



SERMON VI.*

Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far. The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name, &c.—Isaiah xlix. 1, 2, 3, 4.

THE Prophet, from the fortieth chapter of this prophecy, to the end thereof, discourses of these two things. 1. Of the bringing of the Church back from Babylon. 2. Of the restoration of the Church by Jesus Christ. Here is

1. A preface to the doctrine of Christ, and the glory of the Church under Him. And in these words Christ Himself is speaking to the islands, and, among others, to Scotland and England: for Britain is one of those islands.

2. The Person spoken of is described from His calling, and the power of His mediation, compared to a sharp sword.

3. In allusion to the people for whom He is to work, it is said of Him, "Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

4. The unsuccessfulness of His ministry, occasioned by the obstinacy of the Jews; "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain."

"Listen, O isles, unto me."—Christ first made choice

* Preached at a Communion, at Kirkmabreck, July 19th, 1634.

of the people of the Jews ; but now He has broken down the partition wall betwixt Jew and Gentile ; and cries to us, " Listen, O isles, and hear, O Scotland and England." Ye who lie far out in an isle of the sea, listen unto Me, and ye shall be My land and heritage. Now, O Scotland, God be thanked, thy name is in the Bible. Christ spake to us long since, ere ever we were born. Christ said, " Father, give Me the ends of the earth, put in Scotland and England, with the isles-men in the great Charter also : for I will have them among the rest (Psalm ii. 8). God said, He should get all the land He named ; all Sinim, and all the ends of the earth : all beyond the river, Sheba and Seba. The land in acres, and ridges,* was measured out to Christ, and the march-† stones set. And as ye ken, in Charters, houses, crofts, mosses, moors, fowling, and fishing, even all in the land's length and breadth are included, so Christ gets all His chosen ones that are included in the grand Charter of election. Believe in the name and authority of the Son of God, I pray you believe, and read Scotland's Charter Psalm ii. 8, xlv. and lxxii. 10. Will ye then believe?

But now we are like to be turned over to a new master ; Antichrist is claiming us. Let us be wo‡ for that. Ken ye what the enemies of the Kirk are doing ? They are working hard that they may get Christ overthrown, and His Father's land taken from Him. Think ye they will come speed ? Nay, they shall not : the gates of hell and Rome shall not prevail against Him. Regard them not, for they shall not overcome. Christ's Charter is surer than that. Then let the isles hearken and obey ; and I fear not

* Rigs ; furrows. † Boundary-stones. ‡ Grieved.

that Christ shall lose one foot-breadth in Britain. But if ye will not believe and obey Him, surely there will be a land lost, and we will be given away. It was not an ill conquest that Christ made, and could not but thrive. It was well won (as we may say) by the sweat of His brow. Christ is not like many daft^o young heirs, who lose their estates by their folly. Christ is no waster, He never sold, nor mortgaged a furr† of His Father's land. It is *our sins* that have sold us, and not He.

“*Listen, O isles, Hearken, &c.*”—The isles must be Christ's, upon condition they hear and obey Him. Christ our Master must have service from us; else we cast away our rights. “And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all who believe and obey Him” (Heb. v. 9). Of Him the Father says, “This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear Him.” Listen therefore to the matter, for upon your peril be it, if ye reject the Lord Jesus.

“*The Lord hath called me from the womb.*”—What means this? Might not Christ have come uncalled? Nay, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Heb. v. 4, 5). “So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made unto Him an high priest, but He that said, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee.” If ye ask what was Christ's calling? I say it was, 1. God's eternal decree, wherein it was decreed, and agreed upon in the Covenant of Redemption, betwixt the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that Christ should be the person: and writs, as it were, past betwixt them. 2. This calling is God's lay-

* Not in their right mind.

† Furrow.

ing all the elect over upon Christ. Therefore the Father has not a personal oversight of the elect, they are all given to Christ; they are all given to the Son's hands. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). There is not another Mediator than He: neither the Father nor the Spirit. There is not another to answer, or compare personally for us. The Father (so to speak) has given all our bonds and writs over to the great advocate, Christ Jesus. The Father seeks, purposes, and pleads against mystical Christ, and cries, Payment, or death:—Death or payment, either from the Head or the members. But the Father laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah liii. 6). Was only our sin laid upon Christ? Nay, He is also made the author of eternal salvation by suffering. Never such a word is spoken of the other two glorious persons, in all the Book of God. If Christ had not given an infinite satisfaction, and payed the debt, none could have attained salvation. Works of supererogation will not do the turn; man's free will cannot avail. Nothing but the blood of Jesus was able to compensate the matter.

