

ANGELS' ACCLAMATIONS.

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NOTE.

The 'Angels' Acclamations' forms the second of the four treatises which compose 'Light from Heaven' (4to, 1638). Its separate title-page is given below.* For general title-page, see Vol. IV. page 490. G.

* ANGELS

Acclamations :

OR,

THE NATIVITY

of CHRIST, celebrated by
the heavenly *Host*.

BY

The late learned, and reverend Divine

RICHARD SIES,

Doctor in Divinity, Master of *Katherine Hall*
in *Cambridge*, and sometimes Preacher
at *Grayes-Inne*.

ISA I 9. 6.

To us a Child is borne, to us a Sonne is given.

1 PET. 1. 12.

Which things the Angels desire to looke into.

LONDON,

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1638.

ANGELS' ACCLAMATIONS.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.—LUKE II. 13, 14.

THE words are few and pregnant, very precious, having much excellency in a little quantity. The heavens never opened but to great purpose. When God opens his mouth, it is for some special end; and when the angels appeared, it was upon some extraordinary occasion. This was the most glorious apparition that ever was, setting aside that it was at Christ's baptism, when the heavens opened, and the Father spake, and the Holy Ghost appeared in the likeness of a dove upon the head of Christ,' Mat. iii. 16, when all the Trinity appeared. But there never was such an apparition of angels as at this time; and there was great cause, for,

1. *There was never such a ground for it*, whether we regard the matter itself, the incarnation of Christ. There was never such a thing from the beginning of the world, nor never shall be in this world: for God to take man's nature on him; for heaven and earth to join together; for the Creator to become a creature.

2. *Or whether we regard the benefit that comes to us thereby.* Christ by this means brings God and man together since the fall. Christ is the accomplishment of all the prophecies, of all the promises. They were made in him and for him. Therefore he was the expectation of the Gentiles. Before he was born, he was revealed by degrees. First, generally, 'the seed of the woman,' &c., Gen. iii. 15. Then, more particularly, 'to Abraham and his seed,' and then to one tribe, 'Judah,' that he should come to him; then to one family, the house of David; and then, more particularly, 'a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,' Isa. vii. 14, and the place, 'Bethlehem,' Micah v. 2; till at last John Baptist pointed him out with the finger, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world,' John i. 29. Even as after midnight, the sun grows up by little and little, till his beams strike forth in the morning, and after it appears in glory, so it was with the 'Sun of righteousness;' as he came nearer, so he discovers himself more gloriously by degrees, till he was born indeed; and then you see here a multitude of angels celebrate his nativity.

Now, as before his birth he was revealed by degrees, so after his incarnation he was revealed to all sorts: to the old, in Simeon; to women, in Anna, a prophetess; to wise men and to silly shepherds; to all ranks of men; and to whomsoever the incarnation of Christ was revealed when he was born, they all entertained it with joy. The angels they sang and praised God; Simeon was even content then to die; and Zechariah, you see, beforehand breaks forth, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,' &c., Luke i. 68; and the shepherds went away rejoicing. There is a special passage of divine providence in the carriage of this manifestation; for Christ was revealed to the wise men that were Gentiles by a star, because they were given to star-gazing. He was discovered to the shepherds by the apparition of angels. The scribes that were conversant in Scripture, they found it out by searching the Scriptures. God applies himself to every man's condition.

'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude,' &c.

You see here, however, Christ lay in the cratch,* in the manger, yet notwithstanding there were some circumstances that shewed the greatness of his person, that he was no ordinary person. He lay in the cratch indeed, but the wise men came and adored him; and he appeared to the shepherds, poor men; yet notwithstanding, here is an host of angels that praise him. So likewise at his death he converted the good thief, and shadowed the sun itself, and then he gloriously rose again. So that there were some beams of his divine nature that broke forth in all his abasements. We see here an apparition of angels. In the words consider these things.

Here is, first of all, an apparition of heavenly angels.

And then their celebration of Christ's birth.

The apparition: 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.'

The celebration of it: 'praising God, and saying.'

The matter of the celebration and praising God,

'Glory to God in the highest,

'In earth peace,

'Good will towards men.'

I shall especially stand upon those words; but somewhat is to be touched concerning the apparition of these angels.

1. *The circumstances of their apparition.* They appear to poor shepherds.

God respects no callings.

He will confound the pride of men, that set so much by that that God so little respects; and to comfort men in all conditions.

2. Again, The angels appeared to them *in the midst of their business and callings*; and indeed God's people, as Moses and others, have had the sweetest intercourse with God in their affairs; and oftentimes it is the fittest way to hinder Satan's temptations, and to take him off, to be employed in business, rather than to struggle with temptations. We many times meet with comfort in our business, in our callings, that without† it, in speculation and otherwise, we should never have.

3. And then they appeared to them *in the night.*

God discovers himself in the night of affliction.

Our sweetest and strongest comforts are in our greatest miseries. God's

* That is, 'cradle.' Consult Haliwell, *sub voce*.—G.

† That is, 'outside of,' = apart from.—G.

children find light in darkness ; nay, God brings light out of darkness itself. We see the circumstances then of this apparition.

He calls these angels 'a heavenly host,' in divers respects ; especially in these :

(1.) An host *for number*. Here are a number set down. A multitude is distinct from an host ; but in that they are an host, they are a multitude ; as in Dan. vii. 10, 'Ten thousand times ten thousand angels attend upon God.' And so, Rev. v. 11, there are a world of angels about the church. In Heb. xii. 22, we are come to have communion with an 'innumerable company of angels.' He sets not down the number ; and here appears 'a multitude of angels.' Worldly, sottish men that live here below, they think there is no other state of things than they see ; they are only taken up with sense, and pleasures, and goodly shows of things. Alas ! poor souls ! There is another manner of state and frame of things, if they had spiritual eyes to see the glory of God, and of Christ our Saviour, and their attendants there—an host, a multitude of heavenly angels,

(2.) An host likewise implies *order* ; or else it is a rout, not an host or army. 'God is the God of order, not of confusion,' 1 Cor. xiv. 33. If you would see disorder, go to hell. Surely disordered places and companies are rather hells than anything else ; nay, in some respects worse ; for there is a kind of order even among the devils themselves. They join together to destroy the church, and the members thereof. I note this by the way. Here was an host of angels ; that is, they are an orderly company. What that order is, I confess with St Austin, is undetermined in Scripture ; we must not rashly presume to look into these things (a).

(3.) Again, *Here is consent* ; an host all joining together in praising God : 'Glory to God on high.' And sure it is a heaven upon earth, when a company of Christians, led with one Spirit, shall join in one work to praise God ; to help one another in some spiritual way. When they meet together to hear the word, and to pray to God, all with one consent, their prayers meet in heaven. Christ commends union and consent. 'Where two or three are met together in my name, I will be in the midst of them,' Mat. xviii. 20 ; and 'whatsoever two or three shall ask in my name, if they agree' (if there be no jarring, nor schism, nor breach among them), 'I will grant it,' Mat. xviii. 19. Agreement in good is a notable resemblance of that glorious condition we shall enjoy in heaven. This multitude of angels they all agree with one consent.

(4.) An host of angels, it shews likewise their *employment*. An host is for defence or offence. That is the employment of angels here below especially, for the defence of the church, and for the offence of the enemies of the church. It is a great comfort to the church and children of God. The church is in the midst of devils here. We are all strangers in the way to heaven. We live in the midst of devils, and devils incarnate, devilish-minded men, that are led with the spirit of the devil. But here is our comfort, we have a multitude, an host of angels, whose office is to defend the church, and to offend the enemies of the church, as we see in Scripture.

(5.) Again, An host implies *strength*. We have a strong garrison and guard. We are kings in Christ, and we have need of a guard ; and God hath appointed us a strong guard, a guard of angels. Angels severally are strong creatures. We see one of them destroyed all the first-born in Egypt ; one of them destroyed the host of Sennacherib the Assyrian in one night. If one angel destroyed a whole host, consisting of many thousands, what can a multitude of heavenly angels do ? Yet all are for the service of

Christ and of his church. These and such like observations we may gather hence, that they are said to be an host of angels.

Beloved, we have need of such comforts ; and let it not seem slight unto us to hear of angels because we see them not. It is a thing forgotten of us too much. Why are we so cold, and dead, and dull, and distrustful in dangers ? We forget our strength and comfort in this way. There is now at this time an earthly host against the church, men led with anti-christian spirits. Let us comfort ourselves, we have an heavenly host with us ; as Elisha said to his servant, ' There are more with us than against us,' 2 Kings vi. 16. If God see it good, this outward host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, he can make them fight for his church, as in Sisera's case, Judges v. 20. But there is another host, that see the face of God ; that is, that observe and wait on his will and command. We have an heavenly host within the heavens, that having a command from God, can come down quickly for the defence of the church, and for every particular Christian, not only one angel. That is but an opinion, that every one hath his angel ; but even as God sees good, one or two, or more, a multitude, an host of angels.

God useth angels, not for any defect of power in himself to do things, that he must have such an host, but for the further demonstration of his goodness. He is so diffusive in goodness, he will have a multitude of creatures, that they may be a means to diffuse his goodness : angels to the church, and the church to others. It is for the spreading of his goodness, for he is all in all in himself. Let it take impression in us, that we have such glorious creatures for our service.

We see here this host of heavenly angels, they attend upon the Lord of hosts at his birth, for Christ is the creator of angels, the Lord of them ; not only as God, but as Mediator. As God, he is the creator of angels ; as Mediator, he is the head of angels, Col. i. 16. It was fit therefore that an host of angels should attend upon the Lord of angels ; it was for the honour of Christ. God would let the world know—although they heeded it not, there was no such thought in Augustus's court at that time—that there was an excellent, glorious person born into the world. God himself took our nature : Christ, Immanuel. Though he were neglected of the world, and fain to lie in a manger, yet God took better notice of him than so. Heaven took notice of him when earth regarded him not. Therefore God, to shew that he had another manner of respect and regard to Christ than the world had, he sends a multitude, an host of heavenly angels, to celebrate the nativity of Christ.

There is much solemnity at the birth of princes ; and God, that is King of kings and Lord of lords, he makes a solemnity likewise at the birth of his Son, the greatest solemnity that ever was, an host of heavenly angels. But these things I do but touch.

' And suddenly there was,' &c.

' Suddenly,' in an unperceivable time, yet in time ; for there is no motion in a moment, no creature moves from place to place in a moment. God is everywhere. ' Suddenly : ' it not only shews us,

1. *Somewhat exemplary from the quick despatch of the angels in their business*—we pray to God in the Lord's prayer, ' Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ; ' that is, willingly, ' suddenly,' cheerfully—

2. But also it serves *for comfort*. If we be in any sudden danger, God can despatch an angel, ' a multitude ' of angels, to encamp about us ' suddenly.' Therefore, though the danger be present, and the devil present,

and devilish-minded men present to hurt us, God hath a multitude, an host of angels as present to defend us ; nay, as himself is everywhere, so in the midst of his church he is present more than angels can be. He is not only among us, but he is in us by his Spirit, to comfort and strengthen us. Therefore let us stir up the Spirit of God in us, in all difficulties and dangers whatsoever, considering we have such grounds of comfort every way.

What is the use and end of this glorious apparition ? In regard of the poor shepherds, to confirm their faith, and in them ours ; for if one or two witnesses confirm a thing, what shall a multitude do ? If one or two men confirm a truth, much more an host of heavenly angels. Therefore it is base infidelity to call this in question, that is confirmed by a multitude of angels. And to comfort them likewise in this apparition. We see by the way that for one Christian to confirm and comfort another, it is the work of an angel, an angelical work ; for one man to discourage another, it is the work of a devil. When Christ was in his agony, the angels appeared to comfort him, Luke xxii. 43. We may take notice how willing and ready these glorious spirits were to attend upon our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, in all the passages from his incarnation to his glory. We see they appeared here at his incarnation ; they ministered unto him after his temptation ; at his resurrection, then they were ready to attend him ; and at his ascension, they were ready then ; but oh the welcome when he entered into heaven ! There was the glorious embracings, when all the host of heaven entertained him at his ascension. In the garden, as I said, they comforted him. Let us imitate them in this blessed work, if there be any in distress that need comfort and confirmation. We love examples of great, noted persons. Here you have an example above yourselves, the example of angels ; who, to confirm and comfort the poor shepherds, appear in an host, 'a multitude of heavenly angels.' The angels, as they attend upon Christ, so for his sake they attend upon us too ; for he is that Jacob's ladder. Jacob's ladder, you know, stood upon the earth, but it reached to heaven, and the angels went up and down upon the ladder ; that is, it is Christ that knits heaven and earth together, God and man ; and the angels by Christ, having communion and fellowship with us, as I noted out of the place, Heb. xii. 22, 'we are come to an innumerable company of angels ;' so that they attend upon us for Christ's sake, whose members we are. They attend upon Christ mystical as well as Christ natural : 'For they are ministering spirits for the sakes of them that shall be saved,' Heb. i. 7. And therefore in our childhood and tender years they have the custody of us committed to them ; as Christ saith, 'their angels behold the face of God ;' and in our dangers they pitch their tents about us, and at our death they carry our souls to the place of happiness, as they carried Lazarus's soul into Abraham's bosom, and at the resurrection they shall gather our dead bodies together. So that as they never left our blessed Saviour from his birth to his ascension, so they always attend upon his members, his spouse. For his sake we have communion with the blessed angels. These things may be of some use. But it is not that I mainly intend. Thus much for the apparition.

2. Now *the celebration* is 'a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.'

The word signifies 'singing,'* as well as praise. It implies praise expressed in that manner ; and indeed 'praising God,' it is the best expression of the affection of joy. The angels were joyful at the birth of Christ their Lord. Joy is no way better expressed than in 'praising God ;' and it

* See any good Lexicon, under the word αἰνέω.—G.

is pity that such a sweet affection as joy should run in any other stream, if it were possible, than the 'praising of God.' God hath planted this affection of joy in the creature, and it is fit he should reap the fruit of his own garden. It is pity a clear stream should run into a puddle, it should rather run into a garden; and so sweet and excellent [an] affection as joy, it is pity it should be employed otherwise than 'in praising God' and doing good to men.

They express their joy in a suitable expression 'in praising God.' The sweetest affection in man should have the sweetest employment. The sweetest employment that joy can have is to be enlarged in love, 'to praise God,' and for God's sake to do good to others.

