged there; look again and see what was absolutely necessary for such a transaction, and fear not as long as thou art praying and waiting, thou hast something of an answer in hand, and more in hope, which will not fail.

20. In the soul's approach to death and judgment. O this is a solemn thing, for it is the statute law of heaven; "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.|| Death is formidable in a natural sense, judgment in a moral sense; this body

* Exod. iv. 13. Jer. i. 6.

‡ Lam. iii. 8.

† Eph. iv. 10, 11.

|| Heb. ix. 27.

and this soul must part, and meet again before a solemn tribunal; O how shall I come off then? truly, I have no other way than to secure my advocate to appear for me; it is Jesus alone that plucks out the sting of death; if I can get Jesus in mine arms, I can pass safely through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil;* and when I go to the grave I but lay me down to sleep, yea more than so, I shall sleep in Jesus,† and O what a soft warm bed will that be? and as to judgment, I have one to answer for me, the judge of the court is my friend, and I know I shall not be condemned, for when Christ who is my life shall appear, I shall appear with him in glory.‡

This, this is the glorious privilege of a child of God, a member of Christ, whether he know it or not, but many do know it, and have the comfort of it.

Thus much for the former branch of this division, how and in what cases believers should improve this great privilege of Christ's intercession.

The second branch in reference to genuine believers that have interest in Christ's intercession, is to consider how they should conduct themselves when enjoying this privilege, and I shall give these ten directions:—

1. Get clear evidences of your interest in Christ's intercession. I suppose you to have interest, but labour to get it cleared up to yourselves; your safety lies in the former, your comfort lies in the latter. O what satisfaction will it be to a pious heart to think, Jesus Christ appears in the presence of God for me; he bears my name, my person, my prayers before the throne, he also bears away my failings; I am accepted in the beloved.|| The church prays, Cant. viii. 6, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." My

* 1 Cor. xv. 55—57. Heb. ii. 15. Psal. xxiii. 4.

† 1 Thess. iv. 14. ‡ Col. iii. 4. || Eph. i. 6.

name is upon the breast and shoulders of the high priest, in the holy of holies;* he acts for me, speaks a good word for me, as if I were the only person concerned, yet others not excluded. He is now speaking for me, when I dare not or cannot speak for myself; he loved me and gave himself for me, and now he ever lives to make intercession for me.† O what a privilege is this.

2. Do not in the least question the prevalence of your just suits; see they be scriptural, grounded upon a promise, and then see that your requests be by faith put into Christ's hands, and fear not speeding, for our advocate hath the greatest interest in God the Father, he is his only well-beloved Son, his dear Son, he always hears him;‡ the Father was so pleased with his Son's undertakings on earth, that he welcomes him to heaven with this grant, "Ask of me and I will give thee."||— But he asks no more of God than what he hath purchased by laying down a valuable consideration for it, so that God's justice pleads for his suit. See your matters be right, and the manner of your asking be right as to the main, and then come with confidence, fear not a disappointment.

3. Trust God for what is needful for you over and besides what you petition for. Have you the tree? you have all the fruit growing upon that tree: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"§ Alas, we poor beggars are short-sighted and short-spirited, we know not what we want, and often fail in asking what we know, but we have an astonishing word for this, Eph. iii. 20, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or

* Exod. xxviii. 9, 12, 28, 29.

† Gal. ii. 20. Heb. vii. 25.

‡ Matt. iii. 17. Col. i. 13. John xi. 42.

|| Psal. ii. 8.

§ Rom. viii. 32.

think;" we can ask much and think more, but woe were to us, if we had not many preventing mercies that we asked not, nor knew any thing of, before they were received; trust God for these, and thank God for them, because he has been better to us than our prayers.

4. Remember Christ at God's right hand who remembers you to your great advantage; let your hearts and thoughts be above with Christ in meditation and affections, Col. iii. 1, 2. Your good Joseph exalted forgets not you, why should you forget him? God complains of Israel in the wilderness, that then they had his approbation, but when they were put into a fat pasture and were filled, then they forgot God, Hos. xiii. 5, 6, as if God should say to them, and to thee in a like case, time was when you were in a low condition, and had no other relief, then you and I were better acquainted, many a visit I had from you, but now you are filled, I hear no more of you, you think you need me not, but I will draw the veil over you again, and see then what you will make of it; consider what base disingenuousness this is.

