

solve never to break off this friendship, but look upon him as your inseparable friend, and from whom you are never to depart. And say to yourself, this God shall be your God ; i. e. your friend, your friendly ruler, for ever and ever, and shall be your guide even unto death. So that you can never any moment of your life suffer an elongation from him, that he should be far off, or keep long from you, but presently your hearts will miss him. And you will say, Oh ! where is my friend ? I will seek him, pursue after him, as the spouse in the Canticles is represented to pursue after him whom her soul loved. This is my friend, where is he ? where is he ? You will be presently upon enquiries, if he have hid himself, and seem to have withdrawn and retired from you ; for this hath been the state of things between him and you in contracting this state of friendship, that this God shall be your God for ever and ever, and your guide even unto death.

SERMON XXXVIII. *

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

THE subject that I last finished, you find did connect faith and friendship with God. This connects faith and sonship to God. And the one and the other must be understood (by them that will consider) to be of the greatest importance to us imaginable ; so great, that it is to be hoped the former is not forgotten, and this latter will not slightly and negligently be attended to.

The words in themselves are an express doctrinal assertion, which I shall not need therefore to vary into other terms ; “ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” It needs only to be explained and applied : for the explication of it, that you cannot upon the first hearing of such an assertion as this, but think very necessary. For it may seem strange to unaccustomed ears, at least, that such a thing as this should be affirmed so generally, concerning believing Jesus to be the Christ, that every such

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an one should be said to be born of God. How amazing a sound may this carry with it to many who do less consider, or who understand less what the meaning of these terms is, to "believe Jesus to be the Christ," and to "be born of God;" the latter of these doth indeed, at the very first hearing, appear a very great thing—be born of God! It might even swallow up a man's soul to think of such a thing as this, affirmed of such worms as we are. We, that might "say to the worm, Thou art our father, and to corruption, Thou art our sister and mother;" to speak of such creatures as we, as of a divine offspring and heavenly progeny, as of persons born of God; how wonderful and transporting may it be to us.

But that only which can make such an assertion as this seem strange is, that while this is apprehended (as it is to be really and truly) a very great thing; for the most part, such believing is reckoned a very little thing. It may, indeed, seem a great thing to be a son of God, one born of God; but the name of believing is become so cheap amongst us, and carries so little and so diminished a sound with it, that we are too generally tempted to look upon it as a slight, and small, and trivial matter. But when these terms come to be opened and understood, it will be found that there is such a near affinity between these two things, being "born of God," and "believing that Jesus is the Christ;" that the one will be easily understood not to have any place at all where the other hath no place; that they can never be apart, but wheresoever the one is the other must be too.

Our business therefore in the explication must be to do these two things; first, to consider the parts of this assertion; and then, secondly, to shew their necessary connexion with one another.

I. We are to open the parts of this assertion severally, which you see are these two, concerning Christ and a divine birth; "believing that Jesus is the Christ," and being "born of God." And,

I. For the former of these, what the import is of "believing that Jesus is the Christ." And as touching that, there are again, more particularly, two things to be stated. First, the thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ; and, secondly, the believing of this.

(1.) The thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ. I pray you attend to it. Much of the greatness of this thing, which is our present subject, to wit, faith concerning him, depends upon a right understanding what it is that must be the object of this faith, and which is stated as the object of

it here. The thing to be believed is, that Jesus is the Christ. It concerns us greatly to understand this aright. It is not a trivial matter that is here represented to us as the object of our faith, or the thing we are to believe. And that we may more distinctly apprehend it, we are yet to go lower, and to consider, first, the subject of this affirmation unto which we are to yield our assent, and give up our faith, which is represented to us only under one single term, Jesus; and then, secondly, what we are to believe of this subject, that he is the Christ.

[1.] The very subject itself must be truly stated; we must in our own thoughts determine of the person here spoken of, and concerning whom this affirmation is pronounced, otherwise we do nothing. Why, who is this Jesus of whom we are to believe that he is the Christ? Take we heed that our thoughts do not wander here; for that would be fatal if they should, if they should wander to another subject. This, which is so peculiarly said concerning him, must be understood exclusively of any one else; it is not spoken of any other, nor to be thought of any other. That there should be here an error *personæ*, a mistake concerning the person spoken of, it may prove a most destructive error. "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" This is the question which John directs his disciples to put to Christ for their information, not for his own, that he might gain them an opportunity of being convinced and satisfied in the great and important question of that age; which yet could not be of greater importance to that age than it is to our own, nor of greater to John's disciples than it is to every one of us: and we see what our Lord saith to it, "Tell John what you hear and see;" such and such wonders are wrought and done. And he adds in the close of all, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" which words would carry a kind and benign import with them beyond all that can be expressed. But they carry withal an intimated menace, as any one may apprehend—"Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" as if he should have said, Such an one hath a merciful and wonderful deliverance, "he that is not offended in me." But it is also as if he had said, Woe be to him that is; when so clear a light shines concerning me, and when there is so bright and so express a discovery; blessed is he that doth not stumble, blessed is he that doth not mistake, that doth not take one for another. The intimation is plain, nothing but wrath and vengeance and woe must hang over the guilty heads of them that do take one for another in such a case; and when the light that

shines is so clear, so as that none can be guilty of a mistake, but it must be a wilful mistake if any should take another for me.

And you see how this one person is notified here, only by the name Jesus, as the subject of the affirmation, the Saviour. A name that signifies the aptitude of the person unto the office that he was to bear and manage. You know it was foretold and directed by the immediate counsel of Heaven, that he should be called Jesus; "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. It was a rivaling of the hero of the world, who did affect such titles, and even that very title, which the pagans did therefore bestow sometimes upon their gods, and sometimes upon their kings, to wit, Saviour; the usual name among them of Jupiter, and with which some of their great princes did dignify themselves, and affected to be dignified by, as particularly Demetrius Soter. This was an affectation among the great ones of the world to claim this very name. Well, our Lord will be known to be the Jesus. This name is his, appropriated to him, to signify to persons one that is to save as no other could, that was to be so eminent and so glorious a Saviour; that person distinguished from others by the specifying circumstances (or the individuating circumstances rather) that did attend him. That Jesus who was born at Bethlehem, and lived at Nazareth, and was crucified at Jerusalem, commonly known there by this name, the name Jesus. It is of him peculiarly and alone that this is said, he is the Christ.

[2.] And that is the thing that is to be believed concerning him, that he is the Christ. The former was the personal name, this the name of office, and speaks of the person as invested with his office, or affirms that investiture concerning his office that he is invested therewith. This indeed is variously expressed, that is the attribute given to the subject under this latter name." Sometimes the same thing is said concerning the believing this Jesus to be the Son of God; that doth equally entitle to the same great privilege, and brings a man into the same safe state, implies the same change and transformation upon his soul, as you see in the foregoing chapter of this epistle, at the 15th verse, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Sometimes the meaning and import of this expression, "is the Christ," is signified by that conjunction with the other, both conjoined, that is, that he is the Christ, and that he is

the Son of God. When our Lord demands of Peter, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. xvi. 15) the various opinions are given, some saying he was Elias, some saying some other of the prophets. Well, but what say you, Peter, and the rest, that I am? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," saith Peter. So you have both conjoined in reference to the same person, as in John xx. 31. "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." These passages plainly intimate to us thus much, that to affirm that Jesus is the Christ, and that he is the Son of God, comes all to one, it amounts to the same thing. To say concerning this person believingly that he is the Christ, or that he is the Son of God, there is an equivalency in the one of these to the other. Sometimes a third expression, of equal import to either of the others, or both the others, is used; "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." A strange saying too, as this of the text seems to be, 1 Cor. ii. 3.; there "Lord," is the name of the office too; the usual style by which he is spoken of in the New Testament, and in some places of the Old too; "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Psalm cx. 1. It only imports that universal and sovereign dominion that did belong to the mediatorial office, the thing signified by the name of Christ. "He is Lord of all," Acts x. 36. A thing that seems slid in by the apostle in the stream and current of his discourse; "he is Lord of all," saith he, in a parenthesis; and so he goes on, dropping that by the way; and no man can say that he is so "but by the Holy Ghost," to wit, with a correspondent disposition of soul internally, vitally, and practically acknowledging him, and subjecting his soul to him as Lord of all, as the Lord, he into whose hands all power is put both in heaven and earth.

But when this is said, "that Jesus is the Christ," and this again is used as an equivalent expression, "that he is the Son of God," or, "he is Lord of all," this only represents and gives us an intimation of the state of the case at that time. He appearing now in the fulness of time upon the stage of this world, various opinions there were of him, some mistaken ones, some very malicious ones, and some that were right and true; this begat a great controversy; it was the question of the time, and the determination of it the right way called the present truth; to wit, the great question concerning this Jesus, who, and

what he was; "I speak these things," saith the apostle, "though you know and are established in the present truth." The main dispute lay between them on the one hand, who believed him to be the Christ, or the Son of God; and them on the other hand, who apprehended him to be a deceiver, an impostor and blasphemer, for saying truly who and what he was. This was the true state of the question, he giving out himself to be the Son of God, calling the great God upon all occasions, Father—"My Father" hath directed me to do so and so, and to say so and so; he giving this out concerning himself, that he "came down from Heaven," that he was "the Son of God," in a most peculiar and appropriate sense; and reporting concerning himself too, (which was of most absolute necessity unto the end and design of his coming) that he might bear the office of Christ and the Messiah, and that he was the Son of God; the determining the one of these on his part would determine and conclude the other. Whereas he did upon all occasions intimate that he was the very person that should come, the Christ, the Messiah, and also that he was the Son of God. If it were true that he was the Son of God, it was impossible that could be false that he was the Messiah, that he was the Christ. For no one could imagine that the Son of God should bring down a lie from Heaven and diffuse it among men: therefore, to say he was the Son of God, was to say he was the Christ too; that is, it plainly implied that whereas he said both, it was impossible he could be the author unto men of a false affirmation concerning himself: and therefore, if he were the Son of God, he in whom the divine nature was in conjunction with the human, in whom the glory of God shone so as to characterize him the only begotten of the Father, (John i. 14;) if it were so avowing himself to be the Christ, the Messiah that was to come, that had been so long expected, even at that very time, he must truly and really be so. And so there was no medium between these two, his being the Son of God, and his being a deceiver and impostor; no medium, for if he was not the one, he was the other; if he was not the Son of God, he must deceive in saying he was the Christ. But he being the Son of God, that being sufficiently evinced, or evident that he was so, must give sufficient credit to this affirmation concerning himself, that he was also the Christ, he that was to come, so as that there was not another to be looked for.

Now what this Christ signifies, and what the affirming

this Jesus to be the Christ must import, have been hinted to you already. But it is to be more distinctly considered. It is (as you have heard) a name of office, as the other is a personal name. And this word signifies his unction to that office ; so Messiah signifies, in the Hebrew language, and *Χριστος* in the Greek, an anointed person, and the import of that must be collected from the known usage of this and of former ages, and the continued usage of the same thing, even to this day, in all successive ages since ; that is to invest and inaugurate persons into high and great offices by unction or anointing. And two things, as to this person, this unction must signify, when it is said he was anointed above his fellows with joy and gladness, to wit, with triumph, (as high triumphs have been always used to attend the inauguration or coronation of princes,) two things as to him this unction must signify : 1. Authorization, and 2. Qualification. The former of these is relative, and the latter real.

First, Authorization ; the conveying to him all the authority belonging to the high office of Mediator. He is the person authorized, (as the inauguration of princes signifies that,) either conferring or acknowledging the high authority in them belonging to their high office. Him hath God the Father sealed. He carries the signature, the character of the great God upon him, as his anointed one, his sealed one, marked out for the great work and office which he was to sustain and bear. But,

Secondly, It signifies qualification too. A real endowment, as well as that relative one. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me." Isaiah lxi. 1. It signifies that mighty plenitude of the Spirit which descended and flowed down upon him, whereby whatsoever was requisite to the faithful and successful discharge of the work and business which was conferred upon the man Christ, the divine nature being so intimately united with the human, it signified that all the fulness of Godhead did come to inhabit this man, and so to suit him every way for the great affairs of that high and important office into which he was now put.

And this was the thing to be believed in opposition to the opposers of that time, and of all after-times ; who were of two sorts then as they have been continually since, to wit, Pagans and Jews ; the former whereof did disbelieve that there needed to be any Messiah at all ; and the latter disbelieved that this was he. The former could have no apprehension that there was any need of a Messiah

or a Christ at all. That was the case of the Pagan world; and much less could they believe that this Christ should ever need to be crucified: and therefore the doctrine of him, and especially of his cross, was to the wise Pagans foolishness. What needs any such transaction between God and men in such a way as this, that there were come down one from heaven into this world, to die upon earth a sacrifice to the justice of heaven? Who can imagine such a thing as this, say the wiser Pagans. There is no need of any Christ at all, say they.

The Jews, they were taught long before to apprehend and believe there was need of a Christ; though they mistook much here what he was to do, and what the business of his office and coming was; but yet they had that gospel among them, under veils and shadows and typical representations, which did only hold forth to them what was the business and errand upon which Christ came into the world. All their sacrifices taught them, and no doubt to whom an understanding was given, as this apostle's expression afterwards, is in this same chapter, "They who had the given understanding to know him that is true," verse 20, they did understand that the sacrifices under their law, and offered according to the direction of it, must terminate in one greater sacrifice. They had that volume in their hands concerning which it is said, Ps. xl. 6, 7, "In the volume of the book it is written of me, that when sacrifices and offerings will not serve the turn, (that is, of mean, abject, brute creatures) I must come after all to do thy will, O God." That is to be performed and done by me which those sacrifices were useless and insignificant for: no other way useful but as they did point out me, who was to come, as the substance and fulness and accomplishment of them all. It was a thing generally taught, (whether it were understood or no among the Jews,) that there was to be a Christ, a Messiah, an everlasting high priest, as his office is sometimes dignified by that title, more eminently and principally in Psalm cx. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This the Jews found in the sacred records which they had among them, and in their hands. But yet when he came, they did not think this was he. And so as that was a question between the pagans and christians, whether there ought to be any Christ or no, so it was a question of equal importance between them and the Jews, whether this were the person. And therefore that he doth with so much authority and severity charge upon those that he conversed

among in the days of his flesh, If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins. It is not believing an indefinite Christ or Messiah to come, that will serve the turn now, now that there is a sufficient notification of the person; but now you are not only to believe that there is a Messiah to come, but now if you do not believe that I am he, you are lost creatures, you die under the unatoned guilt of all your other sins, and under the superadded guilt of this sin, not believing the revelation that is made by the great God of this his Christ, when it was made with so much clearness that it was impossible any discovery could have carried more convictive evidence with it than that did. This now was the thing to be believed concerning this Jesus. But then, you will say,

(2.) What doth the believing of this import? What is it to believe it, so as to give a ground for this affirmation concerning the belief of it, that he is born of God? Why, for this it is plain, in the

First place, this believing that Jesus is Christ must carry with it an understanding and a judicious assent of the truth of the affirmation that so he is; that he is indeed the Christ. An understanding and judicious assent: it cannot be less. Faith concerning this so important a thing is not the act of a fool, it must be an act suitable to an intelligent, apprehensive mind; and therefore if this be not assented to with the understanding and judgment, it is as if it were not assented to at all. To assent to this, understandingly and with judgment, is to apprehend some valid and sufficient ground upon which it is to be assented to. I pray consider this well; ungrounded faith is no faith: if there be never so clear and demonstrative ground upon which this truth is in itself founded, that Jesus is the Christ; if it be not at all apprehended by me, if I believe this at random, if men will call that believing when I believe and I cannot tell why, and I care not why, I believe as a matter of common hearsay or of uncertain report, I take it up from the people amongst whom I live. Such an ungrounded faith as this is a nullity, a perfect nullity, it goes for nothing; it is not believing, it is but a hovering, fluttering opinionation, a vague opinion only I met with by chance, a thing that falls in my way; my religion, as I am a Christian, is to me a casualty. I am a Christian, but upon the same terms upon which they who live in the same country are Mahometans; and of the Jews, where they are of the Jewish faith, or infidelity rather, And this is all that the most

have to say for their being Christians: that religion which was the religion of my forefathers, which is the religion of the country where I live, which is the religion established by law, which is the religion that most suits my external conveniences to profess. I could not commodiously (it may be not safely) live in the country where I live, save on this profession, and not continuing this profession. That which is the ground of the belief of the most that go under the name of Christians, is but just the same, *mutatis mutandis*, that is the ground of their faith and religion who inhabit the Pagan world, in all the most dark and dismal quarters of it; they take their faith the same way. The Mahomedans, though less gross Pagans, take up their faith the same way. And so have the Jews done their faith the same way ever since Judaism came to be opposed to Christianity: therefore there must be some great flaw in this matter.

Most certain it is, that such grounds as do equally serve to infer falsehood and truth must be in themselves false. From truth nothing but truth can follow; but from falsehood sometimes that which is true, and sometimes that which is false (as circumstances may be varied) will follow. And it is plain, that from this ground a falsehood doth follow many times and often, yea oftener, than truth. To wit, when the ground is that my religion is descended from my ancestors, it is the religion of the country where I live, it is established by law, it makes for my conveniency to be of this religion, it would be a great prejudice or reproach to me not to be of it, or profess the contrary. These grounds will as well infer a falsehood, as they happen to do truth in the present case, because they are common grounds upon which all the mistaken and false religions in the world are equally founded as well as the true.

But then if the matter be so, see what you are to account or reckon concerning such an ungrounded faith, be the matter of it what it will; if the grounds of it be false and wrong it is vain faith, as it is intimated by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2, "I declare unto you the Gospel which ye have believed, which you have received, which hath been preached to you, and wherein you stand, and by which also you shall be saved, if you keep in the way that I have preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain." The Greek word there used signifies sometimes *temere*; sometimes *frustra*; when it signifies the former, it is believed without ground; when it signifies the latter, it is believing without effect. Both ways faith may be vain. When I believe a

thing without any ground, or without any proportionate ground, that is, I believe a divine truth, but with no divine faith, or not relying in my belief upon a divine testimony, which is the thing that specifically distinguisheth divine faith from human faith. The faith is as the ground of it is. If my faith rest upon an human testimony, it is an human faith; if it rest upon a divine ground, then it is a divine faith, and the efficacy of it is proportionable to the ground of it. Do but observe that, 1 Thess. ii. 13, the Apostle gives thanks for those Thessalonians, "that they received the gospel not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, which effectually works in them that believe." We can never believe aright that Jesus is the Christ, but as taking it upon the authority of a divine testimony. "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not the record he hath given of his Son." Why do I believe Jesus to be the Christ? because the eternal God hath given his testimony concerning him that so he is. This never enters into the minds of the most. They never consider who testifies this; only this is a common opinion, and they have happened upon it. But a testimony from heaven concerning him, hath averred and affirmed him to be the Christ, is that which must take hold of men's souls, and come with power upon them, if ever they do in truth believe that Jesus is the Christ. A man's believing comes all to nothing without this, that there is a divine testimony. But how such a divine testimony is to be evidenced to be divine, or may appear to be so, will be matter of after consideration, as that also will, what is imported in being born of God. Such a faith as the gospel requires, and challenges to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, it carries that mighty and marvellous power along with it as to transform a man's soul, to make him a new man. Any man that pretends to this faith, he is but just as he was before; the same man that he was, as vain, as earthly, as carnal, as strange to God, he lives at the same rate of ungodliness that formerly he did, or that other men actually do; for this man to pretend he believes that Jesus is the Christ, it is a pretence that carries its own confutation and shame in it.

He that understandingly believes Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that understands why he believes it, and what this Christ was appointed for, to reconcile, to reduce us, and bring us back to God, to intitle to the divine favour, and to engage us in the divine communion: such a man as doth in good earnest believe this, is quite another man, as if

he were but new born. Here is a creature produced that was not before: it is as if you were newly come into the world, and into being. If you do sincerely and truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, it is a thing that speaks you just new born; that is, you are born quite another creature; as we shall have occasion further to shew. "Old things are done away, and all things are become new." This faith cannot be unaccompanied with such an impression on the soul, that makes a man a godlike creature in comparison to what he was before: for every one that is born of God is like God by that very birth. It is true, that a thing may be made by another that is not like him, but what one begets or is born of him that hath the same nature, that bears his natural image; it is a creature new-produced, that imitates God, that resembles God, in whom this faith obtains concerning Jesus that he is the Christ.

I have chosen to insist upon this subject upon that account, and with this design, (as many things have been spoken of the same import, and upon the same design from time to time) that we may not impose upon ourselves, and be cheated by the name of faith instead of the thing. Will the shadow of faith save a man? Will it save a man to be called a believer, and to be no such thing? That faith that terminates upon Jesus as the Christ, which will save a man, must so transform him too, so as that he may truly admit to have it said of him, this is a man born of God. I see his faith makes him quite a new man throughout; for he was a stranger to God, an enemy to God, lived in all manner of ungodliness; but O! what a change is wrought? Now he resembles God, now he doth like God; he makes it his business to do good; the divine excellencies shine in him, and are conspicuous whosoever he goes, and in whatsoever he does. To talk of one believing Jesus to be the Christ, who doth not appear to be born of God, doth not appear to be of an heavenly descent or birth, you may as well say such an one is a star, or an angel, as a believer. A believer, and one born of God, are expressions that do signify alternately one another as broad as long: so that every believer is born of God, and that every one that is born of God is a believer.

SERMON XXXIX.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I HAVE spoken to the general ground of this believing Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, upon that testimony which God hath given concerning him, that so he is.

But then there are many subservient grounds which have that use to notify to us the divinity of this revelation, or of this record; or whereupon we have reason to judge the testimony divine. And they are such as these:

[1.] The many prophecies that went before of him. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy, Rev. xix. 10. God speaking by the mouth of all his prophets (as if all had but one mouth) concerning his Christ; so conscient and agreeing was their testimony, though in several successive ages. "Of him bear all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43. "And which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just one;" as dying Stephen speaks, Acts vii. 52. It would be a long business, and (I hope) among you not necessary, to recite all the prophecies, more ancient and more late, which were in the several ages given concerning Christ before he came. He refers himself to all the Scriptures that were then in his time extant, to wit, those of the Old Testament, and those particularly of Moses. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," John v. 39. He must refer there principally to the prophetic writings contained in those writings. And he afterwards runs back as high as Moses, the penman of the first sacred writings. Moses (saith he) wrote of me, verse 46. But if ye will not believe Moses' writings, how will you believe my words? Great prophecies there were concerning him, even in the writings of Moses; and he wrote of times far back, even from the beginning, for he spake of 2000 years and upwards, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head: a plain prophecy concerning this same Jesus, and that he was to be the Christ. That the

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sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come; and that to him the gathering of the people should be. And how many express prophecies do you find concerning him afterwards in the books of the Psalmists. "Why do the heathen rage?" The most express quotation that we have out of the Old Testament, that we have any where in the New, as to what afterwards follows in that Psalm, the Apostle, Acts xiii. quotes particularly the second Psalm, saying, concerning this his Christ, against whom the heathen did rage, even as they did against the Father; "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The things that were said of him after he did come, to wit, that he was Lord of all. This was predicted and foretold concerning him so long before, that the heathen, and all the ends of the earth, should lie within the compass of his vast territory and dominion. Too great indeed to be called a territory: for all power was given him in heaven and in earth. He is Lord of all. It would be endless to recite all the passages to you which have this manifest application. It was foretold concerning him by the prophets, that two natures were to meet in his person. An admirable discovery, and a most express and plain one, that is, that one and the same person was to be born a child, and to be the mighty God. Isaiah ix. 6, "To us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and he shall be called Wonderful, The mighty God, The everlasting Father." In reference to us, he fitly hath that title too. Not in reference to the Trinity, but in reference to us. His divine original was plainly there presignified to us, as in other texts of the Old Testament. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand." And the land which he had a more peculiar relation to, is called "Emmanuel's land, God with us." That his goings forth are said to be "from everlasting," even his, who was to be born at Bethlehem. Mic. v. 2. Many most circumstantial things, as well as those great and substantial ones, were predicted and foretold; the punctual correspondence whereunto of the event did most plainly declare the divinity of the testimony. That is, that those were most divinely inspired prophets, who could at so vast a distance of time testify such and such things concerning him. Well might the Spirit of prophecy, working in those prophets, be called the testimony of Jesus. As when the parting of his garments by lot, before spoken

of, the piercing of his hands and feet, the giving him gall and vinegar to drink, with many more such things; and that he should be born at Bethlehem, when, as that was a casualty, humanly speaking it was no more than so, his mother being surprised upon a journey, and passing through that place. But these things I must not insist upon.

[2.] It speaks the divinity of that testimony given concerning him, that he entered in so extraordinary a way into this world. I may in the highest sense say, that he had so illustrious a birth. Illustrious, not by any thing of lustre derived and borrowed from this earth; that was too mean a thing to make his birth illustrious; but as he was of heavenly descent, the illustriousness of it was by a light and glory which did accompany it from Heaven. His birth was not signalized by the state and pomp of embassies from the courts of we know not how many princes; but by the descent of multitudes of glorious angels, proclaiming it as "glad tidings of great joy" which should be to all people; and an extraordinary star, which signalized this, and which was the guide to those wise sages who by special divine instinct came to do an homage to him, not without a secret signification of that right he was to have in the remotest parts of the world, and all the world over. They came from far to pay that homage, and to signify that his dominion should be far and near. And,

[3.] His most divine and heavenly doctrine was mightily subsidiary unto this record of God concerning him, that he was the Christ and his own Son; for how did he often, when he spake, transport his hearers? How were they astonished sometimes at his doctrine, (as Matthew vii. latter end) for there were such characters did attend it as manifestly did distinguish it. He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes, though they were authorized teachers among that people too. The ear that heard him blessed him, and the eye that saw him bare witness to him. You find, Luke iv. 17, that when he had pitched upon a text in one of the synagogues, to wit, that of Isaiah lxi. 1. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor;" when he came to dilate upon that subject, all the assembly are amazed, wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. And when the officers are sent to apprehend him, and bring him before the judicature at Jerusalem, they come back confounded men, without their errand's end; they are examined, and enquired why they

had not brought him? say they, "Never man spake as this man; a divine person, we dare not touch him, we dare lay no hand upon so sacred an one as he appears to be." And,

[4.] The wonderful works, which, through the whole course of his ministration, after he began, he continually did to testify and bear witness to the truth of what he repeatedly affirmed concerning himself, that he was Christ. When John's disciples were sent to him (not for John's sake, but their own) to know, "Art thou he that shall come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.) he gives them an answer from what they might see and hear, "Go and tell John the things that ye see and hear; (that is) The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." Implying all this to be a sufficient testification who he was. And those words (though they are mild and soft, and palmy and pleasant), "Blessed is he that is not offended in me," yet they carry a sting in them—they breathe terror too; for this plain intimation is carried in them, "Woe to him that is offended when so clear light shines, when there is so plain and manifest a discovery who I am: fearful is the case of that man who stumbles, takes offence, and cannot see when so bright light shines upon him, revealing me." Unto these words of his he makes his frequent appeal, in his many conflicts with the Jews, when they charge him with the solitariness of his testimony. "Thou bearest witness of thyself, thy witness is not true." That he disclaims; though justly tells them too, that if he did bear witness of himself, yet his witness was true. But he did not bear witness of himself singly and alone; "My Father beareth witness of me, and the works that I do they bear witness of me." And he returns it upon them, "If another comes in his own name, him will ye believe: I come in my Father's name, and ye will not receive me." John v. 43.

[5.] The express vocal testimony (besides that stated one that we have in the sacred records) given again and again from Heaven concerning him, at three noted times, his birth, his baptism, and his transfiguration. At his birth, by the embassy of angels, of which you have heard so much already; at his baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended as a dove lighting upon him, and that voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To be that Son of God and the Christ (as the case is stated,)

you have heard, must signify the same thing. They are put together often, "Christ the Son of the living God." Matt. xvi. 16. "Christ, the Son of God." Mark i. 1. That being the great question of that time. He avowing himself to be the Son of God; they charging him, who were his enemies, to be a deceiver and impostor: when that point indeed was gained, that he was the Son of God, no deceiver, no impostor, that must consequently include necessarily that he was the Christ; because that he always testified concerning himself. And if he were the Son of God, he could not be the author of a false testimony, or of an injurious usurpation of a dignity and office that belonged not to him. And at his transfiguration, how solemn and how glorious was the vocal testimony from Heaven concerning him, when he took up, not all the disciples, but a competent number (in common human estimate two or three being sufficient to prove the truth of a matter of fact in such a case,) he takes such a number as might certify the rest, and so publish the whole business to the world, when it should be seasonable and consistent with the design of such a manifestation as that was. When he had Peter, James, and John with him in the Mount, where he was transfigured before them; and then, as the apostle Peter (who was one of the number, and an eye witness), doth himself testify, 2 Pet. i. 17; and tells us what he had seen with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears. Many of you may remember I insisted largely heretofore upon that context. "We have not followed (saith he) cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" What place could there be left for reasonable doubt, whether God did not sufficiently own this Jesus to be the Christ, when there came "such a voice from the excellent glory" concerning him, to this same purpose, notified and testified as any matter of fact ought to be. And then,

[6.] His most amazing death, with so tremendous circumstances as the gospel reports it: such as that, though he could not be brought to it but by consent, till he was pleased in order thereunto to retract the glorious beams of his Majesty, that they might not withhold and frighten those, that were to be the executioners of that horrid tra-

gedy, from doing the thing itself which the hand and counsel of God had determined should be done. He is therefore said not to have his life taken from him; to wit, whether he would or no, but "he laid it down." There must be consent in the case; otherwise, had he let out those beams of majesty continually that shone so illustriously in him, even in the very confines of that hour and power of darkness that was coming upon him, they had not dared to do it. You see that the assassins, that they are even at the first attack beaten aback by those appearances of him, those characters of divinity, that some way or other appeared, and their own dread, that they fall flat to the ground; so that he is constrained to veil himself, and draw some kind of cloud over that glory, that they might not be withheld from going on; though it was a thing that he must spontaneously yield to, or it could not have been done. But when he did yield to it, and it was done, with what amazing circumstances was it attended, that all might know how extraordinary a person he was! Immediately the sun withdraws his head. Such an eclipse ensues, the like whereof was never known in the world besides; and of which some noted Pagan writers give an account with wonder. The powers of Heaven are shaken, so as that from that great Pagan these words were extorted, "That either the God of nature suffered, or the whole frame of things is suffering a dissolution." The earth is shaken and torn; the graves are opened, and the dead arise, many of them, and go into the holy city. The Roman centurion, a Pagan (who was by office to superintend the execution,) upon the sight of all this, gives him the cause against the assassins and murderers; to wit, that whereas this was the question, Is he a deceiver, or is he the Son of God? This was the question on which he died. He gives him the cause, saying, "Verily this is the Son of God." He speaks it in reference to the controversy then agitated and on the stage. What is this man, that here is dying, affixed to this cross? Was he what the Jews averred him to be? or was he what he averred himself to be? Why that is decided on his side by this impartial Pagan. And,

[7.] His glorious Resurrection, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and that upon which the stress of the whole cause was all along after laid. And it was the whole business of the apostleship to bear witness to his resurrection. They were twelve of them. A sufficient number to testify that they had often seen him when arisen.

