

GENERAL DISPENSATION
OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT,
WITH RESPECT UNTO
THE NEW CREATION.

CHAP. II.

The work of the Spirit of God, in the new creation, proposed to consideration. The importance of the doctrine hereof. The plentiful effusion of the Spirit the great promise respecting the times of the New Testament. Ministry of the gospel founded in the promise of the Spirit. How this promise is made unto all believers. Injunction to all to pray for the Spirit of God. The solemn promise of Christ to send his Spirit when he left the world. The ends for which he promised him. The work of the new creation the principal means of the revelation of God and his glory. How this revelation is made in particular herein.

WE are now arrived at that part of our work which was principally intended in the whole; and that because our faith and obedience is principally therein concerned. This is the dispensation and work of the Holy Ghost, with respect to the *gospel*; or the *new creation* of all things in and by Jesus Christ. And this, if any thing in the Scripture, is worthy of our most diligent inquiry and meditation; nor is there any more important principle and head of that religion which we do profess. The doctrine of the being and unity of the divine nature, is common to us with the rest of mankind, and hath been so from the foundation of the world; however some, like brute beasts, have herein also corrupted themselves. The doctrine of the Trinity, or the subsistence of three persons in the one divine nature or being, was known to all who enjoyed divine revelation, even under the Old Testament, though to us it be manifested with more light and convincing evidence. The incarnation of the Son of God was promised and expected from the first entrance of sin, and received its actual accomplishment in the fulness of time, during the

continuance of the Mosaical pedagogy. But this dispensation of the Holy Ghost, whereof we now proceed to treat, is so peculiar unto the New Testament, that the evangelist, speaking of it, says, 'The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified;' John vii. 39. And they who were instructed in the doctrine of John the Baptist only, knew not whether there 'were any Holy Ghost;' Acts xix. 2. Both which sayings concerned his dispensation under the New Testament; for his eternal being and existence they were not ignorant of, nor did he then first begin to be, as we have fully manifested in our foregoing discourses. To stir us up, therefore, unto diligence in this inquiry, unto what was in general laid down before, I shall add some considerations, evidencing the greatness and necessity of this duty, and then proceed to the matter itself, that we have proposed to handle and explain.

1. The *plentiful effusion of the Spirit* is that which was principally prophesied of, and foretold as the great privilege and pre-eminence of the gospel-church state; this was that good wine which was kept until the last: this all the prophets bear witness unto; see Isa. xxxv. 7. xlv. 3. Joel ii. 28. Ezek. xi. 19. xxxvi. 27. with other places innumerable. The great promise of the Old Testament was that concerning the coming of Christ in the flesh. But he was so to come as to put an end unto that whole church state, wherein his coming was expected. To prove this was the principal design of the apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews. But this promise of the Spirit, whose accomplishment was reserved for the times of the gospel, was to be the foundation of another church state, and the means of its continuance. If, therefore, we have any interest in the gospel itself, or desire to have; if we have either part or lot in this matter, or desire to be made partakers of the benefits which attend thereon, which are no less than our acceptance with God here, and our salvation hereafter; it is our duty to search the Scriptures, and inquire diligently into these things. And let no man deceive us with vain words, as though the things spoken concerning the Spirit of God, and his work towards them that do believe, are fanatical and unintelligible by rational men; for, because of this contempt of him, the wrath of God will come on the children of disobedience. And if the

'world in wisdom,' and their reason, know him not, nor 'can receive him,' yet they who believe do know him, for 'he dwelleth with them and shall be in them;' John xiv. 17. And the present practice of the world in despising and slighting the Spirit of God and his work, gives light and evidence unto those words of our Saviour, 'that the world cannot receive him.' And it cannot do so, because it 'neither seeth him nor knoweth him;' or hath no experience of his work in them, or of his power and grace. Accordingly doth it,—it is come to pass. Wherefore, not to avow the Spirit of God in his work, is to be ashamed of the gospel, and of the promise of Christ, as if it were a thing not to be owned in the world.