See here the pure nature of angels. They praise God for us. We have more good by the incarnation of Christ than they have; yet notwithstanding, such is their humility, that they come down with great delight from heaven, and praise and glorify God for the birth of Christ, who is not their, but our Redeemer. Some strength they have. There is no creature but hath some good by the incarnation of Christ; to the angels themselves, yet however they have some strength from Christ, in the increase of the number of the Church; yet he is not the Redeemer of angels. In some sort he is the head of angels, but he is our Redeemer. 'To us a child is born; to us a Son is given,' Isa. ix. 6. And yet see, their nature is so pure and so clear from envy and pride, that they even glorify God for the goodness shewed to us—meaner creatures than themselves; and they envy not us, though we be advanced, by the incarnation of Christ, to a higher place than they. For, beloved! the very angels have not such affinity to Christ in this as we. They are not the spouse of Christ. They make not up mystical Christ. The church doth. The church is the queen, as Christ is the king of all. It is married to Christ. Angels are not; and yet although they see us advanced in divers respects above them, yet they are so pure and free from envy, that they join in 'praising God' here in love to us.

Let us labour therefore for dispositions angelical; that is, such as may delight in the good of others, and the good of other meaner than ourselves.

And learn this also from them: shall they glorify God for our good especially? and shall we be dull and cold in praising God on our own behalf? Shall they come 'suddenly from heaven,' and cheerfully, and willingly, and 'to praise God' for his goodness to us, and shall we be frozen and cold in this duty, that is for our good more especially? I hasten to that that follows:

What is the matter of their celebration and gratulation?

'Glory to God in the highest,

'In earth peace,

'Good will towards men.'

There is some difference in the readings. Some copies have it, 'On earth peace to men of good will,' to men of God's good will; and so they would have it two branches, not three. If the word be rightly understood, it is no great matter (*b*).

1. First, The angels begin *with the main and chief end of all*. It is God's end; it was the angels' end, and it should be ours too, 'Glory to God on high.'

2. Then they wish *the chief good of all*, that whereby we are fitted for the main end, 'peace.' God cannot be glorified on earth unless there be peace wrought. For man else conceives God as an enemy. By this peace we are fitted to glorify God. If we find reconciliation with God through

Jesus Christ, then the sense of God's love in the work of reconciliation will inflame our hearts to glorify God. Therefore, next to the glory of God, they wish 'peace on earth.'

3. Then, thirdly, here is *the ground of all happiness* from whence this peace comes : from God's good will ; from his good pleasure or free grace, 'to men of God's good will.' So if we go back again, the good will and pleasure of God is the cause and ground of peace in Christ ; and peace in Christ puts us into a condition and stirs up to glorify God. So we see there is an order in these three.

To begin with the first :

'Glory to God in the highest.'

The angels, those blessed and holy spirits, they begin with that which is the end of all. It is God's end in all things, his own glory. He hath none above himself whose glory to aim at. And they wish 'glory to God in the highest heavens.'

Indeed, he is more glorified there than anywhere in the world. It is the place where his majesty most appears ; and the truth is, we cannot perfectly glorify God till we be in heaven. There is pure glory given to God in heaven. There is no corruption there in those perfect souls. There is perfect glory given to God in heaven. Here upon earth God is not glorified at all by many. The whole life of many being nothing but a dishonouring of God, by abusing his ordinances, trampling upon his church and children, by slighting his word and sacraments, there is little honour given to God in the world, but only by a few, whom he intends to glorify for ever. And indeed, if we will glorify God here, we must raise our thoughts to heaven at that time ; raise them above the world, to heaven, where we shall for ever glorify him ; where we shall join with the blessed saints and angels, and sing, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,' &c. In the mean time, let me add this by the way, that in some sort we may glorify God more on earth than in heaven. It may seem a paradox, but it is true. That is thus : here upon earth we glorify God in the midst of enemies ; he hath no enemies in heaven, they are all of one spirit. Here upon earth we live not only among devils, but among men led with the spirit of the devil, where God is dishonoured ; and if here we take God's side, and the truth, and gospel's side, and stand for God's cause, in some sort, we honour God here more than we are capable to do it in heaven, where there is no opposition. In this respect, let us be encouraged to glorify God, what we can here : for if we begin to glorify God here, it is a sign we are of the number that he intends to glorify with him for ever.

The verb is not set down here ; whether it should be, *Glory is* given to God ; or whether, by way of wishing, '*Let* glory be given to God ; or by way of prediction or prophecy for the time to come, '*Glory shall be* to God,' from hence to the end of the world. The verb being wanting, all have a truth. For, first, it cannot be a wish, unless it were a positive doctrinal truth, that all glory is due to God in the incarnation of Christ ; and because all glory is due to him, thereupon comes the ground of wishing and of prayer, '*Let* God be glorified.' Why ? Because it is due. If it were not a positive doctrinal truth, there could be no foundation to raise a wish or a prayer : for what is a prayer, but the turning of a promise or truth into a prayer ? And what is praise, but the turning of a truth into praise ? So it is a doctrinal truth ; first, that God is to be glorified especially in Christ ; and in Christ, in this particular, in the incarnation of Christ. And it is a wish for the time to come, let him be glorified ; and a prediction, God shall

be glorified in the church. He shall always have some to glorify him for Christ, and especially for his incarnation.

'Glory to God on high.'

Glory is excellency, greatness, and goodness, with the eminency of it, so as it may be discovered. There is a fundamental glory in things, that are not discovered at all times. God is always glorious, but, alas! few have eyes to see it. But here I take it for the excellency and eminency of the goodness and greatness of God discovered and taken notice of. In the former part of the chapter 'light' is called the 'glory of the Lord,' ver. 9. Light is a glorious creature. Nothing expresseth glory so much as light. It is a sweet creature, but it is a glorious creature. It carries its evidence in itself, it discovers all other things and itself too. So excellency and eminency will discover itself to those that have eyes to see it; and being manifested, and withal taken notice of, is glory.

In that the angels begin with the glory of God, I might speak of this doctrine, that

The glory of God, the setting forth of the excellencies and eminencies of the Lord, should be the end of our lives, the chief thing we should aim at.

The angels here begin with it, and we begin with it in the Lord's prayer, 'hallowed be thy name.' It should be our main employment. 'Of him and by him are all things, therefore to him be glory,' Rom. xi. 36. Therefore we should give God that which is his own; 'Thine is the glory,' as it is in the conclusion of the Lord's prayer. But this being a general point, I will pass it by and come to the particular, in which it will more comfortably appear, as this glory shines in Christ, in the incarnation of Christ, there is matter of glorifying God, both the* angels and men.

And here I do not take the incarnation of Christ abstractively from other things in Christ, but I take the incarnation of Christ as a foundation and prerequisite to all the other good we have by Christ; 'Glory to God on high, now Christ is born.' Why? Only that he is born? No. But by reason of this incarnation there is a union of the two natures, God and man. So that by the incarnation, now Christ is man, and holy man. The human nature in Christ is pure and holy, being sanctified by the Spirit and united to God. Now Christ being not only man, but pure man and God-man, God taking our nature to the unity of his person, hence it is that he comes to be qualified for all that he did, and suffered after. It was from hence that they had their worth. What was the reason that his being made a curse, and to die for us, should be of such worth? It came from a person that was God-man; nay, so near is the manhood to God, that what the manhood did God did, because the person was God; the second person taking the nature of man, and what he suffered in his human nature, God suffered according to man's nature. Hence comes that phrase of the communication of properties. Whatever was done or suffered in man's nature, God did as a mediator, God did it in that nature. Thereupon comes the price of it. Thus the incarnation is a prerequisite and foundation to all other benefits by Christ. Therefore take it conjoined, his incarnation, and his death, and resurrection, and ascension, and all.

Well then, the incarnation of Christ, together with the benefits to us by it, that is, redemption, adoption, &c., it is that wherein God will shew his glory most of all. That is the doctrinal truth. The glory and excellency of God doth most shine in his love and mercy in Christ. Every excellency of God hath its proper place or theatre where it is seen, as his power in the crea-

* Qu. 'by'?—Ed.

tion, his wisdom in his providence and ruling of the world, his justice in hell, his majesty in heaven; but his mercy and kindness, his bowels of tender mercy, do most of all appear in his church among his people. God shews the excellency of his goodness and mercy in the incarnation of Christ, and the benefits we have by it. Many attributes and excellencies of God shine in Christ, as,

His *truth*: 'All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ,' 2 Cor. i. 20. There is an accomplishment of all the promises.

And then his *wisdom*, that he could reconcile justice and mercy, by joining two natures together. This plot was in heaven by God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Trinity, that God and man should be joined together. To join and knit two attributes seeming contrary, justice and mercy; to reconcile man by reconciling justice and mercy, and by such an excellent way that God should become man, Emmanuel, this was a great wisdom—to reconcile justice and mercy by such a person as should satisfy justice and give way to mercy, that is, by Christ. God will lose none of his attributes. His justice must be satisfied, that his mercy might be manifested. The wisdom of God found out that way. It is a plot the angels study in.

Likewise here is *justice*, justice fully satisfied in Christ. He became our surety who is God as well as man. If no creature can satisfy God, God can; when the second person took our nature, and was our surety, and died for us, he was the glory of his justice.

And of his *holiness*, that he would be no otherwise satisfied for sin. It was so foul a thing, that to shew his hatred of it he punished it in his own Son, when he became our surety. How holy and pure is God. That is, what a separation is there in the nature of God from sin, considering that he so punished it in his Son, our surety, that he made him cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mark xv. 34. We cannot see the nature of God in anything in the world so much as in Christ. In Christ we see, as in a glass, his infinite sweet wisdom, his justice and holiness in hating and loathing of sin.

But the main of all is his mercy and goodness, which set him on work to contrive this great work of redemption by the incarnation and death of Christ. The infinite, rich, glorious, abundant mercy—that is the main thing wherein God is glorious now in Christ. Therefore everywhere you have these and the like titles put to his goodness and mercy. The bounty of God appeared, and the riches of his mercy, and the exceeding great height, and breadth, and depth of his love. There are no words large enough to set out the goodness and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore I will only speak of this attribute, because this bears the mastery among all the other attributes, though God be equally powerful and just; and yet he expresseth his mercy and grace most of all in Jesus Christ, towards poor wretched man. For after the fall man being miserable and sinful, what attribute can exalt itself, but mercy to misery, and grace to sinful man in pardoning his sin? Considering in what terms man stood, there was no other attribute could exalt itself but grace and mercy, to triumph over misery and sin. As it is in a city, those that are otherwise equal in honour, yet sometimes one bears rule above another; and he that is now magistrate and chief, take him at another time he is inferior to others; so since the fall the mercy of God bears office, and is chief governor and commander over all the attributes of God. For as I said, what moved God to set his wisdom on work to contrive such a thing as the salvation of man-

kind, to reconcile God and man in one person? His mercy moved him. What moved him to satisfy his justice? It was that an excellent way might be made, without prejudice to any other of his attributes, for his free grace and mercy; That is it that set all the other on work. That is the main triumphing attribute, considering man now standing in that exigence of mercy. Therefore 'glory to God in the highest heavens,' especially for his free grace and mercy in Christ.

Now that you may understand this sweet point, which is very comfortable, and indeed the grand comfort to a Christian, do but compare the glory of God, that is, the excellency and eminency of God's mercy, and goodness, and greatness of this work of redemption by Christ, with other things.

1. God is glorious *in the work of creation*. 'The heavens declare the glory of God,' and the earth manifests the glory of God. Every creature indeed hath a beam of the glory of God, especially those celestial bodies in the heavens, they praise God in their kinds, but with our mouths; they give us matter of praise. And if we have gracious hearts we take notice of it, and magnify him for his goodness. His goodness appears in the use of the creatures, and his greatness in the bulk of the creatures; his wisdom, in ordering and ranking of them. So that his mercy shines in all things in heaven and earth marvellously. Oh but, beloved, heaven and earth shall come to nothing ere long; and what is all this glory of the goodness and greatness of God to us, if we be sent to hell after this short life is ended? What comfort is it that we go on the earth, and enjoy the comforts that God gives us in this world, and then to perish for ever? Therefore the glory and goodness of God doth not so gloriously appear in the creation of the world.

2. Nay, the glory of God's love and mercy *shined not to us so, when we were in Adam*; not in Adam, for there God did good to a good man: he created him good, and shewed goodness to him. That was not so much wonder. But for God to shew mercy to an enemy, to a creature that was in opposition to him, that was in a state of rebellion against him, it is a greater wonder and more glory. It was a marvellous mercy for God to make man out of the earth; but here God was made man, he became man himself. There all was done with one word, 'Let us make man.' It was easily done. But in this, for Christ to become man for us, and to suffer many things, to be 'made a curse for us,' it was not so easy a matter. Therefore herein there is a great manifestation of the glory of God's goodness and mercy to us. For God hath set himself to be glorious in his mercy, and goodness, and grace, in Christ. He hath set himself to triumph over the greatest ill in man, which is sin, in the glorious work of redemption. So that you see here the greatest glory and mercy of God appears in our redemption by Jesus Christ, the foundation of which is his incarnation. In Exod. xxxiv. 6, God doth make an answer to Moses, who desired to see the glory of God, that he might have it manifested to him, not out of curiosity, but that he might love God the more, how doth God manifest his glory to him? 'Jehovah, strong, merciful, glorious, pardoning sin and iniquity.' When God would set himself to shew his glory in answering Moses's petition, he doth it in setting out his glorious mercy and grace, and loving-kindness, in pardoning sin and iniquity, to shew that he will now have his glory most appear in the sweet attribute of mercy and compassion in the forgiveness of sins, &c. In Titus ii. 12, 'The grace of God hath appeared, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' &c. The grace of God hath appeared. Grace hath not a body to appear visibly; ay,

but Christ appeared; and when he appeared it was as if grace and love had been incarnate, and took a body. So that grace and mercy most of all shines in the incarnation of Christ.

I need not clear the point further, but only make a little use of it, and so end. Doth the grace, and love, and mercy of God, those sweet attributes, now appear and shew themselves in Jesus Christ? I beseech you, let us remember it—there is no point of divinity of more use and comfort—especially in the greatest plunges and extremities; for it answereth all objections, the greatest and strongest that can be made.

The sinner will object, My sins are great, of long continuance and standing; they are of a deep dye.

Look then upon God in Christ, and consider his end in the incarnation of Christ. It was that his mercy, and goodness, and grace should be exalted, and triumph over all man's unworthiness. The greater thy sin, the greater will be the glory of his mercy; and that is it God seeks for now, to be glorious in his mercy.

Again, Thy heart tells thee, that if there be any mercy shewed to such a wretch as thou art, it must be no ordinary mercy.