The highest testimony that God could from Heaven have given concerning him; that when he died under that false and malicious imputation, as a deceiver and blasphemer, that Heaven might own him to be what he said he was. Though it was necessary he should be permitted to die, yet he recovers, and is raised up from the dead, and made a glorious triumph over death; the pangs whereof it was impossible should hold him, and therefore they are loosed; the pangs and bonds of it could hold him no longer. And,

[8.] The wonderful fortitude and boldness wherewith his inspired disciples and apostles did testify concerning his resurrection afterwards, and that he was the Christ. That was the business of the apostolical office, to bear witness to his resurrection; Matthias was chosen to fill up the number, and join with the rest to bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord, that all the world that way might know who and what he was. With great boldness did the apostles bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and a divine presence was with them herein. They testified it from time to time, even to the very faces of those powers under which he suffered; by whose instigation, at least, if not by their authority. The Sanhedrim, the Jewish magistracy, could not put a man to death at that time, they being wholly under the Roman power. But they were the instigators; and yet from time to time, to their very faces, do these poor illiterate men testify, that God had raised him from the dead whom ye have crucified, and him of whom ye were the betrayers and murderers. And this was the thing that stung them and cut them to the heart. You think to bring this man's blood upon us. But that they never spared to do. A most divine fortitude. That to the face of these powers, by whom such things were acted against our Lord, these men should, at the utmost peril of their own lives, so oppose themselves and their testimony, who but a little before did creep and sneak to the denial of our Lord, as you know Peter himself did. Before he was crucified, he did not know the man; afterwards he tells the greatest of them to their faces, You have been his betrayers and murderers. And,

[9.] The terrible vengeance that hath followed hereupon, upon the nation of the Jews. A mighty subsidiary testimony. "Your house is left unto you desolate." Our Lord foretold them how it would be. "Not one stone should be left upon another, even as to their temple, (the thing wherein they so much gloried) that should not be thrown

down." He weeps over self-desolating Jerusalem. "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," when he saw the calamity that was coming; but it came, and not a tittle failed of what was foretold, and according to what the prophets of old did foretell. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations." Hosea ix. 17. That people, while they are yet in being in that scattered dispersed state (wherein the world knows they are unto this day,) are a perpetual testimony, throughout all succeeding ages, of the truth of that Gospel and Christianity which they with so horrid malignity opposed themselves unto. And,

[10.] The marvellous success which the Gospel had since. That success it had immediately after the resurrection of our Lord: for he that descended, the same ascended, "that he might fill all things." Upon that ascent of his, what a mighty descent was there of the Spirit and power of God, that bore down all opposition! The Gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. And in this and that part of the world, you find there are solemn appeals. Do you not know what manner of entrance we had in this place and that place, and how men "turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son Jesus, who saveth from wrath to come?" 1 Thess. i. latter end. How did the gospel fly like lightning from one part and quarter of the world to another! How soon did it run through Judea and Samaria, and after that into remoter parts! A vast circuit in that age, and by the ministry of these very apostles. A gospel that began to be spoken by the Lord himself, but was confirmed by them that heard him; "God bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Heb. ii. 4. That by which the apostle doth enforce that solemn caution, to take heed of letting slip the things that they had heard. For, saith he, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which began to be spoken?" And I may add,

[11.] The strange preservation of the Christian cause and interest through all successive times and ages. That when all the powers of earth and hell were combined to root and raze out Christianity, and all the vestiges and memorials of it, that could never be effected, to this day. That as the spreading of the Gospel was by no human power, so no human power could prevail to extinguish it. It was not

in the way wherein the Mahomedan empire and religion did propagate themselves together, that this was propagated, to wit, by force and arms, and by the temptation of secular advantages, but by its own native and self-recommending light and lustre, and great design. And as it was propagated by no human means, so by no human means or power could it be extinguished, but hath grown upon the world in spite of the world, except the assigned foretold time of the apostasy, that dark and dismal interval wherein that work hath been so long at a stand, and out of which we are to expect its glorious revival.

All these things do concur to evince that that Revelation which hath been made to us concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, is from God: and so carries an indubitable truth in it to be relied upon. And it is upon that main and principal ground that our belief concerning him, that this Jesus is the Christ, must be built and rest, otherwise it is none of the faith which the Gospel claims to it. And it is all one to say the Gospel is a fable, and to believe it to be true and upon no ground, we cannot tell why or how.

SERMON XL.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

WE have gone on to shew, what the believing Jesus to be the Son of God is. And so much having been said concerning the grounds, both principal and subservient, of this belief, I shall superadd hereunto in the

Second place, what I reckon is not less necessary concerning the properties of it, that you may the more distinctly understand what sort of belief this must be that is to be given unto so great and important a truth, Jesus is the Christ. And I shall so state the properties of this belief as that they may visibly stand in that opposition wherein is requisite they should be set, to that common false belief which multitudes do satisfy and deceive themselves by at once to their destruction. You may, *eadem opera*, by the same cast of your eye discern the properties of that common

* Preached 25th March 1694.

false belief, and of that sincere faith concerning this truth, that the one may be avoided and declined, and the other may be aimed at with a restless endeavour and pursuit; so as that none may satisfy themselves till they can say, I find the belief of this great truth hath now its place in my soul, which will be finally saving to it.

There needs both much caution and much light to avoid the mistaken false faith of the multitude concerning this thing. I call it false, not doubting any of you apprehend that it is too possible a thing that there may be a very false faith of the greatest truth. One may believe the most important truth that can fall under human faith with a false faith. The thing is true that is believed in such cases, but it is not believed truly. And that is the sort of faith which I would have you know and avoid. And when you know what you are not to rest in, you will with the same light discern wherein you may safely rest. About a matter of such importance as this, it very much concerns both speaker and hearers at any time to speak and hear in agonies, and with hearts full of solicitude, lest we should mistake ourselves in a matter upon which eternity doth so immediately and entirely depend. Now,

1. The deceiving false faith of the multitude in this matter is but negative; but the sincere belief of this great truth, that Jesus is the Christ, is a most positive act of the soul. The common belief in this case is but a negative belief. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Yes, shall one tell you off hand, without deliberation or doubt, I do believe it. And what is the meaning of that? He believes it only thus, he doth not believe the contrary. He hath no formed opposite belief in his mind, and therefore thinks himself a very good believer. Whenas his believing is nothing else but a negation, an utter negation; to wit, he doth not disbelieve it. As if he should say, your question is to me upon the matter a new one, a new question, I never thought much of the business. I never asked myself whether I believed Jesus to be the Christ, yea or no. And for my part I have no contrary belief, and therefore hand over head he concludes himself a very good sound believer of this matter. But that faith which the Gospel claims, and which the necessities of souls do require and challenge, that they may have life by Christ, it is a most positive act of the soul, wherein the soul hath a real exercise. There is an exerted power of the soul put forth in this act, so that nothing can be more positive than that is. It is a substan-

tial act of the soul, according as substance doth signify positive entity. And so is this faith called, it is the very substance of the thing believed, whatsoever that be, Heb. xi. 1. This other common faith hath no substance in it. Grasp it, feel it, it is but a shadow, hath nothing of substance. Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? Yes, I do believe it; that is, there is as much substance in it as their saying so; as much as there is in the sound of a word, and no more. It is a mere negative thing, there is nothing positive in it.

2. The former of these is an ignorant, but the other a most intelligent act, proceeding upon knowledge. The deceived multitude, when they pretend Jesus to be the Christ, they believe they know not what; they say they believe Jesus is the Christ, but they never consider what they mean by Christ. When they say this Jesus is the Christ, what the signification of that name is they never trouble themselves to understand, they were never at leisure to think of such matter. Indeed they have often heard the word, but they have not a meaning in their minds correspondent to that word (Christ) what it imports, what signification it carries with it; and so what is affirmed concerning this Jesus when he is affirmed to be the Christ, they neither have what we speak nor whereof we affirm about it. Jesus is considered by them as an ordinary person that lived so many years ago; but to say of him, that he is the Christ, you might as well have said nothing: they believe hand over head, but they believe they know not what.

But, now, when any one doth sincerely believe Jesus to be the Christ, he, believing it, understands what this Christ is, and what the name Christ signifies, the anointed one of God unto that great office of mediatorship between God and man; and was therefore every way qualified for the high and great work of that office, invested with that full authority which belongs to such an office. All power is given to him, both in heaven and in earth: one full of grace and truth: in whom all the divine excellencies were resplendent and most conspicuous, which were to have their exercise in the discharge of the work of this mighty office. So that the apprehensive mind of a sincere believer in this thing runs a vast compass; when it hears the name of Christ, it traverseth heaven and earth; it runs through all the creation; for as such an one Christ is considered "over all, God blessed for ever." One that descended; the same that afterwards ascended, that he might fill all things. And he could not be Christ else: one that must have an universal

power over all minds and over all creatures : and one that can do whatsoever he will, both in heaven and earth, and all deep places ; but whose kindness and benignity inclines him to the doing of all the good that any receptive and capable subject shall admit of ; and to make many a one capable and receptive that is of itself quite otherwise. When, such mighty texts as we find upon record concerning Christ, these many glorious things that are spoken of him come in view, O how is such an one enlightened by the lustre of any such text that speaks concerning Christ ! Yes ; that represents him to me, concerning whom my faith hath its present exercise, that it is for Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that child born for us, that Son given to us, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Jesus is the Christ ; that is, he is the wonderful counsellor. When again we are told in Scripture that this is he who was in the beginning with God, and that he was God, and by whom the worlds were made, and that without whom nothing was made that was made ; that came and descended, the eternal word and wisdom of the Father, and was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and his glory shone as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Yes, this is my Christ ! I believe that that Jesus who dwelt at Nazareth, born at Bethlehem, was such a Christ. He by whom all things were made, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, things in heaven and earth ; this is my Christ. He that is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the Lord God almighty. He that was dead and is alive again and lives for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death. This is my Christ. The name Christ fills such a man's soul with light and glory, even in that very instant when he believes this Jesus to be the Christ ; so as that admitting him into the mind under this notion, it insensibly admits a deity in his all-comprehending fulness. He doth not believe a trivial thing concerning this Jesus, when he believes him to be the Christ, but believes him to be all in all. This is my all, and the universal all unto whosoever they are that shall come to partake felicity by him at length. This is nothing like the mock faith of the multitude, that think themselves well if off-hand they answer you the question when you ask, Is Jesus the Christ. Yes—But they neither know nor consider what Christ means, nor what they attribute to this Jesus, in calling him the Christ. Again,

3. That former belief concerning him, it is a dubious, hovering, and fluctuating thing. The sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is peremptory, and full of a concomitant certainty, and thorough persuasion of mind concerning him that so indeed he is. As to the former, what do you think? "Was that Jesus the Christ, or are we to look for another?" Here the mind hangs in a dubious suspense, and they rather say, No sure, we are not to look for another, because he came so long ago, and there hath no other appeared since. But concerning the sincere believer, this is the character under which we may conceive of him, John vi. 68, "We believe and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." Many minds in those days hung in doubt; and less of doubting may appear among us, because we seldom hear the question asked. With many, the mind hangs on a suspense and indifference. Is this the Christ, or is another to be he? Why this is as good as another; this may do as well as another; and for many years we have heard no talk of another, nor do we hear that for many an age by-past. But, saith the sincere believer, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. A sincere belief in this matter determines the mind, so that there it pitcheth. As it is when the balance is cast, and gives over quivering, here we are at a point. "Whom say ye that I am?" saith our Lord to them. Matt. xvi. 16. And Peter answered for the rest, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." See how our Lord owns and accepts his faith, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Thus it is when a divine revelation shines into the heart. I am afraid that that belief is too great a rarity in our age, concerning which it may be truly said, it is not by the product of flesh and blood. O! how few are the souls that may avow it before the Lord, I have that belief in me, of Jesus being the Christ, that comes not from flesh and blood. It is not flesh and blood that hath prompted to this, but a divine light and mighty power from above upon my soul. And it is such a faith that makes a blessed man. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." O! blessed man, that such a faith as this hath entered thy soul, that such a beam of heavenly and divine light hath been struck down into it. It is a great thing if, laying our hands upon our hearts, we can apply this pronounced blessedness to ourselves, as much as if it had been said to us by name. O! blessed, thou such an one, thou John, Thomas, flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto

thee, but the eternal Father, he hath revealed his own Son, he hath taught thee to own him for his Christ, and his own Son. We believe and are sure; such a belief as carries a certainty with it, not that doth altogether exclude, at some certain intervals, a *formido oppositi*. There may be that which morality and policy is wont to style a *plena voluntas*, where there is a determination strong enough to carry a man to consequent acts. And so there may be a *plenum judicium*, not that totally excludes every degree of the contrary, but that prevails over every such degree; and so is determinative, carries the course and current of a man's practical power with it, consequently and agreeably thereunto. So we are to conceive concerning this certainty, that I am not in that dubious suspense, whether this Jesus be the Christ as thereby to surcease and desist from that which ought to be consequent thereupon, to wit, venturing my soul upon him, devoting myself to him, paying obedience to his laws, laying the stress and weight of all my concerns upon his faithfulness, love, and fulness. It is certainty in such a sense, that prevails so far as to govern my consequent resolutions and actions. And,

4. The false deceiving faith of the multitude in this matter is cold and dead, unoperative and without efficacy; lets their hearts remain as stones or clods of clay under it, unaffected and unmoved. But this belief, when it is sincere, is vivid, lively, affectionate, and most efficacious; productive of whatsoever is suitable and correspondent hereunto. A vast difference there is in this respect also! I am sure the difference cannot be greater than the importance is. But it is a very great difference that appears here between belief and belief. A belief that never moves my soul, and is as if it had never touched it. According as some fantastically speak (your enthusiastical writers among the Papists, some of them) concerning theoretical knowledge, wherein they place the sum all religion, that it doth *tangere intangibiliter*, it touches the mind as if it never touched it; indeed this is the deceiving belief of the multitude, they have a belief that so toucheth their minds that it cannot be perceived it ever touched it, it never touched their minds at all, but leaves them unimpressed; there is no signature left behind, no mark, no character, by which it can be said such a faith was ever there. That is, notwithstanding, all the belief they pretend to concerning this Jesus, and concerning the great things of the Christian Religion (whereof this is the sum;) their hearts are as dead, as cold, as terrene, as unaffected, as if they had never

heard of any such thing, void of all kind of impression. Dost thou believe Jesus to be the Christ, and retain an hard heart, a dead heart, a stupid heart, touched with nothing, having no sense, no feeling of any thing that this great truth carries so plain a signification of in it? What doth this Jesus being the Christ, signify? It plainly signifies the lost, undone state of souls, the miserable condition of men in this world, that there needed such a Jesus, such a Christ to descend and come down from heaven with such fulness and divine power. When a man can believe Jesus to be the Christ (as he saith he doth) but it never moves his soul one way or other; his faith makes no more impression upon him than if he had never believed or heard of such a thing, or than if he had believed the quite contrary. Be no more affected with Christ by believing him to be the Christ, than if he had believed him to be a deceiver and an impostor; his heart as little touched or moved with any suitable, correspondent impression of such a belief of his being the Christ, as if he had never heard of any such thing, or had believed concerning him the quite contrary. Will we call this believing Jesus to be the Christ with a Gospel faith?

On the other hand, the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; it worketh through and through a man's soul—works down into every power and faculty. It is a faith that hath spirit in it, that penetrates and spreads itself into all the regions of a man's soul; as we read of a spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13, "We having the same spirit of faith," (speaking of what had been said by David many an age before) what doth that signify when he quotes him professing faith in reference to such a thing so long ago: and the Apostle now resumes the matter, and saith, "We have the same spirit of faith." It signifies that faith, wheresoever it hath been sincere and true, even in the most distant times and ages, that may be supposed it is a spirit of faith, or it is a faith full of spirit. Sincere faith is a spiritual thing, a thing that carries life and spirit, and power with it, wherever it is. Pray let us not deceive ourselves about this. They are mighty affections which the belief of such a thing as this must excite and raise in those souls in whom it truly is; especially those two most correspondent unto the person concerning whom we have this belief, that he is the Christ; to wit, reverence and love, and especially that love which rises unto delight and high complacency, the joy taken in him of whom we have this apprehension or this belief.

(1.) Reverence. This belief concerning Jesus, that he is the Christ, it fills the sincere believer with the profoundest reverence of him; so that he falls before him, saying, "My Lord and my God." John xx. 28. He is acknowledged in his glorious greatness when any do sincerely believe this concerning him; he is beheld as on the throne; he is considered as one that having purged our sins is ascended and sitten down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is a great thing to have this belief concerning him, answerably forming a man's spirit into adoring postures. He is now great in our eyes; a glorious one; one that we think it profane ever to look towards but with veneration. We dare not lift an eye towards him but with an adoring soul. O! my great, glorious, and exalted Lord. This is he whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Him whom he hath sealed, to whom he hath given power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him. With such a reverence must this belief be accompanied concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ. And then,

(2.) With complacency; that love that hath heightened itself into a complacential joy thereupon. Do I believe this Jesus to be the Christ? O! how can a pleasant joy be thereupon but spread in my soul? As we find it was when this belief first began to obtain concerning him, John i. 35. We read, that the two disciples of John having received the account, and being satisfied concerning this blessed one, having had John's testimony, that he bare record that he upon whom ye shall see "the Spirit of God descending like a dove is the Son of God;" he having seen this satisfactory sight, and acquainting the other two of his disciples, they run away with it. Oh we have found the Messiah, who by interpretation is the Christ; so say they in transport. What a joy were these good men in, and how did it diffuse and spread among others! They run and tell others, Oh we have found Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. It flies like lightning from one to another, every one being the ready instrument to convey the pleasant notice which they had got concerning this great thing. The joyful *Εἰρηνα* runs from mouth to mouth, and from ear to ear, and from heart to heart. *Εἰρηνα*, *Εἰρηνα*, saith one to another, we have found, we have found the Messiah the Christ. Have we indeed found him? Is it found among us that this Jesus is the Christ? O, what multitudes of transported souls would there be among us!

For it is no excuse that this is no novelty among us : for it is a thing that never ought to grow old. As he is the way of returning sinners to God, that is always new and always living. It is a reproach to us to say that the notion is grown stale among us, of Jesus being the Christ. Instead of being grown old, it is grown to nothing, dwindled away to nothing. It looks but like a notion without any thing at the bottom, that we seem to account hath nothing of reality in it; from our apprehensiveness of the state of the case, and what the design of heaven was in constituting such an one in that high and sacred office that is notified by the name Christ, it is thus become such a notion. But, what? Are not the necessities free and urgent upon us every day for which we did need a Christ? Nay, can we go to God without him? And can we live comfortably in this world without God? Nay, can we draw a breath without him? Are not all things delivered up into his hand? And is not he constituted Lord of all? By the same thing by which we would pretend the commonness of this belief, and the ancientness of it, as a reason why it affects no more, we do (as it were) proclaim the nullity of it, that it doth not only signify little with us, but it signifies nothing; it is an unoperative thing: and to be a dead thing in this kind is to be nothing: as a dead man or the carcase of a man is equivalent to no man, and so is that faith (in the Apostle James's phrase) which is unoperative and works not, dead also. This faith that doth not affect the heart is but as a carcase without a spirit, which is for no valuable purpose and use to be reckoned otherwise of than a mere unformed piece of clay. An unformed piece of clay signifies as much for any valuable purpose as that which is formed into the shape of an human body where there is no spirit, and when it is but a breathless thing.

This of the operativeness and efficacy of this belief in contradistinction to the dead cold faith of the multitude in this matter, leads to what is yet further and more deeply to be considered concerning it; and that is, the residence which this faith hath in the will: for, being so efficacious a thing, it works itself into a government, a regency, a ruling power, into that which is the imperial faculty of the soul; to wit, the will, there it comes to have a throne erected, or rather there it doth enthrone Christ, so as that he comes to be exalted in a subject-will, and is actually entertained there according to that discovery the Gospel makes of him. And so next to this persuasion of the mind,

which is to be distinguished from that which carries with multitudes the same deceiving, insignificant name—I say, besides and next to that persuasion or assent of the mind, there is a compliance of the will that belongs to the essence of this faith. We believe this Jesus to be the Christ, so as to will him accordingly; or by our will to entertain him in a correspondent admission unto the design of the revelation. We acknowledge him, we own him suitably, according to the import of this name Christ.

SERMON XLI.*

1 JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I SHALL NOW go on to clear the efficacy of this faith, which, if it be right and such as it ought to be, will diffuse a mighty and efficacious influence through the whole soul. It will be as a great vital spring in the heart, that sets all the wheels in motion, and acteth every faculty and power. But its next and more immediate operation must be upon the will. So doth this belief (as it were) transire, pass over from the mind into the heart, into the very centre, and therein especially and most principally the will, which is the chief thing that goes under the name of the heart in Scripture phrase. Its great effect is, that the will is proportionably framed, inclined, bowed, made to comply, according to this discovery and revelation that is made of so great and glorious an object; one in whom the soul hath so near and great a concern—"The Christ of God," as he is called. This is the representation that is made in the mind, this Jesus is the Christ. "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answers (Luke ix. 20.) "Thou art The Christ of God." Such a truth as this cannot be received aright into the soul, but it must turn the whole soul, and especially the governing faculty, the will, so as that it shall be inclined and bowed to him accordingly. For it is never to be thought that there should such a revelation be made, not only in the gospel but in the mind,

* Preached April 15, 1694.

concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, but it is in order to some further purpose. He is not so revealed, to be gazed upon, to be looked upon, but that the soul should be acted towards him and be carried towards him, according to that revelation and belief. Therefore the great effect that is wrought by such an efficacious belief, is, the will's consent that he shall be such to me, as this name (Christ) doth import: I consent to it, that he shall be Christ to my soul. And that consent takes in two things, reception and resignation. These two things I shall distinctly open to you, reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him.

But consider we first what is more general here. This consenting act of the will, how that is the consummation of faith; this is faith perfected. The bare assent or belief, that this is he, is inchoate faith, faith begun, faith tending to its end and perfection; but this is faith in its end. The other is faith moving towards Christ, this is faith resting in Christ. It is the acquiescence of faith by which he comes to have an in-being in the soul, and the soul hath a possession of him. He dwells in the heart by faith. It is by faith, thus considered, that he comes to dwell even in the very heart, in the centre, as the expression is, Eph. iii. 17. The soul hath possession of him, and is said to have him; "He that hath the son, hath life," as in the 12th verse of this chapter. This is the unitive act of faith, by which the soul closeth and falls in with him, as in the 20th verse of this chapter. He hath given us an understanding (there's faith in the mind, a right belief or apprehension of him) to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life.

There are considerable the same gradations in faith, as it relates to Christ, as there are commonly observed to be in faith as it relates to God, that is, *Credere Deum*, *credere Deo*, and *credere in Deum*. To believe that there is a God; to believe God speaking to us in his word, revealing this or that to us; and to believe in God or into God: to wit, to unite with him as our God, take him for our God. The same gradation is in faith as to Christ: you "believe in God, believe also in me." There is a *credere Christum*, *credere Christo*, and *credere in Christum*. To believe, first, that there is a Christ, in opposition to the pagan world, that never thought of any such thing. Then to believe him to be revealing himself to be he, "I am he," (if ye believe not

that I am he) in opposition to the Jews, who indeed believed that there should be a Christ, that there must be a Messiah; but who did not believe that this was he. And then, again, to believe in Christ, or to believe into Christ, (as the prepositions used signify) to believe into an union with him, in opposition to the formalists, or *pseudo* Christians, the mere nominal Christians, that can believe (or say they do) against pagans, that there is or must be a Christ; or against the Jews, that this is he, but never believe into him for all that, so as to close with him, as my Christ; unite with him, admit him into my heart and soul, so as that he comes to have his throne, not only his dwelling, but his seat of government in my very will; as the will is the governing faculty in the soul, Christ is the governor, the ruler there in that seat of government. So (God knows) he is believed in but by few even of them that bear his name, and call themselves Christians. We are as much concerned to have a faith concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, in opposition to formalists and nominal Christians, as we are to have a faith in this matter, in opposition to Pagans and Jews: for it is all one how we perish, whether we perish under the name of Pagans, or Jews, or false Christians, that never had the power or spirit of faith in Christ in them.

And so much of this consent of faith in general. But more particularly, it carries (as I said) these two things in it, reception and resignation: reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him. There is in that faith, that will avail us unto salvation, taking and giving at the same time, complicated with one another. When we give we take, when we take we give. When we take him, we at the same time consent that we will be his, and that he shall be ours. This constitutes the covenant between him and us. And considering that he is to be covenanted with but as a Mediator, as Mediator of the gospel, and that through him we finally and ultimately covenant with God, according to that, "ye believe in God, believe also in me:" you must believe me in your way to God. Why it is this that doth make up the entire covenant between God and us in Christ. We accept him, and God in him; we give ourselves to him, and to God through him. This is consummate faith, as you will see more, when we have (as we intend) opened further to you what it comprehends.

And that we may more clearly and distinctly apprehend that, there are several things yet more particularly to be

spoken to ; to wit, to let you know that this same faith concerning Jesus as the Christ, must carry with it

1. Suitable apprehensions concerning ourselves and concerning him.

2. It includes in it some correspondent actings yet further to be considered.

3. It must be attended with some suitable qualifying adjuncts. And

4. It must be attended with some concomitant dispositions and affections that are proper hereunto.

1. It must have with it suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and him : for you see here is the most immediate transactions in this matter imaginable between us and him, when we are to accept him, and resign ourselves to him. Here must be then necessarily suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him.

(1.) Of ourselves. When one goes upon such a transaction as this with Jesus as the Christ, I must consider with myself what I am, and what my state is. And, what am I, upon my most serious and enquiring thoughts? Why,

[1.] I find myself a creature under obligation to be governed by him that made me ; and who shall be further obliged hereunto, if he that made all will further be favourable to me.

[2.] I must understand myself to be a miserable creature. It is as such I must have to do with this Jesus as the Christ. An undone creature, a lost creature. I do but touch upon these things.

[3.] I must consider myself an offending creature, as one that am miserable, by my having broken laws and rules, and who that way have brought myself under guilt. A miserable creature, without the apprehension of being a guilty creature, is an insolent and proud creature. I am miserable, but I am faultless. If any should bear that sense with them, they can have nothing to do with Christ, he is nothing to them. And

[4.] I must apprehend myself to be a depraved creature, habitually depraved ; destitute of any good principles, either of duty towards God, or that have any tendency to felicity for myself. And I am under the possession and power of the most pernicious, radical principles of all iniquity and injuriousness towards God ; and misery to myself. So I must apprehend the state of my case when I apply myself, and when my soul moves towards this Jesus as the Christ. And

(2.) I must have suitable apprehensions of him too; here I am to consent to accept of him for mine, to resign myself to him as his. Both these, reception and resignation, do require that I should have suitable apprehensions of him; That is,

[1.] I must consider his original power over me, as he is the beginning of the creation of God; "as by him all things were made, visible and invisible," Col. i. 15, 16. As by whom God made the worlds, Heb. i. 2. As originally invested with a sovereign, governing power, which, because it was original and natural to him, can never be lost, more than the Godhead. He is the Lord my maker, whom I am to receive, and unto whom I am to resign. And,

[2.] I must consider him as a constituted Ruler. So he is as Mediator. Consider him abstractedly, as he was the eternal Son of God, so he hath a natural power of government over all. But as he is Mediator, God-man, he is a Governor too by constitution. All power is given him both in heaven and earth. The Father hath given all things into his hand. John xiii. 3. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him," John xvii. 2. So I must apprehend and conceive of him.

