

MIRACLE OF MIRACLES.

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NOTE.

'A Miracle of Miracles' originally appeared as a thin 4to, in 1638. The title-page is given below of the second edition (1656). It was appended to the Commentary upon 2 Corinthians chap. iv. See note Vol. IV., page 308. Cf. Memoir, Vol. I. pp. cxxv. for remarks of Fuller. G.

A
M I R A C L E
OF
MIRACLES:

OR,
Christ in our Nature.

Wherein is contained
The Wonderfull Conception, Birth,
and Life of Christ, who in the fulnesse of
time became man to satisfie divine Justice
and to make reconciliation between
God and Man.

Preached to the honourable Society of
Grayes Inne, by that godly and faithfull Mi-
nister of Jesus Christ, *Richard Sibbes*, D.D.

Phil. 2. 5.

*He made himselfe of no reputation, and took upon him the
forme of a servant, and was made in the likenesse of men.*

L O N D O N,

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MIRACLE OF MIRACLES.

(FIRST SERMON.)

The Lord himself shall give a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.—ISAIAH VII. 14.

THE Jews at this time were in a distressed condition, by reason of the siege of two kings, Resin and Pekah : the one the king of Syria, the other the king of Israel. Whereupon the prophet labours to comfort them, and tells them that these two kings were but as two fire-brands, that should waste and consume themselves, and then go out. For confirmation thereof, because he saw the heart both of king and people astonished, he biddeth them ‘ask a sign of things in heaven or earth.’ No, saith king Ahaz, ‘I will not tempt God;’ and making religion his pretence against religion, being a most wilful and wicked man, would not.

For he had framed an altar according to the altar which he had seen at Damascus, neglecting God’s altar at Jerusalem as too plain and homely.

Man, unsubdued by the Spirit of God, admires the devices of men, and the fabric of his own brain.

And though this king was so fearful, that his heart, and the rest of their hearts, were ‘as the leaves in the forest,’ shaking, and trembling, and quaking at the presence of their enemies, and though he was surprised with fear and horror, seeing God his enemy, and himself God’s enemy, and that God intended him no good, yet he would go on in his own superstitious course, having some secret confidence in league and affinity with other kings that were superstitious like himself. This, by the way.

We may learn by this wretched king, *that those that are least fearful before danger are most basely fearful in danger.* He that was so confident and wilful out of danger, in danger, his heart was ‘as the leaves of the forest.’ For a wicked man in danger hath no hope from God, and therefore is incapable of any intercourse with him. He will trust the devil and his instruments, led with a superstitious* spirit, rather than God : as this king had more confidence in the king of Syria, that was his enemy, and so shewed himself after, than in God. It is the nature of flesh and blood, being not sanctified by God, to trust in this means and that means, this carnal help and that carnal help, ‘a reed of Egypt,’ yea, the devil and lies, rather than to God himself.

The prophet, in an holy indignation for the refusing of a sign to confirm

* Cf. Acts xvii. 22.—G.

his faith that these kings should not do the church harm, breaketh forth thus: Know, O house of David, 'is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?' God offers you a sign out of his love, and you dislike and contemn his blessed bounty. Therefore 'the Lord himself shall give you a sign.' What is that? 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.'

From the inference, we may see *the conflict between the infinite goodness of God and the inflexible stubbornness of man*; God's goodness striving with man's badness. When they would have no sign, yet God will give them a sign. His goodness overcometh and out-wrestleth in the contention man's sinful strivings, his mercy prevails against man's malice.

To come to the text itself. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.' It was not so much a sign for the present, as a promise of a miraculous benefit, which was to be presented almost eight hundred years after the prophet spake these words, even the incarnation of Christ, a miracle of miracles, a benefit of benefits, and the cause of all benefits. He fetcheth comfort against the present distress from a benefit to come. And to shew how this can be a ground of comfort at this time of distress, 'that a virgin shall conceive,' we must know that 'Christ was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. All the godly of the Jews knew it well enough, the Messiah being all their comfort. They knew that he was 'yesterday and to-day, and shall be the same for ever.' The church had in all times comfort from Christ. *Profuit antequam fuit*: he did good before he was exhibited in the world.