2. The *ministry of the gospel*, whereby we are begotten again, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures unto God, is from his promised presence with it, and work in it, called the *ministry of the Spirit*, even of the Spirit that giveth life; 2 Cor. iii. 6. And it is so in opposition to the 'ministration of the law,' wherein yet there were a multitude of ordinances of worship and glorious ceremonies. And he who knows no more of the ministry of the gospel, but what consists in an attendance unto the letter of institutions, and the manner of their performance, knows nothing of it. Nor yet is there any extraordinary afflatus, or inspiration, now intended or attended unto, as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm the two pretend. But there is that presence of the Spirit of God with the ministry of the gospel, in his authority, assistance, communication of gifts and abilities, guidance, and direction, as without which it will be useless and unprofitable in and unto all that take the work thereof upon them. This will be more fully declared afterward. For,

3. The promise and *gift of the Spirit* under the gospel, is not made nor granted unto any *peculiar sort of persons* only, but unto all believers, as their conditions and occasions do require. They are not, therefore, the especial interest of a few, but the common concern of all Christians. The Papists grant, that this promise is continued; but they would confine it to their pope or their councils, things nowhere mentioned in the Scripture, nor the object of any one gospel promise whatever. It is all believers in their places

and stations, churches in their order, and ministers in their office, unto whom the promise of him is made, and towards whom it is accomplished, as shall be shewn. Others also grant the continuance of this gift, but understand no more by it, but an ordinary blessing upon men's rational endeavours, common and exposed unto all alike. This is no less than to overthrow his whole work, to take his sovereignty out of his hand, and to deprive the church of all especial interest in the promise of Christ concerning him. In this inquiry, therefore, we look after what at present belongs unto ourselves, if so be we are disciples of Christ, and do expect the fulfilling of his promises. For, whatever men may pretend, unto this day, 'if they have not the Spirit of Christ, they are none of his;' Rom. viii. 9. For our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised him as a Comforter, to abide with his disciples for ever; John xiv. And by him it is, that he is present with them, and among them, to the end of the world; Matt. xxviii. 20. xviii. 20. That we speak not as yet of his sanctifying work, whereby we are enabled to believe, and are made partakers of that holiness without which no man shall see God. Wherefore, without him all religion is but a body without a soul, a carcass without an animating spirit. It is true, in the continuation of his work he ceaseth from putting forth those extraordinary effects of his power, which were needful for the laying the foundation of the church in the world. But the whole work of his grace, according to the promise of the covenant, is no less truly and really carried on at this day, in and towards all the elect of God, than it was on the day of Pentecost, and onwards; and so is his communication of gifts necessary for the edification of the church; Eph. iv. 10—13. The owning, therefore, and avowing the work of the Holy Ghost in the hearts and on the minds of men, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, is the principal part of that profession, which at this day all believers are called unto.

4. We are taught, in an especial manner, *to pray* that God would *give his Holy Spirit* unto us, that through his *aid and assistance*, we may live unto God in that holy obedience which he requires at our hands; Luke xi. 9—13. Our Saviour enjoining an importunity in our supplications, ver. 9, 10. and giving us encouragement that we shall succeed in

our requests, ver. 11, 12. makes the subject matter of them to be the Holy Spirit; ‘Your heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him;’ ver. 13. Which in the other evangelists, is ‘good things,’ Matt. vii. 11. because he is the author of them all in us and to us; nor doth God bestow any good thing on us, but by his Spirit. Hence the promise of bestowing the Spirit, is accompanied with a prescription of duty unto us, that we should ask him, or pray for him; which is included in every promise where his sending, giving, or bestowing, is mentioned. He, therefore, is the great subject matter of all our prayers. And that signal promise of our blessed Saviour, to send him as a Comforter to abide with us for ever, is a directory for the prayers of the church in all generations. Nor is there any church in the world fallen under such a total degeneracy, but that in their public offices there are testimonies of their ancient faith and practice in praying for the coming of the Spirit unto them, according to this promise of Christ. And, therefore, our apostle, in all his most solemn prayers for the churches in his days, makes this the chief petition of them, That God would give unto them, and increase in them, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit himself for sundry especial effects and operations whereof they stood in need; Eph. i. 17. iii. 16. Col. ii. 2. And this is a full conviction of what importance the consideration of the Spirit of God and his work is unto us. We must deal in this matter with that confidence which the truth instructs us unto, and therefore say, That he who prayeth not constantly and diligently for the Spirit of God, that he may be made partaker of him for the ends for which he is promised, is a stranger from Christ and his gospel. This we are to attend unto, as that whereon our eternal happiness doth depend. God knows our state and condition, and we may better learn our wants from his prescription of what we ought to pray for, than from our sense and experience. For we are in the dark unto our own spiritual concerns, through the power of our corruptions and temptations, and ‘know not what we should pray for as we ought;’ Rom. viii. 26. But our heavenly Father knows perfectly what we stand in need of. And, therefore, whatever be our present apprehensions concerning ourselves which are to be examined by the word,

