

SERMON VIII.*

THE

BRANCH OF THE LORD THE BEAUTY OF ZION :

OR,

THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH

IN ITS RELATION UNTO CHRIST :

OPENED IN TWO SERMONS ; ONE PREACHED AT BERWICK,
THE OTHER AT EDINBURGH.

* These two sermons not being divided in the first edition, we were obliged to print them together as one continued discourse.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
THE
LORD GENERAL CROMWELL, &c.

MY LORD,

IT was with thoughts of peace that I embraced my call to this place, in time of war. As all peace that is from God is precious to my spirit, so incomparably that between the Father and his elect, which is established, and carried on in the blood and grace of Jesus Christ. The ministerial dispensation of this peace being through free grace committed even unto me also, I desire that in every place my whole may be, to declare it to men of God's good pleasure. That this was my chief design, in answer to the call of God upon me, even to pour out a savour of the gospel upon the sons of peace in this place, I hope is manifest to the consciences of all, with whom (since my coming hither) in the work of the ministry I have had to do. The enmity between God and us began on our part; the peace which he hath made, begins and ends with himself. This is the way of God with sinners; when he might justly continue their enemy, and fight against them to their eternal ruin, he draws forth love, and beseeches them to be reconciled, who have done the wrong, and them to accept of peace, who cannot abide the battle. Certainly the bearing forth of this message, which is so 'worthy of all acceptance,' and ought to be so welcome, cannot but have sweetness enough to season all the pressures and temptations wherewith it

is sometimes attended. This hath been my desire to pursue, and that with the weapons which are not carnal. And though some may be so seasoned with the leaven of contention about carnal things, or at best the tithing of mint and cummin, as to disrelish the weightier things of the gospel, yet the great owner of the vineyard hath not left me without a comfortable assurance that even 'this labour in the Lord hath not been in vain.'

The following sermons, which I desire to present unto your Excellency, were preached one at Berwick upon your first advance into Scotland, the other at Edinburgh. My willingness to serve the inheritance of Christ here, even in my absence, caused me to close with the desires that were held out to this purpose. And I do present them to your Excellency, not only because the rise of my call to this service under God was from you; but also, because in the carrying of it on, I have received from you in the weaknesses and temptations wherewith I am encompassed, that daily spiritual refreshment and support, by inquiry into, and discovery of, the deep and hidden dispensations of God towards his secret ones, which my spirit is taught to value. The carrying on of the interest of the Lord Jesus amongst his saints, in all his ways, which are truth and righteousness, the matter pointed at in this discourse, being the aim of your spirit in your great undertakings, it bears another respect unto you. I am not unacquainted with its meanness, yea, its coming short in respect of use and fruit, of what the Lord hath since and by others drawn forth, but such as it is, having by providence stepped first into the world, I wholly commend it to him for an incense, who graciously 'supplied the seed to the sower;' beseeching him that we may have 'joy unspeakable and glorious,'

in the acceptance of that peace, which he gives us in the Son of his love, whilst the peace, whose desire in the midst of war you continually bear forth to him, and to others, is by them rejected to their hurt.

Your Excellency's

Most humble servant in our dearest Lord,

J. OWEN.

Edinburgh, Nov. 26, 1650.

SERMON VIII.

For mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.—ISA. lvi. 7.

FROM ver. 3. of this chapter, to ver. 8. you have promises and predictions of calling in Gentiles and strangers to the church of God, notwithstanding any objections or hinderances laid in their way, by ceremonial and typical constitutions, they being all to be removed in the cross of Christ, Ephes. ii. 13—16. Col. ii. 14. making way for the accomplishment of that signal promise which is given in the second chapter of this prophecy, ver. 2, 3. ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go, and say, Come ye, let us go up,’ &c.

The words of ver. 7. are a recapitulation of the whole, holding out summarily the calling of the Gentiles to the holy mount, or spiritual church of Christ. Where also you have a description of the services performed by them upon their coming: ‘Their burnt-offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar:’ answerable to that eminent prediction of the solemn worship of the called Gentiles, Mal. i. 11. ‘For from the rising of the sun, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a peace-offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.’ The spiritual services of the saints of the Gentiles are in each place set forth by those ceremonial ordinances of incense, altar, and sacrifice, as were then most acceptable from the Lord’s own appointment.

Now this whole promise is once again strengthened, without loss of life or beauty, and comprised in the words of the text. That which before he termed ‘sacrifice and burnt-offerings,’ here he calleth ‘prayer:’ and those who before were ‘the sons of the stranger,’ are here ‘all people,’ some, many of all sorts, the whole world, all men, without distinction, the partition wall being broken down.

The thing here spoken of is God’s house, described

First, By its appropriation unto him, it is his peculiar; 'My house.'

Secondly, By its extent of receipt in respect of others; it is 'for all people.'

Thirdly, By the employment of its inhabitants, that is prayer; it 'shall be called a house of prayer.'

'House,' here may be taken two ways:

1. Properly, as it was in the type for the material temple at Jerusalem; whereunto these words are applied by our Saviour, Matt. xxi. But that is no farther concerned herein, but as the spiritual holiness of the antitype could not be represented without a ceremonial holiness of the type.

2. Spiritually, for the church of Christ to be gathered to him out of all nations; the house wherein 'juge sacrificium,' a continual spiritual sacrifice is to be offered to him: this is peculiarly intended. So then observe,

I. Christ's church of saints, of believers, is God's house.

II. The church of Christ under the gospel is to be gathered out of all nations.

III. There are established ordinances, and appointed worship for the church of Christ under the gospel.

It is the first that I shall speak unto.

I. Christ's church of saints, of believers, is God's house.

That his church is of saints, and believers, will appear in the issue.

By the church of Christ I understand, primarily, the whole multitude of them, who antecedently are chosen of his Father, and given unto him; consequently are redeemed, called, and justified in his blood: the church which he loved, and gave himself for it, 'that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish;' Ephes. v. 26, 27. And secondarily also, every holy assembly of mount Zion, whereunto the Lord Christ is made beauty and glory: every particular church of his saints, inasmuch as they partake of the nature of the whole, 'being redeemed by his blood;' Acts xx. 28.

That this church belongs unto God, I shall only leave evidenced under the claim whereby he here appropriates it to himself; he calls it his: 'My house.'

That it is his house, I shall farther demonstrate. Three things are required to the making of a house.

First, A foundation.

Secondly, Materials for a superstruction.

Thirdly, An orderly framing of both into a useful building.

And all these concur to the church of Christ.

First, It hath a foundation: 'I have laid the foundation,' saith Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 10. and 'other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ;' ver. 11. That which Paul laid ministerially, God himself laid primarily and efficiently. 'Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation;' Isa. xxviii. 16. Now this foundation is no other but the rock upon which the church is built, Matt. xvi. 18. which makes it impregnable to the gates of hell, communicating strength and permanency continually to every part of the building.

Secondly, A foundation only will not make a house; there must also be materials for a superstruction. Those you have, 1 Pet. ii. 5. 'You are,' saith he, 'lively stones.' All God's elect are stones, in due time to be hewed and fitted for this building.

Thirdly, Materials themselves will not serve: they must be fitly framed, and wisely disposed, or they will be a heap, not a house. This then is not wanting. 'Ye are built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: in whom the whole building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom also ye are builded together, for an habitation to God by the Spirit;' Ephes. ii. 20—22. There is much spiritual and heavenly architecture in these three verses. I shall only touch on some particulars.