3. The Lord's calling Christ is His giving Him law on His side, by a public office; to teach as a Prophet, to suffer as a Priest, and to subdue, rule, and defend, as a King. For we may know for certain, that howbeit, Christ-man had a private goodwill to us, pitying our case, and desiring we should be set at liberty; yet that would not have done our turn, except He had been a divine person, and given the required satisfaction. A man may have a goodwill to be cautioner and surety for another; but if he is a rebel against the king, the law cannot accept of him. No, he cannot be accepted unless he be a free

subject, and a sponseable* man. So Christ having man's bowels to pity us, God gave Him law upon His side, and public authority against all sin. Here is a singular comfort to all weak, sick, and heavy-laden souls. If ye doubt of your salvation, remember that Christ by law, and God's good-will and special calling, is made and appointed a Mediator for you. Then it is no false pretension that Christ took your plea in hand : He has a calling to it by law. Then rest and rely upon Him alone for salvation. The Lord has made a resignation of you over to Christ ; and if ye truly believe in Him as He is offered to you in the everlasting gospel, there is no fear that He cast you off or that ye shall not be saved. Whom! He loves, He loves unto the end. If ye are His, He will not lose His right. Then boldly claim salvation, forgiveness, and Christ's righteousness. It is yours by God's calling ; take your own, and be not driven from it as silly bodies : be not bosted† from salvation, by temptations, crosses, and faithless fears. If you believe in Christ, your rights are strong. Christ says, "The Lord God called Me from My mother's womb : " that may be your warrant, to trust in Him as an all-sufficient Saviour. Unbelief, then, must be a great liar, and slighter of Christ. It says as much as Christ is not a lawful Saviour, that He came un-called, and that His work will not stand. See then how deep in sin thou art, O unbeliever ! Thou turnest worse than a Jew, and sayest at the first, Christ is a deceiver, and not a true Saviour. There is much talking of faith ; but I wish it were well kend.‡ Alas ! that it is not better known.

" From the bowels of my mother hath he made men-

* Able to pay. † Driven by threats. ‡ Known ; understood.

tion of my name.”—The law asked who should suffer for man? It was not content with the general answer, “A cautioner and surety;” but one behoved to be named. So the Lord named Christ, and said; Talk no more of that, there is none other meet for the work but Mine own eternal Son; the Son of God, and the Son of man. And upon Christ's consenting, and answering to His name, God booked Him; and writes it in His holy word, that Christ is Cautioner for His people. He was made to undergo the curse due to us, and His name was written in our bond. An honest man, especially in a high station, will not have his name called in question for a sum of money. He would rather pay the sum ere his name were heard in the Court. So, ere his name be heard for a fault that deserves infamy and death by the law, he would rather die. But our dear Redeemer was not so thin skinned; for His name was within our black bond, along with the perjured man, the adulterer, &c., and justice laid hold on Him as if He had been the transgressor and sinner. He did not become the sinner actually, as the Antinomians say, else He could not have made satisfaction for the sins of His people. It is but a foolish conceit of theirs to imagine that He was both the sin, and the sacrifice for sin. No, instead of being the sinner, “He was holy, harmless, and undefiled” (Heb. vii. 26). Yet (what is matter of admiration and wonder) this Holy One did undergo the full punishment that law and justice did require! “He poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah liii. 12). Lo, hear His name in God's high count-book, and the Father cries, “Jesus Christ is made sin for sinners.” This is a sore

ditty;º the law of God's curse and malediction lighted on Christ! O! The angels might wonder to hear Christ's name called in question. Then ye who think much to be spoken of for Christ, to be reproached and nick-named; or to have your names heard of before judges and rulers for Him; why do ye so? He took a blot on His name for you! Christ did not hang down His head, nor think shame of you! He avows you and your cause before His Father. So then, avow ye His name, Him and His truth also, before all the world. Take not a back-side, hold not your peace, flee not the place, when His cause comes in competition, with your name being heard of for Him. "It is your honour." Oh! That we love ourselves so well, that we will not suffer a wrong for Him! Oh! Thy spirit will rise if thy name is but changed. And some of you will say, I thank God, none will say that of me, "But a whore's son!" and I thank God, my name is known where I dwell. And so is His name. Is thy name better known than thy Saviour, Christ's? Who has the name of King of kings? And yet His name was put in God's book along with the transgressor's. Christ took a little low style, as from a lord or an earl to a good man. He is aye called here, in our country, the Son of man. Many irreverent people, in the days of His flesh, called Him Mary's son.

"He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword."— Christ can shed blood with the tongue. (Rev. i. 16), "And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, that with it He should smite the nations." All whom Christ slays, as Mediator and Saviour, He slays them with His mouth; for see how sharp His sword is,

* Indictment.

(Heb. iv. 12), "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Woe, then, to them who have a heart of iron and flint, that slips Christ's word, and are never slain with it. Some men's consciences are made of iron; let Christ strike they will never stir. But yet Christ will beat such men's consciences all to flinders, and then they can never be mended again. But of this afterward.

It is true some are moved at the word, they will thrust out a tear. But I compare their motion to a strong physic on a weak stomach; they are sick for a time, but incontinently they vomit it up again, and are as well as ever they were again. So are some men's hearts with the word; they will be physic sick, but they will soon vomit up Christ's physic again: it goes not out of the kirk-yard with them; it abides not with them till the next Lord's day.