our prayers are to be regulated by what God hath enjoined us to ask, and what he hath promised for to bestow.

5. What was before mentioned, may here be called over again and farther improved, yea it is necessary that so it should be. This is the solemn promise of Jesus Christ, when he was to leave this world by death. And whereas he therein made and confirmed his testament; Heb. ix. 15—17. ‘He bequeathed his Spirit as his great legacy unto his disciples.’ And this he gave unto them as the great pledge of their future inheritance, 2 Cor. i. 22. which they were to live upon in this world. All other good things he hath indeed bequeathed unto believers, as he speaks of peace with God in particular. ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;’ John xiv. 27. But he gives particular graces and mercies for particular ends and purposes. The Holy Spirit he bequeaths to supply his own absence; John xvi. 17. that is, for all the ends of spiritual and eternal life. Let us, therefore, consider this gift of the Spirit either formally, under this notion that he was the principal legacy left unto the church by our dying Saviour; or materially, as to the ends and purposes for which he is so bequeathed, and it will be evident what valuation we ought to have of him and his work. How would some rejoice, if they could possess any relic of any thing that belonged unto our Saviour in the days of his flesh, though of no use or benefit unto them? Yea, how great a part of men, called Christians, do boast in some pretended parcels of the tree whereon he suffered. Love abused by superstition lies at the bottom of this vanity. For they would embrace any thing left them by their dying Saviour. But he left them no such things, nor did ever bless and sanctify them unto any holy or sacred ends. And therefore, hath the abuse of them been punished with blindness and idolatry. But this is openly testified unto in the gospel, then when his heart was overflowing with love unto his disciples, and care for them, when he took a holy prospect of what would be their condition, their work, duty, and temptations in the world, and thereon made provision of all that they could stand in need of; he promiseth to leave and give unto them his Holy Spirit to abide with them for ever, directing us to look unto him for all our comforts and supplies. According, therefore, unto our valuation and esteem of him, of our satisfaction and acquiescency in him, is our

regard to the love, care, and wisdom of our blessed Saviour to be measured. And, indeed, it is only in his word and Spirit wherein we can either honour or despise him in this world. In his own person he is exalted at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers; so that nothing of ours can immediately reach him or affect him. But it is in our regard to these that he makes a trial of our faith, love, and obedience. And it is a matter of lamentation to consider the contempt and scorn that on various pretences is cast upon this Holy Spirit, and the work whereunto he is sent by God the Father and by Jesus Christ. For there is included therein a contempt of them also. Nor will a pretence of honouring God in their own way secure such persons as shall contract the guilt of this abomination. For it is an idol, and not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who doth not work effectually in the elect by the Holy Ghost, according to the Scriptures. And if we consider this promise of the Spirit to be given unto us as to the ends of it; then,

6. He is promised and given as the *sole cause and author of all the good* that, in this^a world, we are or can be made partakers of. For, 1. there is no good communicated unto us from God, but it is bestowed on us or wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. No gift, no grace, no mercy, no privilege, no consolation, do we receive, possess, or use, but it is wrought in us, collated on us, or manifested unto us, by him alone. Nor, 2. is there any good in us towards God, any faith, love, duty, obedience, but what is effectually wrought in us by him, by him alone. 'For in us, that is, in our flesh (and by nature we are but flesh), there dwelleth no good thing.' All these things are from him and by him, as shall, God assisting, be made to appear by instances of all sorts in our ensuing discourse. And these considerations I thought meet to premise unto our entrance into that work which now lieth before us.