[3.] I must conceive of him as a Saviour; and thereupon as a Redeemer, as a Reconciler, that was to save, by redeeming and reconciling, perishing, lost, guilty creatures, to an offended God. This is the apprehension one must have in consenting to him. And the soul that hath believed aright that this Jesus is the Christ, it will be full of this sense in this transaction: Aye, this is just such an one as I need; for I find myself miserable, I find myself lost, I find myself undone, by my having offended, and involved myself in guilt, against my sovereign, rightful, Lord. There can never be any reception of him, or resignation to him, without this. And,

[4.] He must be understood and apprehended as a vital head, replenished with spirit and holy influence: so as that all that shall come into holy union with him, shall thereby derive spirit, and life and grace and holy influence, from him; the thing which the exigency of the case so much calls for, as we are creatures so miserably depraved, and dead in trespasses and sins, disinclined to the doing and enjoying good in point of felicity. Such an one I need; and so I must consider Christ as one given to be "the head of all things to the church." Ephes. i. 22. He hath an universal political headship over all. But a vital headship

over the church (to wit, that is truly such) that is, his body, his living body. And such an one must the soul, that is treating and transacting with him, apprehend him to be even in this closure, this unitive closure; I am a most wretched, deformed, depraved creature; I believe this Jesus to be the Christ, I believe it belongs to the office of this same Christ to be the fountain and spring of life and renovating grace to poor souls that shall come into union with him: and I come unto him as such, I receive him as such, and resign myself to him as such. Every one that is in Christ is a new creature. I need to be new made throughout, new created; I am lost and undone for ever if I be not so: I come to him, unto this union with him, to be made anew throughout, according to that, 2 Cor. v. 17. and that, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." He is a new plastes; we had a miserable protoplast: we have another former now, a reformer. Christ is to be formed in us, his own image is to be formed in our hearts. He himself can only form his image, and draw it upon us; and that is our business with him. And blessedness itself can never make us blessed, if we be not made new, if we be not made over again, another sort of creatures than we were before. Thus there must be in this belief (as it comprehends our reception of him and resignation to him) suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him in this transaction, otherwise all will turn to nothing. And again,

2. There must be suitable included acts, even in those of receiving him and resigning ourselves. First, there must be the act of trust; and, secondly, the act of subjection; otherwise we do not receive him, and resign ourselves to him, suitably to the apprehensions that are given to us of that object. When we do receive him, how do we receive him? We receive him as Christ Jesus the Lord. Col. ii. 6. You receive Christ, (that is, the name of his office, that we are to believe Jesus to be invested with,) the anointed one of God. But what is he anointed to, or what is he anointed for? To be to us both Jesus and the Lord. Jesus is a saviour, Lord is an owner and ruler. It cannot be, then, but that our receiving him, and our resigning ourselves to him, must comprehend in them

(1) Trust, an absolute trust. When we receive him, we receive him as one in whom we trust; and when we resign ourselves to him, we resign ourselves as committing ourselves, in trusting ourselves. We receive him under the pleasant notion of a Saviour, and so we resign ourselves

to him, to be saved by him, confiding in his saving mercy, encouraged by his word, "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." I will cast myself upon him, without any suspicion that he will ever cast me out; he will ever be as good as his word. Who ever did venture upon him, and perish? I will throw myself into those safe arms. This is included both in receiving and resigning: for I receive him as a Saviour, as Christ Jesus; and I resign myself to him, I commit, I intrust, I can credit myself to him accordingly as such. And then,

(2.) As both these together do carry in them trust, so they carry in them subjection; there is not only committing ourselves, but there is also submitting ourselves. We commit, and submit, and subject ourselves to him at the same time: for he is received as Christ Jesus the Lord, and according as the gospel represents him. "For all the house of Israel know, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ." Acts ii. 36. This must go for a known thing all Israel over, and all the world over, wherever he comes to be revealed; "That God hath made him both Lord and Christ. And him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, (Acts v. 31,) to give repentance and remission of sins." Repentance, wherein we humble ourselves before him as a Prince, prostrate ourselves, throw ourselves down at the footstool of his throne: and remission of sins, which he gives as a Saviour. Now are all sins forgiven to you, go away and be whole, you are accepted, you are pardoned. Your scores are taken off; all things set right between him and you. God hath exalted him to be a Prince, and so he humbles you and gives repentance; and as a Saviour he forgives you. These are the acts correspondent to this twofold notion. Not that the one is any cause of the other, or signifies any thing for the obtaining of them. But these are conjunct things by divine constitution, and the exigency of the case itself. As a Prince, he humbles them to repentance; and as a Saviour, he forgives them, wipes off all scores, takes off their guilt, and sets all things right between God and them. We here must then be at once both trusting in him as a Saviour, and subjecting ourselves to him as a Prince; devoting and dedicating ourselves, so as determining henceforth not to live to ourselves; no, but to him that died for us, and rose again. This is the judgment of a soul brought under the constraint of the love of Christ. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. So that hereupon this becomes the sense of the soul, "For me to

live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. i. 20. While I live, I have no business to do but for Christ; my gain comes to me when I die—then I gain him. In the mean time, the business of my life is Christ, to live up Christ, live up his interest, serve him as a devoted one. My life is sacred to Christ, an hallowed and devoted thing. This is receiving and resigning, as comprehending acts suitable to the state of the case to what he is, and what we are. We are not to think of receiving and resigning blindly, and in the dark, and as those that know not for what; but upon such accounts, and with such actions of heart and soul, as these committing and submitting ourselves most absolutely to him. And

3. Here must be some qualifying adjuncts of these acts of receiving and resigning, especially these two, totality and vitality. It may be, you will remember them the better for the sound's sake. But they are expressions that speak the importance of the thing more plainly than any other can that occurs to my thoughts.

(1.) There must be totality with these acts of the one part and the other, to wit, with reference to the object, and with reference to the subject. Consider the act of reception with reference to the object; we are to receive a whole Christ: consider the act of resignation with respect to the subject; and we are to resign our whole selves. Reception must be with totality, a reception of a whole Christ; resignation must be with totality, a resignation of our whole selves. To take Christ but by halves, will not do the business; to resign ourselves but by halves, will not do the business neither. To take Christ only to serve a turn, that he may save me from wrath, without renewing my nature, and bringing me into an union and communion with himself and with God through him, this will not do; neither will it do for me to resign myself, and not my whole self,—my whole soul. Will it content any one to be saved by halves, to be half saved, and half lost, if this were possible? But then,

(2.) There must be vitality as to both these, as well as totality. There must be vital reception, and vital resignation; life must accompany these acts. "He that hath the Son hath life," as it is afterwards, ver. 12, of this chapter. I must so take him and receive him, as that by a vital act of my will, I become united with him as with a living thing; for I find new life hath entered into my soul. I must so resign myself to him that life may go into that act of resig-

nation. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord as those that are alive unto God. And reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Rom. vi. 11, 13. There must be life springing in my soul towards God, and through Jesus Christ. The cold, dead indifferency and aversion towards God is gone, and with the spirit of faith a spirit of life enters. And so when I come to give myself up, it is not as a dead thing. "Offer up yourselves living sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ." Rom. xii. 1. But then,

4. There must be suitable concomitant affections, especially these two, reverence and joy.

(1.) Reverence. Whom do I receive? and to whom do I resign? The great and glorious Lord of all. Think what this name (Christ) doth import. The Christ of God, as you heard. He to whom all power is given in heaven and earth. When I receive him, how great an one is now to enter my soul! This sense is now to possess it, "Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, for the king of glory is entering in." He is to come and take up his dwelling in my soul by faith, as in the 24th Psalm, latter end. It must be with a prostrate soul that I am to receive him; let the everlasting doors fly open; here is a mighty one to come, him, the Lord of Glory. Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof; I know if thou comest thou bringest life with thee, and salvation with thee to my soul. But O in how humble and reverential a posture must the soul be in this thing! And,

(2.) Joy. He is to be received and resigned unto with highest complacency; with a most complacential reception and resignation. The soul is glad things are brought to that pass between God and him. Oh, blessed be God for this day, that he hath revealed his Christ, and hath revealed him in me; and that I have found him, and in him found according to his own word, "They that find me find life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." O! what a blessed day is this! How hath God signalized this day with my soul, in bringing about this union and commerce between this Christ and me!

This is believing Jesus to be the Christ. If you believe it to purpose, this is it. And pray think with yourselves; can it be any thing less than this? That faith that is short of this is both a nullity and an affront. A nullity, a vanity as to you, and an affront as to God and Christ.

To you a nullity, a vanity, a nothing: for can that faith,

that belief, signify any thing, that doth not reach its end? I pray what is the end, think you, of this revelation of Christ, that there should be such a record extant concerning this Jesus that he is the Christ? Why should it be revealed? Why should it be declared, why am I required to believe it? To be persuaded in my heart of the truth hereof? Can it be for any end, but that my soul may be brought into a vital, unitive closure with him hereupon? If it doth not effect this, it effects nothing. It is from hence my Christianity commeneeth. It is but now that I become a Christian, any thing besides a name. When my soul passeth into this union with him by consent, by reception, by resignation, now I become a Christian, now I am in Christ, now the spirit of faith hath exerted its power in my soul, without which there is no believing. "We having the same spirit of faith, believe." 2 Cor. iv. 13. There can be no faith to purpose without a spirit of faith. Here doth the spirit of faith exert itself, and so it is but now that I do begin to be a Christian; for he that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his, he is no Christian; let him be called what he will, let men call him what they please, he is none of Christ's. And what, will my Christianity without a Christ save me, or do me any good? To have a christless Christianity, what shall I be the better for that?

And it is indeed not only a nullity as to myself; but it is an affront and provocation to God and Christ, if in believing and assenting to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, my soul do not hereupon unite and close with him: for it is a refusing him in the face of light. It is a refusing him, when I know and profess to know who he is. I profess this Jesus to be the Christ, and yet my soul stands out against him. For I must be either a consenter or refuser. To refuse him when I know who he is, when I profess to believe who he is, this is higher wickedness than the Jews were guilty of when they crucified him; for if they had known him to be the Lord of Glory, they would not have crucified him. But I know this Jesus is the Christ, yet I will him not. "You will not come to me, that you may have life." Here is a knowing and denying at once. "He that denieth the Son, hath not the Father." 1 John ii. 23. But he that doth acknowledge that this Jesus is the Christ, hath the Father and the Son both together. If it be vitally acknowledged, so as that the soul pass hereby into union with both, then he hath both.

I hope we speak and hear of these things with a design to be and do accordingly, otherwise here is time the most

unhappily thrown away that could have been. We had been better treating of any trivial subject, if such a thing as this should have been spoken, or been attended to slightly, and with neglect. All lies upon this, depends upon this: all for our present comfort in this life here in this world, and our future happy blessed life in the other world.

SERMON XLII.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

AND thus, what this faith, concerning Jesus's being the Son of God, or the Christ, doth in itself import, hath been largely shown. And now,

II. What is said of such as do believe this with this faith, we are to open to you, to wit, what this being "born of God" imports. And concerning it, I shall first note to you two things in general; and then come to give you a more distinct and particular account of it afterwards. In general,

I. That this must needs be a very great difference, which such a work as this makes between men and men, this being "born of God." The difference cannot but to every one's understanding appear very great, between one that is born of God, and one that is not born of God: especially too, when you consider, that every one that is not born of God, is of the seed and offspring of the worst father that ever was. For there are but two great Fathers whose posterity divide all mankind; they that have not God for their Father, as being born of him, our Lord tells them, "You are of your father the devil, and his works ye will do." John viii. 44. "And by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." 1 John iii. 10. It hath enough in it to amaze a man's soul, to have this matter represented as a thing doubted of, and to be inquired about, To which of these Fathers do I relate? If the one of them be not my Father, the other is. This must be understood (as any ordinary understanding will easily appre-

hend), not concerning a person's naturals, but his morals. When a man is said to be a child of the devil, it is not as if there were any thing of positive natural being wrought in him by the devil, but only a moral depravation. And so when any are the children of God, it is not that any new natural faculty is created, but the faculties that were created at first, and that are depraved, and upon which the image of the devil is impressed, are sanctified ; defaced, and purged of that impurity, and stamped with an impression from the Spirit of holiness, which is the regenerating Spirit.

That is one consideration, and a mighty one it is ; and very obvious, one would think, to every one's thoughts, that this must make a very vast difference between men to be born of God, and not to be born of him, and to be either of his, or of the devil's seed. And,

2. This is to be generally noted too, that this difference is universal upon all believers. The greatness of it, and universality of it, are the two things that I would have previously noted. And this latter you have expressly in the text, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Every one, without exception. So that there is no room left for such an imagination to any one, Is it not possible that some or other may pass for believers, without having this work pass upon them, so vastly differencing men from one another, as this being born of God is? A great thing indeed! What? May none pass for a believer but such as are born of God? May not in the census some or other escape without that mark upon them? No, saith the Apostle, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Let him call himself whatsoever he will, he is real infidel ; let him be never so much a nominal believer, if he be not born of God, his believing of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is as nothing ; it is no believing. As in another case, circumcision goes for no circumcision, if it be not of the heart and spirit, and not only of the letter. As circumcision will go for no circumcision (where there is the very thing figured and represented), if it be the figure and no more, so doth such a pretended faith go for no faith (let men say never so long we believe Jesus is the Christ), if they be not born of God, they will never pass in the divine estimate for believers.

And now these two generals being noted, we must come to give you a more distinct and particular account what this being "born of God" doth import. And that we shall do

in this twofold gradation : 1st, Speaking to it as it is a birth ; and, 2dly, As it is a being born of God, as it is a divine birth. As it is a being born ; and as it is a being born of God. The latter whereof, as you may easily apprehend, doth greatly sublimate the former and raise it higher, and should raise our thoughts and apprehensions proportionably higher about it.

(1.) As this work done upon the soul is called a birth, let us consider it so. And that is a more general consideration, and a lower one ; and as a fountain and substratum to what is afterwards to be added under the other more specifying notion. Why, as it is said to be a birth, it signifies such things as these,

[1.] A real new product in the soul, that there is somewhat really produced anew in it. This must be signified by being born. Being born is not a fiction, is not a fancy ; it is not an imaginary thing. Being born signifies a real new production, that there is really somewhat new brought forth into being, that before was not ; and so as to make the subject so far another thing from what before it was ; or works such an imitation, as that the person in whom this work is wrought, is not what before he was. It brings the matter to this, that he may truly say, *Ego non sum ego*, I am not the same (1) that I was. As the Apostle saith of himself, 1 Tim. i. 11, “ I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor, I was injurious, but I obtained mercy.” And that mercy which he had obtained, had made him quite another man. And this he doth not speak of himself as a single person separately considered, but he speaks of himself as a pattern to all that should thereafter believe ; that he was taken herein as set for a pattern (as the expression is in the original) what mighty changes the power and spirit of grace could work in the souls of men, so as to make them so much other men from themselves. It is very true, indeed, that for those that hitherto continue in their natural and unregenerate state, they are not all sinners allke, they are not all sinners in the same kind. Every such sinner is not a persecutor, is not a blasphemer. But every such sinner is a carnal wretch, a stranger to God, alienated from him, unacquainted with him ; one that hath no love to him, no fear of him, no delight in him, no desire to please him, no design to serve him. “ No, as to what change is made in me (saith the Apostle), I am not here to speak of myself as a single person, but I am to speak of myself as a pattern, what the Almighty Spirit of divine

grace can effect upon the soul of a man, to make him quite another sort of thing from what he was." There is somewhat common to all unregenerate persons, and to all regenerate persons, wherein such a pattern may very well reach and suit every one's case. Every one that is unregenerate, is a stranger to God, unacquainted with him; one that lives as without him in the world; that hath no design to know him, or love him, or please him, or serve or glorify him. Every one that is regenerate, his dispositions are changed in all these respects. Now what is common herein, must the apostle be understood to mean himself to be, a pattern to subsequent believers; those that should come hereafter to believe. Wherever that believing is, there is this change; there is that imitation in the subject, as will speak this person to be new born. There is a new production in him, by which he is quite another sort of man from what he was. "Every one that is in Christ (as every one comes to be in him by believing,) is a new creature." 2 Cor. v. 17. It is the great design of our Lord Jesus Christ (as he is the restorer and repairer of the ruins of a lapsed world, and of a corrupt nature in man,) to make all things new, so far as his design takes place and succeeds. "Behold I make all things new." Rev. xxi. 5. That is my business upon which I am intent: so that there is a real new production every where, where there is faith in Christ wrought, in every such person, which makes him truly differ (and not in imagination only) from what he was, and from what others are. And again,

[2.] As this is a real production to be thus born, new born; so it is a spiritual production, in contradistinction to such productions as lie within the sphere of nature. It is an extra-natural production. For, as I told you before, this makes men differ from what they were, not in mere naturals, but morals; and so it is an extra-natural production. It doth not lie in the sphere of nature, but it lies in the sphere of grace. You may collect it to be an extra-natural production by two things: 1st, The principal seat of it; and, 2dly, The great agent that is employed herein. The prime subject of it is the mind and spirit. The great agent employed herein is our Lord Jesus Christ, as it appears to be the immediate result of believing this Jesus to be the Christ: then he is born of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

First. Consider the former of these; it is a work, the primary subject whereof is the mind. "Be not conformed

to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Here is a transformation to be wrought, by which men cease to be conformed to the world, to be like the world as they were. But where is the seat of this transformation? "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans xii. 2; and so Ephesians iv. 22, 23. "We have not so learned Christ: if ye have heard of him, as the truth is in Jesus," that is, "to put off the old man which is corrupt by deceivable lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind." If you have heard and learned Christ, or the truth as it is in Jesus, this is the effect of it, that you "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." It is an expression that hath somewhat more of emphasis in it, than that last-mentioned expression. Transformed by the renewing of the mind, doth represent the subject not merely, not only as a knowing thing, but as an active thing; as the very action of spirit speaks activity or active vigour. And so it is not a mere contemplative knowing which belongs to the mind alone, abstractly considered; but there being spirit in that mind, that turns all that knowledge into vital principles, suitable for present actions and operations. And this is the very centre of that subject, or seat of this renovation, or transforming change. You must be renewed in this faculty, not only as it is cognitive, but as it is active; as there is a spirit suiting it for vigorous acting centering in it. Here is the seat of this renovation. This plainly speaks this to be an extra-natural production, as well as it speaks it to be a real one, as before was said.

Secondly. If we consider Christ as the ministering agent here, and as he was the prime minister of the gospel by which this work is effected and done upon souls. It did not belong to him in this capacity, as he was Christ, merely to bring forth a new natural production into the old world. It is true that belongs to him too, but under another notion, as he was the Creator of all things, things visible and invisible, things in heaven and things on earth: all were created by him and for him, to wit, if you consider him in his abstract Deity. But the name Christ is the appropriated name of his office, as he is the Mediator. Every one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. Believing him to be Christ, that is, to be the restorer of a lapsed, perishing world, not the creator of it, as he was at the first, which belongs to him in that distinct natural capacity; but look upon him as a constituted Mediator, a restorer and repairer of fallen, ruined, perishing creatures;

look upon him so as the name Christ signifies him to be, and so he is the agent in this great work. "He that believeth him to be the Christ, is born of God." "And he that is in Christ, is a new creature." 2 Cor. v. 17; and again, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Whatsoever lay within the confines and limits of nature, would do us no good, that is all but self. We are not saved by ourselves, but we are saved by grace, and not by nature, or any thing natural, as you have it in that context. How is that? Why, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Now the agency of Christ Jesus, as he is the Christ, it lies within the sphere of grace (by which it is said we are saved,) not within the sphere of nature. And therefore it is not nature that doth the business. We must look upon this as an extra-natural, supernatural production, both as it is our mind, and the very spirit which is to be the seat and subject of it; and as our Lord Jesus, even as he is the Christ, that is to be the great agent therein. But again,

[3.] As this is a birth, so we must consider it to be a total production, such an one as carries an intireness with it: for so it is too with all such productions that are properly called births. A birth is not the production of a leg, or an arm, or an eye, but it is the production of an entire human creature. And so is this work represented: it is called the putting on of a new man. I pray consider this; the words of God are weighty words, and claim to be pondered with serious and deeply considering thoughts. I beseech you, why is that change wrought in regeneration, signified by putting on of a new man? What can it signify less than this, that it must be a total change? The production carries an intireness in it. As you do not call a finger or a toe a man, but the whole fabric and frame animated by a human spirit; this is the man. Now here is an old man "put off, that was corrupt by deceivable lusts," and then a new man put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Some way or other, indeed, this renewing work lies bespread through the whole man. Therefore the apostle prayed for the Thessalonians, (1 Epistle v. 23,) that they might be sanctified throughout in their whole spirit, soul, and body; meaning by the first, the higher and nobler faculties, or, as we may call it, the upper soul. By the second, the lower soul, as it is that seat of internal sense, imagination,

appetition, passion, fancy. And then the body, according as that may in a secondary sense be said to be the seat of a sanctifying impression, the several parts of that being now more governable by a rectified mind and spirit, more useable for God, the several parts thereof being so made instruments of righteousness for the serving of God, as the expression is, Rom. vi. 19. It being evident, that where the Spirit of holiness doth obtain and take place, or where the regenerating work is really effected, men do thereupon more make it their business to govern the outward man subserviently to the inner, and the lower soul subservient to the upper; and the very parts of the body, too, subserviceable to both, that they may be instruments for the serving of God. Wherever there is more of the regenerating power and spirit of grace residing and ruling in the inner man, so much the more there will be of a severe restraint, from a divine principle. So much the more there will be of a severe restraint upon licentious, unbridled appetite: so much the more careful such will be to preserve their bodies in an useable posture for the service of God, remembering that even their bodies themselves are the outward temples of a Deity. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. And every man is therefore taught and required to possess his body in sanctification and honour, remembering that even his very flesh itself hath undergone a dedication, being washed with pure water, to signify its being prest into a subserviency to the great God and the Redeemer, under the conduct and government of his Spirit. "Let us draw nigh (we that have lived at a distance, and strangers) with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, to signify, that in body and spirit we have been devoted. Heb. x. 22; agreeing with that 1 Cor. vi. latter end, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your spirit, and in your bodies, which are both his." And so by participation, and secondarily the sanctifying impression comes to obtain in that which is lowest in the nature of men. They are to be sanctified throughout, therefore this is a total production: that holy rectitude which is effected by regeneration, or this new birth, takes place in every thing belonging to the nature of man. Therefore be not so vague as to imagine, that if there be somewhat done in some one faculty, this is rege-

neration, or that this speaks a man new born. If now and then there be a right thought injected and cast in, if there be an inclination, some motion or desire ; if something of convictive light be struck into a man's conscience ; is this regeneration ? Is this being new born ? No, that makes all things new : " If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are done away, all things are become new." There is a new mind, a new judgment, a new conscience, a new will, new desires, new delights, new love, new fear, every thing new. And,

[4.] This birth, as it is a birth, signifies a permanent production, an effect that is permanent, lasting, and continued. This is obvious to every one that considers the common notion of a birth : for whatsoever it is (as to essentials) that any one is (as he is born,) the same he is to be as long as he lives. Whatsoever he is by birth, as to the essentials of that being which by birth now comes to take place in this world, he is the same thing all his days. Therefore, this must be some permanent, lasting, abiding work and impression upon the soul. It is not some light subetaneous passion that is raised in a moment, and gone in a moment. There may be many such subetaneous passions raised in the souls that live under the Gospel, which vanish and come to nothing ; soon raised and soon gone. A sudden thought injected, a beam of convictive light that strikes into the conscience, a pang of terror that seizeth, some sudden rapid workings of desire : O ! that my sins were pardoned, O ! that there were a peace between God and me ! Is this being born ? That signifies a work done, which lasts and continues. They that give us an account of qualities, do distinguish between these two things, *patibilis qualitas et passio*. Implying, that the latter of these, though it may be a real thing, yet it may be so sudden a thing, so soon up, so soon down, that one is capable of denomination from it no more than a man is to be known by a sudden blush in his face, or that he should grow unknown because he wants it. This is a continuing thing. He that is by this birth to be denominated to be a believer as to the great faith of the Gospel, that Jesus is the Christ. Is such an one born of God ? Yes, as long as he is a believer he is born of God. Doth he believe to the saving of his soul ? This impression, by which it is said he is born of God, it is co-extensive, it is commensurate ; so that it signifies some other kind of impression than what a man can have to-day and lose to-morrow ; or what may vary and alter with him (it may be) twenty times in the same day. For, do

but consider the reason of the thing : what a man is when he is born, that he is when he dies ; as to essentials he is the same creature all his time.

These are things that plainly and evidently belong to this great production in the soul, even as it is signified by the name of a "birth." That is only taking in that it is a secondary birth, and such an one as whereof our Lord Jesus Christ is the author and immediate agent, and in a pre-existing subject that is changed, and influenced, and wrought upon thereby. But then,

2. There is yet a further and fuller account to be given of this effect and work upon the soul, as it is here signified to be a divine birth ; or as he that is said to be a believer with this faith, that Jesus is the Christ, is not only said to be born, but said to be born of God. According to what we so expressly have by the same Apostle in his gospel, John i. 12, 13. "To as many as have received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name ; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And observe this, for it is most observable. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," so saith the text. And that other text first saith, "they that believe on his name," receiving him with such a faith as I have opened to you at large, doth signify such faith by which we truly believe Jesus is the Christ ; they are the sons of God, born of God. But do you think any are the sons of God that are not born of God ? Therefore, the next words immediately subjoin, "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here is a divine birth immediately depending upon God. Wheresoever the spirit and power of this faith doth obtain and take place in the soul, so that if any do believe on his name and receive him as Christ, they are the sons of God ; because they are born of him. Why should they not be called sons, that have the divine nature in them, resembling God's own ? Theirs is not like a human geniture or birth. It is not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of the man, but of God. They are heaven born, an immediate divine production.

O what deep thoughts of heart doth all this claim for us ! and pray let us bethink ourselves. We here meet as a Christian assembly. You see by this what a Christian is. And all will agree (no doubt,) in the common notion, a Christian is one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ. But

you see who are reckoned to believe to this purpose, such as are born thereupon another sort of creatures from what they were, and so continue as long as they live : and such as are heaven born, born of God by immediate divine operation and influence, a mighty power from God coming upon their souls, conforming them to God, addicting them to God, uniting them with God, making them to centre in God, taking them off from all this world ; so as that it may appear it is not the spirit of this world that hath done this work upon them. We have not received the spirit of this world, such a spirit as unites us with the world, but the spirit that is from God, that suits us to God and to divine things, and makes us savour the things of God, take delight in them, and that attempers us more and more to that state wherein God is to be all in all with us. So as that we are dead in this world. In this sense, to be born is to die. Every one that is thus born, dies at the same time : that is, when he is born to God, and made alive to God through Jesus Christ, he is dead and crucified to the world : It becomes a despicable thing. Hereupon he can be content to stay a little while to serve God, but he cannot endure to be without God in this world. And he hopes not to be in it long neither, but to be with him immediately who is to us our all in all.

It is a great thing to be a Christian ! O that it were more understood what the Christian name signifies. If Christianity be not a shadow ; if it were not a design unworthy of the descent of the Son of God into this world to bestow upon men a new name, but let them be the same men under that new name, earthly, terrene, impure creatures, and strangers to God as much as ever, only called Christians, as full of carnality, as full of enmity to God and godliness, as full of distempered affections towards one another ; in wrath, animosity, envy, self-design in opposition to every thing that stands in their way, ready (if it were in their power) to ruin every body that opposes their secular interest ; then Christianity is a great thing. For is this god-like, is it like one born of God, “ who is love ! ” Addictedness to a party, is that to be born of God ? Do you think to be of this or that party is to be born of God ? It is to be made a good man, an holy man, a lover of good men and of goodness, be his denomination or name what it will. To be born of God signifies an universalized mind and spirit, that bears some image of the Divine Infinity ; not in essence, not in being, not in presence, not in power ; that is im-

possible; but in aim and design, that is, that as He cannot possibly be confuted any way, so I will not confine myself. To have an universalized mind and spirit, co-existent (as it were) with the creation, labouring to do all the good that is possible every where, so far as any power of mine can extend: and where no power of mine can extend, thither my desire and prayer shall extend. Such an one as is born of God is like God, ready to scatter every where divine blessings through the world. This is one born of God; that as He fills the whole earth with his goodness, so I would by all acts of benefaction, as much as lies in my compass; never limiting myself in aim or design, though my capacity do never so much limit me.

But these are things that must be enlarged on hereafter. Only let us consider now, how high a pretence it is for any man to pretend himself to be a believer, or a Christian: one that believes Jesus to be the Christ. If I should ask any one this question, Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? And he answer me suddenly, and without consideration, Yes, I believe Jesus to be the Christ: I would not be so uncharitable as to censure any body that so answers; I would hope that he answers considerately, and as the truth of the matter is. But I would give him all the occasion I could of considering himself, and of judging himself, though I will not judge him. Pray think with yourselves what you say, when you say you believe Jesus to be the Christ; for every one that so believes is born of God, and hath that mighty universal change wrought in the very habit of his soul, that makes him imitate God, that conforms him to God, and inclines to God, and makes him value communion with God above all things in this world.

SERMON XLIII.*

I JOHN V. I.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

BUT now, to speak more distinctly to this work as it is signified by a divine birth, or being born of God, there are two things of which we must have a distinct considera-

* Preached 29th April, 1694.

tion : First, the influence by which it is produced ; and secondly, the product itself.

(1.) The influence by which it is produced. And that we must carefully distinguish from these two things : First, from what is superior to it in the kind of influence ; and second, from what is inferior.