"*He hath hid me in the shadow of His hand.*"—This is a speech borrowed from a man carrying his child in his arms, in a stormy day, who keeps his hand betwixt the child and the blast. Or, when he is on his knee, and is too near the fire, he holds his hand betwixt the child's face and the fire, and keeps him from burning under the shadow of his hand. The man, Christ, was made to suffer a sore blast: a black storm of the north wind of God's anger blew upon His fair face till it was like to take all the skin off it. God put His hand betwixt His face and the fire, and preserved Him in the shadow of His hand. And this is nothing else but God's protecting and defending Christ at His calling as King, Priest, and Prophet.

What would have ye more? In all Christ's suffer-

ings, and troubles, God had the man, Christ, hidden under the shadow of His hand. God had a hearty handful of Christ, and that two ways. Ye know oftentimes His enemies would have been about with Him, but no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come. God gave Christ twelve hours in His day, so that He could neither stumble nor fall till His night came : for, in despite of His enemies, He stayed in the city till He got His turn done. They could not chase Christ to the fields, nor make Him flee the place. He came down to plead for the life of His Church and her laws ; and made a vow that He would not go home again till He got a decret, and wan the plea ; and He got that or ere He rested. He was not chased out of the town till He had done His errand. Until He had all His silly ones brought out of hazard and danger, and brought out of hell, He wan not up to heaven again. He died not before His time : He was not like green corn, cut down ere it be half-ripe. But Christ got His fill of the ground, and was ripe at all will, ere ever the Lord's hook cut Him off out of the land of the living : and so He was aye in the shadow of the Lord's hand.

But under Christ's last sufferings, how He was hid under the shadow of God's hand is harder to understand : for Christ got justice and law, and no mercy. But I answer.

1. That although Christ got no sparing mercy, yet He got helping mercy under His sufferings. Observe it, for there is need we go attentively here: the ground is somewhat slippery. The Word says, "God spared Him not." There was no collusion, or secret paction betwixt Christ and God's justice. Nay, the law would not take a composition from Christ for so much and forgive the rest, as if it had been great rigour to take

all. If Christ had gotten a remission, He should have got some of the sweet Evangel. Nay, but Christ got nothing but law, the sour law ; and kept all the sweet Evangel to His poor dyvour friends, to poor, silly, helpless sinners. Therefore, Christ said, I will take all the sour, and ye shall get all the sweet. Nay, under desertion, Christ could not get a blink or word of His Father. Nay, I say more, God might not, He could not, as law went then. Christ cried, Is there not a word, dear Father, not a look ? And He answers, No, not a look for a world. But Christ got God's helping mercy : the sweet shadow of His almighty hand covered Him. For God sent His angel to comfort Him, but would not come Himself. God gave Him armour against all the strokes ; for He had assurance that the God-head and the manhood should never sunder. That was Christ's great Charter that He leaned mickle to in time of trouble.

2. He got aye help sent Him from the God-head, at every stroke, inspiring Him with faith, strength, and patience of soul, Isaiah l. 7, " Therefore have I set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Christ's soul, because of the personal union, was all as flint. God smote, but the arrows never pierced Him : they only made wounds and rents ; but the soul never flew in pieces, nor was turned to nothing. But then, How was the matter ? I say, Justice kept Christ from a kiss of the God-head. For there were two things here ; *a.* The windows of the God-head were closed, that neither the light nor the heat thereof, shined in upon the powers of Christ's soul. *b.* All the powers of His human soul were bound up. 1. The natural power of joy was bound up like a great water dammed in, that none could get a blyth*

* Cheerful.

look of Christ ! for He said, " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." 2. The natural power of seeing God in the union was restrained. God hiding Himself, a black cloud of horrible fears was over Christ's judgment, that He should then believe, but not see nor contemplate the God-head, as before. 3. That power of enjoying, in all the whole humanity, and sweet actual complacency, and resting upon a felt Lord, who was absent, was restrained. And yet (which is a wonder of wonders) with horrible fear, He had faith, and extreme love, with sadness ; in calling God His Father, with strong cries and tears, admirable patience and hope, which made Him long for an open window, to see day light. Indeed, though it was not possible that Christ should miscarry ; yet to our appearance, our salvation was in a venture. If Christ had here gotten a wrong cast,* and gone a wrong step ; then adieu to our salvation. But God be thanked, it was not a loose matter, nor loose hung. God had, all this time, Christ and our heaven in the hollow of His hand. See then, whenever God sends Christ, or any of His servants, an errand, He has them aye hard and fast in the hollow of His hand. God's faithful ministers and professors, serving in a lawful calling, are all here. If He send you to bear witness, and suffer for Him, He will bear your charges. If He yoke† you against any foe, He will defend you : but if ye go to the whore, and get an uncouth‡ sickness ; or go to the world, and seek your happiness there ; then you are not under the shadow of God's hand : He will not bear your charges. If ye but yoke against any sin, He will defend you ; but if ye sin against Him, ye are exposed to all the arrows in His quiver. Why?

* Set. † Set you to work. ‡ Strange.