1. The foundation of this house, this temple, is laid, and that is Jesus Christ: 'other foundation can no man lay.' He is here called, 'the chief corner stone,' and, 'the foundation of the prophets and apostles.' It is not, which they were, but which they laid. It is 'genitivus efficientis,' not 'materiæ,' that expression holds out, the persons working, not the thing wrought.

2. The materials of this building: elect, believers, said in the former verse to be 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and

of the household of God;’ they alone are built on Christ, and thereby have union with him: not one dead rotten stone in all this building, as shall be declared.

3. The architects or builders are of two sorts:

(1.) Principal, the Spirit, we are ‘framed to an habitation for God by the Spirit:’ he is the principal workman in this fabric, without him is not one stone laid therein.

(2.) Secondary and instrumental; ‘the prophets and apostles.’ And this they were two ways:

[1.] Personally, in their several generations: this was their work, their labour, to lay the foundation, and carry on the building of this house.

[2.] Doctrinally, so they labour in it to this very day: their doctrine in the Scripture holds out the only foundation, and the only way of building thereon.

4. The manner of the building: it is ‘fitly framed together,’ *συναρμολογουμένη*, closely jointed and knit in together, sweetly closed together with Christ, ‘the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God;’ Col. ii. 19.

5. What kind of a house it is. It receiveth here a two-fold title, ‘an holy temple,’ and ‘an habitation,’ or tabernacle; because of its allusion to both those holy places of the worship of God, fulfilling the types of them both. Hence it is most evident that this church of Christ is a house, and being appropriated unto God, God’s house. To make this the more evident, I shall do these two things:

(1.) Shew you what are the chief properties of this house.

(2.) Declare what is the relation wherein Jesus Christ stands to this house, having called it all along the church of Christ.

(1.) For the properties, or chief qualities of this house, they are three: [1.] It is a living house; [2.] It is strong; [3.] It is glorious.

[1.] It is a living house: ‘Unto whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house;’ 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. Christ, the foundation, is a living stone, and they that are built upon him are living stones. Hence they are said to grow together into a house. Growth is a sign

of life, growing from an inward principle. Such as the growth of any thing is, such is its life. The growth of this house is spiritual, so therefore also is its life; it lives with a spiritual life, a life whose fulness is in its foundation. He hath 'life in himself,' John v. 26. and they from him: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live;' Gal. ii. 22. Yea, it is himself in them: 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' It is true, those stones are dead in the rock, as well as others: 'by nature children of wrath as well as they,' Ephes. ii. 3. 'being dead in trespasses and sins;' ver. 1. He who hews them out, gives them life: 'he quickens them when dead in trespasses and sins.' There is not one rotten dead stone in all this building. However some such may, by the advantage of their outward appearance, crowd in, yet they are not of the house itself.

[2.] It is a strong house: 'The gates of hell cannot prevail against it;' Matt. i. 6. 18. Though 'the rain descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow upon this house; yet it will not fall, because it is founded on a rock;' Matt. vii. 25. We were all once a house built upon Adam; and when the wind came, and beat upon us, we fell, 'and the fall of that house was very great.' He in his best estate was found to be but sand; now we are built upon a rock, that will abide all trials: the waves may make a noise, and dash themselves against him, but it will be to their own ruin.

But you will say, May not weak and inconsistent materials be built upon a rock, which yet may have never the more strength for their foundation?

It is not so here, for the whole building is framed together in the foundation; Ephes. ii. 22. not only on it, but also in it, and so not to be prevailed against, unless the rock itself be overthrown. And it is a living rock that this house is built on, a rock continually communicating strength unto every stone in the building, that it may be enabled to abide in him. I should proceed too far, should I go to declare the mighty defence and fortification of this house: what hath been spoken from the foundation, is enough to demonstrate it to be a strong house.

[3.] It is a glorious house, and that in a threefold respect.

1st. It is glorious in respect of inward glory, brought unto

it of God in the face of Jesus Christ, being beautiful through the comeliness that he puts upon it. Hence Christ speaking of it, says, 'How fair art thou, O love, for delights!' Cant. vii. 6. and, 'thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee;' chap. iv. 7. And how, I pray, comes that about? Why Christ washeth it in his own blood, that it might be wholly 'a glorious church;' Ephes. v. 26, 27. And farther, he being the branch of the Lord, and fruit of the earth, is made beauty and glory, excellency and comeliness thereunto; Psal. iv. 2.

It hath the beauty and glory of justification, which doth not only take away all filthy garments, causing iniquity to pass away, but also gives fair 'change of raiment,' Zech. iii. 4, 5. even the 'garments of salvation,' and the 'robe of righteousness;' Isa. lxi. 10. And then it hath the glory and beauty of sanctification, whence 'the king's daughter is all glorious within;' Psal. xlv. 13. The comeliness and beauty that is in a sanctified soul, is above all the glory of the world. This house is all overlaid with gold within: Christ is unto it, 'a head of gold;' Cant. v. 11. His house is not like Nebuchadnezzar's image, that the head should be of gold, and the members some of them of clay; they all partake of his nature, and are very glorious therein.

2dly. In respect of its outward structure, which it eminently hath in all the peculiar assemblies thereof. 'O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires. I will make thy windows of agates and carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones;' Isa. liv. 11, 12. So also where it is called the new Jerusalem (a city from its laws and policy), 'this city is' said to be 'of pure gold' (not dross and mire), 'the building of the wall of jasper, and the foundation of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones;' Rev. xxi. 18, 19. This is that which the psalmist calls, 'the beauty of holiness;' Psal. cx. 3. The glory of the ordinances of the gospel in their vigour and purity. There is nothing so glorious, as our King on his throne, Christ in his court, this house reigning in the administration of his ordinances: then 'all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made him glad. Kings' daughters are among his honourable women: upon his right hand

doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir;' Psal. xlv. 8, 9. 'His goings are seen, the goings of our God and King in the sanctuary;' Psal. lxxviii. 24, 25, &c. The apostle exalteth the glory of gospel administrations exceedingly above the old tabernacle and temple worship, which yet was exceeding pompous and glorious. 'If,' saith he, 'the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excellet. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious;' 2 Cor. iii. 7—11. Let men think as meanly as they please of the spiritual service of God amongst his people, all glory that ever yet appeared in the world was but a bubble to it, all that God ever instituted before came exceeding short of it: he delights in it, who beholds the proud afar off.

3dly. It is glorious in respect of the exaltation it hath above, and triumph over, all its opposers. To see a house, a palace, hanged round about with ensigns, spoils, and banners taken from the enemy that have come against it, is a glorious thing: thus is this house of God decked. 'Kings of armies did flee apace, and she that tarried at home divided the spoil;' Psal. lxxviii. 12. 'She that tarryes at home,' the mother of the family, the church of God, she 'hath all the spoils.' The Lord hath affirmed, that not only every one that opposeth, but all that do not serve this house, shall be utterly destroyed; Isa. lx. 12. There you have the spoil of Pharaoh, and all his host, gathered on the shore of the Red sea, and dedicated in this house; Exod. xv. There you have the robes of Nebuchadnezzar reserved, when himself was turned into a beast; Dan. iv. There you have the imperial ornaments of Diocletian, and his companion, casting aside their dominion for very madness, that they could not prevail against this house. There is the blood of Julian kept for a monument of vengeance against apos-

tates. There you have the rochets of the prelates of this land, hung up of late with other garments of their adherents rolled in blood: there is a place reserved for the remaining spoils of the great whore, when she shall be burned, and made naked, and desolate; Rev. xi. Never any rose, or shall arise against this house, and go forth unto final prosperity. Let the men of the world take heed, how they burden themselves with the foundation stone of this house; it will assuredly break them all in pieces.