It is true. God's mercy is no ordinary thing. Of all attributes he will triumph in that. The glory of his mercy and goodness is that he seeks to have of men, by the incarnation and redemption wrought by Christ, above all things whatsoever.

Obj. Thou wouldst have infinite mercy.

Ans. Thou hast it in Christ.

Obj. Thy sins have abounded.

Ans. God's grace abounds much more.

Obj. Thy sins are mountains.

Ans. God's mercy is as the ocean, to cover those mountains.

Obj. But is it possible for God to forgive such a wretched sinner, that hath been a blasphemers, &c.?

Ans. It were not with men; but, saith God, 'My thoughts are not as your thoughts,' Isa. lv. 8. You are vindictive in your dispositions, and will not pardon; but my thoughts are as far above yours as the heavens are above the earth. Therefore bound not the infinite mercy of God, wherein he will triumph, with thy narrow thoughts, but let it have its scope, especially in plunges and assaults, and at such times as the best of us may be brought unto. In Hosea xi. 9, 'I am God, and not man,' implying that if he were man, we might have mean thoughts of him, confined thoughts; but 'I am God, and not man,' therefore comfort yourselves in this, consider how God sets himself to be glorious in his love and mercy to poor, miserable, wretched man in Jesus Christ.

You see the mercy of God in Christ, even in the sacrament. He doth not only give Christ to us—'So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,' John iii. 16, to be born and to die for us—but his mercy is a boundless mercy. We see he labours to strengthen our faith by these pledges, that we make use of this. What if God be merciful in Christ! and what if Christ be gracious, and there is nothing but grace and mercy! If there be not an application, if there be not an interest, what benefit have we by it? We must interest ourselves in this glorious person, interest ourselves in Christ, for it is founded upon Christ. All the glorious mercy of God is grounded upon satisfaction of justice; that is, in Christ. But this is nothing except we interest ourselves in Christ, and in the mercy of God; for our approbation is the ground of all comfort. God out of Christ

is a 'fountain sealed.' He is a fountain of mercy, but he is sealed up. He is a 'consuming fire,' but in Christ he is a cheering, comforting fire. But this is nothing to us, unless we be in Christ. We must have interest in Christ. We must be 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.' He hath married our nature, that we might be married to him. We have no benefit by his incarnation else. Now all our comfort is by this union and communion with Christ, by marrying ourselves to Christ, by strengthening our faith in this union and communion, that so we may make use of the boundless mercy of God in Christ. Therefore how should we be encouraged to come to the sacrament, to enjoy this comfort!

You have heard, beloved, of the joy of the angels, of their manner of celebrating the birth of Christ; and if the angels should leave heaven, and come down upon earth, and take upon them bodies, how would they celebrate the incarnation of Christ! * You see here, 'Glory to God on high.' This would be the course wherein they would carry themselves to glorify God, answerable to their song. So should we do, if we will be like the blessed angels. We see how to celebrate the nativity of Christ. We need not go to fetch joy from hell to celebrate it. If the devil should be incarnate, and come to live among men, how would he celebrate the incarnation of Christ otherwise than in many places it is? If we do not love to have our portion with devils, surely we should not imitate those whose state and condition we are afraid of. The angels saw matter enough in the thing itself to make them sing, 'Glory to God on high, on earth peace, good will towards men.' What! Hath God been so rich in love to us in Christ, so wondrous in mercy, as to take our miserable nature, not at the best, but at the worst, and to take our condition upon him? Here is matter of joy; and shall we be beholden to the devil for joy, when we should rejoice for Christ? Will not the thing itself yield matter of rejoicing? Oh base dispositions, that we should not content ourselves with *homogeneous*, uniform joy to the thing itself. I desire repentance, and reformation of what hath been amiss. If there be any that have been guilty in this kind, that intend to come near God in these holy mysteries, let them know, that God will be honoured of all that come near him; let them take it to heart. As Tertullian said in his time, What! shall we celebrate that which is a public matter of joy to all the church, for a public shame, in a disgraceful way? (c)

I beseech you, consider of these things. 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is near,' saith the Baptist, Mat. iv. 17. What! shall we therefore give carnal liberty to all looseness, as if Christ came to bring Christians liberty to licentiousness? Shall we, instead of repenting, run further and further into guilt, and indispose ourselves to all goodness? Is that the reasoning of the Scriptures? No. 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' Change your lives, for Christ and the fruits of the gospel are at hand. 'The grace of God hath appeared in Christ.' What! to teach us to live as we list, and to be more disordered than at other times? Oh no. 'To live soberly and justly,' Titus ii. 12, not to wrong any body, and holy and godly in this present world. This is the Scripture reasoning, and thus, if ever we look for comfort from God and Christ, we must reason too.

Let none think it too late to speak of these things now; but those that have not had the grace of God to keep them innocent, let them make use of the grace of God to repent; and as the phrase of some of the ancients is, repentance is a board to escape to the shore, after we have made ship-

* In margin here, 'These sermons were preached at the feast of Christ's nativity.' —G.

wreck, and done things amiss (*d*). Therefore, as I said, those that have not had the grace before to be innocent, let them make use of the grace of God, that now invites them to repentance, or not presume to come to these holy things. I speak it, not only to free mine own soul, but to free you from contracting further guilt; for do you think to make amends by coming to the sacrament, without repentance of what you have done before? 'What hast thou to do,' saith God, 'to take my name into thy mouth,' Ps. l. 16—to take my sacrament into thy mouth—'when thou hatest to be reformed?' God accounted his own service as the 'cutting off a dog's head,' when they came indisposed and unprepared, Isa. lxvi. 3. The sacrament is bane and poison to us, if we come without repentance. What saith the apostle? 'For this cause,'—because you come unrepentantly to the things of God—'some are sick, and some weak, and some sleep,' 1 Cor. xi. 30. God struck them with death for it. And it is a great cause why many are hardened in their sins, and go on still; because God executes these spiritual judgments for profaning these holy things, thinking to daub with God,* and to compliment with him in an easy performance.

I know those that belong to God are suffered sometimes to do things amiss, and to fall into errors and miscarriages, that they may know themselves better. And indeed, much of our spiritual wisdom is gotten by the sight of our own errors. We grow more stablished after, against the like temptations, for the time to come; and we can say by experience, It is good that I know the foolishness of my own heart, &c. But he that God hath no delight in, he swells and rages against any admonition, though it be in love to his soul. I hope there are none such here. Therefore, those that have made their peace with God, let them come to these holy mysteries with comfort, notwithstanding any thing before; for God hath prepared these things, not for angels, but for weak men, whose faith stands in need to be strengthened.

And let us not think that Christianity is a matter of compliment; that because we are baptized, and come to hear the word, and receive the sacrament, all is well. For we may do all this, and yet be greater sinners than Turks, or Jews, or pagans; for the most horrible sins are committed in the church. Where is the sin against the Holy Ghost committed? sins against light and against conscience, but where the conscience and understanding is most enlightened? There be the horrible, provoking sins, where there is more light and direction to live in another way. When the grace of God and the riches of Christ are opened, and yet men live in their sins, against conscience and the light of the gospel, so far is the outward performance from excusing in sickness and at the hour of death, that it aggravates our guilt and damnation when we make not a right use of the holy things of God.

That which I shall next stand upon, shall be to shew,

1. How we may know whether we glorify God for Christ or no;
2. And then the hindrances that keep us from glorifying God for this excellent good;
3. And the means how we may come to glorify God.

1. For the *first, of glorifying God in general*, I will not speak much. It would be large; and the point of glorifying God is most sweetly considered, as invested in such a benefit as this, when we think of it, not as an idea only, but think of it in Christ, for whom we have cause to glorify God, and for all the good we have by him.

- (1.) First, then, we hold tune with the blessed angels in giving glory to

* Cf. Ezek. xxii. 28.—G.

God, *when we exalt God in our souls above all creatures and things in the world*; when we lift him up in his own place, and let him be in our souls, as he is in himself, in the most holy. God is glorious, especially in his mercy and goodness. Let him be so in our hearts, in these sweet attributes, above all our unworthiness and sin. For God hath not glory from us till we give him the highest place in our love and joy and delight, and all those affections that are set upon good, when they are set upon him as the chief good; then we give him his due place in our souls, we ascribe to him that divinity, and excellency, and eminency that is due to him. And this especially appears in competition and opposition of other things, when we will not offend God for any creature, when we can say as the psalmist, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and what is there in earth in comparison of thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25. Therefore let us ask our own thoughts often what that is, that our affections of delight and joy and love, and all the sweetness and marrow of our souls, is spent on, and runs after. Is it the sweet love of God in Christ, the excellent state we have in Christ? It is an excellent sign. Surely the blessed saints in heaven, and those that are in earth that look for heaven, are thus disposed for the most part, especially when they set themselves in their devotions before God. Let us examine what is highest in our souls. 'The loving-kindness of the Lord is better than life itself,' saith the psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 3. Then we give God glory, when we set light by life itself, as holy Saint Paul could say. What! do you tell me of suffering at Jerusalem? 'I am not only ready' to do that, but to 'die for the name of Christ,' Acts xx. 24, and in Philip. i. 20, 'so God may be magnified by my life or death.' I am at a point; so if the question be whether we shall sacrifice this blood and life of ours, or dishonour God and wrong the gospel, or be any way prejudicial to the truth known, when we are ready to part with all, with father and mother, and houses and lands, and all for Christ, then with the angels we say, 'Glory be to God on high.' Therefore in a state of opposition, when we cannot enjoy both, let us leave the creature and cleave to God.

(2.) Then again, we give glory to God for Christ, *when we take all the favours we have from God in Christ*, when we see Christ in everything. 'All things are ours because we are Christ's,' 1 Cor. iii. 23. It is by Christ that we are heirs, that we have any comfortable interest. Therefore, when we accept all in Christ, and give God in Christ the glory of all, we practise this that the angels do here; we give glory to God.

(3.) Then again, we give glory to God *when we stir up others*. All the angels consent. There was no discord in this harmony of the angels. When we all join together and stir up one another, and labour to promote the knowledge of God in Christ all the ways we can—every one in our place and calling, magistrates and ministers, and every one in our families—labour that Christ may rule there, that God in Christ may be known. In Ps. ciii. 20, *seq.*, there the psalmist stirs up himself to glorify God, and he stirs up the angels, and here the angels stir up men, 'Glory to God on high,' &c. When there is a zeal of God's glory, and a disposition fit to glorify God, there will be a stirring up one of another—angels men, and men angels—and a wishing that God may have glory in heaven and earth. Therefore those that labour not in their places that the truth may be made known, that for base and worldly ends are opposers of the publishing of the gospel any way—as it is the fashion now, they will not appear openly, but cunningly undermine the gospel under pretences—they bear no tune with these blessed angels. For those that have dispositions like them will study

how this blessed truth may be promoted and propagated, and spread even over the world. Therefore we should labour every one to spread the glorious gospel of Christ, especially those that are ministers, whose office it is to unfold and open the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.'

(4.) Again, We glorify God in Christ, *when we see such glory and mercy of Christ, as it doth transform us and change us*, and from an inward change we have alway a blessed disposition to glorify God, as I shewed out of 2 Cor. iii. 18.* This is the difference between the glass of the gospel and the glass of the law and of the creatures. In the law we see the beams of the justice of God, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all,' &c., Gal. iii. 10, and the beams of his power and goodness in the creature. But it doth not change and transform us to be good and gracious. But when we see the glory of God, of his goodness and infinite mercy, shining in the face of Jesus Christ—for we dare not look upon God immediately—it changeth the soul to be gracious like unto Christ. Therefore if we find that the knowledge of God in Christ hath changed our dispositions, it is a sign then we give glory to God indeed. For to glorify God is an action that cannot proceed but from a disposition of nature that is altered and changed. The instrument must be set in tune before it can yield this excellent music, to glorify God as the angels do; that is, all the powers of the soul must be set in order with grace by the Spirit of God. If the meditations and thoughts of the gospel have altered our dispositions to love God, and that that pleaseth God, to do good to men, to delight in goodness, it is a sign we are instruments in tune to glorify God, and that we have an apprehension of the love and mercy of God in Christ as we should. For it hath a transforming power to work this. 'The grace of God will teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live holily,' Titus ii. 12. When the grace of God, that is, the free love of God in Christ, in the forgiving our sins and advancing us to heaven, hath this effect in our souls, it is a sign we have a true notion and apprehension of the excellency and eminency of God's grace. Otherwise, if we 'turn the grace of God into wantonness,' Jude 4, to make the benefits by Christ a pretence and covering for our wicked and loose lives, we know not what it is to glorify God; but though in words we say, 'Glory be to God,' yet in our lives we deny it, as the apostle saith, Titus i. 16. The hypocrites in Isa. lxvi. 5, they had good speeches in their mouths. Saith God, 'Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word: your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified.' So you shall find those that are opposers and persecutors, and haters of sincerity, will sing '*Gloria Patri*,' 'God be glorified;' but what good will this do them if they have diabolical, Satanical dispositions, if they be like the devil in opposing the truth, and hating that that is good? The devils in the gospel could glorify God for their own ends: 'We know that thou art the Son of God,' Luke iv. 41. So devils incarnate can come to church and receive the sacraments, and seem to praise God. Oh, but there must be a change; for to glorify God is a work of the whole man, especially of the Spirit. 'All that is *within* me, praise his holy name,' Ps. ciii. 1. It came from the heart-root of a sanctified judgment, out of grounds why we do it. The wish of the angels here, 'Glory to God on high,' it came from a good ground, because they knew God is to be glorified in Christ. For judicious phrases are founded upon truths. So there must be a sanctified judgment to be the ground of it, and the affections must be in tune answerable to those

* Cf. 'Excellency of the Gospel above the Law,' Vol. IV. page 201, *seq.*—G.

truths. ~ Then we are fit to glorify God. And all this is by the power of the gospel transforming us.

≡ (5.) Again, We glorify God *when we take to heart anything that may hinder, or stop, or eclipse God's truth, and obscure it*; when it works zeal in us in our places, as far as we can; when it affects us deeply to see the cause of religion hindered any way. If there be any desire of glorifying God, there will be zeal. The heart will move with a kind of indignation when God is dishonoured, and his truth eclipsed with false doctrine or by ill practice. It cannot be otherwise. It is out of the nature of the thing itself. Therefore those that either are instruments of stopping or obscuring the truth, or causing it to be reproached by their wicked lives, or if they be not instruments, yet they do not take it to heart when they see God dishonoured, surely they can speak little comfort to themselves. They have neither angelical nor evangelical dispositions; for if they had the knowledge of the gospel it would work this in them.