5. Act suitably to this great privilege. O live at the rate of this mercy, do not disoblige God by any unsuitable carriage, this is his own caution, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, "Behold I send an angel before thee," beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him." Observe it, men might say there is more lenity in the Son than in the Father, if we offend we will fly to the Son; no, no, you cannot think he will pardon those sins that God will not pardon, for he is the same in will and essence with the Father, infinite in power, holiness, justice, and truth, and will not humour sinners in their licentious ways; there-

fore you must honour Son, as you honour the Father,* by acting like Christians, obeying his commands, and living conscientiously, as under the law of a mediator; though he pardon sin upon repentance, yet he will by no means gratify sinners in vain courses, or in ways of impenitency. Remember the wrath of the Lamb is severe,† as well as of Jehovah.

6. Persevere in the good ways of God. Be not discouraged with the greatest oppositions; remember, Christ ever lives to make intercession for you.‡ You need not fear his deserting you, if you keep close to duty he will stand by you; you shall see he will hold with you, and he will hold you up: read and think of that good word, Heb. iv. 14, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Here is a double ground of encouragement to persevere:—

(1.) That Jesus our head is already in heaven, and if the head be above water, the body cannot drown.

(2.) The business that Christ is managing in heaven, which is to intercede as a great high priest, carrying that work on in the behalf of believers, is in no danger of creating disappointment, if you fail not to employ him; and if you do fail, he will still manage his work for others, but it will be your particular loss, the loss of your souls; O tremble at this, if you fall away after these discoveries, your case will be deplorable, Heb. vi. 5, 6.

7. Be not afraid to ask great things at the hands of God in the name of Christ. Be not daunted with the greatness of your sins, or variety of your wants, but come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may ob-

* John v. 23.

† Rev. vi. 16.

‡ Heb. vii. 25.

tain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. Christ's merits are adequate to all the saints' wants and guilt, and the very appearance which he discovers of having suffered is a sufficient plea for believers; as it is storied of Amintas, who appeared as advocate for his brother Æschylus who was strongly accused and likely to be condemned to die: now, Amintas having performed great services, and merited highly of the commonwealth, in whose service one of his hands was cut off in the field, he comes into the court on his brother's behalf, and said nothing but only lifted up his arm, and shewed them *cubitus sine manu*, an arm without a hand, which so moved them that, without a word speaking, they freed his brother immediately. And hath not our Jesus suffered more for us than the loss of a hand? Yea, the loss of his life, whereby he hath purchased those things for which he prays, yea, those for which you pray, if you pray aright, and shall they not be granted? Yes, doubtless: he makes larger offers than Ahasuerus to Esther, "What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom:"* but what are earthly kingdoms or all the world, to God's gifts of grace and glory? Open your mouths wide, and he will fill them, Ps. lxxxix. 10.

8. Thank God for what you have met with as an answer to prayer, and put it altogether to the score of Christ's intercession. It was not your piety, parts, nor importunities—it was not your enlargedness, zeal, or fervency, that obtained those good things: no, no, you must say as David, Psal. cxv. 1, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." We have no reason to ascribe any thing to our own worth or good-

* Esth. v. 3.

ness, but to God's free grace and Christ's intercession. Rob not our Lord Jesus of any of his glory, it is dear to him, and he will not give it to another; there is no parting stakes betwixt our blessed Lord and creatures: no, no, exalt King Jesus only, give him the glory due to his name. If God have given you any signal mercies, as answers of prayer, let Christ have the credit thereof, for not one drop of saving mercy comes from God to souls but through Christ, and our business is to return our gratitude in the same channel. A good man never went to bed or rose, but he had that doxology in his mouth or on his heart, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," 2 Cor. ix. 15.

9. Forgive and pray for others, though they have ever so much offended you. It is our Saviour's precept, Matt. v. 44, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." This is a hard word to flesh and blood, but Christ practised it, and if you be his disciples you must follow his example. Study 1 Pet. ii. 21—23. You will say, was this ever practised by any mortal man? surely this goes against the grain of nature, to love them that hate us. I answer, as grace transcends nature, so sometimes it contradicts nature's corrupted emotions: but grace teacheth us to love their souls, not their vices, to pity and pray for those that are maliciously set against us. God saith concerning Job's three friends that wronged him, "My servant Job shall pray for you:"* it alludes to an advocate in court, that moves the judge in behalf of an offender. So did Job notwithstanding all their severe censures of him, yea, he offered sacrifices, and the Lord accepted him for them and for himself, for the Lord turned the capti-

* Job xlii. 8—10.

vity of Job. The people reproached Jeremiah, yet he stood before God to speak good for them : so Stephen, David, and many others—this is a piece of brave self-denial, following Christ's example.