[1.] From what is superior to it, and ought to be conceived infinitely superior. And that is the influence by which the eternal Son is begotten of the Father. That cannot be called a created influence, as that which is common to this work with all other creatures must be. But it may be truly procreated, because he is said to be begotten ; the only begotten Son of the Father. Begotten he is, but so begotten as none besides : not so begotten as a creature is. We shall shew you the difference by and by. But we are to consider these as infinitely different. The manner by which God is said to beget his own eternal Son, and that by which he doth beget all that are, in the sense of the text, born of him, differ : and especially in these two things lies the difference ; first that the former is eternal, whereas the latter is temporary ; and secondly, the former is necessary, whereas the latter is arbitrary. And pray note these two great differences. The former, I say, is

First, Eternal. He that is said to be the only begotten Son, “ We beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John i. 14. He is the only begotten Son in that peculiar and most noble sense, to wit, that he was begotten from eternity. So you find, Micah v. 2, “ his goings forth were from everlasting ; of old, and from everlasting.” So that there was no moment conceivable, not only in time, but in all foregoing eternity, wherein he was not by an everlasting resultancy (as we may speak) from the Father. His goings forth were from everlasting. It is not thus as to creatures ; not as to the most excellent sort of creatures, this same more noble creature, the new creature, the divine creature (being yet but a creature ;) it had its beginning, and may have its very late beginning, as all creatures do begin to be at one time or other. And,

Secondly, The influence in the former is necessary ; in reference to the latter, this and all other creatures are but arbitrary. Whatever is created is created by an arbitrary influence. “ For thy pleasure, or by thy will (as those words, Rev. iv. 11. may be read) they are and were created.” Whatsoever is created, is the product of the divine will, depends upon an

antecedent act of will, determining whether it shall be, or not be. But this could not be the case as to the eternal generation of the Son, even from thence (as it hath been said) that it was "from everlasting:" for whatsoever did depend upon an act of will, determining whether it should be or not be, that is an antecedent of will: not concomitant, but antecedent; and so whether it should be or not be, must have had a beginning, and could not be pre-existent, could not be from all eternity. Though indeed such productions may be to all eternity (as it is with the spirits and souls of men) they cannot have been from all eternity, if it depend upon choice whether they should be or not be. But the other was a generative influence, that did not depend upon choice, but necessity of nature. He was the Son by natural, necessary, eternal promanation; as necessarily the Son, as the Father the Father; he resulting from him as his everlasting substantial image. As if the sun in the firmament, instead of projecting its beams round about, did invert them, and so there were a necessary production of a sun in a sun, not depending upon choice, but from an everlasting necessity of nature; so he is said to be the only-begotten Son of the Father. Though he hath many sons, as you that are said to be begotten and born of him; but in an inferior sense, as a greater difference cannot be supposed than to be from necessity of nature, and to be from arbitrary choice, at will and pleasure. "Of his own will begat he us, to be the first fruits of his creatures:" James i. 18. he did it when he might not have done it. That is one distinction that is necessary to be made in this case, between this begetting and what is infinitely inferior to it, to wit, that of the only-begotten Son of God. But then

[2.] We are to distinguish it too from that which is unspeakably inferior to it, as well as that which is superior; that is, we are to distinguish it from the production of inferior things, that are of a lower nature and value, which though they are called God's creatures, yet are they never in any sense to be called his sons. And we must therefore consider the special kind and nature of this productive influence in this respect, as it is to be distinguished from all that which is merely creative, and not generative at all. It is true, indeed, that the generative influence is creative too within the universe of created beings, so as that God's children as such are his creatures; for they are called new creatures. But though all his children are his creatures, yet all his creatures are not his children. There is somewhat

peculiar not only in respect of the thing produced, but in respect of the productive influence too. And so we must note to you these differences :

First, That this influence is spiritual, I say ; it is purely spiritual. It is called so, both in respect of the cause and of the effect. As it is from the cause, and as it terminates in the effect, so we are given to understand that it is spiritual ; it hath the name of Spirit put upon it, John iii. 6, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is Spirit producing, and spirit produced thereby. The influential cause, as such, is the divine Spirit, (for we consider now the spirituality of the influence, not of the thing produced thereby.) "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, (or the Holy Ghost,) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is not enough (as if he should have said) that a man be baptized ; that will not do the business, that may leave him short of regeneration, of heaven, and the kingdom of God. It is spoken by way of allusion to the Jewish baptisms that were before the Christian institution ; for there were two sorts of proselytes among the Jews (long before Christianity under that name came to obtain in the world ;) those that were called proselytes of the gate, and those that were called proselytes of justice. And for the latter sort, they were always admitted into the Jewish church by baptism ; and therefore doth our Saviour justly upbraid it to Nicodemus, that he being a master in Israel, should understand so little of the mysteries of regeneration. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" Dost thou not understand the meaning of an usage so common among yourselves ? For at those baptisms they used to have a new father and a new mother, new kindred, new brethren, new sisters, declaratively. This was a thing wont to be declared in the solemnity of those baptisms, as their own records inform. Now, saith our Saviour, dost thou think this thing, so used among yourselves, had no meaning ? Art thou a master in Israel, one of the teachers and doctors, and dost not understand this thing ; that besides the external, significant baptism, there must be a signified internal baptism ? And what could that be but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, renewing the nature, transforming the soul, altering the habitual inclination, creating a new man, a new divine creature ? So that it must be a mighty penetrative, spiritual influence, full of vital life and vigour diffused through the soul, that makes this birth, when one is said to be born of God. There is a spiritual production, and it is of Spirit. That which is

born of the Spirit is spirit : under that notion, and as such we conceive it in relation to action, it speaks a mighty vigour, and vivacity, and operativeness. For matter, as matter can effect nothing, work nothing, it hath no operativeness, no *ris*, no energy in it, it is a mere passive thing ; but the fountain of all activity, life, and vigour, is Spirit, a spiritual being ; and the generative influence in this work is such.

Secondly, It is intellectual as well as spiritual ; such as carries mental light in it. For when God doth this work upon souls, he is said to shine into them. God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, “hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” He doth this work as the Father of lights. “Every good gift and perfect giving proceeds from the Father of lights.” James i. 17. Even as it is such ; whereupon (as we shall in the proper place come to note to you) these children are called “children of light,” as he is the “Father of lights.” And whereas the thing produced is the divine image, this is to be renewed in knowledge, or “they are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them.” Col. iii. 10. After the image of their Creator, who is the fountain of all knowledge and wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are originally and essentially in God, and communicatively and derivatively in Christ, they are all hid in him. And so there is a derivation even in this work, unto the effect produced ; and therefore it must be considered in the productive influence. Here is a radiation of light into the soul. He hath “called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.” The light of divine truth, by which these great things that do concern us Godward are revealed which were ad his before. Therefore as to the manner of the production, or the productive influence, these are said to be “born of God.” These children of God are said to be born of divine truth ; which is that light which shines into the soul, exhibiting to us such things, not as will satisfy curiosity, but necessity—answer the necessary purposes of our souls. “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be to him the first-fruits of his creatures.” And, 1 Pet. i. 23, “Being born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God,” divine truth : “seeing you have purified your souls (as it is said before) in obeying the truth.” They had received that truth which carried with it a transforming power, by which they became subdued thereunto, and were made to receive the impression thereof, according to that of our Saviour, “Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth.” John xvii. 17. “And we

give thanks alway to God for you, (saith the Apostle to the Thessalonians) that God hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13. So that divine truth and light is the immortal seed out of which this divine production springs in the soul. The productive influence is illuminative; divine truth, in the light and lustre and glory of it, being darted into the very heart, hath made light to shine in to the heart, even the light of the knowledge of God's own glory. 2 Cor. iv. 6. And again,

Thirdly, It is a powerful influence which is productive of this blessed work. It is true, that whatsoever work is done by God is done by an omnipotent agent, but not always as such; for we must not look upon him as a merely natural or involuntary agent, that doth in every thing what he can; as the fire burns all that it can, and the sun shines as much as it can. The case is not so in the matter of divine agency; but he doth exert more or less of his power as it seems him good, and as the matter doth require. It is power, being under the regulation of his wisdom and his will in every thing he doth; for it would be very unreasonable and absurd to think there should be the same emission of divine power and virtue in the production of a worm as in the production of an angel. Therefore, the almightiness of his power he attempers and proportioneth, by his wisdom and choice, to the effect to be produced. But there is a mighty exertion of power in this work, when he begins the new creature; when he is not only to bring a thing out of nothing, but, (which requires a greater exertion of power) he is to bring a contrary out of its contrary, light out of darkness, holiness out of the greatest impurity, love to himself out of the highest enmity. This is a mighty egression of divine power: when there are but additions to be made in this kind in the soul, we find what it requires by what is prayed for. "We pray for you, (saith the apostle, Eph. iii. 16,) that God would grant you to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner men;" and that he will do so "according to the riches of his glory:" implying that there must be a mighty exertion of the glory of the divine power, in order to an additional work, in order to the superadding some further degree unto what hath been wrought powerfully already; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you." And the expressions are of equal import, to the same purpose, which we have, Col. i. 11. The apostle there prays for the Colossians, that

in order to their walking worthy of the Lord to all well pleasing, and in order to their being fruitful in every good work, and in order to their increasing in the knowledge of God, to wit, their religion (that being a periphrastical expression thereof, the knowledge of God being a periphrasis of whole Christianity) that they may be “strengthened with all might according to his glorious power.” There needed a continual exertion of all might, and such as should accord to and agree with the glorious power of God himself, in order to their progress and increase of grace and holiness; and therefore much more must the first beginning of such a work as this in the soul require a very glorious exertion of divine power.

And whereas therefore in this work there is a communication and participation of the divine nature, this is signified to be his divine power. If you look to 2 Pet. i. verses 3, 4, compared, “According as his divine power hath given us all things appertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.” Here is a divine nature to be communicated and imparted in this great and glorious work. How is it to be communicated? It is true it must be by apt and suitable means; to wit, by the great and precious promises given us in the gospel. But it must be by the exertion too of a divine power. Though God do work suitably to an intelligent nature when he works upon such subjects, yet he works also suitably to himself, “according as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness,” or to the godly life; in order to the ingenerating the godly life his divine power hath given us by the exceeding great and precious promises, a divine nature. The instrumentality and subserviency of these “exceeding great and precious promises,” is greatly to be considered, God working herein suitably to the nature of an intelligent subject. Here is a change to be wrought in his nature, a nature that is corrupt, depraved, averse from God, alienated from the divine life; this nature is now to be attuned to God, made suitable to him, made propense and inclined towards him. This might be done, it is true, by an immediate exertion of Almighty power, without any more ado. But God will work upon men suitably to the nature of man. And what course doth he therefore take? He gives “exceeding great and precious promises,” and in them he

declares his own good will, that he might win theirs. In order to the ingenerating grace in them, he reveals grace to them by these great and precious promises. And what is grace in us? Truly grace in us is goodwill towards God, or good nature towards God; which can never be without a transformation of our vicious, corrupt nature. It will never incline towards God, or be propense towards God, till he make it so by a transforming power. But how doth he make it so? By discovering his kindness and goodness to them in "exceeding great and precious promises," satisfying and persuading their hearts; I mean nothing but kindness towards you, why should you be unkind towards me? I am full of good will towards you, will you requite it with perpetual ill will, and everlasting enmity towards me? Thus the "exceeding great and precious promises" are instruments to the communicating a divine nature to us, though that divine nature be ingenerated by a mighty power. God doth work at the rate of omnipotency in the matter, by the exertion of Almighty power; but yet suitably to our nature, so as to express his mind, and kind design, and good will, by the exceeding great and precious promises contained in the gospel.

And if it were not so, he might as well make use of any other means as the gospel, to work upon souls by. But the gospel is the word of his grace. "To testify the gospel of the grace of God," that is my business, saith the apostle, as a minister of Christ, and for which he did not reckon his life too valuable or too costly a thing to be sacrificed; "That I may testify the gospel of the grace of God, my life is not dear to me." Acts xx. 24. I can be contented to throw away an hundred such lives as this, in testifying the gospel of the grace of God. But what was it to be testified for? That God by this testimony might insinuate into so ill-natured hearts and spirits, and set them right towards him; plead effectually with them, and expostulate the matter. Why should you be everlasting strangers to me, who mean nothing but kindness and good will towards you? Why should you choose to live as without me in the world? Why should you be always alienated from the life of God, when he is seeking after you, and would impart his grace and glory to you? It is in this way, and by such means, that the divine power works, in order to the production of a divine nature; a nature that will incline towards God, work towards him, as it carried men away from him before. And then,

Fourthly, The influence by which this work is done, it is a merciful, compassionate influence; an influence of grace exerted and put forth, with the height of divine pity towards miserable creatures that must be lost and undone; being liable to an eternal hell, and who are a present hell to themselves, till such a work as this be done in them. For though, alas, such poor creatures will not consider it themselves, God doth consider with compassion the horrid, forlorn state of unrenewed souls: where his regenerating influence as yet hath had no place or effect, they are not only liable to eternal wrath (whereupon they are said to be by nature the children of wrath) by the inclinations and propensions of their own vicious nature, that hath set them at enmity with God, at enmity with one another, and set them at enmity with themselves. They are not only, I say, liable to eternal wrath by the inclination of their own nature, to which that tends to carry them, and to which it suits them; but they are a present hell to themselves, as every unrenewed soul is. If you consider the constituent parts of hell, loss and torment; loss of the best good, torment by the worst evil; there are both these in kind in this present state, though they are both higher in degree hereafter. But in kind, both do fall into the present state of an unregenerate soul.

i. The misery of loss. They are without God in the world: Ephes. ii. 12. "without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world." They do not reflect upon this; but if occasion were given them to consider the state of their case, and they would truly consider it, whatsoever their straits and necessities are, they must needs say,—I do not know which way in the world to turn myself; I have no God to go to, none to whom mine heart inclines, none in whom I can justly pretend myself to have a present interest; I must bear all my burdens alone; in the midst of my wants I have no God; in the midst of my enjoyments I have no God; no God to supply my wants, no God to sweeten my enjoyments. This is their forlorn case. And if

ii. You look to the misery of torment, which is the other constituent part of hell, there must be that in degree in every unrenewed soul. And so they have the same misery in kind that they shall have hereafter, for all degrees are comprehended in the kind. And therefore the lowest degree speaks the true kind, the same kind. Some degrees they have of it now, even of that torment which belongs to

the present state, that of an unrenewed soul as such ; for, being unreconciled to God, they are not capable of being reconciled to themselves ; that is, the power and faculties of their souls with one another ; but light prompts them one way, and inclination carries them another way. It is true there is somewhat of this warring in the regenerate too ; but then the prevailing principle doth agree with their light ; the prevailing principle in their hearts doth agree with the light in their minds, and is the victorious principle. There is a disposition to contend against light ; but the holy gracious principle there doth ordinarily and habitually prevail against the corrupt and sinful principle. But the case is quite otherwise with unregenerate souls ; to wit, in the stated course and current of their lives, they run counter to the judgment of their consciences ; as no man's conscience but must condemn an ungodly life, living as "without God in the world ;" but so they live their lives, and transact the whole course and current of their lives at that ungodly rate, without fear of God, without the love of God, without praying to him, without depending on him, without designing for him in a continued course. Why here is the self-tormenting principle laid asleep only in such souls ; that is, if ever they should reflect, they must consider themselves in a state of war with God, and with their own consciences, which are God's vicegerents, and are to govern over them in his right. If conscience were awake, and would do its office, that self-tormenting principle would presently and repeatedly tell them, 'Thou art a rebel against God and me ; thou dost what thy light condemns thee for ; God is cast out of thy soul, thy thoughts, thy affections, thy mind and heart : thy life is a continual war and rebellion against Heaven. It is true, instead of mortifying their corruptions, they make a shift to mortify their consciences, and so they are not clamorous, nor do give them actual torment ; but the tormenting principle is there, and needs only awakening, and will awaken sooner or later, too late, if God be not merciful. But because he is merciful, therefore is such a transaction set on foot between him and them. And it is a compassionate influence suited to the sad and forlorn case wherein men are liable to hell, and are a present hell to themselves. It is a merciful influence which is vouchsafed in such a case.

Do but look back to the 2d Ephesians, where men are said to be "children of wrath by nature," one as well as

another; it is immediately subjoined in the next words, "But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ;" hath inspired us with a new life, a divine and holy life, which is another expression of the same thing signified by "the divine nature." This is an influence in which grace breathes, in which mercy governs. "God, who is rich in mercy," hath saved us by quickening us together in Christ, infusing a new divine life into us, which will be eternal life, as certainly as a vicious, corrupted, depraved nature, continuing unrenewed and what it was, will end in eternal death. So that as they are children of wrath, and sinners of hell by that very nature, so, by this divine nature now imparted by God's rich mercy, there is a sacred and sure pledge of life eternal, wherein that will end. And to the same purpose is Tit. iii. ver. 3, 4, 5. The apostle speaks of what naturally we all were; "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice, hateful, and hating one another: but after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This then is a most merciful influence that is given forth in the regenerating work. It is as if God should have said, I see these poor creatures are perishing, not only tending to hell, but carrying with them their own hell into hell, "hell being at last cast into hell," (as the expression in the Revelation is.) It is a throwing hell into hell, when a wicked man comes to hell; for he was his own hell before. God beholding this forlorn case of wretched creatures, saith, I must either renew them or loose them; I must either transform them, or they must perish; they are in fire of hell already. Such and such we were, but of his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Ghost. O! the compassionate influence that is shed upon a soul in this case! The balmy dews that descend from Heaven upon a distempered soul, which quench the flames of lust, and which implant and invigorate (after their implantation) a divine principle, in-create a new life, that leads to God and Christ, and the way of holiness and heaven at last. This "being born of God" must imply, if we consider the productive influence by which this blessed work is effected. We are afterwards

to consider the effect itself produced: in general God's own image inwrought into the soul, which we must understand by an influence, or exerted virtue, suitable to the thing to be produced, as well as suitable to the productive cause.

SERMON XLIV.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

AND now, besides the peculiarity that appears in the productive influence, we are to shew you what peculiarities there are in the thing produced. It is the divine image itself, the permanent divine image. The influence is transient by which the effect is wrought, not only as it doth *transire* from God, but as it doth pass into the effect which it doth leave behind it. It doth *relinquere post se opus*, it leaves behind it a work wrought and done; and the work wrought and done hath a fixed permanent divine signature or impress upon it, by which it may be seen this is a divine production. Here are such resemblances of God in this work now done, that it may be plainly seen here is one born of God, or there is somewhat born of God in this soul, or in this person, as the matter is most emphatically expressed, to wit, in the neuter gender, afterwards in this very chapter, "Whatsoever is born of God," the thing born of God; to signify to us, that it is not the person as such (for then Nicodemus's question could not have been answered, "How shall a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?") But there is something done in the person which is a divine product in this work. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." The same thing that is signified before in this same epistle "by the divine seed," permanent and remaining in such an one, chap. iii. 8. Whence it is that he cannot commit sin, that is, as such he cannot, as such he never can commit it; be a doer of it in a con-

* Preached May 13, 1694.

tinnal course, as such it is impossible he should. The seed remaining, inhibits, withholds him from it. Here now our thoughts are to stay and take up in contemplating this fixed, permanent, divine image, that comes into the soul by this productive influence in regeneration, or when a person is said to be born of God.

And for this now you must know, that two things do concur and meet in this work, when it comes to be entered into its fixed state, passing from the *fieri* to be *facto esse*; that is, from its being adoining, and its being actually and fully done. Two things, I say, must be considered as concurring; to wit, first, the working out of a former image, and, secondly, the introducing and working in of this. The working out a former: it is in the sphere of grace, as it is in the sphere of nature, that *generatio unius* is *corruptio alterius*. The introducing of a new form is the expulsion of an old; the putting on of a new man is necessarily accompanied with, and led on by "the putting off the old man, which is corrupt by deceivable lusts." But when we consider what the former image was, that is to be abolished and razed out, that will very much make way for the more full and distinct understanding what sort of image it is that must intervene and be introduced. And for that reason it will be requisite to say somewhat to that too.

And we may easily apprehend, if we do but reflect in our own thoughts, the two terms between which the soul of man doth move from the one to the other. The soul in its state of apostasy from God, there were somewhat or other when it left him, which it made defection to. And so in its return to God, there is somewhat it goes off from, when it comes into a state of union with him. And according as the terms are of recess and approach, so the *exemplaria* are, the exemplars, according to which the soul is formed and moulded; for it will bear the image of that which it doth converse with, and most converse with. The two terms between which it was always divided were, this world and God; the inferior creature and created good on the one hand, and the supreme and uncreated good on the other hand. Here is an impress or image of the former to be abolished, when the image of the latter is to be introduced. The soul did adhere to this world as its only best good, before regeneration; there was hereupon a worldly image on it; that is to be abolished, it is to return to God; and by regeneration therefore, must be suited to God, and so have a divine image impressed upon it in order thereupon.

These are the two terms between which the motions of the soul are, this world and God; when it left God, it betook itself to this world; when it returns to God, it leads and comes off from the world, and accordingly are the images which successively obtain and take place in it. Therefore you have that strict interdict upon all them that would make a tender of themselves to God in order to which that great work of being renewed in the spirit of their minds must pass upon them. "Be not conformed to this world," Rom. xii. 2. Here is a tender to be made of ourselves to God, not as a dead thing, but as living; we are made alive in the work of regeneration, of which he there speaks, "be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds," or "transformed in the renewing of your minds." But here is a foregoing form that they must be divested of, "be not conformed to this world" if you pretend to God, if you will be for him; if you offer yourselves to him as "a living sacrifice, be not conformed to this world;" that is an inconsistency to offer to God a mundane thing, a worldly thing, that which carries the impress of this world upon it; you offer to him an abomination, that which he must abhor—you offer him a sacrifice that smells of impure earth, that hath (as it were) the reake of a dunghill:—what, will you offer that to him? No; "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God," as there it followeth. This is a great thing; and we do nothing in considering either the work of believing in Christ as the Messiah, or in considering, much less in experiencing, the work of regeneration which is conjunct therewith, if we understand not what it is to come off from this world, and to have the worldly image and impress abolished and defaced in us, so as that it shall not be a prevailing thing, a regnant thing any longer. And to this purpose you must know that the image which we are to bear, or which we have borne, it is not superficial only, it is not an outside thing; but if we have the image of this earth upon us, we have it in our very souls, the world is set in our hearts, it is in us another nature, a worldly and terrene nature; that is it wherein the image lies; not in an outside, but we are in spirit, and in our very natures, contempered to this world. We read therefore of a spirit, and a spirit opposite to one another in this matter. As there are those two terms between which the motion of the soul lies, so there are two motive-principles, and each of them called spirit, the spirit which is of this

world, and the Spirit which is of God: it is this spirit that operates either to work the one image or the other. The spirit of this world, that forms us to the world; the Spirit of God forms us to God, and snits us to his communion and converse. You find, 1 Cor. ii. 12, that so the state of the case is represented, that a contest is continually kept up, and will be kept up by the Spirit of God against the spirit of this world; and is kept up till there be an overcoming by the spirit of this world against the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is from God. It is not a mundane spirit; that spirit that now comes upon us is another spirit, and is to work out the former impress, and introduce a new one. And so is the case again stated in the fourth chapter of this epistle, at verse 4, that the spirit that is in this world and the Spirit which is from God are engaged, as it were, in a war one against the other; "Little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the world: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world:" and he that is the greater, he that is in you, is to work out the former worldly impress and to introduce the new one; and he will do so in all that are regenerate. And therefore, these two things in reference to this worldly spirit and image must be understood to be done; and pray consider it, for it concerns the souls of us all.

First, There must be an opposition by the divine Spirit unto the spirit of this world, the worldly genius, so as thereby gradually more to work and wear off the worldly impress from such a soul. You see there is a war, an opposition; "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The spirit that works in this world doth lift up itself; but there is a greater power that is exerted and put forth; he speaks of a contest that is between spirit and spirit. "Hereby ye know the Spirit of God;" and by a contrary character it is implied we are to discern and distinguish the spirit of this world; but these as militating and warring one against another. In short, this is the matter of contest, God would have our hearts and souls, this world it would retain them which before had them; and this is the case with every one of us, every one that hears in this assembly; either this world hath your hearts, or God hath them. Where the Spirit of God comes to work (and it worketh by the gospel of his Son) the great design of its striving and working is to draw off the hearts and souls of men from this world, that they may be united to himself; and in order thereunto, to work out the worldly image, their likeness to this world and

their conformity to it. They that are of this world bear its impress; and nothing is gustful and savoury to them but what is worldly and terrene. As God makes his own way, he introduceth a new savour of things; as they are made less like to this world, and more like to God, accordingly they do less savour the things of this world, and do more savour the things of God. They are emphatical expressions you find to this purpose in some passages of scripture, which you do well to compare with one another. In ch. iv. v. 6, of this epistle you will see how men are distinguished; there is one sort of whom it is said, "We are of God," born of God, regenerated ones (as you have heard that passage is sometimes contracted.) We are of God: well, but how doth that appear? "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." And hereby it is that spirits are distinguished, which spirit is regular; they that are regenerate are of God, and then they hear the things of God, the word of God, with gust, with savour and relish; it is according to the image, the impress, they have upon them; if they be like this world they can savour nothing else but the things of the world. "They that are of the world, speak of the world, and the world heareth them," as at verse 5, of this chapter. Worldly minded men can discourse with one another of the things of the world all the day long with gust and relish, and never be weary: but the things of God they have no relish, no savour of. Therefore there is a diverse impression upon the mind and spirit of the one and of the other. To the same purpose is that John viii. 43, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" saith our Saviour, "even because ye cannot hear my words." You cannot hear them; there is another gust and relish of things with you; they cannot enter into you, as he saith a little before in the same chapter: "My word hath no place in you." There is no likeness, no similitude or agreement between the impression, influence and tenour of my words and your minds; your minds disagree, are otherwise impressed and otherwise tintured. So in verse 47 of the same chapter, "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." You have nothing divine in you, nothing of the distinguishing work, therefore you cannot hear the words of God. This is one thing concerning this image to be abolished, to wit, there must be an opposition to it wherever the contrary image is to be introduced. And,

Secondly, There must be a victory over it, to which that

opposition tends; and it is to no purpose if it have not that glorious end, if it do not end in this. Indeed there may be strivings that have a worse end, as in that 2 Pet. ii. 20; some that do escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [oh, sad word] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, (in a degree) who are again entangled therein, and overcome, and their end is worse than their beginning: But this regenerating work doth effect and bring about actual victory over this world and its spirit, so as to dis-entangle a man's heart from it. And pray observe to this purpose what you have in the context where the text lies, that, as in this verse, you hear what is said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" so it is also told us at verse 4, that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And that he might give to understand that he speaks consistently with himself, pursuantly to his design in verse 5, he adds, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" He that hath this faith in him is a conqueror over this world; if it be this faith indeed, not the name, not the show, not the mock show of it only. And let this now be gladly thought of, "He that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God; he that is born of God overcometh the world;" first taking this sound and sense of it, that is, that whoever is born of God, is by the new birth become so noble, so raised, and so altered a creature, that he can be no longer a slave to this world only. What, are the sons of God, his children, to be slaves? If they are born of him, he is their father, and they are his sons. What more monstrous absurdity can be conceived, than that a son of God, and born of God by a divine birth, should be held afterwards to so base a thing as this world is? What, do you think that the sons of God are to be in a state of slavery? No; so soon as they are born they conquer, they overcome. That is, the divine principle in them is a victorious principle. And so the other image (though there be fragments of it) is not intire, it is broken, and there can be but fragments. It is not the spirit of this world that is reigning and governing, but another spirit: and hereupon this is observable in the very complexion of their spirits, they can use the things of this world as other men do, but they do not entirely enjoy them, so as to rest in them, or to get their rest from them; but their tendency is higher; they in the most true sense possible possess them, but are not possessed by them; they are proprietors in the

truest sense of the things of this world, to wit, by a restored right from God; he hath renewed their right, hath given them a right that was forfeited and lost; and so are they in a true sense owners of what portion he allows them in this world; under him they are owners and possessors; they do possess, but are not possessed: other men, unregenerate men, do not; they do not so truly and properly possess this world as they are possessed by it; those that are ignorant, are lords and masters of it; but for great men, that is master of them, they are slaves to it; worldly desires, worldly inclinations, worldly interests, worldly designs engross them, and swallow them up; they are ingulfed of this world, and possessed by it; they have not a power over it, but it hath a power over them. See what a spirit of liberty as to this the apostle describes, 1 Cor. vi. 12; "All things are lawful unto me," (speaking of such things as he refers to, the lawful use of the creatures) any thing to which I have an inclination; this or that sort of creature that I have need of, I may lawfully enjoy them: but nothing hath that power over me that I cannot distinguish between expedient and inexpedient; but I may covet too much of that which is in itself simply a lawful thing, and so turn it into unlawful. And how doth he expound it? why, thus—that he kept himself from being under the power of any thing—"all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." And even among these things it is that he resolved he would be under the power of nothing. Here is the difference in reference to the state of the two, between the regenerate and unregenerate, and that with relation to this world. Whatsoever the unregenerate man's heart is set upon in this world, it hath him under its power; it hath power over him, so that he shapes and grounds his course accordingly; doth not consider whether he shall walk by rule or not by rule, whether he shall please God or displease him, but only considers, shall I please myself? or is this a thing which I find suitable to my purpose? will it serve my end? I find it will be grateful, will it be otherwise serviceable to me? And so are the questions determined; all disputes end and are decided in this manner: and so this world hath him continually under its power. They are lords and masters of nothing of it; though every thing that is grateful and most suitable to them is master of them, and hath the power over them. But whatsoever "is born of God overcometh the world," brings it under, prevails, and tramples over worldly inclinations; that is, the divine and heavenly principle, so far as it does obtain,

is a victor. It is a hero, a divine birth that is produced. It was said of that great hero among the pagans (Hercules) that in his cradle, he strangled two serpents. They are the things of this world that the old serpent tempts by, and preys upon the souls of men to their destruction. But one that is born of God overcomes. When the regenerating principle takes place, it makes the slave a victor; he that was a slave to this world before, is now a conqueror. There is then a worldly image wrought out, that was in-wrought by the spirit of the world, and maintained till the work of regeneration be found to take place; and then is the divine image introduced: which is the next thing here to speak of, and to shew the resemblance of God in that which will appear in many particulars hereafter to be mentioned.