(6.) Again, If we apprehend this glorious mystery of Christ in the gospel aright, *it will work in us a glorious joy*; for joy is a disposition especially that fits us to glorify God. Then we are fit to 'glorify God,' when our hearts are enlarged with joy; when we think of God in Christ; when we think of the day of judgment; when we think of heaven; when we think of hell with joy, as being subdued; and bless God for Christ; when we can think of all that is opposite as conquered in Christ. So that our joy is enlarged in the apprehension of our own blessed condition. It is a good sign we are in a disposition to 'glorify God.' But I will not enlarge myself further in this point.

2. This being so excellent a duty, to which we are stirred by the angels, 'Glory to God on high,' &c., what are the main hindrances of it, that we give not God more glory?

(1.) The main hindrances are, *a double veil of ignorance and unbelief*, that we do not see the glorious light of God shining in Jesus Christ; or else if we do not know it, we do not believe it; and thereupon, instead of that blessed disposition that should be in the soul, there comes an admiration of carnal excellencies, a delighting in base things.

This ignorance is partly from the darkness of our own hearts, being overcast sometimes, that such great things are too good to be true. Our hearts have a hell of unbelief in them.

And sometimes the policy of Satan, who casts dust in our eyes, and labours that we may not see the glory of God in the gospel: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'The God of this world hath blinded their eyes,' &c. Ignorance arising from within or without is a great cause why we do not see the excellencies of God. Therefore no wonder if, where the gospel is not preached, that the devil hath a kind of reign, and God is not honoured at all, because the devil is the prince of darkness, and rules in darkness. That is one cause, ignorance.

(2.) So likewise *unbelief*, when we hear and see and know the notion of mercy and of Christ, and can dispute of these things, like men that talk of that they never tasted of. The devils know all these things better than any man; yet they do not 'glorify God,' because they do not believe that these things pertain to them. Men want a light suitable to the truth of the things themselves. A man may see them with a natural light, or with the light of education, or by books or the like; but not in a spiritual and proper light. He sees not spiritual, heavenly things, in a spiritual light. And that is the reason he believes them not. These two veils are the cause why

we see not the light of God shining in the gospel, and why we do not glorify him. Light is a glorious creature. It was the first creature. It is not only glorious in itself, but it shews the glory of all other things too. If we had all the sights in the world presented to us, if there were no light to discover them, or no sight in our eyes, if either be wanting, all the glory of them would be lost. So it is in the gospel. Though there be wondrous admirable things there, if we want either light or sight; if the light shine round about us, 'and the god of this world have blinded our eyes,' and infidelity have blinded us, how can we 'glorify God,' wanting a heavenly, proper, peculiar, spiritual light, suitable to the things? For a natural man, by the light that he hath, cannot judge of them. These are the main hindrances, the veil of ignorance and unbelief.

(3.) And, on the contrary, there is another hindrance; that is, *too much light*; either want of light altogether, or too much light, when by the preaching of the word of God, awaking our conscience, and shewing our sins so enormous, so transcendent, so odious, that we forget mercy in Christ, and so dishonour Christ, to set the sins of the creature above the infinite mercy of the Creator; as those that doubt, and from doubting, proceed to despair of the mercy of God, seeing the vileness of their sins in the true colours of them, and seeing and feeling God's anger and wrath, together with their sins in the conscience; here is too much light one way, and not looking to the other light, this excellent, glorious, infinite light of God's mercy, shining in the gospel. They look not on God in 'the face of Christ.' Out of some stubbornness and pride they flatter themselves; they will not believe; they will not receive the consolations due to them, but dwell upon the consideration of their unworthiness and sins; and Satan holds them in that slavery and bondage. This is a great hindrance of glorifying of God, when we lift up our sins above the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. This is to take away God and Christ altogether; for if the mercy, and rich and bountiful goodness of God, wherein he will be infinitely glorious, were not greater than our sins, it were not the mercy and bounty of a God. God should not be glorious in it. But there are but few of these that miscarry; God usually shines upon them at the last. There are three ranks of men. Some are in the first profane, dead, loose Christians, that were never under the law, that never understood the corruption of nature, nor themselves. Some are brought from that to understand themselves a little too much, that are under the law, and feel the flashes of God's wrath. And some, in the third place, are brought from hence to be under grace. That is the only happy condition, to be under the grace of God in Christ. Some men never come to the second step. They never understand what sin is, and what the anger and wrath of God is. They will give their conscience no leisure to tell them what their condition is. There is hope of the second that they will come to the third rank; but for a company of profane persons, opposers of goodness, to talk of the mercy of God in Christ, they are not in the next step to it. A man must be sensible of his sins and of his misery before he can have grace. Therefore, for those that have too much light, though it be a great fault in some, and hinders God of much glory, and themselves of much comfort, out of this peevish stubbornness of theirs, yet there are not many of them, and, as I said, few of them miscarry.

Now, from these two veils that hinder the glory of God, there come other hindrances; for the soul of man will wonder and admire at somewhat. It will have somewhat in the eye of it. Hereupon, not seeing or

not believing the mercy, and goodness, and love of God, and the excellent prerogatives of a Christian issuing from the goodness of God, and the fruits of it, they doat upon some worldly excellency; either they are proud of their parts, and so God is robbed of his honour, or on creatures meaner than themselves. For the base nature of man, since the fall, it doats upon earth, upon gold and silver, mean and base things, not to be compared to the excellency of man, or else upon some duties they perform, upon their own works, as if God should be beholden to them. For not knowing themselves well, and the infinite glory of God in Christ, that God must have all the glory, not only of happiness, but of grace that brings us to happiness, they glory in that they have done; as in popery, they think they merit much by their performance. In the night time a torch seems a goodly thing; and sometimes rotten wood will shine; but in the day time, when the sun appears, the very stars shine not; we care not for meaner lights. For what good do they then? So the soul, when it wants a sight of the greatest excellency, it doats upon rotten wood, upon every torch-light. Many vain things seem to be great. A man may see by the dispositions of many what they admire and stand upon most. Their carriages shews it well enough. It argues a corrupt and weak judgment. You see what are the main hindrances.

3. Now, the way to attain to this glorious duty, to glorify God. The next thing shall be to give some directions, because it is a most necessary duty. Is it not that we pray for in the Lord's prayer, 'Hallowed be thy name'? And what is the end that we were created and redeemed for, but that God may have some glory by us? Therefore, being a necessary absolute duty, let us hearken to some directions that may help us that way.

(1.) First, Therefore, if we would glorify God, *we must redeem some time to think of these things, and bestow the strength of our thoughts this way.* The soul being the most excellent thing in the world, it is fit it should be set on the excellentest duty. Man being in such an excellent condition, being heir of heaven, and having an understanding soul, it is fit the most excellent part of the most excellent creature should be set upon the most excellent object. Now, the most excellent part of the soul is the understanding. It kindles all the affections, and leads all the rest. Therefore let us take some time to meditate and think of these things. What we are by nature, and the misery we are exposed to by sin, that whatsoever we have more than hell is more than we deserve; and then withal, think what we are advanced to in Christ; what we are freed from,—that cursed condition; and what we shall be freed from,—the sting of death; and all that we fear for the time to come. Think of what we are freed from, and what we are advanced to, and by whom. By God becoming man: a mystery that might, nay, that doth ravish the very angels themselves; God-man, now in heaven, making good what he did on earth, by his intercession. And then the ground of all, the infinite love, and mercy, and bounty of God to poor distressed man. The thought of these things will inflame the heart. Now, they never work upon the heart thoroughly till they end in admiration; and indeed the Scripture sets it down in terms of admiration, '*So God loved the world.*' '*So.*' How? '*So, as I cannot tell how, I cannot express it; and 'what love hath God shewed us, that we should be called the sons of God!'*' 1 John iii. 1. And then the fruits that we have by this incarnation of Christ, and by his death, they are admirable: '*peace that passeth understanding,*' Philip. iv. 7, '*joy unspeakable and glorious,*' 1 Pet. i. 8. So that the mystery is wonderful, and the dignity wonderful, and the fruits,

the comfort, and peace, and joy, wonderful; everything is an object of admiration. Therefore when we think and meditate of these things, let us never end till our souls be wound up to admiration of the excellent love of God. We wonder at things that are new, and rare, and great. Is there anything more new and rare than that that never was the like, for God to become man? Is there anything more excellent than the benefits we have by Christ becoming man, to free us from so great misery, and to advance us to so great happiness? If anything be an object of admiration, surely it must be this. Therefore the apostle doth well to give all the dimensions to the love of God in Christ, 'height, and breadth, and depth, and length.' It is a love 'passing knowledge,' Eph. iii. 19.

Quest. What good will come by this?

Ans. When the soul is thus exercised, then it will be fit to 'glorify God.' When it is in this frame, it will think itself too good for any base service of sin. Eagles will not catch at flies. When the soul is lift up to consider God's love and mercy in Christ, will it be catching at every base thing in this world? No. It will not. The soul never sins, but when it loseth this frame, to have a judgment suitable to things. When our judgment and affections are lost of the best things, then comes in a judgment and affection to other things as better. So losing that frame the soul should be in, we fall to the creature, to commit spiritual fornication with that.

Let us labour to keep our souls in this temper, begin every day with this meditation, to think what we were, what we are now in Christ, what we shall be, and by what glorious means all this was wrought, that so the soul may be warmed with the love of God in Christ. This frame of spirit will not suffer the soul to sin, to stoop to base sinful lusts.

(2.) Now, to help this, in the next place, *beg of God the 'Spirit of revelation' to discover to us these things in their own proper light*, 'for they are spiritually discerned.' Now the Spirit knows the breast of God, what the love of God is to every one in particular, and he knows our hearts too. Therefore the apostle desires of God 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17, to discover these things to us, not only that they are truths, but that they are truths to us. For unless we know these things belong to us in particular, we cannot glorify God as we should. They are in themselves glorious things: to hear of God's mercy in Christ; of God becoming man; to hear of kingdoms and crowns. Oh, but when there is a spirit of appropriation to make these our own, that God in Christ loves us—'who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20—then the soul cannot but break forth with the angels here, 'Glory to God on high.' Therefore beg the Spirit to reveal to us our part and portion, that he would shew his face to us, that he is to us a Father in Christ. Surely in hearing, meditation, and prayer, &c., we shall find a secret whispering and report from heaven, that God is our Saviour, and that our sins are forgiven, especially when we stand in most need of this comfort. Let us therefore beg of God to take away the veils of ignorance and unbelief, and openly to reveal his fatherly bowels and tender mercy to us in Christ; to discover to us in particular more and more our interest in the same by his Spirit, that only knows the secret of our hearts, and being above our hearts can settle our doubts. Only the Spirit can do it. For as God only works salvation, so the Spirit only can seal to our souls our salvation. This is one excellent way to help us to glorify God.

And add this as motive, as a plea, not to move God so much as to

move and to satisfy our hearts, and to strengthen our faith, *that it is the end of our lives and the pitch of our desires to 'glorify God.'* Therefore we desire God to reveal himself so far to us, to be our Father in Christ, that we may glorify him. Surely it is a forcible plea. God will do that that is suitable to his end. 'He hath made all things for his own glory,' Prov. xvi. 4. Especially the work of redemption in Christ is for the glory of his rich mercy; and we desire the sense of his mercy and love for this end, that we may be fitter to glorify God. It is a prevailing argument, fetched from God's own end.

(3.) And let us labour daily more and more *to see the vanity of all things in the world.* Put the case we have honours and large possessions in the world, that we wanted nothing; if this were severed from God's love in Christ for life everlasting, what comfort could we have in this, especially at the hour of death? Let us see, therefore, the vanity and emptiness of all things else out of Christ, and the good we have by Christ, what all will be ere long. The daily thoughts of that will be a good means; for we must empty ourselves of that we are, that we may be filled with that we are not; and we must daily consider the emptiness of the creature where-with we labour to support ourselves. For when men have no goodness in themselves, they will have an excellency in the creature. Therefore, when we see ourselves out of Christ, to be nothing but fuel for God's vengeance, and see that the creature can afford us nothing but vexation, these thoughts that these things are so, and out of experience, will make us draw near to God upon all occasions. It will make us glorify him and abase ourselves. What made Job abase himself and glorify God? When he drew near to God, and God drew near to him. 'I abhor myself,' Job xlii. 6; and so we see in Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. Let us draw near to God upon all occasions, in the word and prayer, and in the sacraments, and this will make us see our own nothingness and God's greatness; for that is the way to honour him, to see his greatness, and a nothingness in the creature; that all things in him are so excellent, and out of him nothing, and worse than nothing.

Now we are to draw near to God in the sacrament; and the nearer to God, the more we honour him. Who honours God most? Surely Christ, because he is so near him, being God and man in one person; and next to him the blessed angels 'glorify God.' They are near him. Therefore, in Isa. vi. 2, they 'cover their faces,' it being impossible for the creature to comprehend the great majesty of God; and they cover their feet in modesty. The nearer we draw to God in the meditation and consideration of his excellency in the ordinances, the more humble and abased we shall be in ourselves; and the more we shall honour God, seeing his excellency, especially of his love. So next to the angels the saints: 'all thy works praise thee,' Ps. cxlv. 10; they give matter and occasion, but 'thy saints bless thee.' If it were not for a few saints on earth, though all the works of God are matter of praise, they could not praise God: 'thy saints bless thee.' And the nearer we come to God, the fitter we are for this. Now, there is a wondrous near-coming to God in the sacrament. If we come prepared, we come to have communion and strengthening in Christ. He is both the inviter and the feast itself. We come to be made one with him: 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.' Therefore, if we come prepared, this is the way to bring us to a disposition to glorify God. You see here the wondrous, infinite love of God in the sacrament, to stoop so low to his creature, to strengthen our faith by giving us these things. God had been

good to us whether he had given us his oath and his seal or no, but he knows we are weak, and unbelieving, and doubting; therefore to help us he hath given us not only his promise, but his oath, and besides his oath he hath given us signs and seals. Here is wondrous mercy. Let us be encouraged to come in and admire the love of God, not only in giving his Son Christ for us, but in affording us other means to strengthen our faith. Let none be discouraged in the sight and sense of their own sins; but let them come in, and they shall glorify God the more. 'Where sin hath abounded' in their sense and feeling, there 'grace shall more abound.' And those that have been good, and have slipped any way, let them consider God's infinite love in Christ. It is not a cistern, but a spring. God's mercy in Christ, and the blood of Christ, is a 'fountain opened for Judah,' &c., Zech. xiii. 1; that is, it serves not for our first conversion only, but every day, upon every occasion, when we have made any breach with God, we may come and wash in that bath, Christ's blood. 'The blood of Christ purgeth,' 1 John i. 7. It is in the present tense. It runs continually in the vigour of it. There is a spring of corruption in us; there is a spring of mercy in God. There is a spring of Christ's blood, that hath a perfect efficacy to wash our souls. Therefore, if we have not yet been converted, and humbled, and cast down for our sins, let us now come in and give God the glory of his mercy; and if we have fallen again, consider there is a fountain opened for 'Judah and Jerusalem to wash in,' and let us come and renew our repentance and faith at this time.