And thus the prophet applies the comfort to the house of David: 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, who shall be of the family of David.' And therefore the house of David shall not be extinct and dissolved. The reason is strong. You of the house of David are in fear that your kingdom and nation shall be destroyed; but know that the Messiah must come of a virgin, and of the house of David. And considering this must certainly come to pass, why do ye fear, ye house of David?

Again, it hath force of a reason thus. The promise of our Messiah is the grand promise of all, and the cause of all promises; for all promises made to the church, are either promises of Christ himself, or promises in him and for his sake, because he takes all promises from God, and conveyeth them, and maketh them good to us. God maketh them, and performeth them in Christ and for Christ.

Now the reason stands thus, if God will give a Messiah, that shall be the 'son of a virgin,' and 'Emmanuel,' certainly he will give you deliverance. He that will do the greater will do the less. What is the deliverance you desire to the promised deliverance from hell and damnation, and to the benefit by the Messiah, which you profess to hope for and believe?

The apostle himself, Rom. ii. 8, reasons thus: 'God, that spared not his own Son, but gave him to death for us all, how shall not he with him give us all things?' If God will give Christ to be Emmanuel and incarnate, he will not stand upon any other inferior promises or mercies whatsoever.

Obj. But you will say, this promise was to come; and how could this confirm their faith for the present, that they should not be destroyed?

Ans. I answer, In regard of his taking our nature, he was 'to come,' yet Christ was always with his church before. They understood him in the 'manna;' he was the 'angel of the covenant.' They that were

spiritually wise amongst the Jews, understood that he was the rock that went before them.

And again, it is usual in Scripture to give signs from things to come, as Isa. xxxvii. 30, 'The next year thou shalt eat that which groweth of itself,' &c., because where faith is, it maketh things 'to come' all one as if they were present.

And so we should make this use of the grand promises of Christ to comfort us against all petty matters and wants whatsoever. And to reason with the holy apostle, 'God spared not his only begotten Son, but gave him to death.' He hath given Christ, and will he not give things needful? Hath he given the greater, and will he stand with thee for the less? This is a blessed kind of reasoning. And so to reason from other grand things promised. God shall raise my body out of the dust and the grave, and cannot he raise my body out of sickness, and my state out of trouble? Cannot he raise the church out of misery? So saith St Paul, 2 Cor. i. 9, 'God that raised Christ, restored me again, that had received the sentence of death.' When we receive sentence of death in our persons, look to him that raised Christ from the dead, and to the grand promises to come. They before Christ comforted themselves in times of all distress by the grand promise of Christ 'to come.' But now the Messiah is come. And which may much more strengthen our faith, he hath suffered, and given his body to death for us; and therefore, why doubt we of God's good will in any petty matters whatsoever.

To come to the words more particularly, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,' &c.

You have diverse articles of our faith in these few words. As *Christ's conception* by the Holy Ghost, his being *born of the Virgin Mary*, &c. You have here the *human nature* of Christ, 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.' And the *divine nature* of Christ, his name shall be called Emmanuel, which signifieth also his office, 'God with us' by nature, and God with us by office, to set God and us at one. So you have divers points of divinity couched in the words, which I will only open suitable to the occasion.

'Behold.' This is the usual beacon set up, the usual harbinger to require our attendance* in all matters concerning Christ. And it hath a threefold force here. 'Behold,' as being a thing presented to the eye of faith. He mounteth over all the interim between the promise and the accomplishment, for faith knoweth no difference of times.

2. And then, it is to raise attention. 'Behold;' it is a matter of great concernment.

3. And not only attention, but likewise admiration.† 'Behold,' a strange and admirable thing. For what stranger thing is there than that a virgin should conceive, that a virgin should be a mother, and that God should become man.

We had need of strong grace to apprehend these strange things. And therefore God hath provided a grace suitable, above reason, and above nature, and that is faith. Reason mocketh at this. The devil knoweth it and envieth it. The angels know, and wonder at it. The soul itself, without a grace suitable to the admirableness of the thing, can never apprehend it. And therefore, well may it be said, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.'

'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear.' And why a virgin? When God is to be born, it is fit for a virgin to be the mother. Christ was not

* That is, 'attention.'—G.