Only methinks upon what hath been said, this should be considered: A believer as to this truth, Jesus is the Christ, is one born of God. Methinks it should make every one lay his hand upon his heart, and say, Will I now adventure to call myself a believer, to avow and profess myself I am one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ? Take heed of compounding together inconsistencies. We shall compound together perfect inconsistencies if we do but admit the notion into our minds of an unregenerate believer? An unregenerate believer? To say so is to speak falsely, to say that which overthrows itself. There can be no such thing as an unregenerate believer, otherwise than in sound. You compound together impossibilities, impossibilities, things that cannot consist. Every one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God. Upon the whole then, it is a great assuming to say, I am a believer: yes, it is a great assuming. It is a great thing for any one to say so. God forbid but that there should be many, that many may hourly say so. But they that say so, say a great thing; and they had need weigh and consider what they say when they say this, I am a believer; for in this same breath you say (or imply it, whether you say it or no) I am born of God, I am a heaven-born creature, I am of a divine original, I am of God, because stamp't with his image, and governed by the Holy Ghost. Either blot this text out of the Bible, or own the truth of this, that it is a great assuming to say, I believe Jesus to be the Christ. Do you say, I believe so. I pray thou thinkest with the next thought, am I born of God? Do I find the springings of divine life in me? Do I find the worldly spirit abolished, vain self brought under in

me? I say again, either blot this text out of the Bible, or own it a mighty thing to say thou believest Jesus to be the Christ; for to say that, is to say, I am a divine and heaven-born creature. And if it be not to say that, Christianity is the greatest fable in the world. It is to no purpose to believe Jesus to be the Christ, if this be not the effect of it, that God have thereby a regenerate seed raised out of this world, and fitted for him, to serve him in this world, and enjoy him in the next world.

SERMON XLV.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

BUT now to proceed to the second part, the product of itself, which is much more a distinguishing work, and that whereof he himself is the exemplar and pattern, as well as the author. He is not only the efficient but the exemplary cause of it; for this divine product is not only a new creature, but it is a creature formed for God. As it is a creature, it must be made by him; for there is but one Creator; but it is not only of him, but after him; a creature made after God's image, that carries his resemblance in it. And for opening of this we proposed to shew you, that there is in this work a suitableness to God. Whether, 1st, you do consider the productive influence; or whether, 2d, you consider the effect produced. We shewed that it cannot but be (as to the productive influence) most peculiarly god-like in several respects. Though here also we distinguished it from the eternal generation of the only-begotten Son of God, as it was necessary we should. But we told you in what respects the influence is peculiarly divine by which the work is done. And then,

(2.) We mean to shew, that there is suitableness to God in the thing produced. The influence is transient, the effect is permanent; and then shew there must be a permanent abiding influence of God upon that soul that is regenerate and born of him.

* Preached May 20, 1694.

And whereas this word (as you see) expressed by being born, it therefore necessarily enforceth relation (as the latter part of this text speaks) between him that beget, and them that are begotten of him. There is paternity and filiation, fatherhood and sonship. He becoming hereupon a father to them and they children to him, for the relation is mutual, as it cannot but be. And you see it is supposed in the close of the second chapter, and beginning of the third chapter, of this epistle. Every one that is righteous is born of him, so the second chapter ends; and thereupon doth the third chapter begin thus, "Behold, what manner of love is this that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?" Upon their being begotten of him, he is a father to them, and they are sons and children to him. So the matter is more definitely explained, 2 Cor. vi. last: "I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Why, now upon this must be a suitableness to God in this product itself.

1st. He is a father to them; and, 2d, As they are children to him. Then with such things in the frame and constitution (as I may speak) that corresponds to God as having been their father, and that corresponds to their being his children. And you plainly see afterwards, that these things are widely different, according as paternity and filiation are different; they are not the same relation, though they are both a resemblance of each other.

[1.] You must therefore expect to find in them that are born of God several things suitable to him, as he is a father to them, or (as the latter part of the verse expresseth it) as it is he that beget them, hath propagated, and communicated a certain divine nature to them, 2 Pet. i. 4. And these things are not to be considered with neglect, for eternity depends upon it. According as there is a real god-like communication unto souls in this world, so they are to be disposed of in the other world. The thing speaks itself. This is not a new and singular notion; but common to all Christians, of what-soever denomination and persuasion, as it is most expressly in the word of truth, that without being thus born, born of God, born of the Spirit, there is no entering into, no seeing of the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 6. And you have it under the eternal seal of our Lord's amen, four times affixed in those two verses. I say unto you, He that is the Amen hath given it under that seal, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into (he cannot so much

as see) the kingdom of God.” Therefore we had need to take heed how we hear such matters of such weight and importance as this. God is not trifling with us when he sends to deal with us in the ministry of his word. Consider then wherein the divine character is imprest suitable to God as a father must appear in them that are born of him. And as that which is most fundamental,

First, There is a resemblance of God in this divine product, in a refined spirituality : in such a spirituality as by which the soul is refined from the sinful prevailing carnality of mind that is common universally to the unregenerate world. It is plain concerning the generality of unregenerate men, that their minds are habitually carnal, and a carnal mind doth actually govern their lives and hearts, and influence all their actions and designs. It is quite otherwise with them that are born of God. You are now here to consider,

i. That this similitude to God is not corporal, which was the vague and gross notion of the Anthropomorphites of old; they understood that there must be in man a likeness to God, they imagined God to be in an human shape; and so that men are made therefore like unto that, and must be made more and more like; and so they did not make him a model to us, but made us a model to him; instead of having made us like God, they made God altogether like themselves. Nor

ii. Doth this similitude to God in this respect stand on the other hand, in being exempt from having any body at all, or any corporeity. It is not in that we are to resemble God. That is the opposite doctrine of them who of old denied the resurrection of the body; as if that must be too mean a state to have a part after, any body at all; and so we should never be perfectly like God till we were perfectly free from having corporeity about us. Nor again,

iii. Doth it stand in having a spirit in us? for that is not distinguishing thing, so have all the sons of men. As the regenerate have all of them flesh, so have the unregenerate, every one of them a spirit in the natural sense. But

iv. This similitude doth stand in reference to this thing, in having the spirit exalted into dominion, a regency, a governing power. Whereas in the unregenerate world it is the fleshly principle that governs every where. They have a spirit in them, but that spirit is a slave to the flesh, made to serve divers lusts and pleasures. That is all the business in which men do generally employ that intellectual

spiritual being that is in them; a reasonable, immortal spirit is used in serving and making provision for this flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof. And because the fleshly principle is the governing principle in the generality of men, therefore they are called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Their very minds are said to be carnalized, vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind, Col. ii. 18. Their very minds and consciences are impure, tinged with the vain tincture of carnality upon it, Tit. i. 15. This is the great thing then to be effected by regeneration, or in this divine birth; God doth in compassion to the work of his own hands, to the spirit which he hath made, restore it out of that state of base servitude wherein it was. It was a servant to base lusts and pleasures. Tit. iii. 3, 4. But when the kindness and love of God towards man appeared, according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Whereby it is that he exalts this sunk, depressed spirit, that was immersed in flesh, buried in flesh, where it should but dwell. Flesh should have been its mansion, but it became and was made its grave, its dormitory. But by regeneration this spirit is raised into dominion; it is the spirit that is fetched out of the grave, and made a governing thing over the flesh, over all natural appetites and desires. That is the product in the work of regeneration, this is the thing produced and brought forth. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." John iii. 6. Signifying that the spirit of a man, whilst it remains a servant and slave to natural inclinations, hath even forfeited its name; it is no more worthy to be called spirit.

The denomination is taken from what is prevailing and governing. If the natural principle do prevail, this compound now is called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." But when the spiritual principle is revived and authorized, made the governing principle of the man, it then regains its name, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."

For that it signifies nothing unto that conformity to God, which being born of him doth import, that there is such a thing as a natural spirit in man, when that natural spirit doth not do its office, or retain its state, doth not keep the throne, but is become basely and meanly servile. And the tragedy is so much the greater in this respect, and the more deplorable, by how much the less apprehensive and sensible the unregenerate soul is of the state of its own case. By how

the more excellent and noble powers it hath belonging to it, it is so much the more fearful spectacle to behold and look upon, to see it enslaved to sense, and brought into the state of so vile a depression, and is become so mean and abject a thing. As the son of a prince captured in his infancy, and made a base drudge, he is so much the more a deplorable thing, by how much the more his spirit is depressed and sunk into that state into which he is brought; so as that he loses his servitude, his spirit is grown hard, (perfectly perhaps) ignorant of his true original. So it is with the souls of men generally; they are unapprehensive of their own original excellency and dignity, and are content to serve and be voluntary slaves to divers lusts and pleasures, till regenerating grace be vouchsafed. But now it becomes a godlike thing again. When, however, it dwells in flesh, that flesh is not a sepulchre to it as before, but a mansion; here it dwells still, but here it governs, governs over that, and is itself immediately subject to God. That is the thing wherein similitude to God consists, and which must be found in every one that is born of him, a governing, prevailing spirituality, so as that the soul is alone made like itself, and like God; it is made like one and the other all over, like what it once was, and like him from whom it was. But there is in others a spirit too, but ingulfed and swallowed up in a regnant, prevailing and domineering carnality. A spirit, but employed only in serving this flesh, and the fulfilling the divers lusts thereof, till regenerating grace take place.

Secondly, That which is con-natural, and consequently necessary, this similitude stands in life; divine spiritual vigour. There is life, as it is a spirit, in the natural sense in unregenerate ones too; but in the mean time this is given as the common character, alienated from the life of God. They have no participation of the divine life. Eph. iv. 18. There are two things wherein an apparent difference lies, and may be seen: that is, whether you consider the tendency, or whether you consider the aliment of that life, in the one, and in the other way.

i. Whether you consider the tendency hereof. Here is life and vigour in the regenerate man, so there is in the unregenerate too, and (it may be) a great deal more of natural life and vigour: but in the unregenerate where doth it tend? which way is it directed? still in the pursuit of vanity: the operations and actions of life in him are perpetual, everlasting triflings. But consider life now morally,

and things morally considered are to be estimated by their end. The end is morality, *habet ratione formæ*, is specifying and distinguishing. Here is life, but which way doth it work? He who to the regenerate is the immediate prime author of life, is the object too. They are "alive to God through Jesus Christ." Rom. vi. 11. Dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is a great deal of vitality, liveliness, and vigour in an unregenerate man, perhaps. And which way doth it work? Either towards forbidden, or towards mean things. They are either alive to sin, to that which is forbidden; or towards things that are contemptibly mean. Alive to the world, towards which they should be mortified, crucified, and it crucified to them, so as that the world and they should be dead things to one another. When the great regenerating work is wrought, God is the great *terminus* of that life that is then begun. That is a life that is sanctified, is infused, added to a pre-existing thing. In regeneration a man is not in all essentials created anew; then what could be said to Nicodemus's question? "Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" No, it is only an holy, sanctified influence that is infused, and doth supervene, as what was grafted upon nature, upon that stock; and so that life becomes an holy life that was but a natural life before. It rested before in all its tendencies in self; in flesh, in this world, in vain or prohibited things, as was said; but now it tends to God, and acts all in a divine sphere, and therefore is called a divine life, the life of God. And so look,

ii. To the aliment of this life, that shews this to be a divine creature that is now produced, that nothing will serve it to live upon but divine things: it must live upon immediate communications from God. And I pray you, as we go along, you will consider with yourselves whether there are any such workings and strivings in you as must have God for your continual support. Are there any constant aspirations towards him? "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is the sense of the regenerate soul, I cannot live without God. The same as in Gal. ii. 19. That life that is peculiar to a regenerate person is, that he is through the law dead to the law; in order to a new life springing up in him, that he may live unto God. But how then afterwards is this maintained? Look to the twentieth verse, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And the life I live in the flesh; whilst I live so

meanly in this base flesh, I have a life springing and flourishing in me that is maintained continually by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. This is the regenerate life. By its tendencies, and by its aliment, it appears to be a divine thing, and that this is a creature born of God. For which way doth it work? and what supports doth it seek, and is it continually sustained by? This is most agreeable to the former: "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. viii. 6. So long as the soul is under a prevailing carnality, so long is it dead to every thing that is good. But when regenerating grace takes place in it, as it is in that work spiritualized, thence it is consequent, that life springs in it agreeably to such a divine nature as is put into it. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace;" and a most significant adjunct that is; to let us know that this life is not the life of a fury, or that peace is not the peace of a fool; but both these are in conjunction, complicated with one another, peaceful life, and vital peace; a steady principle that works sedately and calmly, and with such regularity towards the objects and in the business that it is to be engaged and taken up about. It is not an ungovernable principle, but as there is life belonging to that sedate and peaceful frame that now takes place in the soul, so there is peace and calmness and tranquillity belonging to that life which springs up in the soul. And this is one part of its likeness unto God, called the life of God, or living unto God, that is part of the work of regeneration in such as are born of God. But then,

Thirdly, There is a divine power that appears and is put forth in such as are born of God. And this also is to be understood accommodately to the sphere of grace into which such an one is translated out of the order of quite natural production. It is raised into an higher sphere. The schools do commonly distinguish, in speaking to this matter, of those things that are of the order of nature, and those that are of the order of grace; speaking of them as two distinct spheres. And according to what was said concerning that life in the one and the other, so must we speak concerning that power that exerts itself in the one and the other sort of men. It was a divine power to which the production was owing of the divine nature. "According as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, wherein there is given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature." 2 Pet. i.

3, 4. A God-resembling nature ! These productions carry the divine impress upon them in this respect, that there was an appearance of a divine power in the effect, which is a permanent thing. As we told you the influence did pass away, but it did *relinquere post se opus*, it left a work behind it, wherein are permanent, abiding signatures of a divine hand, that shew it to be a thing to be produced by God himself; whereupon you read of a certain power belonging to godliness. And that spirit that is given is said to be a spirit of love and power, and of a sound mind. To us a spirit is given, imparted and communicated. As in that John iii. you read of a Spirit producing, and spirit produced. The divine Spirit ingenerated is there called by the name of Spirit. And that spirit that is capable of being given, of abiding, and being permanent, is said to be a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind. That which is born of God in a regenerate person, it is a powerful thing: and therefore is a principle of divine power which animates that form of godliness, so as that it is not a mere spiritless form. "From them that only have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, (practically deny it, understand it not, know no such thing, look after no such thing, as if they did in plain words deny the reality of it, as if it were only a fiction, a fancy,) from such turn away, as a living man would from a putrefying carcase." 2 Tim. iii. 5. There is no society between the living and the dead. A regenerate man can take no pleasure in such conversation; with such as savour of nothing else but carnality and death in all their conversation; from such turn away. The divine principle in them as well as their rule bids them to turn away from them. There is none but impure, putrid breath that comes from them. They smell of a grave, turn away from them.

It is very true indeed, that when the regenerate work takes place there is very often great complaints of much weakness: the good that I would, that I cannot do; and when I would be doing good, evil is present with me. But there is a great deal of difference between weakness and death, between an ability to do much and a disability to do any thing at all. There is nothing can be done by the unregenerate person in vital and real religion; to every such good work he is reprobate. It is one thing to be impotent and feel, another to be impotent and feel nothing. A carcase doth not complain that it can do nothing, but a sick man doth; he complains of impotence if he be sick only. But if there be a total death, it is impotency, of which there is no

complaint. And what there is of power, (as there is always some power always going with the regenerate life and principle,) it is a power of a higher kind and order than that which doth belong to the rest of men, wherein they do something, though but little, yet above all that the unregenerate world can do. They can love God, though it is too weakly, too faintly: they can desire after him, can pant for him. The rest of the world are strangers to such desires, to such designs. The practical workings of the powers that belong to them still terminate in an inferior orb, they never reach God, there is no working of power that way. And therefore it is said of such unregenerate men in common, that they are without strength. It signifies total destitution. They are without any strength of that kind; in that kind they can do nothing at all. When a man shall make an essay upon itself, try himself before his own soul, say to it, Oh! my soul, what canst thou do in a design for God, for heaven, for eternal life? When all a man's natural powers are bound *quoad hoc*, as to this. It is true he hath powers in him belonging to his nature; but they work not at all this way. Why, here is a manifest difference between the regenerate and unregenerate world in this respect. In the regenerate there is a principle of divine power that works in them towards God, and can employ itself about divine things.

Fourthly, This similitude unto God appears in the knowledge which such as are born of him have of divine things. To wit, that gustful knowledge, that practical knowledge, that transmutative knowledge, which will most manifestly appear to be peculiar to them from the rest of men. In the 19th verse of this chapter, where the text lies, "We know that we are of God, (an elliptical expression of being born of God,) and he hath given us an understanding to know him that is true." Are we born of God? Then we have a spiritual eye-sight, a cognitive power, enlightened towards God so as to make us capable of knowing him, and of knowing him with so active and operative a knowledge as to give us an union with him; he hath given an understanding to know him that is true, so as to be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and eternal life.

Consider the matter reasonably. Do you think that they who are born of God are born blind? Are they born blind towards God, and towards the things of God? Doth he emit from himself any so imperfect, and mean, and maimed

a production ? “ I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” 1 John ii. 13. As soon as they are children, as soon as they are so born, born of God as their Father, there is a disposition of mind to him to receive the knowledge of him. The rest of the world do not like to retain God in their knowledge, they are ignorant of God ; not because he cannot be known, that that knowledge should take place in or should center in them. That knowledge is our notion of divine light, though it hath a further notion, as you may hear hereafter. They have a light darted into the inmost center of their souls. Indeed a superficial light there is in every unregenerate mind too ; some natural notions of God ; light that is morally, objectively divine, conversant about God. For I do not think any man can totally abolish and rend off the characters of God from his mind, tear out the ideas. They that have set themselves most industriously to do so have been able to effect nothing therein to satisfy themselves, but so as still there would remain a *formido oppositi*, a dread that he is whom they would fain make themselves believe not to be. Therefore the fool’s saying, of what we find Ps. xiv. 1, “ The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God ;” it is not an assertion, but it is a wish. The copulative in the text is wanting, which we supply needlessly. The fool hath said in his heart, No God. Let there be none, oh that there were none ! It is not what they put into a proposition, there is none that can obtain so much of themselves, but they have their secret wish, Oh that there were none ! So they are willingly ignorant of God. “ Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.” Eph. iv. 18. Such a blindness as consists only in a resolution not to see, or in an unwillingness to see. But that knowledge of God, and of divine things which belong to the regenerate state ; it is not that superficial knowledge which hovers in the soul and surface of the mind ; but it is central, it centers in the soul. “ God, that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts.” So that this light which is in the heart, must be understood to carry a liking and complacency in it. That as the unregenerate soul doth not like to retain God in its knowledge, the regenerate liketh this knowledge ; it is lightsome to them, and carries a pleasant savour with it : whence it comes to be operative and unitive, and unites the soul with the object known. And,

Fifthly, Another signature of God upon this same product,

a regenerate soul, is spiritual wisdom, which superadds much, in the ordinary notion of it, unto mere knowledge: for many may know much, that are not wise. But wisdom is the parent of this seed and offspring; therefore, it is said to be justified of its own children. All the unregenerate are fools, "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Titus iii. 3, 4, 5, 6. There are not greater instances of folly and madness among them who lie under cure in houses set apart on purpose for that end, than are generally to be found, (though not taken notice of because they are common,) in the generality of the unconverted world. They that in so clear light spend their strength for trifles, will not get understanding of what is their best good. They that throw away their souls for nought, that rush upon armed vengeance, and are not afraid to perish; they continually run counter to principles, that are secretly conscious of the immortality of the soul, profess to believe there is a heaven, and a hell, yet they run away from the one, and run into the other in sight. Greater instances of madness and folly are not conceivable than these.

It is only the regenerate that do become wise. A "spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to them, that they may know the hope of that better calling, and what are the riches of that glorious inheritance which God makes common among his saints." Eph. i. 17, 18. And so, indeed, do the regenerate seed justify that wisdom that is their parent: "Wisdom is justified of her children;" so that it may be known, even to the world, that these are the children of it. They are not a generation of fools. See how wisely they do design, and how wisely they pursue their design, to wit, by patient continuance in well doing, seeking for honour, and glory, and immortality, to the actual enjoying of eternal life. No lower things do they design, nor a less suitable course do they take in pursuance of it, than by patient continuance in well doing to seek it. Their design is high and great, and their pursuit apt and suitable. This shews the only wise God is their Parent: they discover of what seed and offspring they are.

It is true, the children of this world are wiser in their

generation than the children of light: with reference to the things that their generation can reach, they are wiser—wiser for this world. In reference to worldly matters and designing, they pursue them with more constancy, because they have no other. But the children of light shew themselves to be so in their higher, and more excellent end, and in their more regular course which they take in order thereunto. But now I add, in the next place,

Sixthly, The great resemblance wherein this creature appears to be a divine production, is the divine holiness stampd upon it, and imparted to it. It is a holy creature. It doth most eminently bear the image of him from whom it is, upon that account. And that makes it a glorious creature, as he himself is glorious in and by his holiness. “Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness.” Ex. xv. 11. They are changed into the same image, and thereby become glorious creatures, as he is their glorious Creator and Father. “We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor. iii. 18. Here is this work in its inchoation and in its progress; that work by which souls are at first made God-like creatures; and then promoted and carried on towards a state of maturity, and made ripe for the regions of glory into which they are to be translated at length. This impression of holiness upon them is by the regenerating Spirit, which is therefore called the Spirit of holiness, and the Holy Ghost, as you know nothing is to be more frequently noted in the Book of God. This is a creature, born spirit of Spirit; that Spirit of which it is born is the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost, even as such. And therefore, such must this production be. You find (1 Pet. i. 3,) that God is adored upon this account, as having begotten such as are truly appertaining to him upon this special account, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled. Nothing could be more agreeable than that they who are born of him, should inherit from him; that they who are his children should be his heirs also. But having once made mention of them, and of him, upon this relative account, as they are begotten of him, and as he is their great Parent, and the author of this spiritual and new divine being to them. Thereupon it follows, (as you may see in the same chapter) “As obedient children ye are no longer to fashion yourselves according to your former lusts, in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye

holy in all manner of holy conversation and godliness." And by the way, you must know that efficacious calling and regeneration is all one. God calls when he creates; when he creates, he regenerates. His calling that which was not to exist and be. And this is but another name for the regenerating work, in which respect any are said to be born of God. Now inasmuch "as he which hath called you (that is as much as to say, as he that hath begotten you, he of whom ye are born) is holy, so be ye also holy in all manner of conversation;" which is but to make your conversation correspond to the very principles of your birth: For you cannot be his offspring if you be not a holy seed. Because he is holy, so you must be supposed to be holy in your very constitution and frame. And therefore see you to it, that you express what is correspondent herenunto in all your walkings, that in all manner of conversation you discover yourselves to be the children of such a Father, holy ones as he is. It is upon this account, that they that are born of him are said to be "children of light." When I told you last time, that according to our notion of light it meaneth divine knowledge, taken in the borrowed and metaphorical sense, (for every one knows what it is taken in the proper and literal sense) I then hinted, that taken in the metaphorical sense too, it hath a further notion, to wit, to signify holiness as well as knowledge: and indeed, knowledge is no further to be called and counted divine light, than as it tends to holiness, and is productive of it; and from thence it comes to be denominated light. It is light, as it terminates in that which is itself so splendid and illustrious a thing, holiness; a bright, a shining, a glorious thing. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works:" that is, not knowledge, that they may hear you talk fine notions; but that they may see your good works. That is the light, the divine peculiar light, that distinguisheth the children of God from another seed. See how light is taken principally in that, 1 Epistle John i. 5, 6. How is the solemnity of a message sent unto the children of men on purpose to make discovery to them of the nature and excellency of God. And, saith the apostle, "This is the message which we have heard, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The words that follow do plainly enough shew what is meant by light and by darkness here. By light is meant purity and holiness, as we cannot conceive any thing more pure and simple than light; and therefore not any thing more expressive of holiness than light. "God is light;" as if he

should have said of himself, I would have all to conceive so of me; and therefore I send this message unto men, to instruct them how to form their notions and conceptions of me. I am light, and with me there is no darkness at all. And now, saith the apostle, "If any say they have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, they lie, and do not the truth." If any say they have a participation with God, that they partake and communicate with him in anything divine, and walk in darkness, they tell a most gross and insolent and absurd lie: "they lie, and do not the truth." It is a practical lying, their practice gives themselves the lie; they do (as it were) proclaim themselves liars. And what is the meaning of all this, but to shew that light is holiness. If any say they have fellowship with God, and live wickedly, shew themselves to be impure and unholy creatures, that is a great lie, a gross lie, a lie most injurious to God, and no ways advantageous to themselves: they can gain nothing by it, but they wrong him by it infinitely, to make it to be thought as if he were an impure one, like them that pretend to him, to be acquainted with him, to be conversant with him. It is to make a wrong and false representation of him to the world, so that they gain nothing by it but shame retorted into their own faces; for at the same time when they do so, they (as it were) virtually call themselves liars before the world. Because they who know any thing at all of God, know that he cannot be such a one: "He is light, and with him is no darkness at all."

The same notion we have of light as it signifies holiness, in that Eph. v. 8. "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" speaking of that mighty turn and change wrought upon the soul in the work of regeneration. Ye were darkness in your unregenerate state, now are ye light in the Lord. You not only have it, but are light; as before ye not only had darkness in you, but ye were darkness, as it were so many lumps and masses of impure, gross, and consistent darkness. But now you are light. Indeed there may be light in an unregenerate mind; but though such a one may be said to have it, he is not said to be it. And that light though it may have a tendency to some suitable disposition in the heart, yet it prevails not to effect, to bring it about. Though there be a weak tendency thitherward, the thing is not done. And therefore that light doth forfeit its name, and is still called "darkness," (as our Lord saith;) and you may take his judgment in the case without wavering: "if the light that is in thee be darkness,"

how great is that darkness !” The very light that is in an unregenerate person, is rather to be called darkness. As in the natural world there is no such thing as *pura tenebræ*, no pure darkness, no darkness without a mixture of light ; but the denomination is taken from that which prevails ; otherwise, we should never say it is night, never say it is darkness. We can never say so, as supposing no admixture of light at all ; but when darkness prevails, then we say, concerning the region and horizon, it is dark. And so it is with the unregenerate soul : till the day-spring from on high doth visit, and till the Sun of righteousness arise, that soul is a region of darkness, impure darkness, such a darkness as wherein men work all manner of wickedness, living still under the power and dominion of the Prince of darkness : for he governs in that region. And therefore the work of regeneration too is elsewhere expressed by “ being translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son,” our Lord Jesus Christ ; and “ out of the power of darkness into his marvellous light ;” to signify that we were under other government, other power, before. They that are born of God therefore (as he is the Father of lights) are children of light ; that is, holy ones. There is that frame of holiness that invests them, and is put upon them, which carries a lustre, a glory in it, as you have heard, and this must still shine brighter and brighter, in those that are truly righteous, unto the perfect day. And as they gradually approach nearer and nearer to the land of light, and thereby are made more and more meet to partake at length of “ the inheritance of the saints in light.” Col. i. 12. But,

Seventhly, Another divine character of those that are born of God, wherein they resemble him, is Truth. He is the God of truth, who is their Parent and Begetter : and they are accordingly the children of truth. Understand me here to mean truth in the moral sense : I speak not now of the truth of propositions, or of the truth of things in their nature, logical or metaphysical truth ; but that which is in the spirit and proper sense, moral, and that lies in two things ; 1. In speaking as we think, and 2. In doing as we speak : these two make up the notion of moral truth. Herein God is himself a great exemplar and pattern to us ; and his image is most eminently conspicuous in all that are born of him in this also. He glories to be called the God of truth. Moses in that dying song of his, Deut. xxxii. 3, 4, when he tells us he will now publish the name of the Lord, he therefore exhorts all to ascribe greatness unto God.

“Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.” It is the same thing that is spoken of him so often in scripture under the name of faithfulness: the divine faithfulness, that takes in part of the meaning, though not all of what is carried in the notion of truth; for faithfulness doth particularly refer to the promises he hath made, or the covenants that he hath promulgated and entered into. It is generally speaking, the same thing with sincerity; that is another comprehensive expression, that takes in the full of what is signified by the name of truth. They that are born of God are true, the children of truth, sincere, upright, without deceit or guile; when they speak, speaking the truth from the heart; when they act, acting according to what they have spoken, especially wherein they have obliged themselves by promise. And that is the proper notion of fidelity, one great branch of this truth. That is a glorious attribute of God, wherein he is pleased frequently to represent his excellency to the children of men; his faithfulness that reacheth to the clouds. Look as high as heaven, look all the way between this earth and up to the heavens, and you have continual instances throughout of the faithfulness of God; all things being conserved through this vast and spacious universe according to the tenor of his word, and those ordinances that he hath settled in this great creation of his. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the substantial, consubstantial image of God, and the brightness of his glory, this is his great character too, the Amen, the faithful and true witness. It is a peculiar name that belongs to the Son of God, “he that is faithful and true.” Often he is spoken of by those distinguishing titles: and well they belong to him, as he was the original, substantial image of God. The image of God in the regenerate, those that are born of him, it is true, is much inferior in them, (as we have heard about the generation of the only begotten Son,) to what it is in him; but it is not contrary, it is a true image, though it be not so perfect an image. It doth not make a false representation of God: it represents him truly, though not so perfectly as in the first and original impression of it in his only eternally begotten Son; of whom it is said, Isa. xi. 5, “That faithfulness is the girdle of his loins:” they are girt about with truth. And observe, after the same manner, and under the same notion, is that truth which is said to be found in the children of God in this

world, spoken of too. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, having your loins girt about with truth." Eph. vi. 14. This keeps men steady, keeps them in an equal temper, so as they do not vary from themselves. Being once made like God, then they are to be continually in an uniformity and agreeableness to themselves; their course equal, and the temper of their spirits steady, true, and not apt to swerve or prevaricate this way or that, but like his children. Therefore, inasmuch as he always counts it the glory of his own being, his own nature, that falsehood is incompetent, incompatible, yea, impossible to him, a God "that cannot lie;" so if he hath any children in this world, see how he speaks of them, "They are my people, children that will not lie: therefore he was their Saviour." Isa. lxiii. 8. Put away lying, (saith the apostle,) and let every man speak truth with his neighbour. Put away lying, in reference to narrations, and lying in reference to promises. It hath the same distinction that oaths are wont to have, which are usually different by those terms, of assertory and promissory. If one should be guilty of perjury, it may be either of these two ways; and if one be guilty of lying, it is one of these two ways too; either by representing a thing otherwise than it is; or by promising to do that which was never intended, and, therefore, accordingly is never done. But the one way or the other, there is that which is contrary to sincerity, and to that truth which is the divine glory, the glory of the Divine Being, and wherein he doth exalt himself so infinitely, the God "that cannot lie." And if I have a people in this world, if I have a seed, a race, a progeny, though it cannot be said of them, they are those that cannot lie, (that is the divine prerogative,) yet it may be said of them, they will not lie, "children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour."