Thus have I given you a glimpse of this house, with the chief properties of it, which as God assumes as his own, so also peculiarly it belongs unto the Lord Christ; yea, what relation it stands in unto him, or rather he unto it, is the main thing I intend.

(2.) Jesus Christ stands in a twofold relation unto this house.

[1.] In respect of its fabric and building.

[2.] In respect of its state and condition.

[1.] In the first regard, Christ relates to this house in a four-fold respect. As, 1st. Its foundation; 2dly. Its ark; 3dly. Its altar; 4thly. Its candlestick.

I shall pass through these, God assisting, in order, and begin with what was first laid down, his relation to this house. As,

1st. The foundation of it. This was in part declared before. He is 'the stone which the builders rejected, but made of the Lord the head of the corner;' Psal. cxviii. 22. He is the lowest in the bottom to bear up the weight of the building, and the highest in the corner to couple the whole together. 'Other foundation can no man lay, but that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ;' 1 Cor. iii. 10. He is the rock, on which he builds his church; Matt. xvi. 18.

Now there are three things required to a foundation, all which are eminently seen in the Lord Christ, in reference to this house.

(1st.) That it be first laid in the building. It were a course exceeding preposterous, first to build a house, and then to lay the foundation. Jesus Christ is the first that is laid in this holy fabric, and that in a fourfold respect:

[1st.] He is the first in respect of God's eternal purpose. The Lord purposed that 'he should have the pre-eminence'

in this as well as in all other things; Col. i. 15. He is in that respect 'the first-born among many brethren,' Rom. viii. 29. the residue of this house being predestinated to be made conformable unto him. 'He is before all things: by him all things' (that is, all spiritual things, all the things of this house) 'consist: he is the head of the body, the church.' This I mean, God purposed that Christ should be the bottom and foundation of this whole building, that it should be all laid on him. I do not mean, that God first intended Christ for a foundation, and then his elect for building (the order of intention and execution is, as to first and last, inverted by all agents), but this I say, God purposing to build his elect into a holy temple, purposed that Jesus Christ should be the foundation.

[2dly.] In respect of outward manifestation. God first manifests and declares him, before he laid one stone in this building. Gen. iii. 15. 'The seed,' saith he, 'of the woman shall break the serpent's head:' in that was laid the first stone of this building: then was the 'Lamb slain,' ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, Rev. xiii. 8. presently 'after the foundation of the world:' and thence is grace in him said to be given to the elect, πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων, Titus i. 2. 'many ages ago.'

[3dly.] Because in order of nature Christ must be first laid in the heart of every individual stone, before they are laid up in this building. If Christ be not in men, they are ἀδόκιμοι, 2 Cor. xv. 1. altogether useless for this building; try them never so often, they must at last be rejected, and laid aside.

[4thly.] In respect of every particular assembly, and little sanctuary of mount Zion. If he be not first laid in the midst of such assemblies, they will prove to be pinnacles of Babel, not towers of Zion. This therefore was the way of the saints of old, first 'to give up themselves to the Lord Christ, and then to one another, by the will of God;' 2 Cor. viii. 5.

In these respects Christ, the foundation, is first laid in this spiritual building, which is the first property of a foundation.

(2dly.) A foundation must be hidden, and out of sight, unto all those that outwardly look upon the house. They

cannot perceive it, though every part of the house doth rest upon it. And this hath occasioned many mistakes in the world. An unwise man coming to a great house, seeing the antics and pictures stand crouching under the windows and sides of the house, may haply think, that they bear up the weight of the house, when indeed they are for the most part pargeted posts; they bear not the house, the house bears them. By their bowing, and outward appearance, the man thinks the burden is on them, and supposes that it would be an easy thing, at any time, by taking them away, to demolish the house itself. But when he sets himself to work, he finds these things of no value, there is a foundation in the bottom, which bears up the whole, that he thought not of: against that he may waste himself, until he be broken in pieces. Men looking upon the church, do find that it is a fair fabric indeed, but cannot imagine how it should stand. A few supporters it seemeth to have in the world, like crouching antics under the windows, that make some show of underpropping it: here you have a magistrate, there an army, or so. Think the men of the world, can we but remove these props, the whole would quickly topple to the ground. Yea, so foolish have I been myself, and so void of understanding before the Lord, as to take a view of some goodly appearing props of this building, and to think, how shall the house be preserved if these should be removed: they looked unto me like the mariners in Paul's ship, without whose abode therein they could not be saved: when lo, suddenly some have been manifested to be pargeted posts, and the very best to be held up by the house, and not to hold it up. On this account the men of the world think it no great matter to demolish the spiritual church of Christ to the ground: they encourage one another to the work, never thinking of the foundation, that lies hidden, against which they dash themselves all to pieces. I say, then, Christ, as the foundation of this house, is hidden to the men of the world, they see it not, they believe it not; there is nothing more remote from their apprehension than that Christ should be at the bottom of them and their ways, whom they so much despise.

(3dly.) The foundation is that which bears up the whole weight of the building. What part of the house soever, is

not directly poised upon it, hath no strength at all. Take a goodly stone, hew it, square it, make it every way fit for your fabric, so that it may seem to be the best of all your materials; yet if you do not lay it upon the foundation, answerable to that, which may give it a solid basis, and bear up the weight and poise thereof, it will be useless, cumbersome, and quickly fall to the ground.

Let a man be hewed and squared by the word and ordinances into outward conformity, never so exactly, that he seems one of the most beautiful saints in the world; yet if he be not laid rightly by faith upon the foundation, to derive from thence strength, supportment, and vigour, he will quickly fall to the ground. What then will become of their building, who heap up all sorts of rubbish to make a house for the Lord?

2dly. Christ is the ark of this house. The ark in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple, was the most holy thing in the most holy place. There was nothing in it but the two tables of stone written with the finger of God: before it was Aaron's rod that budded, with a pot full of manna; over it was the propitiatory, or mercy seat, being a plate of gold, as long and as broad as the ark, covering it, being shadowed with the cherubims of glory. Now all this glorious fabric did signify, that unless the law with its condemning power were hid in the ark, and covered with the mercy seat, no person could stand before the Lord. Besides, the law was the old covenant of works, and being renewed unto them chiefly to be subservient to the gospel, and partly with its appurtenances and carnal administration to be the tenour of the Israelites holding the land of Canaan, and this being in the ark, it was said to contain the covenant, and is frequently called 'the ark of the covenant.' Jesus Christ is the ark of this spiritual house. When the 'temple was opened in heaven, there was seen in the temple the ark of God's testament;' Rev. xi. 10. Jesus Christ made conspicuous to all, who lay much hid under the old testament. Rom. iii. 25. God is said to set forth Christ to be *ἱλαστήριον*, 'a propitiation,' or mercy-seat; for by that very term is the mercy-seat expressed, Heb. ix. 5. He is then the ark, and the mercy-seat covering it. He then doth these two things:

(1st.) In behalf of this house, and every stone thereof, he hides the law with its condemning power, that nothing from thence shall be laid to their charge. If a man have a suit to be tried in any court, and a powerful friend engage himself, that the only evidence which is against him shall not be produced, will it not give him encouragement to proceed? In that great and tremendous trial, which is to be above, there is but one principal evidence against us, which gives life to all others, which if it be removed all the rest must fail: this is the law. Christ, as the ark and mercy-seat, hides this law; it shall not (I speak in respect to this house) be produced at the day of trial. Will not this be a great encouragement to them to appear at the throne of God? Christ hides the law as being 'the end' of it, Rom. x. 4. 'that the righteousness thereof might be fulfilled in us;' Rom. viii. 4. He hath so far answered all that the law required, that none from thence can 'lay any thing to the charge of God's elect;' Rom. viii. 33, 34. Let not poor sinners fear, it will not be with them, as with Uzzah: he touched the ark, and died: touch this ark, and live for ever. And,

(2dly.) He is the ark of this house, as containing in himself the new covenant; it is made with him originally, established in him irreversibly, made out through him in all the grace of it faithfully.