† That is, 'wonder.'—G.

to come by the ordinary way of propagation. He was to come *from* Adam, but not *by* Adam; for he was to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Because he was indeed to be a sacrifice, and he must be without spot or sin himself, that was to offer himself for the sins of others. Therefore the foundation and ground of his nature must be pure and clean; and that is the foundation of all the purity of his life and conversation, and therefore a virgin.

This was typified in Aaron's rod, which budded though it had no root. No juice could come from a dry stick, yet by an almighty power the rod did bud. And so Moses's bush. It burned and did not consume. And that God that caused those things, caused a virgin to be a mother.

He enters into the womb of a virgin without any defilement at all, considering the Holy Ghost, from the Father and the Son, did purge and purify and sanctify that mass whereof the blessed body of our Saviour was made. The virgin afforded the matter, but the wise framer was the Holy Ghost. She was passive, the Holy Ghost was the agent.

Now, when did the virgin conceive? When upon the angel's coming to her and telling her 'that she was greatly beloved,' and that she should conceive; she assented, 'Be it so as the Lord hath spoken,' Luke i. 38. When she assented to the word, presently Christ was conceived; her faith and her womb conceived together. When her heart did conceive the truth of the promise, and yielded assent thereunto, her womb conceived at the same time also.

Obs. From hence learn something for ourselves: *It had been to little purpose though a virgin conceived Christ, unless Christ had been conceived likewise in her heart.* And there is no benefit by virtue of this conception to others, but to such as conceive Christ in their hearts also.

To which end our hearts must be in some measure made virgin hearts, pure hearts, hearts fit to receive Christ.

We must assent to promises of pardon and of life everlasting: 'Be it as the Lord saith.' A Christian is a Christian, and Christ liveth in his heart, at the time of the assenting to the promise. So that if you ask, When doth Christ first live in a Christian's heart? I answer, then, when the heart yieldeth a firm assent to the gracious promises made in Christ for the pardoning of sins and acceptation to the favour of God, and title and interest to life everlasting. For faith is the birth of the heart.

Christ was conceived in the womb of an humble and believing virgin. So that heart that will conceive Christ aright, must be a humble and believing heart: humble, to deny himself in all things; and believing, to go out of itself to the promises of God in Christ. When God by his Spirit hath brought our hearts to be humble and believing, to go out of themselves and believe in him, rest upon him and his promises, then Christ is conceived in our heart.

'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.' Here is the birth of Christ as well as the conception. Christ must not only be conceived in the womb, but also brought forth, because God must be manifested in the flesh; as St Paul saith, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. If he had only been conceived, and not brought forth, he had not been manifested. He was to do all things that befitted a Mediator.

And therefore he went along with us in all the passages of our lives. He was conceived as we are, remained in the womb so many months, born as we are born, brought into the light as we are; away therefore with idle, monkish devices and fond conceits, that affirm the contrary!

He was like to us in all things, 'sin excepted;' conceived, brought forth, hung upon the breast as we, an infant as we; hungry, and thirsty, and suffered as we.

And as he was in all things like to us, so in everything that was in him there was something extraordinary; as he was a man like to us, so he was an extraordinary man. He was conceived, but of a virgin, which is extraordinary. He was born as we are, but there his star appeared, and the wise men came to adore and worship him. He was poor as we are, but there were beams of his Godhead appeared. When he was poor, 'he could command a fish to furnish him,' Mat. xvii. 27. He died as we die, but he made the 'earth to quake, the veil of the temple to rend,' when he triumphed on the cross, Mat. xxvii. 51. All which declared he was more than an ordinary person.

And so we must all conceive Christ, and bear Christ in our words and actions. It must appear that Christ liveth in us; it must appear outwardly to man what we are inwardly to God. Our whole outward life must be nothing but a discovery of Christ living in us. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' saith St Paul, Gal. ii. 20; which should appear by word, conversation, and action. Our lives should be nothing but an acting of Christ living in our souls.

This is not a mere analogical truth, but it floweth naturally. Whosoever are to have the benefit of his birth and conception, Christ sendeth into their heart the same Spirit that sanctified the mass whereof he was made, and so frameth a disposition suitable to himself. He sets his own stamp upon the heart. As the union of his human nature to the divine was the cause of all other graces of his human nature, so the Spirit of God, uniting us to Christ, is the cause of all grace in us. If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his.