'Peace on earth.'

The same holy affection in the angels that moved them to wish God to have his due of glory from the creature, it moves them to wish peace to men likewise; to shew this, by the way, that

There can be no true zeal of God's glory but with love to mankind.

They were not so ravished with the glory of God as to forget poor man on earth. Oh no! They have sweet, pure affections to man, a poorer creature than themselves. Therefore let them that are injurious and violent in their dispositions, and insolent in their carriage, never talk of glorifying God, when they despise and wrong men. There are some that overthrow all peace in the earth for their own glory, but he that seeks God's glory will procure peace what he can; for they go both together, as we see here, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth.'

Now, their end of wishing peace upon earth, it is that men might thereby glorify God, that God being reconciled, and peace being stablished in men's consciences, they might glorify God. Hence observe this likewise, that

We cannot glorify God till we have some knowledge of our peace with him in Christ.

We must have the first act, to cast ourselves upon God's mercy in Christ, and adhere and cleave to that mercy; and then we shall feel so much comfort as shall make us glorify God, though we may question it in desertion sometimes. Here the angels, intending that God should have glory of all, they wish peace on earth, in the consciences of men especially.

The reason is, peace comes from righteousness. Christ is first the 'King of righteousness,' and then 'King of peace;' righteousness causeth peace. Now, unless the soul be assured of righteousness in Christ, it can have no peace. What saith the Virgin Mary? 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.' She begins with magnifying the Lord. But what was the ground? She rejoiced in

God as a Saviour; therefore she magnified him. So in the Lord's Prayer we say 'Our Father,' which is a word of the covenant of grace, when the soul conceives of God as a gracious Father, reconciled in Christ. And then comes 'Hallowed be thy name,' insinuating that, till we know in some measure God to be our Father, we cannot with a gracious spirit say, 'hallowed be thy name.' For can we heartily wish for the manifestation of the glory of him that we think is our enemy, and him that we have no interest in his greatness and goodness? The heart of man will never do it, therefore God must first speak peace to the soul;—the angels knew that well enough;—and then we are fit to glorify God.

'Peace on earth.'

What is peace? It is the best thing that man can attain unto, to have peace with his Maker and Creator. Peace, in general, is a harmony and an agreement of different things. This peace here you may know what it is by the contrary, as the apostle saith, Eph. i. 10. The word there is very significant, *Anakephaliosis* (ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις). There is a recapitulation or gathering all to a head in Christ. Out of Christ there is a division, a separation and a scattering, a breach, that is five-fold.

(1.) First, *There is a scattering and a division from God*, the fountain of good, with whom we had communion in our first creation, and his delight was in his creature. We lost that blessed communion, and our sins have separated between God and us, as the prophet saith.

(2.) Then there is *a separation between the good angels and us*; for they being good subjects, take part with their prince, and therefore join against rebels, as we are. Hence it is, that upon the sight of angels, the very hearts of good men have sometimes been stricken, considering that there is no very good terms between us and the angels, till we come to Christ again.

(3.) Then there is *a division and scattering between man and man*. No common Spirit of God will keep men together till they be in Christ, as it is said, God sent an evil spirit, 'a spirit of division,' between the men of Shechem, Judges ix. 23. So, since the fall, there is an ill spirit of division among men, till the gospel again bring peace; especially there is no sound peace between men in the state of nature and others that are God's children, nor with the ordinances of God. For men apprehend the ordinances of God as enemies. The word cuts and lanceth him. It is as the sentence of a judge to condemn him. Therefore he fears and trembles at the powerful opening of the word. The ordinance of God speaks no comfort to a carnal man. He is as Ahab. He never had a word of peace from the prophet. The word alway speaks ill to him. He is under the law, and it speaks nothing but terror and curses to him.

(4.) And then there is *a division and separation between a man and the creature*, which is ready to be in arms against any man that is in the state of nature, to take God's quarrel, as we see in the plagues of Egypt and other examples. If God do but give them leave, they presently make an end of sinful man; and they would glory in it too, to serve their Creator. It is part of their vanity to be subject to wicked men. They have no peace with the creature.

(5.) And they have no peace *with themselves*. They speak peace to themselves, but, alas! God speaks none to them. They make a covenant with death and hell, but death and hell make no covenant with them. So it is a forced, sleepy peace. It is a dead sleep. The peace they have, it is but a diversion to other things. They consider not themselves and the war they are in with God, with themselves, and with the creature; it is but a

truce that they take up for a time. When God opens their conscience, there is a hell in their hearts and souls, that when it is loosed, makes them to suffer a hell upon earth. They enter into the pains of hell before their time. So there is 'no peace to the wicked' at all, Isa. lvii. 21. There is, since the fall, a separation between God and man, between angels and man, between man and the creatures, between man and himself.

Now, Christ at his coming, taking our nature upon him, brings all into one again. He brings God and man together again, by offering himself a sacrifice, by making full satisfaction to the justice of God; and sin, which is the cause of his displeasure, being taken away, God being gracious and merciful, his mercy runs amain on us. Sin only separates between God and us, and that Christ takes away. Therefore he is called by St Paul, 'Christ our peace,' Eph. ii. 14, and 'the Prince of peace,' Heb. vii. 2. He was qualified to be our peace. He was a friend to both parties, having married our nature of purpose, that he might in our nature bring God and us together, as it is 1 Peter iii. 18. His whole work was to 'bring us back again to God,' from whom we fell at the first.

Then if we be at peace with God, all other peace will follow; for good subjects will be at peace with rebels, when they are brought in subjection to their king, and all join in one obedience. Therefore the angels are brought to God again by Christ.

And so for men, there is a spirit of union between them. The same Spirit that knits us to God by faith, knits us one to another by love.

And we have peace with the creature, for when God, who is the Lord of hosts, is made peaceful to us, he makes all other things peaceable. The heathen could say, *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia* (e), when God is at peace, he makes all so.

So there is peace in our own hearts. We are assured by the Spirit of God that he is our Father. He seals it to our conscience by his Spirit, because the blood of Christ is set on by the Spirit of God, and not by our own, so that now God and we are brought to one, and angels and we, and all other things. Therefore now the angels say, 'Peace on earth,' when Christ was born.

Now, we will shew that this blessed peace, in all the branches of it, is *founded in Christ*. Christ is the cause and the foundation of it. For though these words were spoken at the incarnation of Christ, yet we refer them to the whole work of his mediatorship, in the state of his abasement and his state of exaltation. Our peace is wholly founded upon him. For he was born and became man, and became sin; that is, a sacrifice for sin for us; he became 'a curse for us,' to stablish a peace and to satisfy God's anger; and then he rose again, to shew that he had fully satisfied God's anger, and that peace was fully established. Therefore the Holy Ghost was sent after the resurrection, as a testimony that God was appeased; and now in heaven, he is ever there as a priest, to make intercession for us. So that Christ is our peace from his incarnation to his death, from thence to his resurrection, and ascension, and intercession; all peace with God, with angels, and with creatures is stablished in Christ.

Quest. And why in Christ?

Ans. Christ is every way fitted for it, for he is the mediator between God and man; therefore by office he is fit to make peace between God and man. He is Emmanuel, himself God and man in one nature;* therefore his office is to bring God and man together.

* Qu 'person'?—ED.

(1.) It is fit it should be so *in regard of God*, who being a 'consuming fire,' will no peace with the creature without a mediator. It stands not with his majesty, neither can there ever be peace with us otherwise. Now Christ is a fit mediator, being a friend to God as the Son of God, and a friend to us, taking our nature upon him, to be a merciful Redeemer.

(2.) It was also fit, *in respect of us*, it should be so. Alas! 'who can dwell with everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Who can have communion with God, who is a 'consuming fire?' No. We cannot endure the sight of an angel. The Israelites could not endure the sight of Moses when he came from the mount, his face shone so; and can we endure the glorious presence of God, 'who dwelleth in light that none can attain unto'? 1 Tim. vi. 16. Therefore God derives all good to us in our flesh, that though we cannot see God directly in himself, yet in the flesh we can see God incarnate. We may see the sun in the water, though we cannot directly look on that creature without hazard. It was a comfort to the patriarchs, that they had Joseph their brother the second man in the kingdom. So it may be to every Christian, that now we have the second person in heaven, our brother in our nature. He is the steward of heaven and earth, to dispense all God's treasures to us. Will not he acknowledge us, that are 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,' when he took our nature for this end, to be a merciful Redeemer? It is most suitable to our condition, that Christ should be the foundation of our peace.

3. *If we look to Christ himself*, he being God's Son, and the Son of his love, for him to make us sons, and sons of God's love. Is it not most agreeable, that he that is the image of God, should again renew the image of God that we lost? Jacob's ladder knit heaven and earth together; so Christ knits heaven and earth, God and us, together. You know if a ladder lie upon the ground, it doth no good, or if it be kept above, it serves for nothing; so if Christ were only God, or only man, there could be no union wrought between God and man; but now, being both, he is a fit mediator between both. Christ is the foundation of our peace, in the gracious covenant that God hath made with us, in all his offices. For as a prophet, he proclaims peace. He preached before in the time of Noah. He published peace as the prophet of his church in himself, when he lived, and by his ministers when he left the world. And as a priest, he did work our reconciliation, offering himself a sacrifice. He made a peace between God and us, and is now in heaven, to make intercession between God and us. And as a king, he subdues the corruptions of our souls, he pulls down the pride of our thoughts, to bring the heart into subjection to him by his mighty power, which indeed requires an almighty power; also by his kingly office, he rules, and governs, and subdues all the enemies of his church, without and within. You see then, without further illustration, that Christ is the foundation of our peace, by his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension.

This should teach us, first, that whatsoever intercourse we have with God the Father, we should take Christ, take our Benjamin, our Beloved, with us. We must not offer sacrifice without the High Priest. Let us offer nothing to God without Christ. There is no intercourse between God and us, till we be reconciled in Christ, in whom we must offer all our sacrifices and endeavours. Therefore, let us not own an absolute God in our devotions: let us think of God 'reconciled' in Christ, and at peace with us, and a father in covenant in Christ; and then our persons, and prayers, and all, shall be accepted for the sacrifice of Christ, in whom he smells a

sweet savour. As it is said concerning Noah, he offered a sacrifice to God, 'a sweet smelling sacrifice of rest,' Eph. v. 2. So doth God in Christ. He is the true mercy-seat in Christ, in looking to whom, God frees us from the curse of the law. Jerusalem was the glory of the world, and the temple was the glory of Jerusalem; but the mercy-seat was the glory of the temple, because that pointed to Christ, the Mercy-seat, in whom we have intercourse with God the Father.

We conceive not high enough of the majesty of God, when we go to him immediately. We must go to him in his Son, whom he hath sent, and anointed, and set forth, 'as the propitiation for our sins,' Rom. iii. 25, and 'him hath God the Father sealed,' John vi. 27. He cometh with authority. Therefore God will be reconciled in Christ. We may bind God himself, when we offer Christ. He is the foundation of reconciliation and peace, by God's appointment. He is 'the Prince of peace,' of his own anointing. Therefore we may go boldly to God, to the throne of grace in Christ.

And let us often seriously meditate of the sweet favour and reconciliation established now between God and us through Christ. It is the sweetest meditation.

First, To think in what ill terms we are with God by nature; and then think how near we are now to God in Christ, that we are at peace with him. Methinks the word is too short. There is more meant than is spoken. At peace with God in Christ: nay, now we are friends; nay, we are sons and heirs, fellow-heirs, fellow-kings with Christ; for God's favours are complete. As a God he stablisheth not a peace as men do, only to do them no harm that they are at peace with; but where he makes a peace, he confers all that is good: reconciliation, adoption, giving us the liberty of sons and friends, to go boldly to God as a Father in all our wants. Let us think more of this, and improve this blessed privilege every day.

'Peace upon earth.'

Quest. Why doth he say, 'peace on earth'?

Ans. Because peace was here wrought upon earth by Christ in the days of his flesh, when he offered himself 'a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to his Father.'

Because here in earth we must be partakers of it. We oftentimes defer to make our peace with God from time to time, and think there will be peace made in another world. Oh, beloved, our peace must be made on earth. 'We must live godly, and righteously, and soberly in this present world,' Titus ii. 12. We must enter 'into the kingdom of heaven' here. Further entrance 'must be ministered here, by growing in grace daily more and more,' 2 Pet. iii. 18. If heaven be not entered into here, it shall never be entered afterwards; for the church is the seminary of the heavenly paradise. All that are taken to heaven, to be set there for ever, they are set in the church before they are planted, and grow up there a while, under the means of salvation. Therefore, labour to have this 'peace on earth,' or else we can never glorify God on earth; and if we glorify him not on earth, we shall never do it in heaven.

But to come to some trials, whether we have this peace made or no; whether we can say in spirit and truth, there is a peace established between God and us.