3dly. He is the altar of this house. There were two altars in the old tabernacle, and temple: an altar for sacrifice, and an altar for incense; Exod. xxix. and xxx. The first was the great brazen altar, that stood without the holy place, whereon the burnt-offerings, and all sacrifices of blood for remission were offered. The other less, made of shittim wood, all overlaid with pure gold, and a crown of beaten gold upon it, on which they were to burn pure incense unto the Lord always. And they were both most holy, sanctifying the gifts with legal sanctification that were offered on them; Matt. xxiii. 19. Now both these doth our Saviour supply in this house. He is the great altar of sacrifice, the altar of offerings for expiation and atonement. 'We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat, who serve at the tabernacle,' Heb. xiii. 10. that is even he, who 'sanctified the people with his own blood, and suffered

without the gate;’ ver. 11. The good will and soul of Christ offering up himself, ‘through the eternal Spirit, a pure oblation and sacrifice, by one offering to perfect for ever them that are sanctified,’ is all our altar. He is also the golden altar of incense. Incense is prayer: Psal. cxli. 2. ‘Let my prayer come before thee as incense.’ Jesus Christ is the golden altar whereon that incense is offered, Rev. viii. 3, 4. even that altar which is always before God; Rev. ix. 13. As by being the former he makes our persons accepted, so by the latter he makes our duties accepted. And all the living stones of this house are priests to offer sacrifice on these altars; by him, as priests, they have approximation to the holy place; there they have a share and participation in all the sacrifices that are offered upon or by him.

4th. He is the candlestick of this house. The making, fashioning, and use of the candlestick, in the holy place of the tabernacle, you have, Exod. xxv. 31, &c. It was one of the most glorious utensils of that frame, made of pure and beaten gold, with much variety of works, knops, flowers, and lamps. The use of it was, to bear out light for all the worship of God in that most holy place. The tabernacle was made close, without any window. It was not to receive light from without, it had all its own light from within. It is true, this candlestick with its seven lamps, did secondarily represent the churches of Christ, which hold out his light among themselves, and unto others. Rev. i. 20. ‘The seven candlesticks thou sawest are the seven churches.’ Therefore Solomon made ‘ten candlesticks of pure gold,’ 1 Kings vii. 49. to set out yet farther the increase and multiplying of the churches of God. Upon this account also the two witnesses are said to be ‘two candlesticks,’ Rev. xi. 4. and ‘the two anointed ones, that stand before the God of the whole earth,’ Zech. iv. 3. whence that in the Revelation is taken. There is mention indeed of two anointed ones, but of one candlestick; the Holy Ghost plainly intimating, that though the churches and witnesses of Christ are also candlesticks in a second sense, yet there is one eminent candlestick, which hath light originally in itself, which also it communicates unto all others. And this is that which is mentioned in Zech. iv. which hath the ‘two olive-trees,’ or the two anointed churches of Jews and Gentiles standing by

it, receiving light from it, to communicate to others : they empty the golden oil out of themselves, which they receive from the candlestick. For this candlestick hath ' seven lamps,' ver. 2. which lamps, that burn before the throne, are the ' seven spirits of God ;' Rev. iv. 5. seven spirits, that is, the perfection and completeness of the Spirit of God, in all his graces and operations. Now who hath these seven spirits ? Even he ' who received not the Spirit by measure,' John iii. 34. being the ' stone' upon which are the ' seven eyes ;' Zech. iii. 9. He alone then is this candlestick, and all the light which this house hath, it is from him.

There are two ways whereby Jesus Christ makes out light to this house. (1st.) By way of doctrinal revelation ; (2dly.) Of real communication.

(1st.) He alone discovers light to all the stones of this building. ' No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him ;' John i. 18. No saving discovery of God, of his nature, his will, his love, but what is by Christ. The moon and stars give light, but it is only what they receive from the sun. The prophets and apostles held out light, but it was all received from him. They ' spake by the Spirit of Christ that was in them. I have received of the Lord that which I have delivered unto you ;' 1 Cor. xi. 23. The same apostle curses every one that shall bring in any other light into this house, be they angels, or men ; Gal. i. 8, 9. Christ alone fully knows the mind of God, as being always in the ' bosom of his Father ;' John i. 18. Yea, he knows it to the uttermost, being ' one with his Father ;' John x. 30. And he is willing to reveal it, for even ' for this end came he into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth.' And he had ability enough to do it, for ' in him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;' Col. ii. 3. He alone is the author of all light to this his holy habitation. Many attempts have been to set up light in this house, and not from Christ. Some would kindle their traditions for the doctrine of this house, some their prudentials for the government of it, some their ceremonials for the worship of it : all candles in the sun. Shall men think to compass themselves with sparks, and walk in the light of the fire which themselves have kindled, in the face of the sun of righteous-

ness? Shall not such men lie down in sorrow? Beloved, take heed of such 'ignes fatui,' foolish, misguiding fires.

(2dly.) By way of real communication, 'He is the true light which lighteneth every man;' John i. 9. Every one that hath any spiritual light really communicated to him, hath it from Christ. It is part of his work to 'recover sight to the blind;' Luke iv. 18. And therefore he adviseth the church of Laodicea to come to him for 'eye-salve, that she might see;' Rev. iii. 18. At his coming Zion 'shines forth,' Isa. lx. 1. because his 'light ariseth upon her;' ver. 2. The former doctrinal teaching of itself will not suffice: that 'light may shine in darkness, and the darkness not comprehend it;' John i. 5. All the light the sun can give, will not make a blind man see: there must be a visive faculty within, as well as light without. The stones of this building are by nature all blind, yea, darkened, yea, darkness itself. If the Lord Christ do not by the mighty efficacy of his Spirit create a visive power within them, as well as reveal the will of his Father to them, they will never spiritually discern the things of God. 'The natural man discerneth not the things of God, nor indeed can do;' 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is true, men by the help of common gifts, with the use of the former doctrinal revelation, may attain to such a knowledge of the mind of God, as may in a sense be called illumination; Heb. vi. 4. Far may they go, much may they do, by this light: they may teach others, and be cast away themselves: they may dispute for truth, yea, die for truth, and all this while have but the first, common anointing, see nothing clearly, but men walking like trees. A spiritual insight into the mind of God, is not to be obtained without an almighty act of the Spirit of Christ, creating a new power of life and light upon the soul. Some indeed think that they have this seeing power in themselves. Do but shew them outwardly what is to be seen, and let them alone for the discerning of it. Well then, let them alone, if ever they are stones of this living house, I am deceived. Thou that art so, know whence is all thy light; and if thou art any thing in the dark, draw nigh to the candlestick, from whence all light is. Thence must thy light come, yea, and thence it shall come, the secrets of the Lord shall make their abode with thee.

