

DISCOURSE XXII.*

WE are met here to remember the death of Christ in the way and by the means that he himself hath appointed, and in remembering the death of Christ we are principally to remember the love of Christ; 'who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood;' and that which on our part is required herein is faith in Christ who died for us, and love to Christ who loved us so as to give himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us.

1. That which I would now observe is this (to make way for the stirring up of our love), That the person of Christ is the adequate complete object of the love of God, and of the whole creation that bears the image of God, I mean, the church of God above, the angels and saints; and the church of God below in believers, which are the creation that has the image of God upon it.

The person of Christ is the first complete object of the love of God the Father. A great part (if I may so speak, and I must so speak) of the essential blessedness of the holy Trinity consists in the mutual love of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost, which is the love of them both.

That which I would now take notice of, I say, as the foundation of all, is this, that the divine nature in the person of the Son, is the only full, resting, complete object of the love of God the Father. I will give you a place or two of Scripture for it, and so go on to another instance, Prov. viii. 30. 'Then,' saith he, that is from everlasting, 'was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him,' that is, as the special object of his love; as among you men, one that is brought up with you, as your child is. The delight of the Father from all eternity was in the Son. The ineffable love and mutual delight of the Father and the Son by the Spirit, is that which is the least notion we have of the blessedness of the eternal God. John i. 18. 'The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father.' Pray observe it, that I speak yet only of the divine person of Christ antecedent unto his incarnation, and the ineffable mutual love of the blessed persons in

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the holy Trinity, which Jesus Christ wonderfully sets out in John xvii. There is his relation unto God, he is 'the only begotten Son,' by eternal generation; what follows? 'he is in the bosom of the Father,' is in the Father's eternal infinite love. Herein is God's love; and every thing else of love is but a free act of the will of God, a free emanation from this eternal love between the Father and the Son. God never did any thing without himself, but the end of it was to manifest what is in himself. The old and new creation that God hath wrought was to manifest what was in himself. God made this world to manifest his power and wisdom; God made the new world by Jesus Christ to manifest his grace, his love, goodness, &c.

The sole reason why there is such a thing as love in the world, among the creatures, angels, or men, that God ever implanted it in the nature of rational creatures, it was, that it might shadow and represent the ineffable eternal love that the Father had unto the Son, and the Son unto the Father by the Spirit.

Contemplative men of old did always admire love, wherein they would have the life, lustre, and glory of all things to consist, but they could never see the rise of it: and they traced some things to this, that God necessarily loved himself; and it is true, it cannot otherwise be; but God's loving of himself, absolutely as God, is nothing but his eternal blessed acquiescence in the holy, self-sufficing properties of his nature. This they had some reach after; but of this eternal ineffable love 'of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father by the Spirit,' that they had no conjecture of. Yet this is the fountain and spring-head; and all such things as love in the old and new creation, as I said, is but to resemble and shadow out this great prototype of divine love. I acknowledge there is little discerned of these things, by reason of the weakness of our understandings; but the Scripture having so directly declared to us the mutual love of the Father and the Son (which truly is of such singular use, that I would fix persons upon it in conceiving of the doctrine of the Trinity), that it is matter of admiration and thankfulness to us. Here lies the foundation of all love, whereunto we hope to reduce our love unto Christ, viz. in the unchangeable love of the Father to the Son.

2. The person of Christ as vested with our nature, and undertaking the work of mediation, is the first object of the Father's love, wherein there is any mixture of any thing without himself.

The first love of God the Father to the Son is that which we call 'ad intra,' where the divine persons are objects of one another's actings; the Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father; the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father; and so consequently of the Holy Ghost, the medium of all these actings.

But now, I say, the first act of the love of God the Father, wherein there is any thing 'ad extra,' or without the divine essence, is the person of Christ, considered as invested with our nature. And had not the love of God been fixed in the first place in all things upon the person of Christ, there would have been no redundancy to us, nor communication of love unto us. From the first eternal love of God proceeds all love that was in the first creation; and from this second love of God to the person of Christ, as incarnate, proceeds all the love in the second creation. See how God expresses it in a prospect of what he should be, Isa. xlii. 1. 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.' And this is singular in the whole Scripture, that God spake the same words twice from heaven immediately, and they were these, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' at his baptism, Matt. iii. 17. and at his entrance on his sufferings, Matt. xvii. 5. which was the voice which came from the excellent glory. I would observe this unto you, because I think it is what God would have us take notice of, the emphasis in the words, 'Behold my servant, mine elect, my Son, my beloved Son!' what of him? 'In whom I rest, in whom I am well-pleased and delighted.' All of them emphatical words. Saith God, let the sons of men (I speak it from heaven again and again) take notice of this, that the infinite love of my whole soul is fixed on the person of Jesus Christ, as incarnate. And you will find the Lord Jesus Christ pleading this as the ground of that trust committed unto him, and all that he received, John iii. 35. 'The Father loveth the Son, and has given all things into his hands.' John v. 20. 'The Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things that himself doeth, and will

shew him greater works than these.' He lays the foundation of all the trust that God the Father committed unto him, in the peculiar love of the Father to him, as the Son incarnate.

Truly I shall not go beyond this foundation to manifest to you, that the person of Christ is the complete, adequate object of the love of the Father. The great satisfaction of the soul of God wherein he rests and delights, consists in love to Christ as incarnate.

I will make but this one inference from it; proportionable to the renovation of the image and likeness of God upon any of our souls, is our love to Jesus Christ. He that knows Jesus Christ most is most like unto God, for there the soul of God rests, there is the complacency of God; and if we would be like to God, have pledges in ourselves of the renovation of this image upon us, it must be in the gracious exercise of our love to the person of Jesus Christ. And pray let me observe it to you, the world, that is full of enmity to God, doth not exercise its enmity against God immediately under the first notion of God, but exerciseth its enmity against God in Christ: and if we return to God by the renovation of his image, we do not exercise our love to God immediately as God, but our love to God by and in Christ; that ye through him might believe in God. Here is a trial, brethren, of our return to God, and of the renovation of his image in us, viz. in our love to Jesus Christ. There God and man do meet, there God and his church above and below centre. The Lord grant that this ordinance may be the means to stir up our hearts more to the exercise of this grace!

DISCOURSE XXIII.*

I SHALL speak to them who have a mind to be found performing their duty; but it may be, it doth not occur to them what is particularly required of them. They are such as are least acquainted with this mystery that I would have most respect unto, that nothing of God's provision in his house

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