It is said concerning the inhabitants of Sion (which Sion represents in a borrowed transferred sense, the church on earth first, and then the church in heaven in the highest sense), the inhabitants of Sion (into which none come but by the divine birth, they are come into it whoever are of it), that they are such as speak the truth from their hearts. And never doth any man come into the forgiven state, till he come into the regenerate state. Then it is that God pardons, when he receives and regenerates. He gives righteousness and the Spirit of his Son both at once. By the one of which he doth one work, by the other of them he doth the other. They are never separated. When any are forgiven, it is a blessed state they come into. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is

covered. But then observe the character of that person that is the subject of forgiveness, he in whose spirit there is "no guile." What! a forgiven man, a regenerate man, one born of God; and a false man, a deceitful man, a guileful, a fraudulent man? He that shall talk at this rate speaketh inconsistencies; he compounds impossible things. A regenerate man, and one made up of falsehood, deceit, and guile; this cannot be. He that is born of the God of truth, there is the image of him as such upon such a man. He is born of the Spirit; and "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Ephes. v. 9.

And while I urge faithfulness and truth as the character of the regenerate, those that are born of God, give me leave myself to be so far faithful to you as to declare, and testify in the Lord, that whoever they are that can allow themselves in falsehood, insincerity, deceitfulness, and guilefulness any way, let their profession be never so splendid, they do but bely themselves in it. They the children of God, they born of God, they who are the sons of the God of faith, and yet children of falsehood, is a thing that I will not only say is not, but cannot be. It is an impossibility. God hath no such children; they that are born of him, carry this image of him upon them, they are children of truth, sincere and upright; so that if they speak, they speak the truth in their hearts, just as they apprehend things to be; if they promise, they promise what they intend to perform. They are as they speak: if they have spoken to their hurt, they will not change. Their word is a sacred thing with them, as God's word is with him.

It is true, indeed, there may be much of this seen in the unregenerate world: truth hath been highly magnified among many of the more refined Pagans; and it may have place with many among us (oh, that it had more,) in whom the divine nature hath no place. But here is the distinction, when men are true to one another for God's sake and for conscience sake; not for reputation's sake, but for God's sake, and because of their devotedness to him, and because they must truly represent him to the world; this is that which is distinguishing: and, indeed, if men be true to one another, and untrue to God, leave out him as the centre in whom they unite, and upon whose account and for whose sake they are true to one another; all their truth to one another is but such a combination as that of several conspirators against their lawful

and rightful prince, who may be true to one another, while they are all false to him. But there is no such thing as truth in the right sense, and that which will turn to their true advantage at last in whom it is found, but when God is made the centre, and they are true to God: if they be true to one another, and not true to God, it is a casualty; they have a disposition in their minds to be false to one another if there be occasion; if they be not true to God, if they be not stedfast in his covenant, if they be towards him "as a deceitful bow," (as it is said of Ephraim) they will not be always true to one another.

And pray let this be deeply considered: Supposing that truth have its primary reference to God, I am devoted to him, and I must be true and faithful; this is then the character of them that are born of him; they that are with the Lamb are chosen and faithful and true; and he saith, "Be thou faithful unto the death, and thou shalt receive a crown of life." Here is their character, they must be faithful to him first, and then by consequence to one another in all their dealings, transactions, conversation, and affairs. Take this for an invariable character of an unregenerate person, he is one that can be false, if it will consist with his interest; if it will serve his other purposes, he can allow himself to be so. If he be true, it is (as was said) a contingency. But take this for the character of a regenerate person, he is true to God first; and because he is so, he dares to be false to no man. And it hath been a method observed by some of the wiser and more refined Pagans, *Qui deus non timet, non curat homines.* (Cicero.) They are liable, one time or another, to prove false to man, that do not fear God. But if the matter do begin there, then is truth a derivation from the divine nature upon such a one; that as God is the God of truth, from whom it comes, and by whom it is inwrought into man, so the children of God, who are born of him, it may be consistently said of them they are children of truth, they are such as have a reverence for truth; it is with them a venerable thing. I would not speak otherwise than I think, or do otherwise than I have said, notwithstanding the lie might be rewarded with the gain of the world. Truth is with them a sacred thing. They that find no such restraint upon their spirits, have nothing of the divine nature in them. I cannot say or do so or so, say otherwise than I think, do otherwise than I have spoken; I find there is a nature in me that withholds me, that prompts me quite otherwise: I can

do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, (according to another larger notion of the truth) I must not, I may not.

This I reckoned of great necessity to be stood upon, fearing that too many may very much misunderstand the notion of religion, while they limit and confine it to the first table only, without letting it have a governing influence upon the affairs that relate to the second. But we are to take both in conjunction. And the error would be the same if men should again confine all their regularity to the rules of the second table too, and think very well of themselves, because they do not transgress those rules. Here is the same danger, and the same fatal error and mistake. But if we will deal safely and righteously, safely for ourselves, and righteously with God, then, I say, we must take the connection of both together; and take all the rules of duty which belong to the second table, as they have their foundation in the first, to wit, in "the love of God, with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our might, and our neighbour as ourselves." These two make up the law and the prophets, and this is nothing else but the work that is abridged and epitomized in regeneration, when the law of God is written in the heart, and transcribed in the inner man, put into "fleshly tables (as the apostle speaks) not by ink and paper, but by the Spirit of the living God." 2 Corin. iii. 3. That is it which is done by regeneration; when God doth beget out of an impure apostate world a holy seed, a divine offspring for himself. Whereas their defection and apostasy lay in the violation of the whole intire law of their creation, their regeneration lies in the renewing the impression of it, turning it into a living law within, not into an audible law or a visible law, that they can hear with ears or read with eyes, but a living law, which they feel and relish with their hearts; their hearts being contempered to it. And he Spirit of God makes no maimed impression, it makes the impression intire and full, so as that all the several parts of that law are expressed together. There are characters that signify each several part, and these are but the several lineaments of the new creature, or the new man, portrayed in the soul by the regenerating Spirit of God.

It greatly concerns us when we consider that the gospel (under the dispensation whereof we live) is the Spirit's instrument in regeneration; and that is part of which we now hear. It is greatly, I say, to be considered, what there is done to this purpose by this gospel upon

our souls. If we never be regenerated by the gospel, we are very unreasonable to expect that God should use any other methods with us. This is the word of the kingdom into which all they that have a real place in it are regenerated; they are born into it, *in regno nati sumus*, as that moralist speaks upon another account. We are born members of this kingdom: and by what means hath he begotten us again? even hereby, by the word of truth. I beseech you let this be seriously and deeply considered. If there be any such thing as regeneration, that is, if there be any such thing as the raising up a divine offspring to God out of this world, that shall not perish when the rest of the world do, it is by this means that the thing is to be done; "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25. Is the gospel preached to us for this purpose, and is the proper design of it to regenerate at first, and nourish afterwards unto eternal life? For *ex iis nutrimur ex quibus constamur*; the same gospel is to both. Methinks it should beget in us the most deeply serious and solicitous thoughts imaginable. What is done upon us to this blessed purpose? Hath any thing heretofore been done? Or do I find any thing yet adoeing? Was nothing done the last year? May it be hoped that any thing shall be done this year? Was nothing done the last Lord's day? Is it not yet to be hoped that somewhat may be done to-day? Do I find my spirit altered? There are great previous dispositions in natural productions, before there is a complete product: What disposition do I find? What tendency towards such a birth? What strivings, what agonies, what pangs are in my soul? Do I reckon I am to be born again, born of God, born from Heaven, and never feel it? Can so mighty a change pass upon my soul as amounts to another birth, to a divine birth, and I never be sensible of it? If such a day as this pass with us, and we feel no such thoughts in our spirits, and are unconcerned, what have we to justify our unconcernedness? Wherewith shall we justify our being unconcerned? We can have nothing as a ground on which rationally to justify us, unless we could tear the whole gospel constitution, unless we could ascertain ourselves

there is no such thing as an heaven or hell; for if there be, and there will be so vast differences in the final states of men, certainly those eternal differences must have their foundation here: as men are distinguished by being regenerate and unregenerate, so they will be for heaven or hell. Sure if there be such two distinct states into which men are to be disposed of by the Supreme and Universal Judge, who cannot but do wisely, and righteously, and holily, it cannot be that men should be disposed of into those states promiscuously, whether they are his children or not his children, as if he would make no difference between those that are born of him, and those that are not born of him, but have lived and died in perpetual rebellion against him, full of enmity and perpetual malignity towards him, whereby they testify themselves never to have been begotten of him, and that they are not like him; as the following words after the text, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." If he begat us, we shall be sure to love him. They that have all their days chosen distance from him, is it a supposable thing God should have begotten any according to his own nature, and they should not love him? Not love to converse with him, love not to be in his presence, to open their hearts to him, to unbosom and pour out their souls before him? Hath God begotten any such unnatural children that can live without him all the day, never come near him, never look towards him, never think of him, that know not what belongs to prayer to him? What can men have to preserve peace and quiet in their souls, but the apprehension—that sure there are no such things as heaven and hell, of which we have heard so much?

But who would run the danger of it? If men do but apprehend the possibility, if they have allowed themselves to attend to that light that makes so clear and bright a discovery of another world, and of those distinct states in it; if, I say, they have not allowed themselves to attend to the light, so as thereby to be ascertained in their own hearts, there is as surely an heaven and an hell as there is an earth (and we have as much reason to be ascertained of the one by believing what is plainly testified, and what the reason of the thing doth evince to us to be true, as we have to be certain of the other from our eye sight,) then all is vain that we say to them.

But if men would but believe all this, then there can be no more reasonable thing in all the world, than to be full

of enquiring thoughts concerning our state, till we arrive to some proportionable certainty concerning it, till we can say, Blessed be God, now I find some of those characters upon me, that speak me one of his children, that spirituality, that life, that power, that knowledge of him and divine things, that wisdom, that holiness, that truth, that will justify me in enumerating myself to the children of God, his family, counting myself among them, and believing that he will count me among them too. But if we find no such characters as these, and yet say we are children of God, we pretend to him, we profess him, that very profession itself is a lie; as is said concerning those false pretenders, Rev. iii. 9, that said "they were Jews, (that is, Christians,) and were not, but of the synagogue of Satan, they do lie." It is a very fearful thing when even a man's profession is a lie. I call myself a Christian, but it is a lie; one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, but it is a lie; for whosoever believeth this, is born of God; but of this I find nothing in myself.

SERMON XLVI.*

I JOHN V. I.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

BUT now I might add in the next place,

Eighthly, It is a creature endowed with a most generous liberty, that disdains, that cannot be patient of servitude; the sons of God must be free born. This is evident, and hath been elsewhere spoken to and opened. But then,

Ninthly, It is a creature of a very peculiar benignity and goodness. Who would expect it to be otherwise? When you hear of a God-like creature born into this world, what would you look to find it, but a creature made up of goodness? The Spirit is the immediate regenerator, the great agent in this work. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John iii. 6. And we are told, Ephes. v. 9, "That the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." It lies in an universal goodness; here is the product, this is that God-like thing that is now produced. When one is said to be born of God, he is a crea-

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ture made up of goodness; it is the production of the Holy Ghost, the Divine Spirit; "and the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." And it is added, "righteousness and truth too," which we have spoken of before. Every one that doth righteousness is born of God, and the children of God are children that will not lie, but abhor falsehood. But they are also an offspring of great benignity, of most extensive and diffusive goodness.

I apprehend it may be worth the while to insist upon this, because that there is not another thing wherein the divine nature and likeness are more expressed and held forth in the work of regeneration than in this thing; in no other respect rather or more than this is God said to be the Father of such, or they to be born of God. And, oh! that we may, I for my part speak, and you hear as those that apprehend the weight and importance of what is now to be spoken; we are in all these things distinguishing the divine seed and offspring from the children of the worst of fathers; and there is no middle state between these two; we must either be born from above or born from beneath; no middle state, speaking of morals, when we speak of naturals we know there can be but one author of nature; but as to morals, two great parents and fathers divide the world, and one of them you must call so. They that are not born of God his own word concludes concerning them, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. But now see wherein a divine production appears and shews itself to be such; here is somewhat begotten, born of God, that appears like God in this, as a thing made up of goodness. And here I shall more distinctly consider,

i. What objects this goodness hath reference to in them. And,

ii. Wherein, or in what exertions it shews itself towards such objects.

i. What objects it refers to. You must still consider that an imitation of the divine goodness; that supposed all along as that wherein this creature is a God-like creature. It is a God-like creature as it is a most beneficent creature; and it being the goodness of beneficence, or beneficent goodness that we are to speak to under this head; we shall have somewhat further under another order of heads, to consider what may admit of the same name, but will be of somewhat a different kind. But our present discourse it is to be confined unto a beneficent goodness, and being so we

are not now at this time to consider God as one of the objects that this goodness hath reference to. "My goodness extendeth not to thee," saith the Psalmist (speaking of such goodness,) Psalm xvi. 2; but, as was said, it being an imitation of the divine goodness, it must respect such objects as divine goodness, which is beneficent, doth respect, and they are of two sorts; there is a more general, and there is a more special object of the divine goodness, as hath been largely shewn upon another occasion. God's goodness hath,

(i.) A general object. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;" so diffusive, so flowing is his goodness, the whole earth is full of it. The whole earth—a more surprising instance of the extensiveness of it could not have been given. The whole earth—this stage of wickedness, where constant rebellions against the Majesty of Heaven have been in continued succession from age to age, and from generation to generation acted. The whole earth is full of his goodness; a thing that should not only convince, but amaze that it should be so.

Why, such is the goodness of this creature that is born of God proportionally extensive—"As you have opportunity, do good unto all men," Gal. vi. 10; a goodness that must flow every where, as far as one can, that must diffuse and spread itself to our very uttermost. As you have opportunity—supposing there be an ability and power, then there needs nothing more than opportunity. If there be opportunity, let this goodness exert itself; this shall shew you a God-like sort of creatures, born of God, bearing his image; he doth good to all—"as you have opportunity do you do good to all."

When he had it in design to raise up to himself a seed, a new creation in the world, it must be understood it should be such as it was fit for him to own as the peculiar parent of this offspring. What? shall I raise up a new seed to be but like other men? Is this like to God? when he was to do a new thing in the world, to raise up a new sort of people, that they should be but just like the old? Think what men are naturally, and as they grow up from the old stock; every one minds his own things, every one is for himself, cares not what becomes of others, what becomes of this world. But this creature, born of God, is of a large comprehensible spirit, it measures with the universe, not narrow, not clung, not contracted; it bounds (comparatively) private interest, my good is the good of the creation. It is spoken as a most

peculiar character of this seed, that when all else do naturally mind their own things, as the apostle speaks concerning Timothy, he doth as naturally mind the things of another, of his neighbour, as if he had no private interest of his own at all. God will have it known that in this second creation of his, this new attempt, when he was to raise up a people, a seed out of a common universal ruin, I will do such a thing in the world as shall make the world look about them, and wonder to behold what new sort of people are sprung up among them. That whereas they have ever himself for his end, himself for his measure, every one being for himself; here is a people that are off from self, a self-denying people, a self-abandoning people, made up of goodness, and making that goodness to flow as far as ever it can; for it is a divine goodness, and they make this goodness disperse like God's, they make it to flow to the uttermost they can.

It must be so, when you consider that this being born of God, and that every such divine birth, doth spring out of believing Jesus to be the Christ: whoso believeth, is born of God, and is a Christian indeed, and honours the Christian name. What, shall the world be Christianized and made nothing the better?—made Christian, and not made good? How unlike God were this!—how mean and low a design would that be! If they be Christians, they must be good men, and so appear born of God: when they are changed, when they become Christians, they become imitators of his goodness; otherwise, how despicable is the performance of the Son of God in this world, when he is to raise up other sons that shall be just as the rest of men are? But then,

(ii.) This goodness it hath a special object too, even as the divine goodness which it imitates hath—"My goodness extends not to thee"—but to whom then? eminently, principally, to the saints that are in the earth, those excellent ones "in whom is all my delight." Psalm xvi. 3. God takes pleasure in his people; he loveth the righteous; he hath a peculiar love, good will, and kindness towards those that he doth regenerate, that are born of him. And so they that are born of him have a peculiar kindness and goodwill unto one another, as the text speaks—"Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth also them that are begotten of him." It cannot but be so, as there is opportunity to do it, good must be done to all, but "especially to those who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. They that bear the same image, that have the same nature, that spring from the same father, and are of the same seed, this goodness must

have a more peculiar reference and tendency to such ; and it will argue our not being of his seed, not being children of this Father, if all be alike to him, if his kindness be not distinct, if he be as well pleased with the conversation of the one sort as of the other. But then,

ii. Besides the consideration of the objects of this goodness, we must consider wherein it shews itself, and in what exertions it appears towards its object—why,

(i.) It appears in sundry negatives ; and they are not to be overlooked, for there are great appearances of this goodness in them, as you will have cause to judge : As,

[i.] In not being apt to harm others. This is goodness, when there is not an aptness to harm another. What, is it to be thought that this creature, born of God, is a mischievous creature, as it were, born to do mischief ? how is that possible ? As our Lord was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, so are they to be,—“ Be ye harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke,” Phil. ii. 15. Mark the connexion, “ the sons of God”—and harmful ? mischievous ?—that cannot be : hath he begot such a sort of creatures into the world to do mischief in it ? no ; such are not of this seed.

[ii.] Much less are they apt to take pleasure in another’s harm : so it is with many other men—it is a pleasant sight to them to behold the mischiefs and misdeeds of others ; but it cannot be so with them that are of this seed. Again,

[iii.] This good appears in an inaptness to do evil for evil. They do not think themselves warranted, Because such an one hath done evil to me, therefore I will do evil to him ; “ not rendering evil for evil,” no, by no means, this cannot agree to this seed, this God-like sort of creatures. Again,

[iv.] They are very inapt to be provoked : this sort of creature is not apt to provocations, as is the character 1 Cor. xiii. 5—“ not easily provoked,” which is a great imitation of God, who is “ slow to anger ;” so must they be, and so they habitually are, “ swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.”

[v.] Much less can they suffer anger and wrath upon provocation to arise to a fixed hatred ; they are quite another sort of men from the men of the world, of whom this is the character, “ hateful, and hating one another,” Titus iii. 3. This cannot belong to this God-like sort of creature, to have a fixed hate for any one, whosoever they be ; no, not the worst enemy in all the world ; the contrary is expressly commanded, and is a law in their very natures, even in reference to the very worst enemy. And,

[vi.] They are not habitually vindictive : not only do they not in fact render evil for evil ; not only do they abstain from this, or not do this ; but much more are they alien from an habitual vindictiveness : to be in the habit of their minds revengeful, oh, this cannot be in this God-like seed ! And,

[vii.] Much less is it possible for them to be implacable : this is again the worst sort of mankind, which is described by this character, implacable ; that cannot be reconciled ; if once there be a grudge it is everlasting, a fixed thing. Oh, this cannot belong to this God-like seed, to be of an irreconcilable spirit, it hath the sum of hell in it, the devil as the parent of it appears in this countenance, nothing more plain ; the very show of that countenance discovers who is the father, an implacable spirit, malicious, vindictive, and then implacable. With this are conjunct other things that we might mention : as envy at the good of another : it is the notion of envy to grieve at another's good : as it is an argument of a most diabolical spirit to rejoice at another's hurt, to take complacency in the harm of another ; so to grieve at the good one hath in himself, or doth possess and enjoy, such an one is better than I, and that grieves me—or such an one doth more good, or possesseth more good than I, and this I am grieved at ; this cannot consist with the divine goodness that appears in this God-begotten creature. But then,

(ii.) This goodness shews itself in positives too, and that more eminently,

[i.] In actual doing good as there is opportunity, and towards both sorts of objects. “To all as there is opportunity, but especially to the household of faith,” Gal. vi. 10. So doth this goodness imitate the divine goodness, he is good and doth good. Never talk of being good if you do no good when there is opportunity. And again,

[ii.] In an habitual propension thereunto, so as to do good with complacency and delight ; so this goodness imitates the divine goodness ; he exerciseth loving-kindness in the earth, because he delights therein ; so doth the good man do good even with delight, tasting and relishing his own act in what he doth. Oh, how sweet is it to do good ! he tastes the relish of it more than the receiver of it doth, incomparably more ; according to that motto of our Lord, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” A more blessed thing, a thing that carries more sweet and savour in it. A man finds a blessedness in it ; he tastes the fruits

of his own doing as a grateful relish. God enables me to do good, to imitate his goodness, and this is refreshing to my soul, this is fruit which, by divine vouchsafement, I am enabled to eat and feed upon: such an one feeds upon his own act, in what he doth in this kind, owning all to grace, as that is called grace that was bestowed on the church of the Macedonians and those Corinthian Christians to whom the apostle did write; he propounds it to them that they might abound, or would labour to excel in the same grace too. Oh, what a pleasant savour hath grace and goodness! Oh, the sweet relishes of it! It would make one wonder indeed to take notice of some expressions of pagans about the pleasure of doing good; in what transports do they sometimes speak of the delights of friendship upon this account, placing all the sweetness of it in the obliging another, so as that it should be impossible for the person obliged to have so pleasant relishes as he that doth oblige. But this must be most peculiarly so in divine goodness: when regeneration makes a good man, produceth a divine creature, his delight is in doing good as God's own is. And hereupon,

[iii.] He doth good for goodness sake; it is its own reward. It is not for vain glory, not for applause, not that he may draw on a good turn afterwards; it is not to gratify such and such, as hoping they may have opportunity afterwards to gratify him; but it is doing good because it is good for goodness itself's sake. This is simple goodness, pure goodness, incorrupt goodness, unbribed goodness. And,

[vi.] It appears in easiness to forgive. If any do evil to me, it is not a task, it is not a difficulty, it is not a penalty to forgive, but as an act of nature when it comes from a good man, from one born of God; for he hath the nature in him that prompts him thereunto, a divine nature imparted to him, so that it is far easier to forgive than to revenge: revenge indeed must needs have upon a rational account more difficulty with such an one, because that requires contrivance, and waiting for an opportunity, and, it may be, setting many instruments on work to effect it. But goodness flows immediately into this act, it is done of myself; but I must employ many others in revenge, and that may be contriving long; but a man never needs any contrivance to forgive, it is a thing done out of hand, the product of a man's soul: this is the goodness of the children of God, those that are born of God with a nature like his own. The regenerate soul, oh, what enmities doth he forgive, and what enemies! How continued, how inveterate,

how often exerted with many through the course of their lives, even almost to the last end of them, so as to leave scarce time of repentance and returning! This readiness to forgive, it is sure a great participation of the divine nature, a direct imitation of God. And then again,

[v.] An aptness to return into amity; for that is a great deal more. There are some that can forgive others, but will never be friends with them any more: an everlasting pique remaining, and they cannot but discover a shyness, a great shyness, shun them, baulk them, decline them, and are apt still to think hardly and speak hardly of them upon all occasions. But the divine nature in the regenerate makes a person apt to the renewal of friendship; they can easily fall in again, who are regenerate; if there have been breaches, if there have been strifes, if there have been fallings out, they can presently fall in, because they have been so taught by nature, by that nature which is imparted to them in being born of God.

These are great things, and they are plain things; it is impossible if there be such a seed born of God but it must imitate the divine goodness, and if it imitate that goodness it must appear in such instances as these—"Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" So we very faintly and defectively render those emphatical words, "will harm you," as if there were a denial of the design or intention or inclination; but it is only a sign of the tense—"who is he that will harm you?" who shall eventually harm you? do that which shall procure you real harm? They shall never (if it be understood aright)—who is that? [you]—not a lump of flesh, but a mind, a spirit, a soul; a being it is true, a body which may be hurt: and yet—*that* not be hurt: "who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers?" What is meant by followers? There is a following by prosecution, as an end; and there is a following by imitation, as a pattern. The word tells us which is meant there; if you be imitators, it shall be in the power of none eventually to do you any harm. Imitators of what? we read of that which is good; it is (of the good) that which is good carries a man's mind presently to apprehend that it is some created goodness that is there spoken of, that we are to follow; but the following being imitation, it is not enough for a man to imitate any created good, be it never so great, never so high, of never so excellent a kind, I must not imitate that good, but be it, have it, possess it. But the expression is of the good, and so there is none good but God,

"none good but one, that is God." I will take care for my own divine seed and offspring that I have in this world ; I will save them from harm, as far as is needful, so as to bring them safe to the everlasting kingdom that I design them to. And why ? and upon what account ?—Because they are mine ; my image is upon them ; they are imitators of the good, they resemble the good, they may call the good, Father.

Objection. But all this while it may be said, What sort of thing are you describing ? a thing fled from our world ? Why, sir, you do but describe an idea, a chimerical thing ; where is there such goodness ? or, where is there such a good sort of creatures to be found ? Sure we must go as high as the regions of bliss to see such a sort of good people.

Answer. Yes, it was this apprehension that made me the more intent to enlarge upon this head, and spend this discourse upon it. This is looked upon as if it were a thing exiled from the world, fled from the earth. But oh ! what a dismal mistake and delusion is it if men will enterain such an imagination, that such goodness is to be found nowhere but in heaven ? No, heaven must be let down into our world, or else it will never have any inhabitants out of it, it prepares its own inhabitants first ; they that are born again are born from above, from heaven. There must be an heavenly descent, a descent of the divine Spirit from above entering the souls of men, forming them, moulding them, renewing them in the spirit of their minds, writing the divine law there ; which in reference to the second table of it is all summed up in this, Love thy neighbour as thyself. Harm another ? Why, I can no more do it than I can harm myself. Take pleasure in another's harm ? I can no more do it than I can take pleasure in my own. Be spiteful towards another ? Am I ever spiteful towards myself ? full of malice towards others ? Am I ever malicious towards myself ? or vindictive or implacable ? Regeneration is the writing of the law of God in the heart, impressing the divine image there ; love to God will come into another order of heads. But this love, wherein we imitate his, is love to others. Love to men, if it have place in no inhabitants of this earth, there is no more going from earth to heaven. Heaven must make inhabitants for itself in our world, who are to be so prepared and formed as to be made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light. In this sad degenerate age wherein we live, indeed such goodness is

apprehended too great a rarity to be thought a reality; it is too rare a thing to be taken for a real thing. A very sad case! as indeed conversions are very unfrequent, and it is a fearful thing to consider how long the gospel may be diffused (which should evangelize the world, and transform men into the divine likeness) before it proves the savour of life! How generally it is a deadly savour is dismal to think! And proportionably instances of a regenerating work are rare and unfrequent. And the regenerating principle (where it is) is low and languishing, is not conspicuous, doth not shine forth. The contraries to it do shew forth themselves in so obvious and frequent appearances, that these evidences and fruits of the divine goodness cannot be seen: as it is a very rare thing for persons to come as returning prodigals, renewed, converted, changed, transformed, and to pour out their tears and lamentations and self-bemoanings into a Redeemer's bosom, and by him to their heavenly Father, so it is proportionably rare for Christians to make such discoveries of a good spirit towards one another, to pour out complaints and tears and self-bemoanings into one another's bosoms: as if there was no such rule as that, confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another; as if that text were thought to have come into the Bible as a casualty, and stood there for nothing. How rare are instances of any such fruit and exemplification of the divine goodness, as to hear it said by any; Oh! friend, Christian brother, I have offended you, I am grieved for it; it grieves me that I have grieved you! Where is this to be found? These things are just such rarities as the return of wandering sinners into the bosom of God through Christ. A sad token of a departing divine Spirit! in a great measure sadly departing, almost gone. Religion would otherwise be another thing; the rules and precepts of it would turn into example more frequently.

But this is one thing, and so great a thing, that it ought not to have been passed over. They that are born of God, bear his image even in this thing, beneficent goodness, a goodness of temper, a benignity which speaks them the children of this Father, so as that their temper cannot change by the greatest malignity that they have experienced, and are many times the subjects of from others. It spends itself upon them, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you;" bless them while they curse you, express the greatness of your kindness, love and concern for

them when they are designing to ruin and undo you. And for what? that ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, that you may appear so, that it may be seen that he hath a divine offspring in this world, Matt. v. 44, 45. He doth good to enemies, otherwise what might become of you? Might it have been said of any of you, Oh, if he did not know how to spare an enemy, nay to oblige an enemy, and conquer an enemy by kindness and goodness, what would become of any of us all.

SERMON XLVII*.