And this is the fourfold relation wherein the Lord Christ stands unto this house, as it is a spiritual building.

[2.] In respect of state and condition, Jesus Christ stands in a fivefold relation to this house, viz. 1st. As the owner; 2dly. The builder; 3dly. The watchman, or keeper; 4thly. The inhabiter; 5thly. The avenger: each of which I shall unfold in order.

1st. He is the owner of it. He calls it his: 'Upon this rock will I build my church;' Matt. xvi. 18. 'Moses was faithful in all his house, as a servant; but Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we;' Heb. iii. 4, 5. And that you may see that he doth not own it as his, without good right and title, know that in the great economy of grace Jesus Christ hath a threefold right and title to this house.

(1st.) Of inheritance. He is by his Father 'appointed heir of all things;' Heb. i. 3. By inheritance he obtains this excellent name, to be Lord of this house. God sends him to the vineyard as the heir, after his servants were refused. And he hath an engagement from his Father, that he shall enjoy his whole inheritance upon demand; Psal. ii. 8. For the Father appointed, 'in the fulness of time, to gather together all these things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, in him;' Eph. i. 10. So that as Christ 'is the first-begotten of the Father,' Heb. i. 6. and 'the first-born of every creature,' Col. i. 15. the right of heirship is his. But this will not do: for,

(2dly.) When he should come to take possession of this house, he finds that it is mortgaged, and that a great debt lies upon it, which he must pay to the uttermost farthing, if ever he intend to have it. To the former title there must also be added a right of purchase. He must purchase this house, and pay a great price for it. And what is this price? what is required of him? No less than his 'dearest blood;' Acts xx. 28. Yea, he must make his soul an offering for sin, and charge himself with the whole debt; all the curse and punishment which this house had in part actually contracted upon itself, and wholly deserved. He must put his shoulders under the burden due to it, and his back to the stripes prepared for it. A hard task! But Jesus Christ being the heir, the right of redemption belonged unto him. It was not for

his honour that it should lie unredeemed. Full well he knew that if he did it not, the whole creation was too beggarly to make this purchase. It is true, that nature of ours, which he assumed to pay that by, which he never took, was startled for a while, and would have deprecated this grievous price, crying out, 'If it be possible let this cup pass from me:' but he recollects himself, and says, 'I am content to do thy will, O God:' and so, through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself up unto God for a ransom. He likes the house, and will have it to dwell in, whatever it cost him. 'Here,' saith he, 'shall be my habitation, and my dwelling for ever;' Psal. cxxxiii. 'Know you not,' saith the apostle, 'that you are the temple of the Spirit of Christ?' Well, and how come we so to be? 'You are bought with a price;' 1 Cor. vi. 19. They who affirm that he also purchased the unclean sties of the devil, wot not what they say.

(3dly.) Unto purchase he must also add conquest. An unjust usurper had taken possession of this house, and kept it in bondage: Satan had seized on it, and brought it, through the wrath of God, under his power. He then must be conquered, that the Lord Christ may have complete possession of his own house. 'For this purpose, then, was the Son of God made manifest, that he might destroy the works of the devil;' 1 John iii. 8. And how doth he do it? He overpowers him, and destroys him, in that 'through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;' Heb. ii. 14. And he spoiled him, having overcome him; 'He bound the strong man, and then spoiled his goods;' Matt. xii. 27. All that darkness, unbelief, sin, and hardness, that he had stuffed this house withal, Christ spoils and scatters them all away. And to make his conquest complete, he triumphs over his enemy, and like a mighty conqueror makes an open show of him to his everlasting shame. Col. ii. 15. 'Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross:' and by this means strengthens his title to his inheritance.

I might also farther insist on the donation of his Father, and the actual possession he takes of it by his Spirit; but these are sufficient to prove this house to be Christ's. I shall take some observations hence.

Observation 1. Is this the house of Christ? Is he the owner of it? Let men take heed how they spoil it for themselves. The psalmist makes this a great argument in his pleading against opposers, that they came 'into the Lord's inheritance;' Psal. lxxix. 1. The title of Christ's purchase was not then so clearly known, as that of his inheritance; and therefore they of old pleaded chiefly by that title. Now he hath proclaimed to all his other titles also, the whole right he has to this house, to his saints. Who then shall meddle with it, and go free? Amongst men every one with all his might will defend his own possession: and shall we think that the Lord Christ will suffer his to be spoiled at an easy rate? Shall not men pay dear for their encroachment? How hath he in our days frustrated all attempts for the persecution of his? 'Touch not,' saith he, 'mine anointed.' Men may upon various pretences claim this privilege to such a land, nation, or faction; it will in the end appear to be theirs, and only theirs, who are living stones of this house. Dogs may scramble for their bread, but shall not enjoy it. It is Christ in this house that will make every stone of it a burdensome stone. He hath done it, that men may learn *μὴ ξεομαχῆν*. Do not think it will excuse thee to say, thou wast mistaken.

Observation 2. Is Christ the owner of this house? Let the order and disposal of it be left to himself. Men are apt to be tampering with his house and household. They will be so kind and careful, as to lay out their wisdom and prudence about it; thus and thus shall it be, these are parts and members of it. Christ is exceeding jealous of his honour in this particular. He cannot bear it, that men pretending to his glory, should think him so wanting in love or wisdom towards his own, as not exactly to dispose of all things that concern the regimen thereof. Men would not be so dealt withal in their own houses, as they deal with Christ in his. We have all wisdom enough (as we suppose) to order our own houses; only the wisdom and love of the Father leaves his to the discretion of others. These thoughts are not from above.

Observation 3. Hath Christ taken his own house to himself upon so many titles? Let not men put those buildings on him, for his, which are not so, which he holds not by

these titles. Go to a man that dwells in a stately palace of his own, shew him a hogsty, tell him, This is your house, here you dwell, this is yours: can you put a greater indignity on him? No, says the man, that is not mine, I dwell in yonder sumptuous palace. And shall we deal thus with the Lord Jesus? He hath bought and adorned his own house: a glorious house it is. If now men shall hold out to him a sty of swine, a den of unclean beasts, a ruinous heap, whereof the far greatest part are dead stones, and tell him, this is his church, his house; will it not exceedingly provoke him? will he bear such a reproach? Nay, he will reject such tenders to their ruin.

2dly. Jesus Christ is the builder of this house: 'This man is counted worthy of more honour than Moses, inasmuch as he that buildeth the house hath more honour than the house;' Heb. iii. 3. 'I,' saith he, 'will build my church;' Matt. xvi. 18. This is not a fabric for any workman, but Christ. It is true, there are others employed under him; and some so excellent, that they may be said to be 'wise master builders;' 2 Cor. iii. 10. But yet all the efficacy of their labour in this building is not from themselves, but merely from him, by whom they are employed. Except the Lord build this house, they labour in vain, that go about to build it.

Now this house receives a twofold building. (1st.) Spiritual, of all the stones thereof into one mystical house. Of this I chiefly treat. (2dly.) Ecclesiastical, of some particular stones into several tabernacles, which are useful partitions in the great mystical house, called assemblies, and dwelling places of mount Zion. Both these it hath from Christ alone.