10. Especially let this be your main business, to plead with God for Christ's interest upon earth, the church of God, the success of ordinances, and the conversion of sinners to God. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee." * A pious man will prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy ; † his comfort is bound up in the church's prosperity, and oh what sorrow doth he conceive upon Zion's fall ? how doth he give way to his feelings in the earnestness of prayer ? Isa. lxii. 6, 7, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." O that there were greater numbers of such remembrancers ! God forbid that we should be taken up with our own houses, while the house of God lies waste. O that all that love God would solemnly engage in this momentous work : you join with Christ herein, of whom it is said, Zech. i. 12, 13, "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years ? and the Lord answered the angel that talked with me, with good words and comfortable words." Public spirited men have usually peculiar privileges. Come, sirs, help poor Zion in her distresses. All that have a tongue to speak, or a spirit to breathe, stir up yourselves to keep with us a departing gospel. Is it nothing to you whether God go or stay ? have you no souls of your own ? have not your children precious souls ? can they

* Psalm cxxii. 6.

† Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.

be saved if the gospel of salvation go? Come all that have any sense of eternal concerns upon your heart, take hold of his strength, and say we are called by thy name, leave us not: I advise you to borrow the complaints and pleas you find in scripture, especially Isa. lxiii. and lxiv. Jer. xiv.

CHAP. XII.

THE CONCLUSION.

AND now what shall I say? The vast distance betwixt the infinite, incomprehensible Majesty, and a finite worm crawling on this dunghill, amazeth and overwhelmeth my finite faculties: how can I come near Jehovah? And yet the greater distance that sin hath put betwixt the holy God and a guilty, polluted sinner, doth more confound me, so that I may say, How dare I come near him? No, I have great reason to fear banishment from him into eternal torments. But behold, a deep mystery, a transcendent mercy, Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God is become man, hath suffered divine wrath, quenched the flaming sword of justice, and paved a new and living way to the divine Majesty; so that now in Christ Jesus, we who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* Here is a wonder of grace, heaven and hell meet, and sweetly converse together. Christ hath smoothed the face of justice, hath dried up Jordan, and driven back the Red Sea, that the ransomed may pass over; yea, he hath shipped over this dead sea thou-

* Heb. x. 19, 20. Eph. ii. 13.

sands of gracious souls into a land of light, life, and love.

O gracious and blessed Jesus, what hast thou been? what hast thou done? what hast thou suffered for wretched man? What an astonishing journey didst thou take from the empyrean heaven to this dunghill of earth? What a poor tattered garment of human flesh didst thou put on? Yea, what rendings, stretchings, tearings, did it bear? What malice of devils, what contradiction of sinners, what effects of divine displeasure didst thou endure? till at last thou didst breathe out thy soul upon the cross, wast laid in the grave, as a malefactor, and all this by the malignant Jews, for no fault, but thousands of good deeds, healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead. But thou didst arise by thine own power, ascendedst to heaven, and sittest at the right hand of the Majesty on high,* which is thy proper sphere, where thou art negotiating the affairs of thy purchased church, and every individual soul that is by faith united to thee.

But will this blessed Jesus, exalted so high, stoop so low as to cast a propitious eye upon so vile a creature as I am? Yes, he looks upon it as his interest, nay, as his honour to own his meanest member. Saviour of lost man, break through these clouds that my sin hath raised, shine on my soul, with the light of thy countenance, send thy Holy Spirit to plead thy cause within me, yea, to plead my cause with thee, and then I doubt not but thou wilt plead my cause with the Father. Thy chariot is paved with love, and thou makest the humblest believer ride with thee therein;† and dost bear them on thy breastplate before the throne. I have been comparing my Lord's account book in the covenant of grace, with what counterpart I find in

* Heb. i. 3.