'And shall call his name Emmanuel.' Many things might be observed concerning the ordinary reading of the words. Some read, '*She* shall call his name Emmanuel,' because he had no father; others, 'His name shall be called Emmanuel;' but they be doubtful, therefore I leave them (*a*).

But 'Jesus' was his name; therefore how can it be said, he shall be called 'Emmanuel'?

The meaning is, he shall be 'Emmanuel,' and shall be accounted and believed to be so; he shall be God with us indeed, and shall shew himself to be so; for in the Hebrew phrase, the meaning of a thing imports the being of the thing. The like phrase is in Isa. ix. 6, 'To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace;' that is, 'He shall be believed to be so, and shall shew himself to be so, and shall be so indeed.' The like you have, because it is an answer to the cavil of the Jews, which object he was not called 'Emmanuel:' 'Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name, whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness,' Jer. ii. 3. For indeed he is Jehovah our righteousness, and we have no righteousness to stand before God with but his. Divers other places of Scripture there be of the same nature; but these two are pregnant, and therefore I name them for all the rest.

Besides the conception and birth of Christ, you have here likewise the *divine nature* of Christ and the *offices* of Christ; for Emmanuel is a name both of nature and office.

It is a name of his nature, God and man; and of his office, which is to

* Qu. 'naming'?—ED.

reconcile God and man. We could not be 'with God,' but God must first be 'man with us.' We were once with God in Adam, before he fell; but there being a breach made, we cannot be recovered again till God be with us. He must take our natures, that he may reconcile our persons.

Now, Christ is 'Emmanuel;' first, in regard of *nature*, 'God with us,' or God in our nature. The pure nature of God, and the base nature of man, that were strangers ever since the fall, are knit together in Christ. What can be in a greater degree of strangeness, except the devil's, than men's unholiness and God's pure nature? Yet the nature of man and of God being so severed before, are met together in one Christ; so that in this one word 'Emmanuel' there is heaven and earth, God and man, infinite and finite; therefore we may well prefix 'behold.'

A true Saviour of the world must be 'God with man, whether we consider the greatness of the good we are to have by a Saviour, or the greatness of the evil we are to be freed from by a Saviour, both which do enforce that he must be Emmanuel, God with us.

I. (1.) First, The greatness of the good which we are to have, for he is to be God and man together, to satisfy the wrath of God, to undergo a punishment due to sin as our surety. He must give us title to heaven, and bring us thither, and who can do this but God?

(2.) Besides, secondly, he must know our hearts, our wants, our griefs, our infirmities; he must be everywhere to relieve us; and who can do this but God?

(3.) So, thirdly, in regard of evil, which we are to be freed from. He is to defend us in the midst of our enemies; and who is above the devil, and sin, and the wrath of God, and all the oppositions that stand between us and heaven, but God? So in regard of the good, in regard of the evil, and in regard of the preservation to an eternal good estate, and freedom from eternal evil, he must be 'Emmanuel, God with us.'

These grand principles are enough to satisfy in this point.

II. And, secondly, as he must be God, so there was a necessity of his being man. Man had sinned, and man must suffer for sin, and 'without blood there was no remission,' Heb. ix. 22; and then, that he might be 'a merciful and pitiful Saviour,' Heb. ii. 17, he must take that nature on him that he meaneth to save. There must be a suitableness and sympathy; suitableness, that the head and the members, the sanctified and the sanctifier, may be both of one nature; and a sympathy, that he might be touched with human infirmities.

III. Thirdly, This God and man must be one person; for if there were two persons, God one distinct person and man another, then there were two Christs, and so the actions of the one could not be attributed to the other.

As man died and shed his blood, it could not have been said that God died; but because there was but one person, God is truly said to die, though he died in man's nature, for he took man's nature into unity with his person; and whatsoever either nature did, the whole person is said to do; and therefore Christ is a Saviour according to both natures, as God and as man; for he was to suffer, and he was to overcome, and satisfy in suffering. He was not only to hear our prayers, but to answer them. Both natures had an ingredience* into all the work of mediation.

God died, and God suffered, and supported the manhood, that it might uphold the burden of the wrath of God, that it might not sink under it.

* That is, 'entrance.'—G.

And so in all his actions there was concurrence of divinity and humanity; the meaner works being done by the manhood, the greater works by the Godhead, so making one 'Emmanuel, God with us.'