The devil has employed you, and not God. Were you in God's service, your Master would stand for you. Then go on in His service, and draw upon Him for all your expenses. Christ, at the time when He stood at the great bar, held by the grand Charter in His hand, and answered.

Now, what can Christ not abide, and what can He not do? What can bits of clay creatures, rulers and princes, do against Him? Even He endured such a battle! We lose heart and courage, when we fear matters go so hard against God's service, and His truth. Indeed, our unbelief will be saying, Christ suffered not such a thing as God's wrath. Know ye what ye say? Some will say, We doubt not but Christ can break all His enemies in pieces, like as many potsherds: but O, say they, we fear we have no strength; we wot not if He will give us part of His strength.

I *Answer*. Christ's strength is not to lie beside Him, as the wretch's gold:* it is to give out for His kirk. But I must say one thing; every professor should try whether he be in Christ or not. If you be not in Christ, this world will blow you clean, clean away from Him. Nay, in any trouble, it is not possible you can stand still. For this cause our Lord has sent a trial, that those who have nothing to do with Christ may be blown away. If ye would suffer for Christ, slay your affections, and mortify your lusts. They shall not be honoured with suffering who have not given sin its death's wounds. If ye would suffer for Christ, and die for Him, ye must be a member: for a tree-fleg suffers not when the head bleedeth. If your heart be prepared, and if you be resolved to

* The miser's money.

† Wooden.

see Christ get a bloody head in His members, or in His cause, see that ye suffer with Him.

“He hath made me a sharp arrow;” an arrow with a sharp point. The sword slays near at hand, and the arrow kills afar off. They are within Christ’s bounds who are slain with the sword; but the arrow flies over the devil’s camp, and kills many on the other side of it. Therefore, it slays those who are over in Satan’s wilderness, and the wild beasts that are in the woods. It kills lions, leopards, asses, and tigers, that is, men of a wild and savage nature, and makes them obedient to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This arrow flies over to the wild people of America, and those who are without Christ in the world, worshipping the host of heaven. I think Christ is a keen hunter; He lays about Him with His sword, and slays those who are within His reach. Those who are half in half out, He pulls them in, and takes them in His arms. Those who are afar off, over in America, He bends His bow, and sends a flight or two of arrows amongst them, and the wounded come mourning in, and say, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? But know this, that some in this world, at whose conscience Christ shoots His arrows, they lie behind a dyke, and the arrow flies by them. (Matt. xxii. 5, 6, Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20), “When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard the parable, they perceived that He spake of them: and they sought to lay hands on Him.” They who brought the woman taken in adultery (John viii. 9), when they heard Christ say, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her: being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last.” The Lord shot an arrow at their consciences, but they

crouched and hid themselves behind a wall. See we not that the seventh command shoots an arrow at the fleshly man? he crouches by it and runs to the harlot. The eighth command shoots an arrow at the covetous man, and cries, Wo upon the oppressor and deceiver; and yet he skips away by, crouches and goes after his covetousness. Nay, some wild beasts go away, and the arrow sticking in them, and the blood coming out; but they shake and fling out the arrow, the blood dries, the wound closes up, and mends again. The conscience of many that God's arrow makes a hole in, and causes them bleed, fling out the arrow, and the wound mends. The devil can lay a plaister upon a wounded conscience, and heal it again. See Acts vii. Some heard Stephen preach, and they saw his face shine like an angel of God; and were not able to resist the spirit wherewith he spake. He calling them stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart, and casting up to them their idolatry, they pulled out Christ's arrow, and fell to their idolatry again, and stoned Stephen to death. I love it not when men can crouch, and run away from the word, and find excuses, and wrestle a fall with Christ, and His word. Well, beware of this; if ye wrestle with Him and fight against His word, take heed ye break not your arm, and that your shoulder blade be not out of lith.* But this is not Christ the Mediator's arrow, this is His deaf arrow. Our Lord Jesus has another arrow with a thistle point, that He shoots at the heart of His elect, the Lord crying with its coming, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He shot him off his horse, and laid him on the ground, that like a wounded man, he cried, trembling and astonished,

* Joint.

“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts ix. 6). Come near to Christ in the word and Sacraments. Christ has now here, under the elements of bread and wine, a bended bow in His hand; with which, and by the foolishness of preaching (as it is called by men) He is lying, as it were, behind a dyke, and stealing a shot at you. Lord, send Him His prey! The Lord send you in the gospel the thing you shall never shake off again. For know ye when Christ speaks to the Elect there, there is a sharp steel-pointed arrow in the end of His tongue, that will pierce sinners to death, and lay them low. (Isaiah l. 4), “The Lord hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” For our Lord has good skill to aim a shot of His arrow, and drive it even to the feather: right to the head in the conscience of His own. See when He comes by Matthew, and says, Follow Me; immediately he falls over like a dead man: he leaves his custom and his count-books, and follows Christ. Christ comes by Zaccheus, sitting on a sycamore tree and bids him come down: He bends His bow, and shoots an arrow at him, and cries, “Come down, Zaccheus, for to-day I must abide at thy house;” and he came down good speed; and from his heart he could never pull out the arrow to this day. Coming by Jacob’s well at Samaria, Christ bended His bow and shot the woman of Samaria: she left her water-pot, and came in to the city and said, “Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?” (Acts ii.) With an arrow from Peter’s mouth, Christ shot three thousand at one shot: He shot them all with one broad arrow through the heart: they were pricked in their hearts. I think Christ, ever since Adam sinned in Paradise, has

been hunting, and until the end of the world, will still be hunting and shooting wild beasts. O! but He will come to His Father at night with a rich prey: many slain men—many shot with His arrow. It is true, we think Christ's arrow is sharp, and that the word of God pains us, for we have no will* to a bloody head. But we must bear and suffer the word of exhortation. Christ will not slay us, but will bind up the wounds again: His wounds are sweet.