1. For a ground of this, that may lead us to further trial, know that Christ hath reconciled God and us together, not only by obtaining peace, by way of satisfaction, but by way of application also. *Whom he died for*

to obtain 'peace,' he gives a spirit of application to improve that peace, to improve 'Christ, the prince of peace,' as *their own*. For there is a mutual commerce between God and man, who is an understanding creature; and there is nothing that God doth for man, if we look to the general and head of benefits, but there is somewhat in man wrought by the Spirit to answer it again. God is reconciled to man in Christ. Man must be reconciled to God in Christ; in 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world.' When he was on the cross, God was there reconciled in Christ. Is that all? No. God by us entreats you to be reconciled to God. A strange condescending, that God should entreat us to be good to our own souls by his ministers. 'We entreat you to be reconciled,' 2 Cor. v. 20; that is, to accept of the reconciliation wrought by Christ, and to lay aside all weapons of rebellion, whereby you fought against God in the course of your vanity. We beseech you to be reconciled, and to 'repent, because the kingdom of God is at hand,' Mat. iii. 2. So that except there be reconciliation wrought by a spirit of application on man's part, it is not sufficient that God is reconciled in Christ, because God will alway have a reflex act from man. As he chooseth man, so man by grace chooseth him. As he loves and delights in man, so he will have man, by a spirit of sweetness, delight in him again above all the world. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25. So there is somewhat wrought by the Spirit to God again. Why should God be at good terms with us, but to enjoy the friendship of his poor creature? Unless, therefore, there be a gracious disposition wrought in the creature, to look back, to love and delight in God, as God doth in him, there is no actual reconciliation. There must be a forcible application by the Spirit. If God should not give a spirit of application, as well as Christ obtain heaven for us, those that are in the covenant of grace should not be stablished; but God by this means brings them so near, that he, loving them, loves them for ever, and they have an everlasting covenant and an everlasting union. The carnal heart of man is a poisonous thing, and hates God naturally. It wishes that there were no God to judge him. He may think well of God for the good things of this life, but when he thinks of God as a judge to cast him into hell, he wisheth with all his heart, Oh that there were no God! that I might have my full of the pleasures of sin. Now the soul when it is at peace with God, when God by his Spirit speaks to the soul, and saith, 'I am thy salvation,' Ps. xxxv. 3, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' Mat. ix. 2; and as Christ to the good thief on the cross, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' Luke xxiii. 43; when he whispers to the soul, 'Thou art mine, and I am thine,' Cant. ii. 16; then the soul becomes sweet and peaceable to God again, and studies to advance the glory of God's mercy by all means, and to advance the gospel of peace. It becomes friendly to God.

To come to some more familiar evidences, whether we be at peace with God, and whether we have the comfort of this peace, established by Christ, or no.

2. Those that are reconciled one to another *have common friends and common enemies*. If therefore there be 'peace' between God and us, it is so with us. We love all where we see any evidence of God's love. We love Christians as Christians. And whom God loves not, we love not; what God hates we hate in ourselves and others. We hate corruptions in ourselves and others, though we love their persons.

3. Another evidence of 'peace' made in Christ between God and us, is *a boldness of spirit and acquaintance with God*. 'Acquaint thyself with

God, and be at peace with him,' Job xxii. 21. A Christian being at 'peace' with God in Christ Jesus, he goes boldly to the throne of grace in all his necessities, as a poor child goes boldly to his father, and moves the bowels of his father by his petitions. When two kingdoms are at 'peace,' there is trading set up afresh again. So when God is at 'peace' with the soul, there is a heavenly intercourse and trading set up. There is no man that is at 'peace' with God, but he calls upon God in his person, in his family. He sets up the worship of God there. He labours to bring all to God that he can. He thinks it the most gainful trade in the world. In the want of grace and spiritual comfort he goes to the fountain of grace, and improves that blessed prerogative we have by peace in Christ. Those that have not the Spirit of God to improve it in communion and trading with God, it is a sign there is no peace. Strangeness shews that there is no peace. Alas, how strangely do many walk towards God, that from Sunday to Sunday scarce lift up their hearts to heaven for a blessing, but walk in the strength of their own mother-wit, and support themselves with the success of second causes, and bless themselves; they are strangers from the 'God of peace.' Let us take notice of this, and account it a great prerogative, that we may go to God with boldness, that it is not now as it was in paradise. There is no angel with a sword to shut us from heaven. But now there is an entrance to the throne of grace. We may go boldly in the name of Christ, to offer ourselves and all our endeavours.

4. A Christian that hath made his 'peace' with God, will never allow himself in any sin against conscience, because he knows sin is odious in itself, loathsome to God, and hurtful to his soul; therefore he will not be in league with any sinful, unjust course. What! to be in league with God, and to be at 'peace' with that that God hates more than the devil himself! He hates sin more than the devil, for he hates him for sin. Therefore a man that allows himself in known sins, there can be no peace between God and him, as he saith, 'Why do you talk of peace, as long as the witchcrafts and whoredoms of Jezebel remain?' 2 Kings ix. 22. A man that lives in sins against conscience, that is an open swearer, an unjust person, that cares not by what means he advanceth himself, what doth he talk of peace with God, when he is in league with God's enemy? Therefore, though such men,—out of 'the hardness of their hearts, which are harder than the nether millstone,' Job xli. 24, and God seals them up under a hard heart to damnation, except some terrible judgment awake them,—force a peace upon themselves, they ought to speak none, and they shall find it to their cost ere long. Therefore let us examine our own hearts how we stand affected to any sinful course. There may be infirmities and weaknesses hang upon the best that are besides* their purposes and resolutions, but for a man resolvedly to set himself in an ill way, how can he be at peace with God and with Satan at the same time? Let us take notice of these things, and not daub† with our own consciences.

5. Again, Where there is a true peace established, there is a *high esteem of the word of peace*, the gospel of reconciliation, as St Paul calls it, 2 Cor. v. 18, 'He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.' Those that find this peace, there is stirred up by the Spirit in their breasts a high esteem of the ordinance of God, as being the word of their 'peace.' How come we to have peace between God and us? Is it not by opening the riches of God's love in Christ in the Scriptures? Therefore, saith the Scripture, 'blessed are the feet of them that bring glad tidings,' Isa. lii. 7.

* That is, 'beside.'—G.

† Cf. Ezekiel xxii. 28.—

The meanest part of their body, their feet, are blessed. Therefore those that have despicable conceits of the ministry of the word, and place their happiness in depraving* the labour and pains of that office and calling, it is a sign that they have profane hearts; for whosoever hath had any grace wrought by the word of reconciliation and of peace, they will highly esteem it, and respect them for their office sake. It cannot be otherwise.

6. Lastly, Those that have found peace *are peaceable*. It is universally true God doth make an impression of the same disposition in us to others. We apprehending God in Christ to be peaceable to us, we are peaceable to others. Therefore, in Isa. xi. 6, *seq.*, the knowledge of God in Christ, it alters and changeth men's dispositions. It makes wolves and lions to be of a milder disposition and temper. Harsh, proud, sturdy dispositions, they never felt 'peace' and mercy themselves; therefore they are not ready to shew it to others. In the nature of the thing itself it is impossible for the soul to apprehend peace in the love of God, and not to have the disposition wrought upon to shew what it hath felt. Let us think of these and such like evidences daily, to keep our hearts from speaking false 'peace.' The greatest danger in the world, in this regard, is in the church; for people under the gospel speak false 'peace' to themselves. There is a spirit of delusion that carries them along to their death, and deceives them also in death; and so they are in hell before they be aware, and then too late. They see that they were never in good terms with God in all their life, because they looked on Christ making peace, without any consideration of the spirit of application.

There must be a sprinkling of the blood of Christ on our souls to make it our own: 'We are come to the blood of sprinkling,' Heb. xii. 24. It is not the blood of Christ that makes our peace only as blood; but as it is sprinkled by the hand of faith, that is as the hyssop that sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon the people. We must not think to have any good by the blood of Christ, when we want the blood of sprinkling, that is, this particular faith: 'Christ loved me, and hath chosen me,' Gal. ii. 20; and I choose him, and love him again; and so go with boldness to God as a Father. Unless there be this passage of the soul, between God and us, let us not talk of peace. For if we might have good by Christ, without a spirit of application, and if there were not a necessity of sprinkling the blood of Christ upon our souls by faith, all the world should be saved.

In the next place, to give a few directions to maintain this peace actually and continually every day.

1. To walk with God, and to keep our daily peace with God, *it requires a great deal of watchfulness over our thoughts*,—for he is a Spirit, *over our words and actions*. Watchfulness is the preserver of peace. Where there is a great distance between two that are at peace, it is not kept without acknowledgment of that distance, and without watchfulness. It is not here as it is in a peace that is between two kings that are co-ordinate with one another; but it is a peace between the King of heaven and rebels that are taken to be subjects; therefore we must walk in humble, low terms. 'Humble thyself, and walk with thy God,' 1 Pet. v. 6. We must watch over our carriage, that we do not 'grieve the Spirit of God;' for then, however the first peace established in conversion should be never taken away, yet God interdicts our comfort. We cannot daily enjoy our daily peace without watchfulness. But God suffers our knowledge, and our former illumination, to lash our conscience, and to be more miserable in our

* That is, 'undervaluing.'—G.

inward man, than a carnal man that never had sight of goodness. Oh the misery of a man that is fallen into ill terms with God, that had peace before! Of all men such a man hath most horror till he have made his peace again. Watchfulness will prevent this.

2. And because it is a difficult thing to maintain terms of peace with God, in regard of our indisposition, we fall into breaches with God daily; therefore *we should often renew our covenants and purposes every day.*

And if we have fallen into any sin, let us make use of our great peacemaker, Christ, who is in heaven to make peace between God and us. Let us desire God, for his sake, to be reconciled unto us, 'for God is, in Christ, reconciling us unto him,' 2 Cor. v. 19, still. The fruit of Christ's death remains still. Let us desire him to testify it unto us by his Holy Spirit.

3. And take that direction of the apostle, in Philip. iv. 6, when we find any trouble in the world, not to trouble ourselves over much. 'In nothing be careful,' &c. No. Shall we cast away all care? Cast your care upon God; let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving; let your prayers be made to God; and let him have his tribute of thanksgiving for what you have received already. What then? 'The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep and preserve your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,' Philip. iv. 7. Perhaps we shall not have what we pray for, when we have made our requests known to God. If we have not that we pray for presently, yet we shall have the 'peace of God, that passeth all understanding,' [which] shall 'keep our hearts and minds.' Therefore, when any thing troubles us, let us consider there is peace made between God and us, and put up our requests in the name of Christ, and we shall find that peace that passeth understanding.

4. Again, If we would maintain this peace, let us *be alway doing somewhat that is good and pleasing to God.* In the same chapter, Philip. iv. 8, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,' &c., 'think of these things;' and what then? 'The God of peace shall be with you.' The peace of God and the God of peace shall be with you. There must be a thinking of whatsoever is good. The thoughts must be exercised that way, and there must be a practice of what we think of. This is one means to maintain this peace with God. The very heathen had this reward of God, I mean in this life, that when they did good to their country, and one to another, they had content of conscience, they had a peace suitable. For in this world there is a suitable pleasure of conscience and contentment upon everything that is good. God rewards it in this world. For as the heat followeth the fire alway—naturally it cannot be without heat—so the thinking and practising of that which is good, especially when it is joined with some opposition of corrupt nature, when the light of nature is above the corruption of nature. If a man be a pagan, he shall have this reward in this world, a kind of inward peace; for we see how comfortably they speak sometimes upon some notable performance for their country (*f*). Now, the God of peace will be with us much more when we have laid the foundation of our peace aright, in the mercy of God in Christ, besides what is reserved, heaven and happiness. In this world we shall find the peace of God in the doing that which is good.

As for those that live in the church, and are not yet in the state of grace, that have lived wicked lives, let them consider that yet the day of grace continues, as yet the sceptre of mercy is held forth in the ministry; there is a day of jubilee for them to return from their former captivity. Let

them not abuse the patience of God, and think to do it afterward ; for that is the way to harden the heart more and more. And this Scripture puts an effectual argument into the hearts of all that are in ill terms with God, that have not made their peace, or that have had peace and have broken it. Here is an effectual way of pleading with God. 'Glory to God on high,' &c. If the soul can say, I consider my folly and madness in running into sin ; thou mightest justly damn me if thou wouldst ; it is thy mercy I am not sent to hell. Oh, but thou shalt have the greater glory ! If I find mercy therefore that I may say, 'Glory to God on high,' let me find peace on earth ; speak peace by thy Spirit to my soul ; say, 'I am thy salvation.' This was the end of thy sending of Christ, the end of creation, the end of providence, all to bring thee glory. Thou mightest have the glory of thy justice to damn me. Oh, but it will be the glory of thy mercy to save me ; that as my sins have abounded, so thy glory shall more abound. O Lord, extend the bowels of thy mercy. Will not the Lord be jealous 'of his glory' when you allege it ? Certainly he will. You see the angels here cry, 'Glory to God on high, peace on earth.' The way to bring 'peace' is to allege the glory of God's mercy in Christ. It is a prevailing way.

Now, to stir us up more and more to search the grounds of our peace, I beseech you, let us,

1. *Consider the fearful estate of a man that hath not made his peace with God.* However Christ have died, that will not serve the turn. But if Christ be food, if he be not eaten ; if he be a garment, and not be put on ; if Christ be a foundation, if we do not build on him, what benefit is it to us ? Therefore those that have not been brought by the Spirit of God to communion with Christ, alas ! they are under the wrath of God, however God doth use them ; as princes do traitors in the Tower, he gives them the liberty of the prison, yet the sentence of death is not revoked. All the delights of a prisoner in the Tower doth not content him ; he knows he is in ill terms with his prince. So, till we have made our peace with God, by hearty confession of our sins, by shaming of ourselves, by a particular faith, believing the forgiveness of our sins, and a resolution against all sin for the time to come, alas ! we have not sued out our pardon ; all our delights are but as those of a prisoner in the Tower. Therefore, ask thy soul, Hast thou sued out thy pardon ? Is there reconciliation wrought between God and thee, and accounts made even ? 'If we confess and forsake our sins, we shall find mercy,' 1 Kings viii. 35 and 1 John i. 9. It is the word of the God of heaven, who is truth itself. He hath pawned his fidelity and truth on it, to forgive us, if we confess. He is content to be thought unjust and unfaithful if he do not forgive, if we ingenuously, without all guile of spirit, lay open our sins, and take shame to ourselves.

2. If we do not make our peace with God, what a case are we in ! God himself ere long will appear our enemy. *Christ, whom we think will save us, will be our judge,* and a terrible judge. The Lamb will be angry. 'Who shall cover us from the wrath of the Lamb ?' Rev. ii. 12. We think of Christ as an innocent, meek lamb only, that will not be angry. The rebellious kings and potentates, that fight against Christ and his church, they think to trample on Christ and his gospel ; but the time will come when they shall 'desire the mountains to cover them,' Rev. vi. 16 ; and 'if his wrath be kindled, who shall abide it ?' Ps. ii. 12. He speaks there of Christ : 'Happy are they that trust in him.'

3. As for the Holy Ghost, how can they look for comfort from him ?

They have grieved him, therefore he will grieve their conscience. The Holy Ghost, as he is the God of all comfort and consolation, so he is the ground of all terror to wicked men; when he hath knocked at their hearts, by the ministry of his word, to open and to let him in, but they would not.