For God must bring us to heaven by a way suitable to his holiness, and therefore by way of satisfaction; and that cannot be but by God equal with himself.

And that is the reason why the apostle joins together 'without Christ, without God,' Eph. iii. 12; that is, they that know not Christ God-man, to reconcile God and man, have nothing to do with God. For the pure nature of God, what hath it to do with the impure nature of man, without Emmanuel, without him that is God-man, to make satisfaction?

But now that Christ hath taken our nature, it is become pure in him, and beloved of God in him. And God in him is become lovely, because he is our nature; yea, in Christ, God is become a Father: 'I go to your Father, and my Father,' John xiv. 28. His nature is sweet to us in Christ; our nature is sweet to him in Christ; God loveth not our nature, but first in him in whom it is pure. And then he loveth our nature in us, because, by the Spirit of Christ, he will make our natures like to Christ's; and therefore we may conceive of God as Emmanuel, God well pleased with us, and we well pleased with him. Out of Christ we are angry with God, and he angry with us. We could wish there were no God, and choose rather to submit to the devil, to be led by his spirit to all profaneness and licentiousness. We have a rising against God and his image; and whatever comes from God, the proud, unmortified heart of man swelleth against it. But when the heart once believeth that Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, hath satisfied God's justice, now, God is taken by the believing heart to be a Father 'reconciled in Jesus Christ,' 2 Cor. v. 18. And we are taught to be his sons. And our nature is more and more purified and cleansed, and made like the pure nature of Christ; and so by little and little the terms between God and us are more sweet, till we get to heaven, where our nature shall be absolutely perfect and purged by the Holy Spirit. So that he is Emmanuel, God with us, to make God and us friends, which is two ways: first, *by satisfaction*, taking away the wrath of God; and then, secondly, *by the Spirit*; for God sendeth his Spirit into our hearts, to fit us for friendship and communion with him, when we have something of God in us.

From hence many things may be spoken, partly for instruction and comfort. I will name a few.

1. First of all, it is to be wondered at, and we cannot wonder enough, though we were angels, and had natures larger than they are, *at the marvellous mercies and love of God, that would stoop so low*, as that God in the second person should take our nature and become one with us. It is marvellous love that he would be one with us by such a means as his own Son, to make peace between him and us. It is a marvellous condescending and stooping in the Son to take our nature. When there be better creatures above us, that he would let pass all above us, and take our nature, that is dust, into unity of his person; that earth, flesh and blood, should be taken into one person with the Godhead, it is wonderful and marvellous.

He took not the nature of angels; so that we be above angels, by the incarnation of Christ. Because he took not the angels' nature, they are not the spouse of Christ, but every believing Christian is the spouse of Christ. He is married to Christ; he is the head, we the members. He

is the husband, we the spouse; and therefore we may stand in admiration of the love of God, in taking our natures on him.

It requires hearts warmed by the Spirit of God to think of and admire these things answerable to their natures. The angels, when Christ was born, could not contain, but break out, 'Glory to God on high, on earth peace, good will towards men,' Luke ii. 13, 14, because there was then peace; peace between God and us, and by consequence with all the creatures, which do but take part with God and revenge his quarrel.

These things be matters of admiration; and we shall spend eternity in admiration thereof in another world, though here our narrow hearts can hardly conceive it. But what we cannot believe by understanding, as things above nature, let us labour to understand them by believing. Desire God we may believe them, and then we shall understand them to our comfort.

'Emmanuel, God with us.' If God be with us in our nature, then he is with us in his love; 'and if God be with us, who shall be against us?' Rom. viii. 31. For this Emmanuel hath taken our nature for ever; he hath taken it into heaven with him. God and we shall for ever be in good terms, because God in our nature is for ever in heaven, as an intercessor appearing for us. There is no fear of a breach now; for our Brother is in heaven, our Husband is in heaven, to preserve an everlasting union and amity between God and us. Now, we may insult* in an holy manner over all oppositions whatsoever. For if God be with us in our nature, and by consequence in favour, who shall be against us? and therefore with the apostle, 'let us triumph,' Rom. viii. 37, *seq.*

Let us make use of this Emmanuel in all troubles whatsoever, whether of the church or of our own persons. In troubles of the church; the church hath enemies, hell, and the world, and Satan's factors; but we have one, Emmanuel, God with us, and therefore we need not fear. You know whose ensign it is, whose motto, *Deus nobiscum* is better than *Sancta Maria*. *Sancta Maria* will down when *Deus nobiscum* shall stand (b).