(1st.) For the first: If all the most skilful workmen in the world should go to the pit of nature, by their own strength, to hew out stones for this building, they will never with all their skill and diligence lay one stone upon it. There is life required to those stones, which none can give but Christ. The Father hath given into his hand alone 'to give life eternal to whom he will;' John xvii. 2. He alone can turn stones into children of Abraham. To him is committed all dispensation of quickening power. He brings us from the dust of death, and no man hath quickened his own soul. With spiritual power all spiritual life is vested in

Christ. If dead stones live, it must be by hearing the voice of the Son of God. Christ's building of his mystical house is his giving life unto dead stones, or rather being life unto them. Of those who will attempt to build themselves, and draw a principle of spiritual life from the broken cisterns of nature, I shall speak afterward.

(2dly.) For the second, or the communion of living stones one with another, and all with Christ, in the order and worship appointed by the gospel, so becoming assemblies, and dwelling places of mount Zion: this also is of him. This is for his outward solemn worship, and he would never allow, that the will of any creature should be the measure of his honour. He sets up the candlesticks, and holds the stars in his hand. Look to the institution of this building, it is from Christ: look for directions about this building, it is wholly from him: from him, his word, his spirit, is the institution, direction, and perfection of it. From hence now take some observations.

Observation 1. Is Christ the builder of this house? Can he alone fit us for this building? Can he alone, and that by his almighty power, put life into dead stones, that they may grow up to be a holy and living habitation unto him? What then becomes of that famous workman freewill, and a power of believing in ourselves, do not they work effectually in this temple? As it was in Solomon's temple, 'there was neither axe, nor hammer, nor any tool of iron heard in it, all the while it was in building;' 1 Kings vi. 7. so in this spiritual house, that iron tool of freewill is not once heard, it comes not nigh the work, Christ doth all alone. He gives life to whom he pleases. Shall a dead will be thought to have a quickening, life-giving power in it? Shall a spirit of life be spun out of the bowels of nature? Is it the will of man, or the will of God, that draws men unto Christ? And is it his spirit, or flesh, that unites us to him? Where then is this workman employed, that makes all this noise in the world? Even there, where men cry, 'Go to, let us build a city, and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven;' Gen. xi. 4. amongst those who would build a Babel, a tower of their own to get to heaven by. The Lord comes down and scatters all their undertakings. This workman never placed stone in the house of Christ. Nay, it is like the foolish

woman, that pulls down her house with both her hands : what free grace sets up, that free will strives to demolish.

Observation 2. See hence a great mistake of many poor creatures, who would fain be stones in this house. What course take they? They hew and square themselves, strive to cut off this and that rubbish, which (as they suppose) alone hinders them from being fitted to this building. They pare themselves with vows, promises, resolutions, and engagements, beautify themselves with duties and services, and then with many perplexing fears present themselves to the building, never knowing whether they are admitted or no. All this while the great master builder stands by, scarcely dealt withal. What now is the issue of such attempts? What they build one day, falls down in another. When they have oftentimes in their own thoughts brought the building to such a pass, as that they are ready to think it will be well with them, now surely they shall have a share and interest in this living and glorious house ; all on a sudden they fall again to the ground, their hopes wither, and they suppose themselves in the world's rubbish again. There is no end of this alternation. Would now this poor soul see where its great defect lies? It hath not applied itself aright to the only builder. Wouldest thou be a stone in this fabric? Lay thyself before the Lord Jesus, say to him, that thou art in thyself altogether unfit for the great building he hath in hand ; that thou hast often attempted to put thyself upon it, but all in vain ; now, Lord Jesus, do thou take me into thine own hand ; if thou castest me away, I cannot complain, I must justify thee in all thy ways : but thou callest things that are not, as though they were ; thou turnest dead stones into children of Abraham : Oh, turn my dead into a living stone ! Fear not, he will in nowise cast thee out.

The vanity of men, attempting to mix their power and wisdom in the heaping up tabernacles for Christ, might be hence discovered ; but I forbear.

3dly. Jesus Christ is the great watchman, or keeper of this house. There are indeed other watchmen, and that of God's own appointment, for the use of this house : ' Son of man, I have set thee a watchman ;' Ezek. ii. 11. ' I have set watchmen upon thy wall ;' Isa. lxi. 6, 7. which in a special

manner are the pastors of the churches, 'they watch,' Heb. xiii. 17. as the priests and Levites heretofore kept the watch of the Lord. It cannot be denied, but that many who have taken upon them to be these watchmen, have watched only for their own advantage, have been very dogs, yea, dumb dogs, the very worst of dogs; Isa. lxvi. 10. yea, they have been, and oftentimes are, under various pretences, great 'smilers, and wounders of the spouse of Christ;' Cant. v. but yet were they never so good, and true to their trusts, they were never able all to watch and keep this house, had it not another watchman: 'Except the Lord keep the city, these watchmen watch in vain;' Psal. cxxvii. 1. He that keepeth Israel, who doth neither slumber nor sleep, must keep this house, or it will be destroyed. Christ then is that 'Holy One, and that watcher, that came down from heaven, and commanded to cut down the tree and the branches;' Dan. iv. 13, 14. Nebuchadnezzar and his great power, for meddling with this house. Now Christ watcheth his house for two ends.

(1st.) To see what it wants, 2 Cor. xvi. 9. 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in its behalf. He looks down from heaven to behold them that fear him;' Psal. xiv. He is that stone, upon which are 'seven eyes;' Zech. iii. 9. a sufficiency in perfection of wisdom, inspection, and government for the good of his house. And those 'seven eyes of his run to and fro through the whole earth,' for this very purpose; Zech. iv. 10. He takes notice of the state and condition of his people, to eye them in their distresses, and to give them timely and suitable deliverance. They may call every spring of their refreshment, Beer-lahai-roi.

(2dly.) To see that the son of violence draw not nigh unto it; and if he do, to require it at his hands, to make him eat his own flesh, and drink his own blood, that he may learn to devour no more. Observe then,

Observation 1. Whence it is that this house, which seems so often to be nigh to destruction, is yet preserved from ruin. Ofttimes it is brought into a condition, that all that look on say, Now it is gone for ever. But still it recovers, and gets up again. The Lord Christ looks on all the while: he knows how far things may proceed for trial. When it

comes to that pass, that if pressures and troubles should continue, the house will be overborne indeed, then he puts in, rebukes the winds and waves, and makes all things still again. Like a father, who looks upon his child in a difficult and dangerous business, knows that he can relieve him when he pleases, but would willingly see him try his strength and cunning, lets him alone, until perhaps the child thinks himself quite lost, and wonders his father doth not help him; but when the condition comes to be such, that without help he will be lost indeed, instantly the father puts in his hand and saves him. So deals the Lord Jesus with his house, lets it oftentimes strive and wrestle with great oppositions, to draw out, and exercise all the graces thereof; but yet all this while he looketh on, and when danger is nigh indeed, he is not far off.

Observation 2. Let all the enemies of the church know, that there is one, who hath an eye over them in all their counsels and undertakings. Whilst they are digging deep, he looks on, and laughs them to scorn. How perplexed was the king of Syria, when he found that the prophet was acquainted with all his designs, and made them known to the king of Israel? It cannot but be a matter of perplexity to the enemies of this house, when they shall find, that the great friend and protector thereof is continually present in all their advisoes. Let them not wonder at their birthless undertakings, the eye of Christ is still upon them.