Now, we know that when an arrow is loosed off, and flies through the air, if a man sees it not coming upon him, and if it be shot with pith, he cannot hinder it to go through his flesh, or enter into the bone. So no man can resist one of Christ's arrows. The enemies of God's grace say, that free will is so good and hard, that it will break the point of an arrow, and drive it back. I'll warrant you that free will is as hard as flint; but if the devil had put on a double corslet of proof upon the soul, Christ's arrow will go through it. Why? Because (Eph. i. 19, Col. ii. 12), by as great power does Christ work faith in us, as was that omnipotent power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead; and it was by the strong hand of the Almighty that Christ of necessity behoved to be raised. And therefore they are liars who say, In conversion, grace and free will start and begin to run both together, like two horses at the starting place. They lie, for God's grace has the first start. It breaks off first, and powerfully and sweetly draws our free will, so that we run: but Christ prays, calls, and gives us strength, and speed of foot. It is not here, as in a ship equally belonging to two merchants, the one half his, and the other his;

* Do not like blood to be drawn.

as if Christ did the one half, by shooting the arrows; and we the other half, by opening the windows of our hearts, to let the arrows come in. Nay, all is Christ's work; His arrow drives up the window. There is no danger that Christ's arrow turn aside and kill nothing: He is a complete marksman, and will not miss. Nay, He waits not on till our free will be in her good blood, and well disposed; He makes us well disposed, and draws, and runs, then we run.

It is true, our will is like the stomached child, who has taken offence, and will not go near his father. But here Christ winds in His arrow near the heart, and makes the child love the father, and come creeping in to him; as Matthew and Zaccheus did. Fy then! If Christ be such a tried Saviour, lay mickle on Him: it is a pity that such a strong Saviour should not be burdened. Who is here who have not their own burdens? One groaning under covetousness; another under pride, sweating with the devil's pack-mantle:* a backful of lusts, running at the devil's horse foot. Fy then! Ease yourselves, and lay the burden upon Christ; and yourselves also. Now, I say, debts, losses, horses, sums of money, lands, &c., lay them all upon Christ.

I trow men pity Christ; they fear He lose. No, fear not; I'll warrant Him: He will bear both you and your burdens. Then let us all burden Christ; lay enough upon Him; come and hang upon Him. O! if all who are in this house would come just now, as fast as they could win forward, and hang all about Him, like a hive of bees. Rest upon Him, about His neck, and upon His arm, as birds upon a

* Cloak in which a load is wrapt up.

branch. O, fly as doves to His windows, and build your nests in Him (Isaiah lx. 8).

“And said unto Me, Thou art My Servant.”—Christ was not indeed hired by any, but by His Father. His Father sent Him and He wan the hire, saved the Kirk, and was very faithful; but the world gave Him the devil for His thanks. God behoved to have service, and a hard piece of service out of the Man, Christ; even such a service as made Him sweat the best blood of His body. It was dear service to Christ but (so to speak) considering the way that God had laid down to bring man to heaven and satisfy justice, it was not possible that He could get the work done without a servant. The work would have lain, and our redemption ceased for ever. Man nor angel, neither would nor could look upon the bargain. Then Christ, God-man, behoved to be hired, and He sought no wages of His Father, but a Kirk, a seed, and the place in glory, for Himself and His which He had with the Father from eternity. (John xvii. 5.) From you He seeks no hire, but faith and obedience; and it in a manner, breaks Christ’s heart, to consider what service He undertook for you, and how coldrife and indifferent ye are in His service! He ran till He swat for you; but alas! you have neither heart nor hand in His service. He is, by His infinite benevolence, forcing good-will, kindness, love, and friendship out of us! but alas! He comes ill speed. Men will not want their pleasures, nor deny themselves for Him. Christ may say, Why, and what ails you at Me? I veiled My glory, and made Myself of no reputation, yea a curse for you! And is this your kindness to your Friend?

Truly men misken Christ, in His sufferings. He came so far below His place, was so ill handled,

that they all said, This is not the Messiah. Let me see who will come beneath their place, or quit an inch of their will, for Him ; or cast away their lusts, deny this world's glory, and take up their cross and follow Him? He left heaven for you ; but ye will not quit the earth for Him, and yet there is no comparison betwixt the two.