I beseech you, therefore, let us comfort ourselves in regard of the church, as the prophet in the next chapter, verse 7, comforts the church in distress: 'He shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck: and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land,† O Emmanuel.' It may seem a kind of complaint, 'The enemy stretcheth out their wings over thy land, O Emmanuel;' which may teach us in the person of the church to go to Emmanuel: Remember the enemies of thy church spread their wings over thy land and people; O Emmanuel, thou seest the malice of the enemy, the malice of antichrist and his supporters. He is the true Michael, that stands for his church. And then in the tenth verse, 'Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.' And as the church before Christ came in the flesh, much more may we, now he is come in the flesh, insult over all. Let all the enemies consult together, this king and that power, there is a counsel in heaven will disturb and dash all their counsels. Emmanuel in heaven laugheth them to scorn. And as Luther said, 'Shall we weep and cry when God laugheth?'‡ He seeth a company of idolatrous wretches, that conspire together to root out all protestants from the earth, if it lay in their power. They that are inspired with Jesuitical spirits, the incendiaries of the world,

* That is, 'triumph.'—G.

† Cf. Vol. I. page 126.—G.

‡ In margin, 'church.'—G.

have devoured all Israel and Christendom in their hopes; but the church, which is Emmanuel's land and freehold, sees it, and laughs them to scorn. God can dash all their treacherous counsels.

And so in all personal trouble whatsoever, 'Emmanuel, God with us,' is fitted to be a merciful Saviour. He was poor, that he might be with the poor. He took not on him an impassible nature, but he took our poverty, our miserable nature. He is poor with the poor, afflicted with the afflicted, persecuted with the persecuted. He is deserted with them that be deserted: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' He suffers with them that suffer; he hath gone through all the passages of our lives. In the beginning of it he was conceived and born; and he hath gone along with us, and is able to pity and succour us in our poverty, in prison, in bonds, in disgrace, in our conflict with God, in our terror of conscience, in all our temptations and assaults by Satan. He was tempted himself by Satan, for this purpose, that Emmanuel might in all these be merciful.

Let us not lose the comforts of this sweet name, in which you have couched so many comforts. In the hour of death, when we are to die, think of Emmanuel. When Jacob was to go into Egypt, saith God, 'Fear not, Jacob; go, I will go with thee, and bring thee back again,' Gen. xlv. 3; and he did bring him back to be buried in Canaan. So fear not to die; fear not to go to the grave, Emmanuel hath been there. He will go into the grave; he will bring us out of the dust again; for 'Emmanuel' is 'God with us,' who is God over death, over sin, over the wrath of God, God over all, blessed for evermore; and hath triumphed over all. So that 'what shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?' Rom. viii. 35.

He is not only God with us in our nature, but he is God for us in heaven at all times. He is God in us by his Spirit. He is God amongst us in our meetings: 'Where two or three be gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them,' Mat. xviii. 20. He is God for us to defend us, for he is for us in earth, for us in heaven, and wheresoever we be, specially in good causes. And therefore enlarge our comforts as much as we can.

And shall not we then labour to be with him, as much as we can? All spirits that have any comfort by this Emmanuel, they are touched on by his Spirit, to have desires to be nearer and nearer to him.

How shall I know he is my Emmanuel, not only 'God with us,' but God with me? If by the same Spirit of his that sanctified his human nature, I have desires to be nearer and nearer to him, to be liker and liker to him; if I am on his side; if I be near him in my affections, desires, and understanding; if I side not against the church, nor join in opposition against the gospel; if I find inwardly a desire to be more and more with him, and like to him; if outwardly, in the place where I live, I side with him, and take part with his cause: it is a sign I have interest in him. And therefore let us labour to be more and more with Christ and with God in love and affections, in faith, in our whole inward man, because he is in us.

We must know this Emmanuel doth trust us with his cause, to speak a good word for him now and then, to speak a word for his church, and he takes it ill if we neglect him: 'Curse ye Meroz, because he came not out to help the Lord,' Judges v. 23. God trusteth us, to see if we will be on his side; and calls to us, as Jehu did, 'Who is on my side? who?'