Observation 3. Let the saints see their privilege, whoever they are, in what condition soever, the eye of Christ is upon them. He watches over them for good, and knows their souls in adversity. When no eye sees them, he looks on them, they cannot be cast out of his care, nor hid from his sight. There are many poor souls, who go heavily all the day long, that mourn in their spirits unknown, unregarded, unpitied; the eye of Christ is on them for good continually, they cannot be thrown out of his watchful care.

4thly. Christ is the indweller of this house. He hath not built it, and framed it for no use. It is for a habitation for himself. He 'hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest,' saith he, 'here will I dwell;' Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. This house is built up, to be 'an ha-

bitation unto him;’ Ephes. ii. 22. He is the ‘King of saints,’ and this house is his court. It is true for his human nature, ‘the heavens must receive him, until the time of the restitution of all things;’ Acts iv. 27. but yet he dwelleth in this house three ways.

(1st.) By his Spirit. Christ dwells in this house, and every stone of it, by his Spirit: ‘Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?’ 2 Cor. xiii. 5. ‘Christ in you:’ that is, the Spirit of Christ, Christ by his Spirit. So the Holy Ghost expounds it, Rom. viii. 9. ‘If the Spirit of God dwell in you,’ which, ver. 10. is, ‘if Christ be in you.’ Christ and his Spirit, as to indwelling, are all one; for he dwells in us by his Spirit. ‘The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that is given unto us;’ Rom. v. 5. There is not only the ‘love of God,’ a grace of the Spirit ‘shed abroad’ in us; but there is also the ‘Holy Spirit given unto us.’ This is fully asserted, Rom. viii. 11. ‘The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus, dwells in you:’ as also, 2 Tim. i. 14. ‘Keep the good thing committed to thee, by the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us.’ Hence the saints are said to be ‘temples of the Holy Ghost.’ Jesus Christ doth not build temples merely for graces, created graces; he dwells in them himself, he dwells in them by his Spirit. And this is a glorious privilege of this house, that Jesus Christ in a mystical and wonderful manner should dwell in it, and every stone of it. Hereby all believers come to be not one personal, but one mystical Christ; 1 Cor. xii. 6. However we are distanced in respect of his human nature, yet mystically we are one, one body, one mystical Christ, because we have one Spirit, dwelling in us and him. If a man were never so tall, so that his head should reach the stars, and his feet stand upon the ground; yet having but one soul, he is but one man still. Though Christ in his human nature be exceedingly distanced from us; yet there being one and the same Spirit in him and us, we are one mystical Christ. Yet observe,

Observation 1. Though Christ be united unto the persons of the saints, by the indwelling of the Spirit: yet the saints have not that which is called personal union with him, nor with the Spirit. Personal union is by a person of the Deity, assuming the nature of man into one personality with itself,

that having of its own no personal subsistence. Things are here clean otherwise: Christ doth not assume the saints into a personal subsistence with himself, but dwells in their persons by his Spirit.

Observation 2. That the operations of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and all his manifestations, are voluntary. He worketh as he will, and revealeth what he will, even where he dwells. He doth not work in us naturally, but voluntarily, unto what proportion he pleaseth; therefore though he dwell equally in all saints in respect of truth and reality, yet he doth not in respect of working and efficacy.

(2dly.) By his graces. Christ dwelleth in this house, and in all the stones thereof, by his graces. He 'dwells in our hearts by faith;' Ephes. iii. 17. He dwells in us by his word in all wisdom; Col. iii. 16. All the graces we are made partakers of, we receive from his fulness, and by them he inhabits in us. They are indeed the ornaments of the living stones of this house, to make them meet and fit for such an indweller, as the Lord Christ. Christ will not dwell in a soul, whose mind is darkness, his will stubbornness, and his affections carnal and sensual. He puts light, and life, and love upon the soul, that it may be meet for him to dwell in. Christ dwells in all the world by his power and presence, but he dwells only in his saints by his Spirit and grace.

(3dly.) By his ordinances. Where two or three of his are assembled together, there is he in the midst of them. The ordinances of Christ are the great ornaments of his kingly court, by them he is glorious in all the assemblies of mount Zion. Some would fain cast out this indwelling of Christ from among his saints: in due time he will thoroughly rebuke them: some again would thrust him out into the world; but he will make men know, that his ordinances are given unto his. It is true, the benefit of some of them extends to the world, but the right and enjoyment of them is the privilege of his saints. Thus Christ dwells in his house. Hence observe,

Observation 1. The intimacy of the Lord Jesus with his saints, and the delight he takes in them: he dwelleth with them, he dwelleth in them, he takes them to the nearest union with himself possible: he in them, they in him, that

they may be one. He hath made many an admirable change with us. He took our sin, and gives us his righteousness: he took our nature, and gives us his Spirit. Neither is it a bare indwelling, he thereby holds with us all acts of the choicest communion. 'If,' saith he, 'any man hear my voice, and open to me, I will come to him:' and what then? 'I will sup with him, and he with me;' Rev. iii. 20.

(1.) 'I will sup with him:' I will delight and satisfy myself with him. Jesus Christ takes abundance of delight and contentment in the hearts of his saints. When they are faithful, when they are fruitful, he is marvellously refreshed with it. Hence is that prayer of the spouse: 'Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the savour of my spices may flow out; let my beloved come and eat of his spices;' Cant. iv. 16. She would have the spices, the graces she hath received, breathed on by a fresh gale of the Spirit, that they might yield a sweet savour. And why so? That her beloved may have something for his entertainment, that he may come and sup, and eat of his pleasant fruits. A poor soul, that hath received Christ, hath not any desire so fervent, as that it may have something for the entertainment of him: that he who filled it when it was hungry, may not (as it were) be sent away empty. And the Lord Jesus is exceedingly taken with those refreshments. 'The King is held in his galleries;' Cant. iv. 5. He is detained, yea, bound with delight, he knows not how to pass away. Therefore 'he rests in his love;' Zeph. iii. 17. He is exceedingly satiated in the delight he takes in his saints. Neither is this all, that when Christ comes he will sup with us, though this be a great deal. For what are we, that we should entertain our Lord? But also,

(2.) The saints sup with him: he provides choice refreshments for them also. When Christ comes in unto us, he will entertain a soul bounteously. He provides love for us. When the Spirit of Christ is bestowed on us, 'he sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts;' Rom. v. 5. He sheds it abroad, pours it out abundantly. Friends, love is a choice dainty: he that knows it not, is a stranger to all spiritual banquets: it is a choice dish in the feast of fat things, that Christ prepareth. He provides 'righteousness, and peace,

and joy in the Holy Ghost' for us; Rom. xiv. 17. that his kingdom, and this kingdom of his, is within us. Of such precious things as these doth Christ provide a supper for them, with whom he dwells. If Christ be in you, more or less, you shall not want this entertainment. We are indeed sometimes like mad guests, that when meat is set on the table, cast it all down, without tasting a morsel. When Christ hath prepared sweet and precious dainties for us, we cast them on the ground; we throw away our peace, our joy, by folly and unbelief: but this makes not the truth of God of none effect.