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

Now, if after all that hath been said upon this account, I would give you an epitome, or the description of one born of God by this peculiar character, I could not more fitly give it than out of that thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. If it should be enquired what sort of thing is this divine birth, whereof we heard so much which is to be sought out in this world? Since we hear of such productions among men, what sort of thing is it? or what sort of person is he whom it will denominate to be born of God? a divine and heaven-born creature? If any should imagine with themselves a divine creature among men, what must he be? Is he one that doth excel in eloquence more than human, even seraphical, angelical itself? Is he one that can speak with the tongue of men and angels? Is this he? or is it a man of profound speculation, that can search and penetrate into all mysteries? Is it one that abounds in knowledge, so as to comprehend (as far as it is possible to humanity) all knowledge? Is it he that hath so extraordinary a faith that he can work you miracles every hour of the day, and remove a thousand mountains with a breath? Is it one that is a greater miracle himself in this world in respect of the extraordinary good works which he can induce himself to do? And the greater miracle, for that he can do them without any principle, bestow all that he hath,

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all his goods to feed the poor? Is it one that burns in so hot a zeal for this or that private opinion, this conceit, or fancy of his own, that it hath even set his whole soul on fire, and when that is done can be content to sacrifice his body too, and throw that into flames in defence of his opinion? Is it such an one as this, or is that such a thing, a thing born of God? No; it is such a thing as without which all these are mere nothings, will make a man no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, will turn to no account to him in all the world, profit him just nothing, as the Apostle there speaks.

Well, what then is it? It is an habit of soul made up of goodness. It is when a propension to do good is (as it were) all a man's soul. It is such a sort of thing as whereof divine love (which cannot but be from above, from God himself who is love) is the internal constituent form; which therefore runs out into all suitable exercises, appearances, and demonstrations of itself upon all occasions: it is such a sort of thing as suffereth long, and is kind; the wonder lies in the connexion, suffers long and is kind; that being long (as all good men must expect to be more or less in such an evil world as this is) in a suffering state is not soured thereby, not imbittered, not turned into acrimony, suffers long, and is still kind, full of benignity, patient of any evil done him, but inclined to do none to any other.

It is such a thing that envieth not another man's excellency, nor doth boast his own; envieth not, vaunteth not itself, nor is puffed up; it is such a thing that doth not behave itself unseemly, keeps on a steady course, agreeable uniform course, self-agreeable, and therefore cannot allow itself in that which shall be unseemly, unbecoming, unto a discerning or judicious eye; it is such a thing as will suffer a man to have no private interest of his own in opposition to the common interest of the universal Lord of all, or that shall be in a real or actual competition with the rightful good of any other; seeketh not its own things, is not easily provoked, not apt to take offence, not humourously captious, so as that none knows how to converse with it or take hold of it; it is such a thing as thinketh no evil, neither thinketh evil of others, nor thinks evil against others; neither apt without cause to take up an ill opinion of another, nor lay designs to do him hurt; it is such a thing as rejoiceth not in iniquity, cannot do so, looks upon the evil of other men with regret, wishes it not to be, and never indulgeth any evil inclination of its own unto private advantage, so as to

have the occasion of glorying, this or that I got by an unlawful act, or by pursuing or prosecuting an unjust design and in an undue course, but such a thing as rejoiceth in the truth, in walking uprightly, in a plain and unexceptionable way. It is finally, such a thing as "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This needs no paraphrase: in sum, it is such a thing as carries eternity in its own nature; to wit, when many extraordinary gifts, glittering excellencies, that were designed but to be temporary and to serve some present purpose, shall fail and vanish and fade away; the gift of tongues, of speculative knowledge, miraculous faith, zeal for opinions, and the like; when they shall all fail, this shall never fail, but go into eternity, hath its glory perfected there, as being the greatest of the three things that are here concomitant, faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.

I thus insist that among Christians such a thing as this may not be lightly thought of, as if it were an indifferent and dispensable matter, about which we did not much need to concern ourselves; which is indeed the reproach of the Christian name, and that than which nothing doth more to obstruct and hinder the diffusion and progress of Christianity in the world.

It must recommend itself by its own goodness, and by telling men to their own sense, that it is a thing that betters the world, and which, (so far as it doth obtain and take place) brings men discernibly and tends to bring them into a good and happy state, would make this earth a very heaven might it but generally take place in it. And the consideration of other scriptures makes me think this ought to be the more pressed and insisted upon. I shall turn you to a few (but they are most weighty ones) to our present purpose; and I desire you therefore to weigh them accordingly.

If you look to Gal. v. you will find the contraries to this divine principle strangely matched and sorted; to wit, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, in the 20th and 21st verses; you find them sorted with idolatry, witchcraft, adultery, fornication, heresies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. These do keep company; it seems they are not unfit company for one another, or to be sorted and put together.

Let me carry you to another epistle of this same Apostle, Eph. iv. 30, 31, 32, when he had given that great and

tender charge. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;" he immediately subjoins, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger, and clamour and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all lying." What is the import of all this, but that these things do most directly tend to grieve that Spirit by which we must be sealed (if ever we be sealed up) to the day of redemption; we grieve him whom we expect to comfort us: that is his peculiar title and style, the Spirit of Grace. The pseudo-Christians, or apostates from Christianity (that the Apostle speaks of with so much severity in divers places of that Epistle to the Hebrews) they are such "as crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God, and put him to open shame, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace." The most wicked and mischievous thing in all the world, to spite the Spirit of Grace, the Spirit of all kindness and love, and goodness and benignity. Wherever this work is done, the regenerating work; wherever any are truly said to be born of God, the Spirit is the immediate agent, they are born of the Spirit; being born of water signifies nothing without this. What do you tell me of mere figurative Christianity, mere symbolical Christianity, the sign without the thing! except, besides the being born of water, there be the being born of the Spirit too (signified by that water) you can never enter into the kingdom of God, can never so much as see it: whatsoever tends to spite this Spirit which regenerates, doth certainly very ill agree with the regenerating principle, with the work of regeneration itself; nothing can be more unsuitable to our being born of God than to cherish and indulge that in himself which spites and vexeth and grieves that Spirit which is the immediate agent in his regeneration.

If I should carry you yet a little further to another of that Apostle's epistles, Coloss. iii. "Having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;" then put on "as the elect of God (holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. But above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which also ye are called in one body; and be thankful." It is a rebellion against the divine call by which we are called in one body to indulge

ourselves in the contraries to the before enjoined things, bowels of mercy, kindness, forgiveness, and the like.

And you may see how agreeably the holy men of God speak about these things one to another. Let me but lead you to what we find from another Apostle, James iii. 13. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." Here are two opposite principles, that which makes the import of this context the more apparently weighty, and of the greatest importance imaginable: the one is said to be from above, and the other from beneath; the one is therefore the regenerate principle, belonging to the new nature unto this divine birth; and the other fetcheth its parentage from hell, so vastly disagreeing, so directly opposite are these two, not as heaven and earth, but as heaven and hell itself. If you have bitter envyings and strife in your heart, glory not, this wisdom is not from above (this same genius, this spirit, wisdom and folly being the characters of good men and bad in the ordinary language of scripture) this wisdom that is cognate with evil. Envy and strife and wrath and bitterness, is of no heavenly descent, it descends not from above, it hath no kindred, no alliance with those calm, serene, pure, and peaceful regions. No; quite contrary, but it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, so that in contests there will not be a perpetual insisting, inflexibly, I am in the right, and I will not yield an hair: and the other as stiff as he, No, I am in the right, and I will yield as little as you. This wisdom is not from above, it is from beneath; that which is from above is easy to be entreated, can tell how to yield when it is opportune, and when the case manifestly requires it. And so the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace (that hath agreeable soil wherein it will take) with them that love peace.

And to bring you back at last to this same Apostle from

whom we took our text; do but look back to the third chapter of this epistle, how mighty a stress is laid upon this one thing, divine love among Christians as brethren. "We know that we have passed from death to life, in that we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." And I have told you in the beginning of this discourse, that it ought to be remote from us to think him only a brother that is of our own opinion or persuasion, or party. But as all are brethren upon one common account, so go to the more peculiar and special account, all good men are brethren upon that account, all that bear the same divine image, all that do appear born from above. And he that so loveth not his brother, abideth in death. A killing word it should be unto the contrary principle, that is apt to break forth in continual vexations and grievous things towards them that are brethren.

And if you look back in the same chapter, to the tenth verse, you see what his theme is: he is distinguishing those that are born of God from the rest of the world. "Whosoever is born of God," verse 9, doth not commit sin; doth not industriously set himself to pursue or persist in an evil and forbidden course, doth not make sin, is not a worker of iniquity, that is not his trade (as many men's callings are denominated from the things they make,) one in whom wickedness is the governing thing, and with whom it is an habitual thing, it runs through his life: but he that is born of God is no sin-maker, is not a worker of iniquity. But how are such distinguished from them that are not such? Why, in this the children of God (that are born of God) are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Taking this in as a matter so intimately conjunct with the divine life, wheresoever it is, love to one's brother, the children of God, and the children of the devil, are manifest in this; to wit, that they who are the children of God, they do work righteousness; he that doth not so is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother; he hath that principle in him that speaks him to abide in death, the divine life hath not yet obtained, hath not yet a place in him.

Objection. But it may be said, It is impossible that the regenerating spirit should exist and have being at all where these contraries are to be found?

Answer. In short, it must be said, not where they govern, not where they ordinarily prevail, this divine creature of

which I am speaking, this creature born of God, take it in the whole complex of it, it is so Christ-like a thing, that sometimes in scripture it bears his very name, it is called Christ, "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. And if you will consider it in its similitude to Christ, and under that name (as the scripture doth warrant us, even to place the very name upon this thing) then where it is amidst these prevailing contraries (as they may be for the present prevailing, though they do not habitually prevail) it may be (as I may say) Christ crucified, Christ in torture, Christ nailed on the cross, and Christ put to open shame, where such things do appear, break forth, and come in view: nothing is more plain. So that of all things in the world that can come under common notice, this is what Christians should abhor from, and studiously take care of, that if they will name that worthy name, if they will court to be denominated by it, they may not reproach that name, and throw dishonour and infamy upon him whose name they bear; as if Christianity were to get nothing but ignominy by their being called Christians.

This, therefore, is a further resemblance of God that is to be found in them that are born of him; or that we must expect to be impressed upon the divine birth, it is a creature (as it were) made up of goodness.

I shall go on with some other that yet remains to be spoken to.

Tenthly, This creature, born of God, it is evidently characterized by its constant aspirings to the perfection of the heavenly state; and therein it hath the image on it of his divine Parent, whom we are taught to consider and conceive of as having his glorious residence above, as the re-manifesting and displaying his glory, and most fully communicating himself; and are taught when we apply to him, to apply to him under that notion, as our Father who is in heaven. And this same divine principle is itself from above; he that is born (*ανωθεν*) from above, it is he only that can see, can enter into the kingdom of God: this divine principle prompts them to look upwards.

There is therefore a character of heavenliness upon this creature. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (says the Apostle Peter) who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope (hope is there objectively taken, as the next words put in opposition do shew) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for

us." This creature, as it is born from heaven, so it is born to heaven, or for heaven. There is an heavenliness impressed upon it, thither it tends, thither it breathes, thither it aspires, flies upwards as the sparks do, it labours to be gathered up into the region of good souls and spirits, where all are perfected together. They that have received the first fruits of the Spirit do groan (aspire within themselves) waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body, that is waiting for the ultimate perfection of the state they are born for and designed unto. They that have received the first fruits of the Spirit, to wit, all the regenerate, as soon as they come to be regenerate, they have received the first fruits of the Spirit, then they begin to aspire, as soon as they are born they breathe, and as soon as they breathe they breathe upwards, heavenward. They that have received the first fruits of the Spirit do groan inwardly, or within themselves, for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body; they aspire for this, and for the state that doth belong to them as sons, and the perfection of it.

It is to be observed that adoption in the theological sense of it may be taken two ways, as in the civil we find that among the Romans there were two sorts of adoptions, or two degrees of it rather. There was first the private adoption, when any did give but some private intimation or signification that he intended to take such an one for his son, but there was afterwards the public or forensick adoption, when the person was adopted by such an one *in foro*, when it was made a public act, and accordingly inrolled in their public records. And so is the complete and consummate glory of the resurrection, of the risen state, here called the adoption. Another verse in that viii. Rom.—19, compared with verse 23, calls it the manifestation of the sons of God, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the time and season for the manifestation of the sons of God: when they shall be owned to be his sons, when it shall be openly declared and known who they are. And this is the state that they who have received the first fruits of the Spirit do aspire to; so as to be content with nothing beneath, or on this side that: I am born an heir to glory, or the ultimate perfection of that state to which I am born, and whereof by divine designation I am capable, to that I aspire, and can take up with nothing beneath it, nothing short of it. They that continually grovel in the dust of this earth, never think an higher or a nobler thought, are these born of God? are these of the divine offspring? What an inconsistency and

absurdity is that! They that perpetually mind earthly things, have no business in this world but to feed, and dress, and please their flesh, without any thought or concern for the immortal spirit. Are they born of God? No; they that are so born, so well born, have aspirations suitable to the nobility of their birth and parentage, thither they aspire.

But as the things hitherto mentioned are imitations or resemblances of God, in respect of such of his excellencies as are wont to pass under the name or notion of communicable for the most part, I shall name some more that go under the notion more strictly of incommunicable, wherein, though there is not that similitude, yet there is some correspondence: as with respect to the infiniteness of God, I shall give an instance therein. And with respect to his self-sufficiency, under that head I shall only speak to these two things; and though there is not so proper a similitude and likeness, yet there is some correspondence in this divine birth, as such things as these belonging to the very being of God. As there is,

Eleventhly, An unlimited largeness of spirit; not infiniteness in the positive sense, but a negative sort of infiniteness, of unboundedness, in particular respects that I shall mention to you.

i. There is an unlimitedness, so as not to be confined to this present world. No, saith one that is born of God, it is too little a thing, too scant a thing. One born of God hath thereupon a spirit too big for all this world. As that worthy said, I earnestly protested I would not be put off with such a portion. This earth is too little a thing for me, (saith one that is born of God,) I cannot be confined to it. Nor,

ii. Can such an one be confined to time: his prospect is still larger, he looks forward, "he seeks for honour, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life." Rom. ii. 7. And,

iii. He is not confined in respect of any degrees of truly divine knowledge and grace, he never knows so much in that kind but he still covets to know more; and he never hath so much of grace and the image of God, but he still affects to have more. And,

iv. He is unconfined in respect of service unto him whose he is, unto his divine Parent. It is his interest, I must serve while I have any being. And he always thinks he hath never done enough if he hath done much, for he reckons himself still under obligation to do more. So it is with one that is born of God. And then,

Twelfthly, He resembles God in his self sufficiency. This

most incommunicable attribute of the Divine Being, to be self-sufficient. One that is born of God hath a subordinate self-sufficiency, to wit, by gracious vouchsafement he hath that in himself, with which he is content: not in exclusion to God, but to inferior things, to the creature. The good man is satisfied from himself, he is constituted a fountain to himself. Prov. xiv. 24. A fountain fed from an higher fountain. God hath made him a living spring within himself, so that he needs not another; doth not need to depend upon this or that, or the other creature; so as to reckon that if he lose that he is undone. As that wretch cried out, "Ye have taken away my gods, (meaning his idols,) and what have I more?" Every unregenerate person hath some such idol or other, which he reckons his all. Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? When the world is gone, when honour and grandeur are gone, when wealth and riches, this or that pleasant seat gone, Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? No, the regenerate soul hath learnt that doctrine, *ne* I do not need to range, to forage; if I can enjoy God at home in my own soul, I have enough. Such a kind of self-sufficiency as that of Jacob, he had all; when Esau compliantly said to him, "I have enough;" but I, saith he, have all. So the apostle, Phil. iv. 18, "I have all, and abound." Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; there is the emphasis. Thou shalt have my presence, God will always render himself present, will never leave them, nor forsake them. Therefore be content with what you have. There is a self-sufficiency belonging to a good man, in exclusion to external good things, he can live without them.

But how will your body live without them? Why, may such an one say, I can live with that, I am such a sort of creature, as can be in the body, and be out of the body; it is not necessary for me to live in this flesh, my God is my all, and he is pleased to join himself intimately, inwardly to me, and in him I have all. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides thee.

These are so many manifest imitations and resemblances of God that are to be found in this divine creature, who is born of him; and all these things (as you might take notice) do belong to this regenerate, heaven-born soul, as God is his Parent. But (as I told you) the relation is mutual, out of this divine birth results the relation, and relation is mutual

between God and them. He is a Father to them, and they children to him; paternity and filiation do enforce one another. Is God a Father to them? Then he must in begetting them, and when they are born of him, impress on them such characters as resemble him. But then are they also his children, then must there be also such things found in them as do answer their relation to God as such; there must be childlike dispositions towards him of whom they are begotten. Several things will come under that head; as the dependance of children, the love of children towards their Father, they love him that begat, there is love immediately towards him that begat them. To pretend to be born of God, and not love him, is of all things the most contradictory, absurd, and self-confuting pretence. Then there is the reverence of him as their Father; honour thy father and mother. If I be a father, where is my honour? There must be obedience to him as their Father. Children, obey your parents in the Lord; and be subject to the Father of spirits, that you may live. It is mortal to you not to be subject; to rebel is to die; to disobey is to declare yourself none of the family, it is even to protest against the relation.

The mentioning of all these things, one would think, should occasion many throbbing hearts among us. If God have such a work as this to do in this world, to raise up a divine offspring to himself among men; and if that gospel which he hath sent is to be the regenerating instrument. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth," Jas. i. 18, that we might be a nobler sort of creatures. A more glorious sort than the rest of the misereant world are: if the case be so, then while I live under the gospel, which is appointed on purpose for begetting children to God, what do I find done upon my soul? What impressions are there, wherein I do differ from other men? Is there no difference between the children of God and the children of that other father, that worst of fathers? Is there no difference between heaven and hell? Some do think we can confound and mingle them. Oh, methinks, it should cause great palpitations of heart. What do I find inwrought into my soul, that looks like a divine nature? One born of God, and that may suit and answer the end for which he sent his Son to be a Jesus, and Jesus to be a Christ in this world, by faith to be acknowledged and owned as such? That must be an high and noble design! It challengeth very deep and searching thoughts of heart to be employed about it. What

is doing of it in my soul? When we see how little is done, how little effect the gospel hath, what a miscarrying womb it is for the most part, it may make many a sad misgiving heart among us. What, hath God no children to raise up in our days, and in this part of the world? Hath he done with the converting of souls? Begetting and regenerating them in his own image, when they go from day to day, from week to week, and from year to year, with the same unregenerate hearts, just what they were under the ministration which is appointed to minister life and spirit to souls? To remain still the same that one was, what will the issue of this be? What, if time should expire with us now?

SERMON XLVIII.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I shall now return to what was the last time only intimated; to wit, That as this being born of God doth not only infer that he is a Father to them, and that, therefore, he must in this work beget such things in them as do resemble him; so herein also they become children to him; and therefore in this work there must be such impressions made in them, and upon their spirits, as are suitable to their relation as children; childlike dispositions towards him as their Father, must be understood to be inwrought; and they are such as these.

First. An high honour and reverence for him. This is suitable to their state as children born of God, that they have high and honourable thoughts of him. If parents, as such do claim this from their children, most of all the supreme Parent must. It is even, in reference to inferior relatives in this kind and under this denomination, a law of nature. Honour thy father and thy mother. It cannot be supposed, that they that are born of God should be so unnatural children to their divine and heavenly Parent as not to have him in the highest honour. "If I be a Father, where is mine honour," saith he, Mal. i. 6. It requires to be deeply and sadly considered under what notion are we here: Is it not under the notion of God's children? To pretend ourselves to be such, and not to have the highest veneration and honour for our

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divine Parent, is a contradiction and a mockery ; it is an interpretative disowning and disclaiming the relation. It is more than saying, it is a signifying practically, that we are none of his children, if we most highly honour him not in our hearts and souls. What must be said in this case by them who go from day to day, and not so much as a thought, least of all a great thought, an adoring and honouring thought of that God whose children they pretend to be !

Secondly. Another childlike disposition towards him that must be in them that are born of him, is a depending disposition ; their hearts being formed to dependence. There is nothing more childlike than to depend upon a parent, the wisdom of a parent, the care and conduct of a parent, this is childlike. Do I say I am born of God ? Do I then live a depending life ? How is the habit of my soul ? Is it formed to dependence if I in every thing contrive for myself without reference to him ; never thinking I have a Father above that concerns himself in my affairs ? doth this speak being born of God, or doth it not speak quite contrary ? Trusting him with all our concerns, is that which such a relation claims, and doth involve and include in it, which therefore implies, that nothing can be so agreeable and (as it were) connatural unto the spirit of one born of God, as a praying disposition ; for that is a depending disposition ; if prayer be not a mere form, and nothing else, a piece of empty formality, it must carry dependence in it. It is no prayer wherein there is not dependence and expectation still included. To them that are God's children nothing can be more agreeable than to live a prayerful life, to be much in prayer ; this is dependence, this speaks dependence, in every case presently to run to our Father. " I will go and spread all before him : for my love, they are my enemies, but I give myself to prayer, saith the Psalmist." Ps. cix. 4. So we translate it, but there is no more in the Hebrew text, but " I prayer," as if he were all composed of prayer, made up of prayer ; let other men take their own courses, (as if he had said,) this is mine, I am for prayer.

It is under this notion that our Saviour directs prayer, (which also in the days of his flesh he so much practised himself,) " When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door, and pray to thy Father that seest in secret, and he shall reward thee openly." Matt. vi. 6. What, have I a Father, and shall I not pray to him ? A Father in heaven, a heavenly Father, and not pray to him ? What a self-contradicting pretence is that in them that say, God is their

Father, that they are born of him, but know not what belongs to prayer, and to that dependence upon him which is exprest in prayer ! And there are two things, or two heads of things, in reference whereunto this dependence is to have its exercise, to wit, in reference to our present and temporary concernments, and in reference to our future and eternal concernments.

i. In reference to our present and temporary concernments here in this world : The dependence of a child will not allow him to be excessively solicitous ; so to torture himself with vexatious cares, to take thought with anxiety what he shall eat, and drink, and put on ; for after all these things do the Gentiles seek : to wit, with anxiety, as if the press and weight lay wholly upon themselves, “ but your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.” Matt. vi. compared with Luke xii. 36. Why, have you not a Father, and doth he not know what you need ? You are to use a prudent care in the way of your duty ; but you are not to use a tormenting care, a care that doth no good, but hurt only : a care that cannot add one cubit to your stature. Take heed of such a care, it doth not consist with the relation of children to an heavenly Father. And,

ii. In reference to our eternal concernments. “ Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Do not fear. Are you the children of such a father, and will not your father provide for you as his own children ? Yes, he will provide for you after the rate of a kingdom ; he will make you communicate in the kingdom, if you depend upon his pleasure. And it is a thing he doth with pleasure. He pleaseth himself in it, in that display and manifestation of his glory, and munificent bounty. I will now declare openly to the world that I own these for my children ; then is “ the manifestation of the sons of God,” (as the expression is Rom. viii. 19.) When all the sons of God are to have an open, compleat, formal, magnificent adoption declared before angels and men. This is that which the depending spirit of his children prompts them to expect. And they exercise dependence this way, and exert it upon this account in reference to their eternal concernments. I find there are no great things to be had here in this world, by which God distinguisheth his children from other men ; he doth not distinguish them by what they are to possess and enjoy of external good things here ; and they are taught to lay no great stress upon any such things ; but they are taught to depend upon a kingdom for ample provision hereafter, wherein he will deal

with them like a God. And it is their Father's pleasure to give them this kingdom, and upon this they are to depend. It will go well enough with me hereafter, and therefore I am little solicitous what occurs to, or befalls, me in my present transient state. Again,

Thirdly. Another child-like disposition that must be found in them that are born of God, is love. Love to him as their Father. He is an unnatural monster, and not a child, that doth not love his father and parent : and you see how express the words of this very verse are to this purpose, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." You see how this is connected with what goes immediately before, taking it for granted, that he that "is born of God, loveth him that begat him." It is not affirmed, but supposed ; it is not directly affirmed, as if it needed an affirmation. This being obvious to every one's view and thoughts, that for all them that are born of God, they must love him that begat them, a thing that follows of course. Are you born of God ? Then you do love him that begat you.

And whereas we are told (as you have had sometimes occasion given to take notice, chap. iii. of this epistle,) "by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The children of God cannot be manifest in distinction from them that are of another parentage, in any thing more than this, their "loving him that begat." Loving him of whom they are born, as it is a trying, so it is, and ought to be a satisfying character in them in whom it is found. If they are to judge of their estate, Am I one born of God, yea or no ? They may comfortably conclude well concerning this, I find a divine love springing in my soul towards him, my love working Godward, working upward shews me my descent, of whom I am, who it is that begat me. Oh, the wretched case of those souls that cannot evince their relation to God as their Father, as being born of him by such a character as this. Do I say God is my Father ? Alas, I love him not, I have no love for him. If it be said, as Christ tells the Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you," how must that sink the soul and spirit of that man, in him that pretends to that relation to God as a father, when his own heart testifies that he loves him not ?

Love to the most obvious exertions of that love, wherein it discovers and manifests itself. Many might be spoken of, and have been heretofore. I shall only mention these

two at present, delight in his converse, and concern for his interest: these are expressions of a child-like love to God as a father.

i. Delight in his converse. Have I any love for him as my father, when I cannot endure to be conversant with him? When I decline his presence, I keep up no intercourse with him, I live a wandering life. Is this like a child of God, one born of God? Oh, sadly consider it, and take it to heart! We hear this day of such trials as these; but we shall know and see a trying day at last, that must put the everlasting differences between those that were born of God, and those that were never born of him. And even now, if we do but state a judgment day in our own souls, and erect a tribunal there, what can carry more evidence and convictiveness in it than this, if we would but deal impartially with ourselves. Upon this question, do I love the divine presence, yea or no; is he my father, and do I flee his presence, and care not to be in it, when I have no pretence of necessity? I cannot pretend a necessity to be out of his presence, as a child may have to be out of his earthly father's presence. He cannot always be there; but the matter admits of no excuse or pretence,—it can be resolved into nothing but disaffection. I may be in the presence of God more, but I will not. You may be with him as soon as you can think a thought. Here is nothing to be said in this case, but an aversion of heart keeps you off from him. And what? Is he your father, and will you say you are born of him? How can a man satisfy his mind, his judgment, and conscience, in such inconsistencies and contradictions as these. And,

ii. Concern for his interest. This is child-like love to be deeply concerned, whether he be feared or no, honoured or no, obeyed or no, in those that are indeed his children. How doth such affection as this, a filial affection, child-like love, discover itself? How is it wont to do so? "Horror hath taken hold of me (saith the Psalmist,) because of the wicked that forsake thy law. I saw transgressors, and was grieved. Rivers of tears run down my eyes, because of the wicked that transgress thy law." This is a filial sense, the sense of a child, of one born of God; but to feel no regret in a man's spirit, when the contempt of our father discovers itself openly in the face of the sun, when we are so repeatedly told every day, which way soever we look or listen, our father hath little interest in the world, he is little regarded, men little concern themselves whether he is pleased or displeased; for men to have hearts as

stones, unconcerned, never affected in such cases as these, is this child-like? Doth this carry the signification with it of my being a child of God, born of him? Again,

Fourthly. Another child-like disposition towards God as a father, which must be in them that are born of him, is a subject-spirit, an obediential frame of spirit towards him. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Eph. vi. 1. A due obedience even to earthly parents, the fathers of our flesh, not of our souls (they were never capable of producing such a thing in us as an intelligent immortal spirit,) yet this is a right challenged unto them. And what? Is it not a right to our celestial Father, to obey him and to be subject to him? To be willingly and of choice under his government, under his rule and law? He that is the parent of our life and being, he that hath given me a being, shall not he give me a law? He that hath given me a spirit, shall not he give me a command to be received from his mouth? Oh, when a man's life is nothing else but rebellion, insolent rebellion, will not such an one be confounded within himself, if he be put to answer the question, Is God your Father? Are you one of his children, or are you not? "How much more (saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 9,) shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" You have had fathers of your flesh (saith he,) and they chastised us, and ye gave them reverence: shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? How came I to have a spirit in me, an intelligent immortal spirit, such a sort of being as can think, that is by so noble powers distinguished from a clod, a piece of clay? How came I to have such a being? And if there be a superadded divine principle, so as that God is my father, not only having fashioned my spirit in me, put an immortal understanding spirit in me, but by giving a principle of holiness also in superaddition thereunto; I am under a double obligation to him to own him as my Father; and then shall I not be in subjection to the Father of my spirit! And when life lies upon it, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? What doth that imply, but that it is mortal to disobey, mortal not to be subject? If you will not be subject, ye die for it; every one must be subject or perish. Subjection and perdition, they are the disjunctive, and between them any one may make his choice. Oh, what shall they say, that have never yet had hearts taught to obey, formed to subjection? That despise to be governed, that live after their own will, that contest for the governing power with him that gave

them breath, saying in practice, I will not obey, I will live as I list, I will chuse my own way and course. This cannot stand with this relation; it cannot stand with being born of God; it cannot stand with the foregoing character last mentioned, love to him, filial love to him; "For this is the love of God (as you see presently in the context,) that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." This is the sense of a child, one born of God (as the next words again do import,) "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." Therefore his commandments are not grievous to such an one; he is "born of God," he hath a divine nature in him, that contempts him to the law and commands of God, so that he counts nothing grievous that God commandeth. When every thing that he commands, and the whole state of his government is looked upon as a grievance, it is a grievance to be under the restraint of his law, that I may not live as I list, that I may not indulge inclinations, covetous inclinations, wrathful inclinations, envious inclinations, vindictive inclinations; no, I cannot be governed, I must have my will. Then you are no child, then you are not born of God. He is not your father, if you will not be ruled; indeed he despiseth that obedience that proceeds not from love. "This is the Love of God, that we keep his commandments;" to obey him placidly and of choice, so that this is the sense of the soul, I had rather obey than not obey. It is a privilege to be under his government. If this be not the sense of the soul, it is the absurdest contradiction imaginable to pretend to be born of God; it is a pretence that overthrows and destroys itself, to say I am born of God, but I will not be ruled by him.