“*Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*”—That is, it is the nation of the Jews, to whom I will first shew My glory : “Go first to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” For ye ken, when a kinsman is to sell anything, reason is he give his friend the first offer before ever he offer the bargain to any other. So Christ came into the world to sell Himself to man. But the Jews were His brethren by birth : He took on Him the Jew's flesh and blood, for He was a born Jew. So Christ said to the Jews, Ye are My friends, ye shall get the first offer of Me. I will not begin with the Gentiles, till ye say nay. Christ was even like a great market town, the ports^o were closed upon us poor Gentiles ; and upon all Britain, while the Jews got the morning of the market. But they made few or no bargains in the morning : there was no sale for Christ among the Jews. Then, on the afternoon, Christ bade open the ports, and let the poor Gentiles come in. He said to His servants, Go your way, bid the isles come ; bid Scotland and England, and the land of Sinim, and the utmost ends of the earth come. Wherefore? The Jews will not have Me : I will bargain with the Gentiles. There was a fair, and rich table covered for the Jews, God's fair high board, and He called them to the first mess : but they, like daft bairns, ran

* Gates.

to the play, and had more mind of their play than of their meat. They did let their meat turn cold, and ran after salvation in Moses' law, and would not take the new feast of slain Christ; but loathed at their meat, and spilt Christ's blood. He held the cup of His blood to them, but they did cast it all back in His face again. God said, their by-board* might serve the Gentiles: but when the Lord saw that Israel would have none of Him, He shut out the misleard† bairns; and turned them to the broad fields to shift for themselves; their Father scourged them to the door, and said, Bring in the poor hungry Gentiles. Call in the hungry isles-men, bring in the poor, the lame, the cripples, and blind beggars. Now, Scotland and England, Take your meat, and eat, and grow. God be thanked we got the cold meat: the Lord did fetch us to the first mess.

Now be not high-minded, but fear. Learn a lesson of the Jews, and be not spoilt bairns. Eat your meat and grow thereby; take this afternoon's market of Christ. But alas! The fair is like to skail‡ Alas! it is now growing like old sour drink in Scotland: and we are beginning to play with our meat. We are now beginning to clip Christ's ordinances, and to add to, and part from His Testament. Indeed, I think Scotland is making a quarrel with Christ: they say, Our religion is naked, and clipped like, wanting the busking;§ it must have ceremonies to busk it with. The gospel was sweet to us at the beginning; but now men have no list|| to the word; our zeal is away and dead, we have fallen from our first love. Jezebel, the false prophetess, and false apostles, are come in among

* Side-table; their leavings. † Rude and unmannerly.
‡ Empty. § Ornaments. || Relish for.

us. It is a marvel, and may be a marvel, if there be not bloody heads for this labour. I fear we will be sent to the hills, as well as the Jews were: mourn for the abominations of the land. If ever ye awake till the last trumpet, awake now, and look about you; and see where Christ was hidden; even in the hollow of God's hand. Flee to Him and He shall hide you, the members, there also.

"Then I said, I have laboured in vain."—See Christ is brought in here complaining of the Jews to His Father. Take heed He make not His moan of Scotland and England (for Britain is one of the chief isles). Is He not saying even to you who are here, Will ye play Me the same measure that the Jews played Me? O play it not! Many a dirty armful I had of them; long did I bear them in My arms, and yet they gave Me small thanks. So Christ is here, as it were, sorry that He had lost His travel, and spent the strength of His body, in seeking the Jews, and saying, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" (Matt. xi.) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" (Matt. xxiii. 37). "And He came to His own, and His own received Him not." And this complaint He bears to His Father; He is even, as it were, saying, Take up the welcome the house of Israel gave Me: they pierced My hands and My feet. And here is a help and encouragement to all God's faithful ministers, after their taking pains, and having spent their strength in vain, and seeing little fruit of their labours. Lo, here Christ in Isaiah's days making the same complaint.

There is an ordinary word of the Papists, "If your doctrine be the truth, where is the power of it?" How comes it that there are so few gained to Christ by the power of it? *Answer.* Surely the Jews might have said the same of Christ? If Ye be the Messiah, where

are all who follow You? We see only twelve men and seventy disciples, and some few women: but what are they to all Israel and Judah, who are not brought in? Christ says it is very true, few follow Me, I have spent My strength in vain, and for nothing. What then? "My reward is with the Lord." Jesus Christ is not the worse, that few follow Him, that few will take Him. Although only two in a kingdom take Christ, Christ is not to be casten away. Neither will Christ rue because the Jews will not take Him, or because few follow Him. But when Christ comes with His sword and bow to a land, if we, like as many wild beasts, run into the woods, and our consciences flee into dens and caves of the earth; one to his pride, another to his den of covetousness, a third to the wilderness of vanity as we do, and refuse to abide the shot of Christ's bow, yet He will do the office of a Mediator and Saviour, and say of us to His Father, as He said of the Jews, I have spent My strength in vain: and will give in a heavy complaint of us to His Father. And God will read and hear Christ's bill, and give Him justice. It will be a hard matter, if our Saviour turn our pursuer; if our Advocate, who should plead for us, turn a complainer, plead against us, and say, Father, I came to them, and knocked till My head was bedewed with rain, and they would not let Me in.