Observation 2. Doth Christ dwell in us by his Spirit? Should we not be careful lest we grieve that Spirit of his? The Spirit of Christ is very tender. Did the saints continually consider this, that Christ dwells in them, that he is grieved, and troubled at all their unbelief, unruly passions, worldly desires, foolish imaginations; surely they could not but be much more watchful over themselves, than generally they are. He is refreshed when we walk with him, and hold fellowship with him. To turn aside from him, to hold fellowship with the world or flesh, this grieves him and burdens him. Oh, 'grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption.' And let me tell you, if you do, though he will not utterly depart from you, nor take his kindness away for evermore; yet he will do that shall make your heart ache, your joints tremble, and break all your bones in pieces. For,

(1.) He will depart from you, as to all sense of his presence, that you shall have neither joy, nor comfort, nor peace. He will hide his face, and make you believe (as we say) that he is gone utterly from you. And this he will do, not for a day, or a night, or so, but for a great while together. You shall go to seek him, and you shall not find him; yea, beg and cry, and have no answer. Now all the world for one smile from Christ, for one impression of his presence upon my heart, and all in vain. When the Spirit of Christ was thus departed from David upon his miscarriage, as to the sense and joy of it, how doth he cry out? 'Make me to hear the voice of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice;' Psal. li. 8. If thou valuest the presence of Christ at no greater rate, but to jeopard it upon

every occasion, thou mayest haply go without the comfort of it all thy days. Examine yourselves, is it not so with some of you? Have you not lost the sense of the presence of Christ by your folly and uneven walking? Perhaps you value it not much, but go on as Samson with his hair cut, and think to do as at other times; but if the Philistines set upon thee, it will be sorrow and trouble, in every assault thou wilt find thyself a lost man, sooner or later it will be bitterness to thee.

(2.) He will depart, as to the efficacy of his working in thee, and leave thee so weak, that thou shalt not be able to walk with God. His Spirit is 'a Spirit of grace and supplications.' He will so withdraw it, that thou shalt find thy heart in a poor condition, as to those things. To be cold in prayer, dead in hearing, estranged from meditation, slight in all duties, this shall be thy portion: a frame that a tender soul would tremble to think of. Ah, how many poor creatures are come to this state in these days, by their neglect and contempt of Christ dwelling in them! They have lost their first love, their first life, their graces are ready to die, and their whole soul is asleep, in a heartless, lifeless, zealous frame. They shall be saved, 'but yet as through fire.'

(3.) He will depart, as to assurance of what is to come, as well as to a sense of what is present. It is the indwelling spirit of Christ that gives assurance: hereby are we 'sealed to the day of redemption. He 'beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.' Upon our grieving him, he will withdraw as to this also. We shall be bewildered, and in the dark, not knowing what will become of our souls to eternity. For if Christ by his Spirit do not speak peace, who shall?

Observation 3. Doth he dwell in us by his grace?

(1.) Let us first know whence all graces are, that in a want, or weakness of them, we may know whither to go for a supply. 'Of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace.' All supplies of graces are from Christ. 'Lord, increase our faith,' say the apostles. Not only faith originally is from him, but all increases of it also. 'I believe, help thou my unbelief,' says the poor man. We wrestle and struggle with a little grace, a little faith, a little love, a little joy, and are contented if we can keep our heads above water, that we be

not quite sunk and lost. How sweet would it be with us, if upon a serious consideration from whence all these graces flow, we would apply ourselves to draw out farther degrees and heightenings of them, whereby he might dwell more plentifully in us, and we might always converse with him in his gracious train of attendants. How this may be done in particular, is not my business now to show.

(2.) Learn to tender the graces of Christ, as those which hold out his presence to us. Let us tender them in our own hearts, and prize them in whomsoever they are. They are pledges of the indwelling of Christ. Certainly if men valued Christ, they would more value his graces. Many pretend to love him, to honour him, yea, with Peter, to be ready to die with him, or for him; but what evil surmises have they of the graces of Christ appearing in others? how do they call them hypocrisy, humour, folly, pride, singularity, with other terms of a later invention? I cannot so easily believe, that any one can love the Lord Jesus, and hate the appearances of him in others. Where is any thing of Christ, there is also Christ.

5thly. Jesus Christ is the great avenger of this house, and of all the injuries or wrongs that are done unto it. 'All,' saith he, 'that devour Israel shall offend;' Jer. ii. 3. He will not hold him guiltless, that rises up against it. See Isa. lix. 15—18. He takes upon him the avenging of his house, as his own proper work: 'Shall he not avenge his elect? He will do it speedily.' See also Isa. lxiii. 2—6. How dreadful is he in the execution of his revenging judgments against the enemies thereof! So also is he described, Rev. xix. 13—15. He hath promised to make the stones of this house heavy stones, they shall burden all that touch them; Zech. xii. 3. He comes forth of 'the myrtle trees in the bottom' (his lowly people, in a low condition) with the 'red horse' following him; Zech. i. 8. Upon this account he fearfully broke the old Roman, pagan empire; Rev. vi. 13—17. and will as fearfully destroy the antichristian, Roman power, with all its adherents; Rev. xvii. 18, 19. Sooner or later he will call to an account every instrument of persecution in the world. Hence he is said to be a lion in the behalf of this house, that treads down all before him; Micah v. 8. Jacob says of him in Judah, 'He is a lion, as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?'

Gen. xlix. 9. Suppose any do rouse him up: how then? 'He will not lie down, until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain;' Numb. xxiii. 24. Many poor creatures have, by their opposition to his house, roused up this lion: and what hath been the issue? what attempts have been to cause him to lie down again, all in vain? If he be once roused up, he will not couch down, until he eat and drink the blood of the slain. But suppose great opposition be made unto him: will he not give over? Not at all. 'As a lion that cometh upon his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, he will not be afraid at their voice, nor abase himself at their noise;' Isa. xxxi. 4. In brief, sooner or later, temporally or eternally, he will avenge all the injuries, and destroy all the enemies of his holy dwelling; 1 Thess. i. 6—10.

And these are some of the relations, wherein the Lord Christ stands unto this house of God, being made thereby unto it, beauty and glory, comeliness and excellency. The carrying on of this building, by the union of all the stones thereof to the foundation, and their cementing one to another by faith, love, and order, I shall not now treat of, nor of the following points of the text.

The general uses of what hath been said, are three, the heads whereof I shall name.

Use 1. See the eminent privilege of them which are indeed stones of this house, which is living, strong, and glorious, which is so nearly related to the Lord Christ. There is more of duty, dignity, and safety in this thing, than can easily be expressed. To do service unto Christ as his, to have the honour of being his, and to be safeguarded as his, are great privileges. Let them, who have any sense of these things, farther draw out these particulars, from what hath been spoken.

Use 2. Learn hence the vanity of resting upon outward church privileges, if we are not withal interested in this spiritual estate. Where men are living stones indeed, they lie in beauty and order in the assemblies; where they are otherwise, where assemblies are made up of dead rubbish, and yet cry, 'The house of the Lord, the house of the Lord;' the Lord Jesus abhors those assemblies, he stands not in these relations unto them.

Use 3. See hence the ruin of persecution, that hath appeared in the world in various forms. It hath put on all manner of colours and pretences, and prevailed with all sorts of persons at one time or other to close with it. What hath been the issue? what is like to be? The house indeed hath been battered sometimes, but they who have come against it have been broken all to pieces. Shall the residue of men, who under new pretences, or old ones new painted, drive on the same design, shall they prosper? Thou, O Lord Jesus, in thine anger wilt cut them off. The Lord open the eyes of the sons of men, that they may not hope any more to separate between Christ and his saints, between whom there are so many everlasting relations.

Μόνω σοφῶ Θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοῦς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.