2 Kings ix. 32. Now, if we have not a word for the church, not so much as a prayer for the church, how can we say, 'God with us,' when we are not used to speak to God by way of prayer, nor to man but by way of opposition and contestation? By this therefore examine the truth of our interest in Christ.

Those that intend to receive the communion must think, Now, I am to be near unto Christ, and to feast with him. Christ is with us in his word, in the sacrament. There is a near relation between the bread and the wine, and the body and blood of Christ. Now, the true child of God is glad of this most special presence of Christ. All true receivers come with joy to the sacrament. Oh, I shall have communion with Emmanuel, who left heaven, took my nature into a more near hypostatical union, the nearest union of all; and shall not I desire the nearest union with him again that can be possible? Oh, I am glad of the occasion, that I can hear his word, pray to him, receive the sacrament. Thus let us come with joy, that we may have communion with this Emmanuel, who hath such sweet communion with our nature, that our hearts may be as the Virgin's womb was to conceive Christ. I beseech you, enlarge these things in your meditations.

And because we know not how long we may live here, some of us be sick, and weak, and all of us may fall into danger we know not how soon, let it be our comfort that God is Emmanuel. He left heaven, and took our nature to bring us thither, where himself is. When times of dissolution come, consider, I am now going to him to heaven, that came down from thence to bring me to that eternal mansion of rest and glory. And shall not I desire an everlasting communion with him? God became man that he might make man like God, partaking of his divine nature, in grace here and glory hereafter. Shall not I go to him that suffered so much for me? Therefore saith St Paul, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' Philip. i. 23; which is the effect of Christ's prayer, 'Father,' saith he, 'my will is, that where I am they may be also,' John xvii. 24. And in this God heareth Christ, that all that believe in him shall be where Christ is, as he came down from heaven to be where we are. Lay up these things in your hearts, that so you may receive benefit by them.

NOTES.

(a) P. 110.—'Many things might be observed concerning the ordinary reading of the words.' Cf. Dr Joseph Addison Alexander, Dr Henderson, and Maurer *in loco*, for the different readings and interpretations.

(b) P. 114.—'You know whose ensign it is, whose motto, *Deus nobiscum* is better than *Sancta Maria*.' Watchwords of the English and Spaniards respectively in the war of the Armada.

MIRACLE OF MIRACLES.

(THE SECOND SERMON.)

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.—ISAIAH VII. 14.

THE occasion of these words we have heard. The church was in great distress under two mighty kings, that threatened great matters; but indeed were but two smoking firebrands, that went out of themselves. Ahaz, being a wicked king (and wickedness being always full of fears, fearful *in* trouble, though not *before* trouble, for they that be least fearful of trouble be most fearful in trouble), and God intending comfort to the church, the prophet bids him ask a sign. Ahaz, out of guiltiness of conscience and stubbornness together, would ask none. God intended to strengthen his faith, and he would not make advantage of the offer; and therefore the prophet promiseth a sign, the grand sign, the sign of all signs, the miracle of all miracles, the incarnation of the Messiah.

Doct. By the way, I beseech you let me observe this: *It is atheistical profaneness to despise any help, that God in his wisdom thinketh necessary to prop and shore* our weak faith withal.* And therefore, when many out of confidence of their own graces and parts refuse the sacrament,—God knowing better than ourselves we need it,—unless it be at one time of the year, and refuse the other ordinance of preaching, which God hath sanctified, they seem to know themselves better than God, who out of knowledge of our weakness, hath set apart these means for the strengthening of our graces. And as Ahaz, refusing God's help, provoked God by it, so these must know they shall not escape without judgment, for it is a tempting of God, and proceedeth from a bad spirit of pride and stubbornness.

How this promise of the Messiah could be a sign to them to comfort them, we spake at large. We will now deliver something by way of addition and explication.

The house of David was afraid they should be extinct by these two great enemies of the church; but, saith he, 'A virgin of the house of David shall conceive a son,' and how then can the house of David be extinct? Secondly, heaven hath said it; earth cannot disanul it. God hath said it, and all the creatures in the world cannot annihilate it. It was the promise made to Adam, when he was fallen. It run along to Abraham, and afterwards to the patriarchs; so that it must needs be so.