Thus far you have an account what this being born of God imports; and now you have both parts of the text in some measure opened—what it is to believe Jesus to be the Christ, and what it is to be born of God. Now, that which in the next place was proposed to be also spoken to according to the order of discourse, is,

II. The connexion between these two. And I shall upon this head endeavour these two things,

1. To shew that there is a connexion, a most firm connexion between them. And then,

2. To shew you the grounds of it.

1. That there is such a connexion; which is but indeed to evince the truth of the assertion which the text contains, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." To evince to you the connexion between these two,

is but to evince the truth of the thing asserted, and which is but the same thing in sense with this, that there is no such thing as an unregenerate believer: that with true believing, regeneration is co-extent. Nobody doth justly bear the name of a believer of this, that Jesus is the Christ, of a believer in Christ, but one that is born of God; or that any other believing that Jesus is the Christ, not accompanied with regeneration, goes for nothing, if I should never so peremptorily avow it, that I believe Jesus to be the Christ, and yet am not born of God, it avails me nothing, it signifies nothing to me. I had as good have said nothing, as to say I believe Jesus to be the Christ, if I be not born of God; nothing as to any valuable purpose that can serve. This is that, in the first place, I am to evince to you, that there is such a connexion between these two, and it is to be evinced by sundry considerations, which I shall endeavour to set before you. As,

(1.) Other scriptures do most expressly say the same thing. Look at John i. 12, 13. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Again,

(2.) The relation of sonship to God is connected with this faith, and therefore the participation of that nature in respect whereof we are said to be born of God, must be connected with this faith also: for it is not to be supposed that adoption and regeneration can be separated: whom God adopteth he regenerateth; whosoever believeth, he adopteth. This is the strength of the argument of the consideration that I am now offering to you. Do but look back a little to the 23d and 24th verses of the 2d chapter of this epistle, and you find that it is upon this faith that God owns us as his children, or our having an interest in him as our father doth depend, to wit, "that Jesus is the Christ." Upon our owning of this truth (if it be sincerely and truly owned) this is the consequence, that we now have God for our father: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son (this is manifestly meant though not expressed in our copies, and therefore you have it subjoined in a different character) hath the Father also." That acknowledgeth the Son—How? That he is the Christ (as all the drift of the apostle sheweth) he hath the Father, he hath God for his father, he hath no father else; but with having an interest in God as his father, his being related to God as his child, is the participation of the divine nature, connected; as you see in the close of the

same chapter, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Whereupon it immediately followeth, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:" See the series of discourse here: in the latter part of that second chapter, "he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also;" God is his father; he may say, I have a father, an heavenly Father, I have God for my Father: if he acknowledge the Son, believe him to be the Christ, if he sincerely do so. But observe, what the character of such an one must be, he must be able to evince that he is born of God, by doing righteousness as he is righteous; that he hath an holy rectitude invrought into his spirit, which is become the fixed habit of his soul; otherwise it is an absurd pretence that he is born of God, or that he hath God for his father. And the same thing is as manifest in that mentioned John i. 12, 13; he that receiveth him hath the privilege presently to be called the son of God. But doth that privilege go alone? or, is sonship to God an empty relation? or, hath that relation no foundation? Yes, it hath a foundation—"which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If they are believers in his name, they are sons, they are called sons, they are presently in that relation. But how in relation? is it a nominal relation only? no; but a real one; founded upon being born of God, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That is a second consideration to evince this connexion, to wit, that relation goes with this faith, and therefore the participation of a suitable nature must go with this faith also; for adoption and regeneration cannot be separated. And,

(3.) Exemption from condemnation—that hath a certain connexion with the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; and therefore regeneration must be certainly connected therewith too. They that have this faith are exempt from condemnation, "shall not come into condemnation, but have passed from death unto life," as our Saviour speaks, John iii. 24. And who are they that are exempt from condemnation? according to the determination we have so positively set down, Rom. viii. 1, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." You know that there is no being in Christ Jesus, but by believing in him, believing him to be the Christ with such a faith as thereupon drawing the soul into union with him. But do

you think that any are exempt from condemnation besides the regenerate, or those that are born of God ?

(4.) Title to eternal life and glory is connected with this faith; and therefore regeneration must be connected with it too : “ He that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life.” He that believeth with this faith hath that life in possession which shall be everlasting life, as one end of the thread that runs into eternity; that life that admits of no intermission, but hath the beginnings of it already—“ he that believeth in me shall never die,” as our Saviour saith, John ii. 26. He hath that life in him that shall never expire. But can any think they have an actual title to eternal life, to the glories hereafter to be revealed, who are not sons, who are not born of God? It is an inheritance, and who shall inherit but sons? it is called so many and many times. 1 Pet. i. 3, the apostle solemnly blesseth God for “ having begotten them again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” The title to this everlasting blessedness and glory and life is connected with this faith; but it is plain it is also connected with sonship to God; and therefore it is equally connected with regeneration, wherein the sonship hath its foundation, for none can be sons that are not born of him.

(5.) Both this faith and regeneration do owe themselves to the same primary sovereign cause, the divine Spirit, which shews them most strictly to be connected. This faith is from the Holy Ghost, and this new birth is from the Holy Ghost also; there is but one cause of both, they are produced by the agency of one and the same Spirit, and therefore cannot but be connected. This faith, wherever it is, is a God-begotten thing; it is a thing that is of divine descent. When the apostle Peter owns Christ so expressly, Matt. xvi. 16, 17, “ Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,” (which is the faith the text speaks of)—“ And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” And how plainly are we told, 1 Cor. xii. 3, “ No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, (which is the same thing as to say, he is the Christ; Lord being the known title of the Mediator’s office, and of the Messiah in the New Testament, and in many places of the Old) but by the Holy Ghost.” And is not the same Holy Ghost the immediate author of the work of regeneration? “ Except a man be born again”

of the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The same Spirit that begets faith, the same Spirit regenerates the soul into the divine image and likeness by which they are born of God. And,

(6.) The same gospel is the means of the one and the other, of begetting this faith, and of this same divine birth. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," of the gospel; and it is the same gospel, as the means, that souls are regenerate and born again. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James i. 18; and 1 Pet. i. 23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," that word "that liveth and abideth for ever"—when all flesh, as the grass, withers; "and this is that word," (saith he) "which by the gospel is preached unto you." It is by it you are born again, so that there is a connexion too in the secondary, or instrumental cause, the gospel, as well as in the first and most noble cause, the Spirit of God.

(7.) There is a connexion in one and the same effect, as for instance, victory over the world. Every one that is a sincere believer is a victor over this world too. You may see both a little below the text in this same chapter, "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? or, the Christ, which is all one. And then there is,

(8.) A connexion in respect of the end of the one and the other. What any are supposed to be brought to by this faith, it can never be brought about, or the end at which that agency can never be attained, but by intervening regeneration. Why is God so solicitous to have men brought to this faith in this world? Why were there commissions so early given forth for christianizing the world? "Go, and teach all nations"—and let this be the sum of what is taught—"Repent and believe the gospel." Why is this faith to be spread through the world? It was certainly for the honour and glory both of the Father and the Son; but shall either be glorified by having in this world only an unregenerate race, professing faith in Christ, but being like other men? More may be said of this hereafter. But, oh! that in the mean time it might be seriously thought of, what we live under the gospel for, and what we are called unto the Profession of the christian name for? No valuable end can be so much as thought of, that will even be reached

without being born of God. I know not what God is doing among us at this day ; we hear little, in comparison, of his ways on souls, what is done upon the hearts and spirits of men ; we know the Christian name is generally professed among us, we all go under one denomination of Christians ; but, oh ! think, think again and again, what an unregenerate Christian will come to at last ! a Christian, and not born of God ! a Christian, and nothing of the divine nature in me, no likeness to God, no filial disposition towards him. If we have a gospel amongst us that hath made us nothing else but Christians in name, nominal Christians, shall our felicity hereafter be like our Christianity here ? Will we be content with that ? Will the shadow of heaven serve our turn ? That will prove a real hell. And there will be a like reality in our heaven as there is in our Christianity.

SERMON XLIX.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

WE shall now go on to shew in the next place,

2. What connexion this is ; or, to let you see how these two are connected with one another—Believing “Jesus to be the Christ,” and being “born of God.” And, to any thinking, considering mind, this cannot but be a very desirable thing, when we meet with such a positive affirmation as this, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God,” to be able to perceive the very juncture, the very point of coincidence, between these two, wherein they do meet, and (as it were) run into one another ; for otherwise it may seem strange to have the one of these so expressly affirmed of the other. And one that hath no discerning of this same juncture may say, How should this be, that there should be such an assertion of so great a thing concerning them that do “believe Jesus to be the Christ?” This seems to be one of the easiest things in the world, to believe Jesus to be the Christ. And I would fain know (may such an one say) how it should come to pass, that a man cannot believe Jesus to be the Christ, but he must have so great a thing as this said of him, that he is born of God ? Wherein hath the

* Preached August 12, 1694.

one so much to do with the other, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God?

That alone which makes the matter seem strange and difficult is, that men generally have too low thoughts of this same faith. This believing in particular Jesus to be the Christ, the difference lies here, whether this believing is to be reckoned a divine, or merely an human thing: If it be looked upon as a thing of mere human original, then any body would wonder that upon one's believing Jesus to be the Christ, such a thing as this should be said of him, he is born of God, the greatest thing sure that can be said of a mortal creature! But we are taught to reckon this faith to be a divine thing, of divine original. When the apostle Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, professeth this faith, Who am I? saith our Saviour? whom do ye say I am? (when there were various opinions of the people about him at that time, and some said one thing and some said another) but "whom do you say that I am?" Why, saith Peter, "thou art Christ the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. And then in verse 17, our Saviour replies, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:" thou art a blessed man. Why is he blessed for this? "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." All the question is, whether this faith we have about this thing be a self-sprung faith, or an heaven-sprung faith; if it be self-sprung, then it is only the product of flesh and blood, but flesh and blood cannot reach so high as to produce any such faith as this, neither his own flesh and blood; which signifies his human nature; nor the same nature as it is among others, by transmitting whereof from one to another this faith would only be a traditional thing; but the product of flesh and blood which cannot reveal such a thing; but if it be such a faith as is immediately from himself, then blessed art thou that so believest; this faith is not from thee or other men, no way from flesh and blood, or human nature, but from my Father which is in heaven.

And then it will cease to be thought a strange thing, that he that so believes should be said to be born of God; for this being born of God, it is but the work of the divine power working the soul to a conformity to himself, and impressing it with its own image. And this faith it seems is from God too, as well as the great conforming change that then passeth upon the soul when one is brought to believe. And this will make it appear the most reasonable thing in the world, that he that by the divine power and

grace is brought to believe is born of God; for if it be from God that men are made so to believe, it is not faith from itself, but of God's own ingenerating in my soul. Then it must be considered, if God do this work to make me believe with this faith, he doth it for some end worthy of God, for there is no rational agent but works for an end; and he that is the most perfectly intelligent, the most absolutely perfect and all comprehending mind, cannot but have the greatest and highest designs in what he doth by his own immediate operation. And therefore he must be understood to have done this work, in making a man thus to believe for an end suitable to himself, worthy of God. And then, I pray, what end worthy of him can be attained, by making a man to believe, if he do not (as it were) new beget him at the same time? He is capable of serving no end, no valuable end, no great end, no end wherein he shall at once be serviceable to God and happy in himself, if God do not regenerate him.

But look to these two things more narrowly, and you will see how they meet, and how close a jointure there is between them, so as the matter will be above dispute. It will make its way into every mind that considers the case duly and aright, "That he that believes Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;" and in order hereunto (that this may make its way with more advantage,) you may consider how fully that which is equivalent is said of the same thing. Do but look to chap. iv. of this epistle, and the 15th verse, "Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Pray consider it; what is this less than that such a man is born of God? The divine fulness is come in upon him. God and he do in-dwell one another. Whoever he is that confesseth, believingly confesseth that this "Jesus is the Son of God;" for this is all one as believing Jesus to be the Christ. We find them often put together to signify the same; that if one be expressed, the other is implied, as in that Matt. i. 16, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;" and so John vi. 69, "We believe, and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." And again, John xx. last verse, "These things are written (this book I have now written—this gospel is written all for this purpose,) that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through his name." And you may easily apprehend, that confessing this implies the belief of it. No man that is sincere will

confess what he doth not believe ; “ Whosoever doth confess so much that this Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” This is no less a thing than being born of God.

And that we may pursue our scope the more closely, let us but cast our eye upon the two parts that are said to be conjoined. And here I must remind you only of what in general was said about this believing “ Jesus to be the Christ ;” to wit, that it is not one single and incomplex thing, but that it is complicated of more things than one. As,

(1.) This believing Jesus to be the Christ, it speaks a vivid, strong, heart-assured persuasion, that the thing is true ; of the truth of the thing, not as taken up at random, but as taken up from the divine testimony. And because (as it followeth in the same chapter) this is the record that God hath given us of his Son, it is believed that Jesus is the Christ, not because men have told us so, it is received “ not as the word of man, but as the word of God.” 1 Thess. ii. 13. And in the 10th verse of this chapter, “ He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” And,

(2.) This believing doth by consequence imply the opening of the heart to him, to receive him as such. Believing and receiving him are inseparable ; as you see when the same thing is predicated of this same subject, John i. 12, “ To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.” Pray, why do they that so believe in his name as to receive him, bear the title of “ the sons of God ?” He gives them all the privilege to be his sons, why is that ? The next words tell you, without which it had been very absurd to have such an appellation. Why are believers so called the Sons of God ? Is it an empty name and title ? No, they are born of God, who were “ born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Sure they must be his sons that are born of him ; but they that believe in him, so as to receive the Son of God, that faith opening its way into their hearts, they are said to be born, not of the will of man, but of God. That heart-assuring persuasion concerning him, presently makes the soul open to him, and entertain him ; take him in and appropriate him, and say, “ My Lord and my God,” so as that he comes to have an in-dwelling in the soul by that faith.

And then do but consider what was generally said concerning being born of God, that it makes that person of

whom this can be truly said, a God-like creature. He is transformed by it into the divine image and likeness; it is an universal change, and a permanent one passing upon the soul, and continuing in it even to the end, by which he is made a God-like creature; to wit, by which his image is anew impressed and restored in this soul. And these things being finished, let us now consider how inseparable these must needs be, so believing Jesus is the Christ, and being born of God.

Take this faith, as it is such a firm persuasion, an heart-assuring persuasion, upon the authority of God himself, that this Jesus is the Christ, or is his Son. Take it thus, and there are two things in the matter believed, that give it the advantage to be so powerfully operative in the soul when so believed, as you have heard. Therefore consider distinctly the matter believed, and the nature of this believing it so as it hath been opened to you. The matter believed, when a man believeth this Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God (for believing him to be the Christ involves the belief of his deity, of his divine nature, in respect whereof he is said to be God's own Son, in the most eminent sense, the only begotten Son of God, which can signify no less than that he is God.) Why, about this you have two things to consider, that will let us see how mighty an advantage such a matter must have, to be thus operative and transforming upon the soul, that it shall be said hereupon truly to be born of God; to wit, first the greatness of the thing itself, and, secondly, the kindness of the design.

[1.] The greatness of the thing, that this Jesus should be the Christ, the Son of God. This Jesus was then lately seen upon the face of this earth, a man like other men. What is believed concerning him? Why, that he is the Christ, the Son of God. That deity did inhabit and dwell in the flesh of this man, here is God manifested in the flesh. How great a thing is this! The serious, vivid belief of it, cannot but affect wonderfully; even in an ordinary way it cannot but have a mighty aptitude to affect the soul deeply that so believes; for, as was said, to believe this with a divine faith, it is to believe it because God made me believe it, not only by his authority, upon which this faith relies, but by his power by which this faith is wrought, and then I consider the thing believed accordingly. This Jesus is the Christ; he that appears to other men but as an ordinary man, appears to me the Son of

God. The divine glory shines in him to the eye of my soul. He was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. To believe this with such an heart-assuring faith and persuasion, is to believe the greatest thing that ever was heard of. That this Son of God should be a man, or that this man, lately seen with eyes in the world, and handled with hands, is the very Son of God, this tends to form the soul to veneration by the very greatness of the thing itself. And God, when he works this mighty work of regeneration upon the soul, he works by means, by apt and suitable means; means suitable to the work to be wrought, and suitable to the subject to be wrought upon. Now what can be so apt a means to work such a transforming work as this upon an intelligent subject (as the soul of man is,) as to possess it with the belief of such a thing: here I have sent my own Son among you, he that was the brightness of my own glory, and the express image of my own person; I have here wrapt him up in human flesh, and he is in the flesh, to live among you, and at length to die among you, like one of you, as an human creature. What work must this make in the soul of a man, when believed in such a way as you have heard? It disposeth to veneration of that deity inhabiting in human flesh, and so works somewhat naturally upon the soul of a man (as it is God's way, he doth apply himself to our natural faculties,) to enlighten the mind, to mollify, change, and subdue the will. These are natural powers in us; but these would do nothing to the pleasing of God, or saving us, if not wrought upon by a divine almighty power. Now God doth sublimiate the natural principle by this means.

There is such a thing as natural religiousness, man having been born of God at first, and his soul the very divine offspring (whereupon God is said to be the father of our spirits,) he hath a natural impression of God upon him. But it governs not but where regeneration takes place; it is a principle laid asleep: but such a faith of this thing brought in upon the soul, revives the principle of a natural religiousness and veneration of God. You see how far the same notion once did work upon a mistake in that Acts xiv. 11, when Paul and Barnabas had wrought miracles upon the impotent man, and preached such admirable divine doctrine that ravished and astonished the souls of their hearers, they immediately cried out, "The

gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." And Paul, because he was chief speaker, he is called Mercurius, and Barnabas was called Jupiter, two of the most famous deities. And they are intent upon the business of sacrificing to them as incarnate deities. And the apostles had no small difficulty to withhold them from worshipping, and offering solemn sacrifices to them. So mightily did this mistaken notion operate.

Now then, that which is the very truth of the thing comes to be believed in good earnest, as certain, concerning this person, this Jesus. Here is God come down in the likeness of a man, he that was in the form of God, found in fashion as a man, made in the likeness of man. Christians must be more stupid than those Pagans, if it affect not and make no motion stir in their hearts, so as to say and think, What a wonder is this! What a great thing! That God should have come down in the likeness of man, that we should have had an incarnate God dwelling in this wretched world among us! How amazing a thing is this! This, I say, tends to excite even in the very nature of the thing. And God, when he works, works by suitable means. In the nature of the thing there is a suitableness to excite that natural religion that's in the souls of men, which cannot be totally abolished, but is supprest. And such a thing as this hath a tendency to awaken it, when the divine Spirit sets in (as it will set in with truth, when it would not with falsehood) to restore in man that worshipping, adoring disposition towards God.

This is the first and most considerable thing in the work of regeneration, or the new creature; for what are men regenerated for? What makes the necessity of regeneration? It is that men were alienated from God, cut off from God, and therefore must have a nature put into them that would incline them unto God; they were alienated from the divine life. Regeneration is necessary for this, to incline the souls of men to live that life; to live upon God, and to God, and for God. So that when you consider what the work of regeneration is necessary for, you will think that whatsoever will serve that end, to wit, inclining men unto God, fitting them for his communion, and for a state of subordination and absolute devotedness to him, must be the principal aim of regeneration. It is to set the spirits of men right in their disposition and posture towards God, to whom they were strangers, and from whom they were gone off. And you see how the greatness of this thing

did very much impress the minds of those Pagans; they thought the gods were come down in the likeness of men, and now they are all for worshipping them. But besides the greatness of the thing, which is first to be considered in the matter believed, consider also,

[2.] The kindness of the design. This Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, a deity, inhabiting under this flesh. What is this for? What is the design of it? A great thing, as such tends greatly to affect the heart of a man, if it be not stupefied into a stone, a rock, a clod. But when a great thing appears to be in conjunction with the kindest design towards them, this gives it a most important additional advantage, to affect the spirits of men beyond all that can be thought. What should be the meaning of it, that God should come down and put on man, and that this man should be God? Why, it was in order to his being Christ, the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man, as that name imports, so that this was with a particular reference to us, and with some very gracious intendment towards us. And therefore look upon this truth to be believed, this Jesus is the Christ, according to that kind and benign aspect which it hath upon us; and so it tends beyond all that can be thought to work with the greatest efficacy as means, though the thing would never be done without the Divine Spirit upon the spirits of men, to renew and regenerate them, so as that thereupon they should be said to be born of God.

God works upon the nature of man as he is a creature made up of reason and love, according to his natural state; and so he is according to what remainders there are in him of that nature which was first given, and which is still human nature; "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," Hosea xi. 4. If there be such a thing as love in the nature of man not quite abolished, not quite erased, which by such means as this, that Holy Spirit shall apply itself to a man's spirits to draw him by these cords, that love which he hath in him being taken hold of by the divine love appearing in this design, this gives it advantages to operate with the greatest efficacy that can be thought.

And do but see how this is cleared, by considering that passage I mentioned to you but now in the fourth chapter of this epistle and verse 15, looked upon in reference to what immediately goes before in verse 14, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Now look upon the foregoing words, and

you will see which way this works to open the soul unto God, so as that he comes to have an indwelling in that soul, and that soul an indwelling in him. We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." I pray regard this, a mighty stress lies upon it, "We see and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" and now it is subjoined, that "whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in him, and he in God." Why? because this can be understood or believed under no other notion than as a Saviour to it, a Saviour to men; he came upon a saving design; this lets him into the soul, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and do you think that this person must not be regenerate? what can it be but that he must be born of God, when God is come into so near an union hereupon? And what lets him in and brings about this union? why, believing that he came as a Saviour into the world, we believe and testify that he came to do the office of a Saviour, and then God dwelleth in us, and we in God. There is that union hereby brought about between God and you, that it is impossible you should not be born of God. A new nature must hereupon come upon you, making you Godlike.

And this will most distinctly appear, if we consider what his coming as a Saviour implies: as his name signifies Jesus, Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour is anointed and authorized to this work of saving. When Christ was to come you know what was said by himself, and by such as gave testimony concerning him, that he "came a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not walk in darkness." That same light that lets us see what he was, lets us see what we were too; the same light that we discover him by, we discover ourselves by. And what have we to discern of ourselves, but that we are a company of lost creatures, impure, guilty wretches, that have inhabited darkness and death? that are cast off from God, have lost all interest in him, and all inclination towards him? darkened creatures, in every faculty and power? under the dominion of sin, and in captivity to Satan, the evil one, the prince of the darkness of this world, and he that hath the power of that death that hath spread itself in all the gloominess and terrors of it over souls? The same light that reveals him, reveals this, and discovers our state, and thereupon shews that he as a Saviour hath to do such things as these.

First, That he is to take away our sins, the great makebate between God and us. This to be believed, when we believe Jesus to be the Christ, that he came and was manifested to take away our sins. In him there being no sin, as in the third chapter of this epistle, verse 5. Oh, how will this transport a soul that hath once had but the convictive light (the thing before supposed) let in upon it to reveal Christ to it, and to reveal it to itself. Take away sin and I am a happy creature indeed, the only thing that ever hurt me, ever did me any harm. This Jesus was manifested for to take away sin; he is a Saviour for that, a Jesus for that, to save his people from their sins. And that is the reason of his name, Matt. i. 21. And,

Secondly, To vindicate us from under the power of the devil; for we were all led captive by him at his will. And this world did lie in the wicked one, that first apostate, that great enemy that hath trained man in to be accomplices with him in a rebellion against heaven; we are led captive by him at his will; and we followed naturally the course of this world, and “the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience,” Eph. ii. 2, 3. It is Christ’s design as a Saviour to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. If a man be apprehensive of this, as when there is such light concerning Christ (there is such light concerning our state too) in this respect, he will be ready to cry out, Oh wretched man that I am! a vassal to the devil! he hath led me captive at his will, could do with me what he would, hath had his will upon me! Oh then to be rescued out of this captivity! Oh blessed Jesus! when Jesus is believed to be the Christ in order to this, it is not strange it should work such a work in the soul of a man. And

Thirdly, His business, as a Saviour, is to reconcile us to God, to bring about amity and friendship between God and us. When light is let into the soul to see its state, this is the most covetable of all things that can be thought of. There hath been a distance, and strangeness and enmity between God and me, he shall be the welcomest in all the world to me that shall make peace, that shall reconcile me to God, that shall procure me his favour, wherein stands my life. Jesus, as a Saviour, is to do this. He came to be a Saviour, a Jesus with this kind design, and to make this overture to the soul; Come, there is a warfare, and hath been of long continuance between God and you; I will be a reconciler, I will make peace. O blessed Jesus! “blessed is he that

cometh in the name of the Lord," upon such an errand as this; for in his favour stands my very life. And,

Fourthly, As a Saviour, his design is to renew the divine image in the soul: Come, thou art a ruined creature, I will repair thy ruins: a degenerate creature, I will make thee a new creature, to learn the truth as it is in 'Jesus, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put off the old man which is corrupt, and to put on the new man; I come to new create thee, I come to put a new frame upon thee throughout. And,

Fifthly, He hereupon must have this for his design, to unite us to God, to bring about an union between God and us now that the reconciliation of him to us, and the transformation wrought in us make us capable of it; his design is to bring things to that pass with us, that our souls shall now run into union with God. Having the divine stamp put upon them, and a divine nature put into them, they cannot be held off any longer, they must unite with him, for they are become God-like; this is Christ's work as a Saviour, and he makes the soul apprehensive of it, and to apprehend this as the most desirable thing in all the world. As disconformity to God is the most heavy pressure upon the enlightened soul, which he hath in some measure made apprehensive. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." It is he that makes the soul weary of its deformity, and the ugliness that was upon it. Oh what an odious creature am I! what a pressure doth this lay upon me! that now I am become an hateful creature, who once had the divine image upon me, hereupon nothing could ensue but distance between God and me: Well saith he, I will put an end to all this, I will make up all this matter, I will put a new heart and new spirit into thee, I will write my law in thy heart, I will incline it to God, I will unite it to God; and in so doing, there shall be such a distance and such a strangeness between God and thee no longer. And,

Sixthly, It is by consequence hereupon his work (by doing all this) to perfect the nature of man within itself; gradually and inchoatively now; perfectly and consummately hereafter; he will absolutely perfect it at length. Is he restoring the divine image in us, making us who were darkness to be light in the Lord, making us, who had the image of hell upon us, to bear the image of God and heaven? Is he not then perfecting our nature by all this? making a new man? "Behold (saith he) I make all things new." That is the Mediator's great undertaking:

that is the undertaking of this Jesus, whom we believe to be the Christ. And hereupon,

Seventhly, He brings about (and that is part of his kind design) a continued communion and intercourse between God and us, so that we may live with God every day. Thou shalt not live a wandering creature, and a vagabond, upon the face of this earth, as thou hast done; thou hast now the privilege that thou mayest walk with God every day. Sin is taken away, thou art fetched from under the captivity of the devil, thou art reconciled to God, his image is renewed in thee, thou art re-united to him, thy nature is in a degree perfected, and shall be absolutely perfected; and thereupon thou art to have daily commerce with God in continual communion. This thy kind Saviour is doing for thee: believing this Jesus to be the Christ, thou believest all this, if you understand yourselves in what you profess to believe, and what lies before you as the object of your faith. And then in the last place,

Eighthly, All this in order to his introducing you into the presence of the divine glory at last, all doth but tend to one end, to make you participants of the "inheritance of the saints in light, and to present you holy and unblameable, without spot and faultiness, before the presence of the divine glory with exceeding joy," as it is in the latter end of the Epistle of Jude. In that conspicuous glory of his, or before his glorious face, where you are to have your abode stately and everlastingly. This is his design. They believe Jesus to be the Christ, understandingly, as they are made to do so by the divine Spirit. They believe all this by consequence, this is their notion which they have concerning this Jesus that they believe to be the Christ; he is to do all this for such souls as mine, and upon my soul upon believing in him.

And then the soul, receiving him upon believing all this concerning him, being hereby opened to receive him, he hereby first acquires a right to all gracious communications from him; and then, secondly, hath the actual possession of those communications themselves; for all must be in and through Christ, that Spirit of Christ which is to do all is given upon his account and for his sake, upon being united to him; to wit, the soul is brought into union with him by that Spirit; and upon that union it diffuseth its influences through the soul, and possesses it for God, takes it for his temple. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of

God, and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you ?” 1 Cor. iii. 16. And this cannot but infer then, that there should be such a regenerating work by which a foundation is laid for the truth of this assertion, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” For all these things to be done by Christ are matter of promise, and all the promises are yea and amen, only in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. And what are these promises for? we are made partakers of these exceeding great and precious promises, or they are given to us, that by them we might be made partakers of the divine nature which is the very work of regeneration itself, the imparting that divine nature to us; all this promised good is in and by Christ; and believing him to be the Christ, we become intitled to all these promises, and they come of course (we having such a title) to be accomplished and made good.

And thus nothing is more manifest than that which to men might seem strange at first, that it should positively be said, “Whosoever believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;” it cannot but be so, if you do but observe the coincidence how these two things, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God, run into one another.

FINIS.