See then; if Christ preach, and say, I got the wind for My pains, none were converted, it is not the power and holiness of the preacher that convert men. Nay, men think it is the want of ministers that undoes us. If I had (say they) heard Christ from the pulpit, as Mary and Peter did, I would then soon have been converted. Nay, Judas heard Christ, but what the better was he? I grant if a minister be not called,

and graced with God's Spirit to preach, he who made him a preacher might as well have made a swine-herd of him. But when God's chosen servants cast out the net, they take not aye in fish. Christ went through the seas, and shot His lines seeking fishes, and sometimes caught nothing. Peter (Acts ii.) shot his line, and caught three thousand. What is the want of success, but God's saying, It is not the preacher, but the Spirit of God that does it? Then call no man Rabbi: we take God to witness, that we would have you off our hand. We say not, Christ is only with us. Read the King's letter, carry it who will, if they have God's calling. And yet I tell you it is possible when Christ preaches, your tide of conversion is not yet come; may be it is not marrying time; it is not time to shake the tree. Ye have not gotten play enough yet, and therefore no marvel ye are not yet converted. Will not one fisher fish a pool, roll over the streams, and get nothing; and another of less skill may come and catch the fishes?

"I have laboured in vain."—When Christ came to the world in His flesh and preached; did they receive Him as Mediator? He had no greater errand in the world; all was against Him. In His cradle they sought His life; He had as many sore temptations in the world as He had even of the devil himself. Nay the world so tempted Him, in His calling, that He and they were aye at holding and drawing. They could never agree any time. What ailed them at Him? for He came a good errand to the world, to bring them home to His Father. He wronged no man, yet they say He is a deceiver. The best work that could be, was to forgive sins: yet they called that blasphemy. They mistook the casting out of devils. No, say they, He has the master devil,

Beelzebub, the captain of all the rest, who commands all the little ones, and by him He casts out devils. And they slew the Heir, and cast Him out of the inheritance. So if Christ found the world a hard bed, I think all His friends have cause to think so of it too. For badly were His friends treated: Jeremiah cries out (xv. 10), "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me, a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth." All the people cursed Jeremiah: and see how the apostles were treated, and what they met with. 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12, 13, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth and offscourings of the world:—We become all things to all men."

Was not that a sad welcoming, that He and His got in the world? Christ owned all His members: but they will be flouted at, and gloomed* at here. Ye know the mother will not let her own child want; but cares not how long her step-bairns be both naked, and starving for hunger, because she is a step-mother. So the world is a step-mother to Christ, and all His children; it cares not to see them, naked, poor, and hungry, persecuted and heart-broken.

I like it not, when the world handles you as her own children, and casts a piece to you when ye weep. Better be God's sons, and the world's step-bairns, than the world's daties.† I love it not ill that all God's children get a hard bed, and ill cheer in

* Frowned upon.

† Darlings.


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this world. Christ had not a house amongst them : they would not give Him a drink of water in His thirst : they would not welcome Him and His doctrine : they gave Him but cold cheer when He came to the house of His friends. David was once that he could neither get bread nor water in the wilderness, and said, he was a sojourner here, as all his fathers were. Abraham dwelt in tents ; and Jacob was a herd to Laban, a broken stranger, and was glad to lodge in the fields, with a stone under his head for a pillow. Israel lodged forty years in the wilderness, like the beggars, not two nights in one place. Moses wanted father and mother to bring him up. Christ and His disciples could not get lodging in Samaria. Woe worth Esau, but the world plays him a slip, and makes him sell his birth-right for his breakfast. I think all God's children may call the world an uncouth<sup>o</sup> inns : but they must e'en take it as they get it, as their Master before them did.

Let us carry ourselves like the good natured stranger, who resolves never to quarrel, nor fight with his host ; howbeit his meat be ill, and his reckoning dear, and he have to sleep on a straw bed. He says, What the matter, for all my time, I will never make a noise about it : I am but to stay for a night. Surely Christ and His Spouse get but a cot-house, and a straw bed here. See ye not how all the wicked have their horns out against Him and His silly lambs. They are chasing them from one kingdom to another, and hunting them out at the town's end ; just as if ye saw a poor man going through a town, sad, weary, and hungry ; this black-

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* Strange, foreign.

guard and that blackguard hound their dogs at him ; the poor man is glad to get away with a whole skin. Christ and His dear children are going through this world, sad, weary, and heart-broken ; and the indwellers of this city send out all their dogs after them. O, if ye were at home. O fy ! sleep not in this dear inns. I dare say, Cain, Saul, and Judas have not reason to speak good of it, but to say as men say of a dear bargain : Woe be to it, we spent much on it, but got little good in it. Esau may say, I lost my soul for a breakfast in it. Judas may say, Woe worth it ; for I lost my soul in it, for thirty pieces of silver. All men may say, We got a crack in our conscience for our pleasures, and all was but vanity ; a broken tooth, a snow ball, a feather. Alas ! That we love it so well, make it our darling and sit down upon it. Elijah was a heart-broken man, and would fain have been out of the world. Job was in it like an old ship, that gets a dash on this rock and that rock ; and would fain have been hidden in the grave. Daniel was a poor persecuted man, and a captive under the enemy's feet. And what should I say of the rest ? They all got ill cheer in the world. See Heb. xi. 38, "Of whom the world was not worthy ; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," and there had no light. John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, a friendless man ; and at last they took off his head.