The great work whereby God designed to glorify himself ultimately in this world, was that of the *new creation*, or of the recovery and restoration of all things by Jesus Christ; Heb. i. 1—3. Eph. i. 10. And as this is, in general, confessed by all Christians, so I have elsewhere insisted on the

^a Gratias ago tibi clementissime Deus, quia quod quæsi vi mane prior ipse donasti. Cypri. de Baptism. Christi.

demonstration of it. 2. That which God ordereth and designeth as the principal means for the manifestation of his glory, must contain the most perfect and absolute revelation and declaration of himself, his nature, his being, his existence, and excellencies. For from their discovery and manifestation, with the duties which as known they require from rational creatures, doth the glory of God arise, and no otherwise. 3. This, therefore, was to be done in this great work, and it was done accordingly. Hence is the Lord Christ in his work of mediation said to be the 'image of the invisible God;' Col. i. 15. 'The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;' Heb. i. 3. in whose 'face the knowledge of the glory of God shineth forth unto us;' 2 Cor. iv. 6. Because in and by him in his work of the new creation, all the glorious properties of the nature of God are manifested and displayed incomparably above what they were in the creation of all things in the beginning. I say therefore, in the contrivance, projection, production, carrying on, disposal, and accomplishment of this great work, God hath made the most eminent and glorious discovery of himself unto angels and men; Eph. iii. 8—10. 1 Pet. i. 10—12. That we may know, love, trust, honour, and obey him in all things as God, and according to his will. 4. In particular, in this new creation, he hath revealed himself in an especial manner as three in one. There was no one more glorious mystery brought to light in and by Jesus Christ than that of the Holy Trinity, or the subsistence of the three persons in the unity of the same divine nature. And this was done not so much in express propositions or verbal testimonies unto that purpose, which yet is done also, as by the declaration of the mutual, divine, internal acts of the persons towards one another, and the distinct, immediate, divine, external actings of each person in the work which they did and do perform. For God revealeth not himself unto us merely doctrinally and dogmatically, but by the declaration of what he doth for us, in us, towards us, in the accomplishment of the counsel of his will; see Eph. i. 4—12. And this revelation is made unto us, not that our minds might be possessed with the notions of it, but that we may know aright how to place our trust in him, how to obey him, and live unto him, how to obtain and exercise communion with him, until we come to the enjoyment of him.

We may make *application* of these things unto, and exemplify them yet farther in, the work under consideration. Three things, in general, are in it proposed unto our faith.

1. The *supreme purpose*, design, contrivance, and disposal of it.
2. The *purchasing* and procuring cause and means of the effects of that design; with its accomplishment *in itself*, and with respect unto God.
3. The *application* of the supreme design and actual accomplishment of it to make it effectual unto us.

The first of these is absolutely in the Scripture assigned unto the Father, and that uniformly and every where. His will, his counsel, his love, his grace, his authority, his purpose, his design, are constantly proposed as the foundation of the whole work, as those which were to be pursued, effected, accomplished; see Isa. xlii. 1—3. Psal. xl. 6—8. John iii. 16. Isa. liii. 10—12. Eph. i. 4—10. and other places innumerable. And on this account, because the Son undertook to effect whatever the Father had so designed and purposed, there were many acts of the will of the Father towards the Son in sending, giving, appointing of him; in preparing him a body; in comforting and supporting him; in rewarding and giving a people unto him which belong unto the Father, on the account of the authority, love, and wisdom, that were in them, their actual operation belonging particularly unto another person. And in these things is the person of the Father in the divine being proposed unto us to be known and adored. Secondly, The Son condescendeth, consenteth, and engageth, to do and accomplish in his own person, the whole work which, in the authority, counsel, and wisdom of the Father, was appointed for him; Phil. ii. 5—8. And in these divine operations is the person of the Son revealed unto us to be ‘honoured even as we honour the Father.’ Thirdly, The Holy Ghost doth immediately work and effect whatever was to be done in reference unto the person of the Son, or the sons of men, for the perfecting and accomplishment of the Father’s counsel, and the Son’s work, in an especial application of both unto their especial effects and ends. Hereby is he made known unto us, and hereby our faith concerning him and in him is directed. And thus, in this great work of the new creation by Jesus Christ, doth God cause all his glory to pass before us, that we may both know him and worship him in a due manner. And what is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost herein we shall now declare.