† Cant. iii. 10.

mine own breast, and dare appeal to the heart-searching God : Thou knowest whether these workings be the Spirit of adoption, thou knowest that I am not wicked, that there is no way or undisturbed road of wickedness in my heart ; I have sin, yet do not regard but hate mine own iniquity.* It is true, old ashes of youthful lusts raise up new sparks in my soul, both to enflame and torment me : but I trust in the merit of Christ for pardon, and the Spirit of Christ for power against corruption, and I hope I may say with a great man, let young and strong corruptions and his free grace be yoked together, and let Christ and my sins deal it betwixt them : they are too strong for me, not for him : if he be on my side I shall come off victorious, and if he speak for me I shall prevail ; I shall be in some sort omnipotent through Christ strengthening me.† Yet my Lord alone shall be set in his own chair of state, for all the honour is due to him alone. If ever I speed in prayer, it is for Christ's sake ; if I be exempted from evil, it is through Christ ; if heaven come down to me, or if I mount up to heaven, it is through Christ. Christ is heaven, the best part of heaven, all heaven, yea, more than all heaven.

It is some comfort to me, to reflect upon the communion of saints. O what a glorious cloud of incense ascends daily out of the angels' hand, along with the prayers of the saints ! What a harmony of petitions breathed out by the same spirit, besets the throne of grace ! I am not alone, there is a sweet symphony in the ears of God, all pleading for the same things for substance : but these (as much grace as they have, and as well as God loves them) shall not prevail for one mercy without this advocate, the blessed Jesus. O then how desirable, how precious, how prevailing an

* Psal. cxxxix. 23. lxvi. 18.

† Phil. iv. 13.

advocate is Christ, we need not fear him, nor be jealous of him ; however, I will believe good of Christ till he disappoint and deceive me, which is impossible, and will take his word for guarantee, that he will fill up all blanks in my prayers according to his promise, and obtain for me what I want, and more than I ask, yea, more than I can think I need ; my Lord bids me open my mouth wide, but his ear is more capacious than my lips, else I were undone. Gracious Saviour, thou hast kindled a live coal in my heart, which I hope all the waters of affliction cannot quench ; I must live and die in thy debt, and never be able to pay the thousandth part. O that my heart were more enflamed in love to thee, and delight in thee ; thou hast done all this for me, and put an earnest within me, and wilt in due time make good the full bargain. My head is in heaven, and as he hath taken possession for me, so he is negotiating my affairs there, and presenting and mending my distracted prayers ; all I can do is to bring a lame faith to Christ, holding out a stump instead of an arm, like a lame beggar, and crying : Lord Jesus, work a miracle, Lord mend the frame of my heart, raise my soul as high as heaven. O that I could send up the tribute of praises to my well-beloved, and receive back returns of prayer ! My solicitor is not tired with my broken suits, but the oftener and the welcomer, so I be sincere, and his grace must make me so. Lord, help me to persevere in following hard after thee, and let me find a young green paradise of pleasure in my attendance on thee. O for some first fruits before I reap the full harvest ! and give me patience to wait thy time ; yet abundance of earnest will not diminish the principal sum. Let me have more of holiness, and I shall have more of heaven ; O that I may have a heart to hold intercourse with the blessed Jesus, to lay all

my cares and burdens on him who is able to save to the uttermost; the more I can lay on him, the easier shall I be. Had he not been all sufficient, he had been hard put to it since he undertook to be my guardian; I have oft made foul work, but he hath mended what I have marred, and set all straight again, and I trust he will do so to the end. I often lose myself, but let me never lose thee; keep hold of me and I am safe, put my tears in thy bottle, write my prayers in thy book; thou knowest what hath passed betwixt thyself and my soul, and wilt not deny thy own hand writing, and the workings of the Spirit of adoption; weakness I own, thy work thou wilt not disown. I lift and lift again this heart, these prayers, these praises of mine to put them where thou wouldst have them, that thou mayest carry them to thy Father, and to my Father for acceptance.

But O what astonishing damps are upon my trembling spirit, when I rise off my knees and think, will God hear such a distracted prayer of a poor hard-hearted wretch? surely, conscience saith, no: but what saith faith? A poor trembling faith puts it into the hands of my advocate, and then saith, he can make something of it, and my eyes are fastened upon him at God's right hand, and thereby faith is elevated, and despair gradually vanisheth.