4. *And the angels are ready executioners of God's vengeance* upon any occasion; and others, creatures, wait but for a command from God to execute his wrath upon sinners. The heavens are ready to rain upon them as in the flood, and the earth is ready to swallow them as it did Korah; the beasts that carry us, the creatures we use, wait for a command from God to destroy us; our meat to choke us, the air to infect us, the water to drown us. They are all ready to serve the Lord of hosts against his enemies; as he saith, Isa. i. 24, 'Ah, I will be avenged on mine enemies.' Indeed, here God shews his patience; and our long life, that we think a great favour, 'it is a treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath,' Rom. ii. 5. And then, when God's wrath comes at the day of judgment, when God hath forsaken sinful men, when God the judge of all hath said, 'Depart, ye cursed,' Mat. xxv. 41, no creature shall minister them the least comfort. The sun shall shine upon them no more; the earth shall bear them no longer; as we see Dives (*q*), he had not a drop of water to comfort him in those flames, Luke xvi. 24. Therefore, if we be not at peace with the Lord of hosts, every creature is ready to be in arms against us.

5. *As for the devils*, they will be ready to be tormentors. They that are incentives to sin will be tormentors for sin afterwards.

6. *As for the church*, what comfort can a wicked man look for from the church, whom he hath despised, and whose ministry he hath rejected?

7. *And for the damned spirits*, they are all in that cursed condition with himself. Therefore, 'where shall the ungodly appear?' 1 Pet. iv. 18. Ere long whence shall he hope for comfort? Neither from God, nor angels, nor devils, nor wicked men, nor good men. None of them all will yield him a dram of comfort.

Let us not therefore delude ourselves, *but get into Christ*, get into the ark in time, that when any public calamity shall come, we may be safe in Christ. If we be at peace with God, by repentance of sins, and by faith in Christ, everything will minister thoughts of comfort to us. We cannot think of God, but as our Father; of Christ as our Redeemer and reconciler, that hath brought God and us together. The Holy Ghost takes upon him the term of a Comforter for such. Angels, they are ministering spirits. As for the church itself, God's people, they all have a common stock of prayers for us. Every one that saith, 'Our Father,' thinks of us; and all other things, they are at peace with us, as Job saith, 'The stones in the street,' Job v. 23; nay, the stone in a man's body, the terrible pangs that comes from that disease, they have a blessing upon them. In the greatest extremities, a soul that is at peace with God, however God do not deliver him from the trouble, yet he delivers and supports him in the trouble; and as the troubles increase, so his comforts increase; and the very troubles are peace with him. 'All work for the best to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28. And in the greatest confusions and tumults of states, yet 'the righteous is afraid of no ill tidings,' Ps. cxii. 7, because his heart is fixed upon God's love in Christ. The wicked, when war and desolation, and signs of God's anger appear from heaven, they 'shake as the trees of the forest,' as a wicked Ahaz, Isa. vii. 2; as a Belshazzar, when there is but a fear of trouble. How did he know that the hand-

writing was against him? It was nothing but this naughty conscience. He knew not what it was till it was expounded. So when any troubles comes upon wicked men, their consciences upbraid them with their former life. Their knees knock together, and they grow pale as Belshazzar. Oh the misery of a man that hath not made his peace with God, in the evil day, and the comfort of a man that hath! There is the difference between godly and ungodly man. Consider them in calamities. The one is at peace with God, in the midst of all calamities and troubles; nay, as I said, even troubles themselves are peaceable to him.

Yea, when death comes, which is the upshot of all, the sting of it is taken away, and it is for our greatest good.' He that hath made his peace with God, he can say, with old Simeon, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' Luke ii. 30. Mine eyes have seen Christ with the eye of faith. He is willing to yield his soul to God, because he is at peace with God. Their graves are their beds, and their souls rest with God. They die in peace, and commend their souls to God, 'as to a faithful Creator,' 1 Peter iv. 19, with a great deal of confidence: as Saint Paul saith, 'I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have run my race; henceforth is reserved for me a crown of righteousness; and not for me only, but for all those that love the blessed and glorious appearing of Christ.' Oh the comfort of a gracious soul in the hour of death, that hath made its peace with God, Job xviii. 14, when 'the king of fears,' death, shall look with a ghastly, terrible look upon men that have not made their peace. But to the other it is the end of misery, the inlet to eternal happiness. 'Blessed are those that die in the Lord,' in the peace of the Lord; 'they rest from their labours,' from the labour of sin, of callings, of afflictions, Rev. xiv. 13. There is no resting till then. Saint Paul himself was troubled with the remainders of sin, with afflictions and troubles of his calling; but blessed are they that die in the peace of God in Christ. They rest from their labours. And after death, what comfort are those in that have made their peace with God in Christ! Then their Saviour is to be their Judge. He that makes intercession for them in heaven will be their Judge; and will the head give sentence against the members, the husband against the wife and spouse? Oh no! Therefore the godly have comfortable and sweet thoughts of those blessed times, that astonisheth wicked men. They have a glorious expectation of the times to come. They cannot think of death and judgment, when their souls are in a good frame, without much comfort. 'Lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near,' Luke xxi. 28. Therefore let us not conceive slightly of this peace. It is not a freedom from petty ills, and an advancement to a little good; but it is a freedom from ills that are above nature; from the wrath of God, before which no creature can stand; no, not the angels themselves; from hell and damnation; the curse of God; from the kingdom of Satan. It is a freedom from that condition that all the powers of the world shall tremble at. How can they stand before the anger of God? And it is an advancement to the greatest good; a freedom from bondage; an advancement to sonship. Therefore let us have high thoughts of this peace; as the angels had, when they sang, 'Glory to God on high, on earth peace.'

'Good will towards men.'

Divers copies have it otherwise, 'On earth peace to men of good will.' Some have it, 'Good will towards men.' The sense is not much diffe-

rent.* Peace on earth, 'To men of God's good will, of God's good pleasure.' That God hath a pleasure to save, or 'good will towards men,' of God's good pleasure; 'Peace on earth,' to men of God's good will and pleasure; or God's good pleasure towards men.

'Good will towards men.'

This is the spring and root of all. The angels begin with 'Glory to God,' and then they come to 'peace among men,' because without peace and reconciliation with God the heart of man cannot be enlarged to glorify God. The angels would have men glorify God as well as themselves. Therefore they desire peace on earth, that God may be glorified in heaven. Now there is no peace but issues from grace. Grace is God's free good will and pleasure. Therefore the angels say, 'Good will towards men.'

The holy apostles, they could not have better teachers for their salutations in their epistles than to learn of the angels; as you have Saint Paul's prefaces, the same with this evangelical celebration and gratulation here to men, 'Grace, mercy, and peace,' so here, 'Peace on earth, good will towards men.' Only the apostles they begin, 'grace and peace;' and here the angels, 'peace and grace.' But the meaning of the angels and apostles is all one; for the angels, when they wish 'peace on earth,' they go to the spring of it, 'good will towards men.' The apostles, they begin with grace, the spring, and then go to peace after.

'Good will towards men.'

The words need not further to be explicated. There is no great difficulty in them. The points considerable are these.

1. God now hath a gracious good will towards men.
2. This good will is the foundation of all good.
3. And this is founded upon Christ.

The first of these I will but touch, because it doth but make way to the other.

1. *God shews now good pleasure towards men.*

The love that God bears towards man hath divers terms, from divers relations. As it is a propension in him to do good, so it is love. As it is his free, so it is his good, pleasure or grace. As it is to persons in misery, it is mercy. The fountain of all is love. But as the object is diversely considered, so the terms be divers. Good pleasure and grace imply freedom in the party loving, and mercy implies misery in the party loved.

Now this free good will and grace, it is towards men, towards mankind. He saith not, towards angels. It is more towards men, than even to good angels, in some sort. For now man is taken to be the spouse of Christ. Good angels are not so. Neither is it good will to evil angels; for their state is determined. There is no altering of their condition. Therefore God is called *Philanthropos*, not *Philangelos*; and the Scripture calls this *Philanthropia*, the love that God hath shewed to men in Christ.† Therefore we should have thoughts of God as gracious, loving our nature more than the angelical nature in some respects.

And learn this for imitation, to love mankind. God loved mankind; and surely there is none that is born of God, but he loves the nature of man, wheresoever he finds it. He will not stand altogether, whether it be good or bad, &c. But because we are now in the way, and our state is not determined, and because God loves the nature of man, therefore every

* Cf. note a.—G.

† That is, *φιλανθρωπία*.—G.

man that hath the Spirit of God loves mankind. He will labour to gain Turks, or Indians, &c., if he can, because he loves the very nature of man. But I pass from this point to the second.

2. This *εὐδοκία*, 'good will of God' to restore lapsed man by the sending of his Son, is the ground of all good to man, and hath no ground but itself. God's grace and love to the creature is altogether independent in regard of the creature. God fetcheth not reasons of his love from the creature, but from his own bowels. What can he foresee in 'persons that were dead'? nay, in persons that were in a contrary disposition to goodness? There is nothing but enmity in our nature to supernatural goodness. Can God foresee grounds of love in enmity?

As Moses tells the people of Israel in divers places, Deut. vii. 8, 'that it was not for any foresight of good in them,' they were the stubbornest people under heaven, therefore God, to shew his free love, he chose a stubborn people, and singled them out to be the object of his mercy. So God oftentimes takes the unlikeliest men in the world, and passeth by many, otherwise of sweet natures. So we see, even the means themselves, they are of God's free mercy and love.

We have whatsoever we have by virtue of the covenant; for what could we look for from God but in covenant, wherein he hath bound himself? Now, since the fall, this covenant is called the covenant of grace; that now, 'if we believe in Christ, we shall not perish, but have life and salvation,' John iii. 15. In all the parts of it, it is of God's free grace and good pleasure. What is the foundation of the covenant? Christ. Christ is of free grace. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,' verse 16. There is nothing freer than gift. Christ is a gift, the greatest gift. He came freely from God; he 'gave him to death for us all,' Rom. viii. 32.

And then whatsoever good thing we have in Christ, it comes freely too. He that gave Christ freely, shall he not 'with him give us all things too?' Rom. viii. 32.

Then the very grace to keep the covenant, repentance and faith, they are the gift of God. 'I will take away your stony heart, and give you new hearts, and cause you to walk in my statutes; I will circumcise your hearts,' Exek. xi. 19. So the grace to walk in the covenant of grace, it comes from God. God doth his part and ours too, to shew not only that the covenant of grace is a covenant of wondrous love, to give us grace here and glory hereafter, but that the foundation is of grace, and the performance on our part is of grace. Nay, it is of grace that he would enter into covenant at all. He humbled himself wondrously to vouchsafe to enter into covenant. It was humiliation on God's part, and exaltation to us. Therefore, as it is in Zechariah, we may cry, 'Grace, grace.' There is nothing but grace and free love in the whole carriage of our salvation.

If whatsoever good come to man be merely from God's good will, let us empty ourselves, and give him the glory of all. It is easily spoken and heard, but not so easily done. For man naturally is proud, and for flesh and blood to be brought to go out of itself and acknowledge nothing in itself, to give the glory of all goodness and happiness to God's free grace and goodness, it is hard to bring proud nature to do this. But we must beg grace of God to work our hearts to this more and more, to empty ourselves of ourselves, and to give God the glory of all. But,

I come to the last point, because I would end this text at this time.

3. *This free love and grace of God is only in Christ.*

Therefore the angels pronounce it now at the birth of Christ, 'good will to men.' All these agree very well: Christ's free grace, and faith. For what we have by grace, we have only by Christ; because he hath given satisfaction to God's justice, that so grace may be conveyed and derived unto us without prejudice to any other attribute in God; and then the embracing power and grace in us is faith. So these three agree. I say, whatsoever we have from God's free love now, we have it in Christ. The free love of God is grounded in Christ. We in ourselves, especially considered in the corrupt mass, cannot be the object of God's love. God cannot look upon us, but in him, the best beloved, first. Therefore all is in Christ in the carriage of it. We are elected in Christ, called in Christ, justified by Christ, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, glorified in Christ. 'We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ,' Eph. i. 3. 'This is my beloved Son; I am well pleased in him,' Mat. iii. 17. It is the same word there, *εὐδόκησα*, 'in whom I delight,' Isa. xlii. 1, out of which the Father takes his speech, 'This is the Son I delight in.' Now, all God's delight is first fixed in his Son and in us, because we must have communion with the Son. So the first object of God's free love is Christ, and then he looks upon us in him.

The Trinity have a wondrous complacency in looking upon mankind. Now in Christ God loves us, as redeemed by Christ; Christ loves us as elected by the Father, and given by the Father's choice to him to redeem. The Holy Ghost hath a special liking to us, as seeing the love of the Father in choosing us, and of the Son in redeeming us. And surely if we would see likewise those sweet interviews of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it should be our main delight too, to see how God hath chosen us and given us to Christ to save; how Christ hath redeemed us, from this very respect, that the Father hath chosen us and given us to him, as it is in John xvii. 6, 'Thine they were, thou gavest them me;' and how the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of communion—the 'communion of the Holy Ghost,' 2 Cor. xiii. 14—that hath communion with the Father and the Son, and issues and proceeds from them both; how he witnesseth this love to our souls, and applies it to us. The Holy Ghost applies all. The Father decreed and ordained all. The Son works and dispenseth all. The consideration of the point is wondrous comfortable.

Whatsoever good will the Father hath to us, it is as we are in Christ.

Quest. And why in Christ?

Ans. Because Christ is the first thing that God can love. He is 'the only begotten Son of God.' Whosoever is loved to glory in a spiritual order, is loved in the first beloved. Christ is loved of God as the character of his own image. The Son represents the Father. He is loved of God, as mediator by office. So God looks upon us in Christ as the 'Son of his love.' So he is called by Saint Paul, Col. i. 13.

Then if we consider ourselves, this must be so. Alas! we are not objects of God's love in ourselves, nor cannot be; but in some other that is loved first. For what are we? And what is the glory to which God loves us? To love such as we to such glory, and to free us from such misery due, it must be by another foundation than ourselves. Therefore God's good pleasure is founded upon his Son Christ. This is a clear point. The Scripture beats much upon it. He is our elder brother, and we must be conformed to him.

Use. To make some use of it.

First of all, then, we see here that all that are not in Christ lie open to

the vengeance and wrath of God. His good will towards men is only in Christ.

Again, If all God's good will and pleasure be in Christ, as our high priest, without whom we can offer no sacrifice, as we know whatsoever was not offered by the high priest it was abominable, therefore we should look to God in Christ, love God in Christ, perform service to God in Christ, pray to God in Christ, give thanks to God in Christ, desire God in Christ to make all things acceptable for Christ's sake, because it is in Christ that God hath any good will and pleasure to us.