It is good if the old ship comes in at the port, ere she be driven all to flinders. If a man was riding through his enemies, and every one shooting at him, he would spur his horse fast, till he came in to his own ground. I think the believer's poor soul is like a ship among rocks ; it gets dash after dash. O that we were in Christ's good sea-room, then we should defy them all.

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*"Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."*—Lest men should think Christ did rue the bargain, lo, here He sorrows not, nor rues. He says not, Let Israel go to hell! No; but My conscience says to Me, I have done the work, and My God will reward Me. So, then, in a temptation, when ye are ill handled by the world, when ye have a sore heart, and ye cannot get matters as ye would have them, fear not; a good conscience will get comfort. When the people were wrong (1 Samuel xii. 3), and wronged Samuel, they would have another judge, he mends himself well, and says, "Whose ox or ass have I taken; or whom have I defrauded?" Job xvi. 19, when he was tempted by his friend, said, "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." And David, when He was accused of treason by Saul, when he might not clear himself, prays (Psalm vii. 3, 5), "O Lord, my God, if I have done this; if iniquity be in my hands; let the enemy persecute my soul."

That which is called a good conscience is like a glass, wherein a man may see his face. Whereas, the wicked have a conscience like a foul, muddy fountain, where the bottom cannot be seen. Nay, he dare not in a heavy temptation, or in death, go into his conscience; for it is like a smoky house all full of reek, that a man who hath tender eyes cannot abide it, nor be able to hold up his head in it. But when all the people are cursing Jeremiah, and he thinks he has a hard lot of it, he goes into his conscience, and takes it before the Lord, and says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. xv. 16). Now, I think the wicked man's conscience is like a dung-hill, all full of filth; he dare not, he

cannot take it up: his old adulteries; his old rotten falsehood that he committed twenty years ago. So his thefts, his blood-shed, his covetousness, his oppression, his backbiting, and his wrongs done to this man and that man, are such nauseous things, that he dare not turn them up, for fear they cause him vomit. When Judas looked into his conscience, he wakened a sleeping lion; for out came falsehood to his Master; out came blood-shed; and out came love to the thirty pieces of silver like three furious lions, and devour and tear him to pieces. See that ye keep your consciences void of offence towards God and man.

Make your life a fine, good, and sound building, reared up upon a good foundation, for the time to come: that when your life is ended, and your work done, you need not think shame of your work. But you must not essay this on your own strength, for that will be of no avail; but only in the strength of Jesus Christ and Divine aid. It is in the Lord only that there is righteousness and strength. Man's free will is not able to effectuate a saving change upon any person. You might as well say that the Ethiopian could change his skin, and the leopard his spots.

But, oh! woe's me to see so many men land masters of their consciences: as if their conscience was so great that they might sell part of it in fairs and markets to the best bidder. Some count little of their conscience: they will take an edge thereof to augment their house. Another will dispense with part thereof to enlarge his possession. Another will part with half of his conscience to enhance his credit. Many pay little respect to their conscience in buying and selling if they can get gain. The merchant wastes his conscience; for before he quit an inch of his credit, he would rather quit an ell of

his conscience. The proud man wastes his conscience, to carry on his pride. Many now, for the world, and the standing of their estate, can sell both goods, truth, and three or four ells of their conscience. Thus the kirk-man wastes his conscience; as if his conscience were a long web of an hundred ells; he may throw away part thereof, and it never be missed. And ken ye what some men have now devised? They have devised what they are pleased to call *indifferent* things, indifferent truths in religion; and think that they may sell twenty stone weight of them, and have enough behind. But in Moses' days truth was scarcer: Moses behoved to make all things according to the pattern he saw in the mount: and he would not leave a hoof behind. But it is a wealthier world now! We have broad fair fields, broad and long indifferent things: we may sell acres of them good and cheap. But how any thing lawful, or unlawful, can be indifferent, we have yet to learn. Sin is still sin, and truth truth; and none of them a matter of indifferency. Lord, help this nation to prepare for the awakening storm that is coming to bring us to our right senses. And I pray you, take His word along with you, as a means of preparation. Keep your conscience clean and undefiled. Christ kept His conscience to the latter end of the day, till He had spent His strength, done His work, and finished His talk; and then He got joy of it. Keep your conscience pure, as much as possible, to the end of your day: for a clear conscience in a dying hour, will give more satisfaction than all that this world can afford. And beware of the devil's or the world's hammer of covetousness, lest it light on your conscience, and break it all to pieces: and then see how all the craft ye have will mend it. To God only wise, be praise. Amen.