It is a point of marvellous comfort, that God's love and good pleasure is so well founded, as in Christ. He loves Christ eternally, and sweetly, and strongly. Is not God's love to us the same? Doth he not love us with the same love that he loves his Son? He loves his mystical body with one love, that is Christ, head and members: John xvii. 23, 'That the love thou bearest to me may be in them.' What a sweet comfort is this! God loves Christ and me with one love. He loves me strongly, and sweetly, and constantly, as he doth his own Son. His love to me is eternal, because the foundation of it is eternal. It is founded upon Christ. The love of a prince, if it be founded on a favourite he loves dearly, must needs be firm and strong. Now God's love to Christ is ardent, and strong, and sweet, as possibly can be conceived. Therefore it is so to us, his good will to us being founded on Christ.

Why should a believer fear that God will cast him away? He will as soon leave his love to his own Son, as to us, if we continue members of his Son. It is an undefeasible love. It is a point of wondrous comfort. 'What shall separate us,' saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 35, 'from the love of God founded in Christ? neither things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor anything.' Many things may sever the soul and body, but there is nothing in the world but sin, that shall sever either soul or body from the love of God in Christ, because both body and soul are members of Christ. Therefore let us treasure it up as a point wondrous comfortable.

To come to an use of trial, how shall we know whether God's good will be to us in Christ or no? How shall I know that he loves my person, that I am in the state of grace and love with him?

The Holy Ghost must ascertain this. For as the work of salvation was so great, that only God could satisfy God, so the doubts of man's heart, and the guilt of his conscience when it is upon him, and the fear of God's wrath upon just guilt, is such that God must assure him that God is reconciled to him. God the Son must reconcile God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost must seal and ascertain this to the soul. The soul will never be quiet, before it see and know in particular God reconciled in Christ. The Spirit that is God, that is above conscience, must seal it to the soul, being above conscience. He can set down and quiet our conscience. Now this Spirit that worketh this in us, and assures us of God's good pleasure, it alters and changeth our dispositions, that we shall have a good pleasure in God, for there is a mutual good pleasure. God hath a good pleasure in us as his, and we have a good pleasure in God wrought by the Spirit. The Spirit not only witnesseth, but worketh this sweet and gracious disposition to God. God delights in us, and we in God. God delights in the church above all things. The church is his wife and spouse, his body, his friends, his children, and those that have the Spirit of God delight in them too. Ps. xvi. 3, 'All my delight is in the excellent;' and Prov. viii. 31, 'My

delight is in the sons of men,' saith Christ ; which he shewed by taking the base nature of man upon him. So all that have the Spirit of Christ delight in the church and people of God : ' All my delight is in the saints on earth,' Hosea ii. God saith his delight is in his church. So all that have the Spirit of God, they delight in the people of God.

God delights in obedience more than sacrifice. God's people, that he delights in, they yield their bodies and souls a sacrifice to God : Rom. xii. 1, ' They will seek out what is well-pleasing and acceptable to God.' God accepts them in Christ, and he is acceptable to them in Christ Jesus, and they seek out what pleaseth him and is acceptable to him. As the sons of Isaac sought out what might please their old father, what he could relish, so God's children seek out what duties God relisheth best. Thanksgiving is a sacrifice ' with which God is well pleased.' Is it so ? Then they will seek out that that may please him. God by his Spirit will work in them a disposition to please him in all things. Therefore the people of God are said to be a voluntary, free people, ' zealous of good works,' Titus ii. 14, being set at liberty. The Spirit infusing and conveying the love and good pleasure of God in Christ to them, it sets their wills at liberty, to devise to please God in all things. They have, as David prays, Ps. li. 12, ' a free Spirit.' As God, not out of any respect from us, but freely from his own bowels loved us, and gave Christ to us, and delighted in us, so the soul freely, without any base respects, loves God again. Those, therefore, that do duties for base aims, and forced, as fire out of a flint, not as water out of a spring, that duty comes not naturally and sweetly from them, God hath no pleasure in them, because they have none in God ; but the good they do is extorted and drawn from them.

Let us try ourselves therefore. If we have tasted God's good will towards us, *we will have a good pleasure to him again.* Whatsoever is God's pleasure shall be our pleasure ; what pleaseth him shall please us. If it please him to exercise us with crosses, and afflictions, and losses, what pleaseth God shall please me ; for when he hath once loved me freely in Christ, every thing that comes from him tastes of that free love. If he correct me, it is out of free love and mercy. All the ways of God ' are mercy and truth.' His way of correction and sharp dealing, it is a way of love and free mercy. Therefore, if it please him, it shall please me ; my will shall be his will.

Again, If we find the free love of God to us in Christ, *it will quicken us to all duties, and strengthen us in all conditions.* But these evidences shall suffice. Let us search our hearts how we stand affected to God, and to the best things. We delight in them, if God delight in us.

And if we do not find ourselves yet to be the people of God's delight, towards whom God hath thoughts of love, as the prophet speaks, Jer. xxix. 11, what shall we do ?

Attend upon the means of salvation, the gospel of peace and reconciliation, and wait the good time, and do not stand disputing. This is that that hinders many, their disputing and cavilling, that perhaps God hath not a purpose to save me, and that the greatest part of mankind go the broad way, &c. Leave disputing, and fall to obeying. God hath a gracious purpose to save all that repent of their sins and believe in Christ. This is gospel. ' I will leave secret things.' ' They belong to God, revealed things belong to me,' Deut. xxix. 29. I will desire of God his Spirit, to repent of my sins, and to believe and cast myself in the arms of his mercy in Christ, and then let God do as he please. If I perish, I will

perish in the arms of Christ. Let us labour to bring our hearts to wait in the use of the means, for God's good Spirit to enable me to see my state by nature, and to get out of it, by casting myself upon God's love in Christ.

And *object not the greatness of any sin to hinder the comfort of God's mercy.* It is a free mercy. The ground of it is from himself, and not from thee. It was free to Manassas, that had sinned, no man more. Being a king, and being the son of a good father, his sins spread further than ours can do, answerable to the greatness of his person. Being an infinite and free mercy, it extends to the greatest sinners. Let no man pretend any sin or unworthiness, if he seriously repent. If any sin or unworthiness could keep it back, it were something; but it is a free mercy and love from God's own bowels in Christ.

And consider how God *offers this in the gospel, and lays a command.* It is thy duty to have a good conceit of God in Christ. We ought not to suspect a man that is an honest man; and will God take it well at our hands to suspect him that he is so and so? He makes a show of his love and mercy in Christ, but perhaps he intends it not. Put it out of question by believing. If thou have grace to believe the mercy of God in Christ, thou makest thyself a member of Christ and an heir of heaven. Thou questionest whether thou be one that Christ died for or no? Believe in him, and obey him, and thou puttest that question out of the question. Thou doubttest whether God love thee or no? Cast thyself upon the love of God in Christ, and then it is out of question. Whosoever hath grace to cast himself upon the free love of God, he fulfils the covenant of grace. Stand not disputing and wrangling, but desire grace to obey; and then all questions concerning thy eternal estate are resolved; all is clear.

If these things will not move you, then let all men know, that live in a sinful condition, that they had better have lived in any part of the world than in these glorious times and places of light; for when they hear the love of God in Christ laid open to them, if they will come in and receive Christ, and cast themselves upon him, and be ruled by him, and they will not, it shall be easier for Sodom and Gomorrha, for Jews, and Turks, and pagans, and those that worship devils, than for us. For when God offers his free love and mercy in Christ if we will entertain it, and we will none of it, then justice alone shall not condemn us, but mercy shall condemn us; we will none of mercy. There is not the worst man but would have pardoning mercy. He is content to have God pardon his sin; but he will not take the whole mercy and love of God in Christ, curing, healing mercy. There are those that live in filthy courses, in profaneness, in swearing, &c. It is food to them to be malicious, to deprave the best things. Serpents feed on poison. They are content to have their sins pardoned, if God will let their filthy nature alone,—their poisonous, blasphemous disposition, that exalts itself against God,—and let them go on in their course. They will have one mercy but not another. But we shall never be saved without entire mercy, healing as well as pardoning. Whom God loves, he doth not only pardon their sins, but heals their nature, and makes it like unto Christ's, holy and pure.

Those that have not the Spirit in them, desiring, altering, and changing, and healing grace, as well as pardoning grace, they are hypocrites.

Let us remember this especially, because it is most useful; and most men are deceived in this. They think, Oh, God is merciful, and his love is free in Christ; and though I be unworthy, yet God will have mercy

upon me. But hast thou a secret desire to partake of God's whole mercy and love, to make thee good, as well as to make thee his son, and entitle thee to heaven, to have thy nature altered, to see the deformity of sin and the beauty of grace? If thou hadst rather to have the image of God upon thee more than any favour in the world, that thou hadst rather be free from the bondage of sin than any other deliverance: if it be thus, thy state is good.

To hasten; considering God's free love opened now in Jesus Christ, I beseech you, let us study Christ, and labour to get into Christ daily more and more, that we may be members of Christ; and desire God, daily more and more, to reveal himself in Christ to us, that we may see his face in Christ, that we may know him in the sweet relations he hath put on him in the gospel.

To know God in general as a Creator and doing good, &c., the heathens did that by the light of nature; but we should labour to see him in the face of Christ; that is, to see him appeased and loving us, wishing us well. Concerning eternal glory, that must be by the light of the gospel, and by the Spirit. Therefore in hearing of the word, and reading and meditating, desire God above all to reveal by his Spirit his gracious face in Christ; that in Christ we may see him as a Father, as a husband, as a friend, in those sweet relations of love that he hath taken upon him. It should be our daily desire of God to manifest his love more to us in Christ Jesus than in any other fruits of his love; for there be common fruits, as to give us health, and friends, and liberty, and quiet government, which are great favours that we see denied to many nations. Oh, but the soul that is touched with the Spirit of God, and the sense of his own condition by nature, is thus disposed: Lord, I desire that thou wouldst shew the fruits of thy love to me; but I desire not so much those common fruits, that the reprobates may have as well as I. Oh shew me by thy Holy Spirit that thou hast a particular and peculiar love to me in Christ; and for this end give me grace to know the mystery of Christ more and more, and the mystery of my natural corruption, that knowledge that may drive me to make much of thy love and grace in Christ! Now, the Spirit that knows the deep things of God, the depth of God's love to any one in particular, and the depth of our hearts, if we beg the Spirit to reveal the good pleasure of God to us, in time God will shew unto our souls that he delights in us, and that he is our salvation. This shews that the soul is [in] an excellent temper, that it sets a right price and value on things, that it prizeth God's favour above all things. That is the nature of faith; for what is faith? Only to believe in general that Christ died, &c.? No. But to esteem God's love better than all the world; for God's love is entire in pardoning and curing too. By this the soul is raised up to esteem the love and mercy of God in pardoning and healing sin above life itself: Ps. lxiii. 3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.'

To conclude all with this one motive, *the loving-kindness of God*; when we have it once, it is no barren, complimentary kindness. It is a loving-kindness that reacheth from everlasting to everlasting, from God's love in choosing to his love in glorifying us. It is a love that reacheth to the filling of nature with all the happiness it is capable of. In this world, in all misery, one beam of God's loving-kindness will scatter all clouds whatsoever. What raised the spirit of Daniel in the lions' den? of the 'three young men' in the midst of the furnace? of St Paul in the dungeon? The beams of God's love in Christ brake into the prison, into the dun-

geon. A few beams of that will enlarge the heart more than any affliction in the world can cast it down. It is excellent that Moses saith, Deut. xxxiii. 16, 'The good pleasure of him that dwelt in the bush,' &c. You know that God appeared in the bush, when it was flaming. The flaming bush shewed the state of Israel, in the midst of the furnace of persecution; yet notwithstanding the bush was not consumed. Why? Because the good will of God was in the bush. So let us be in any persecution; put case we be like Moses's bush, all on fire; yet the fire shall not consume nor hurt us. Why? The good pleasure of him that dwelt in the bush is with us. In Isa. xliii. 2, 'I will be with thee in the fire, and in the water;' not to keep thee out, but I will be with thee in it. So that in the greatest persecutions that can be, in the fiery trial, as St Peter calls it, 'the good will of him that dwelt in the bush will be with us.' So that we shall not be consumed, though we be in the fire; 'afflicted, but not despair,' 2 Cor. iv. 8. Why? The good pleasure of God dwells in the bush, in the church. In the midst of afflictions and persecutions he is with us. Who can be miserable that hath the presence of God, the favour and good will of God? But this shall be sufficient for this time and text.

NOTES.

(a) P. 319.—'What that order is, I confess with St Austin, is undetermined in Scripture; we must not rashly presume to look into these things.' There are well-nigh innumerable allusions to the angels, scattered through the writings of this Father, all distinguished by that reverence and modesty of speculation, so characteristic of him in treating of the 'secret things' of God. Cf. *Indices* of Benedictine edition, *sub voce*.

(b) P. 322.—'There is some difference in the readings.' The Vulgate reads *εὐδοξίας*, its version being 'hominibus bonæ voluntatis.' The reading is found in some of the Fathers. The Syriac version renders 'good tidings to the sons of men.' Sibbes refers probably to both the Vulgate and Syriac. Dean Alford has a pungent note on the the popish adoption of *εὐδοξίας*.

(c) P. 328.—'As Tertullian said in his time: "What! shall we celebrate that which is a public matter of joy to all the church, for a public shame, in a disgraceful way"?' There are many such remonstrances and 'rebukes' in this Father. Cf. 'Apology,' c. xxxix.

(d) P. 329.—'As the phrase of some of the ancients is, repentance is a board to escape to the shore, after we have made shipwreck, and done things amiss.' The allusion is to Acts xxvii. 44, a very frequent accommodation with the Puritans.

(e) P. 339.—'The heathen could say, *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*.' We have not fallen in with this expression. Similar ones occur in Seneca, Cicero, and other heathen writers.

(f) P. 345.—'For we see how comfortably they speak sometimes upon some notable performance for their country.' Cicero, and Seneca, and later, the 'Thoughts' of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, which have been admirably rendered and interpreted by George Long, M.A. (1 vol. fc. 8vo, Bell and Daldy), furnish examples.

(g) P. 347.—'As we see Dives.' It is singular how the *un-named* 'rich man' of the parable has gone down to posterity as *Dives*, the Anglicised form of the Vulgate rendering of *πλούσιος*.