* That is, 'support.'—G.

It was the custom of the men of God, led by the Spirit of God, in these times, in any distress, to have recourse to the promise of the Messiah, as for other ends, so for this, to raise themselves up by an argument drawn from the greater to the less. God will give the Messiah, God will become man. 'A virgin shall conceive a son;' and therefore he will give you less mercies.

I note this by the way for this end, to teach us a sanctified manner of reasoning. Was it a strong argument before Christ's coming, the Messiah shall come, and therefore we may expect inferior blessings? And shall not we make use of the same reason, now Christ is come in the flesh, and is triumphant in heaven? 'God having given Christ, will he not give all things necessary whatsoever?' Rom. viii. 32. Shall the reasonings before Christ's coming be of more force than these be, now Christ is come, and is in glory, appearing in heaven for us.

Beloved, it should be a shame to us, that we should not have the sanctified art of reasoning, to argue from the gift of Christ, to the giving of all things needful for us.

The ground of this reason is this, All other promises, whatsoever they are, are secondary to the grand fundamental promise of Christ. All promises issue from a covenant founded in God-man. Now covenants come from love; and love is founded in the first person, loved, and the foundation of all love. Therefore, if God giveth Christ the foundation of love, and out of love makes a covenant, and as branches of the covenant giveth many promises, then, having made good the main promise of all, Jesus Christ, will he not make good all the rest? And therefore we should have often in our hearts and thoughts, the accomplishment of all promises in Christ, and from thence make use of the expectation of all inferior promises; for they issue from that love of God in Christ, which is fully manifested already.

We have spoken of the preface, 'Behold,' which is a word usually prefixed before all the passages of Christ; his birth, his resurrection, his coming again. And great reason.

For what do we usually behold with earnestness? Rare things, new things, great things, especially if they be great to admiration, and that concern us nearly; useful things, especially if they be present. And is any thing rarer than that, 'A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son'? Then the incarnation of Christ. Never was the like in nature, never the like in heaven or earth, that God and man should be in one person. It is a rare thing, a new thing, it is great to wonderment; and therefore in the ninth chapter of this prophecy, 'His name shall be called Wonderful,' Isa. ix. 6, as in many other respects, so wonderful in his conception and birth.

And then all is for us. 'To us a child is born, to us a Son is given,' in the same chapter. For us, and for us men, he came down from heaven. And then to the eye of faith all these things are present. Faith knoweth no difference of time.

Christ is present to the eye of faith now. We see him sacrificed in the sacrament and in the word. Faith knoweth no distance of place, as well as no distance of time. We see him in heaven, as St Stephen, sitting at the right hand of God for the good of his church, Acts vii. 56; and therefore 'behold.'

If ever any thing were, or shall be great, from the beginning of the world to eternity, this is great, this is wonderful. And if any thing in the world be fit for us; and if any thing dignifieth the soul, and raiseth the soul above itself, it is this wonderful object.

We, out of our weakness, wonder at poor petty things, as the disciples at the building of the temple, 'What stones are these?' Mat. xiii. 1. We wonder at the greatness of birth and place, but, alas! what is fit for the soul, being a large and capable thing, to stand in admiration of? Here is that that transcendeth admiration itself. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive a son;' and therefore attend to the great matter in hand. This I thought good to add to what I formerly delivered in that particular.

'A virgin shall conceive a son,' &c.

You need not go farther than the text for wonders; for here are two great ones, a virgin a mother, and God man.

So in the words you have the *conception* and the *birth of Christ*, his human nature, his divine nature and his office, to reconcile God and us in one.

As he is God in our nature—he took our nature into communion of person—so his office is to bring God and man together; his two natures is to fit him for his office. God and man were as much distant terms as could be, unless between the devil and God. And therefore God-man in one person must perform the great office of bringing such as were in such opposite terms together.

Of his conception by the Virgin Mary we spake sufficiently, only we will add this for further explication. A further type of this was in the birth of Isaac. Isaac; you know, was born of a dead womb. Christ was conceived of a virgin, and in a manner far more improbable than the other. Isaac was the 'son of the promise,' Christ was 'the promised seed,' both in some sort miraculously born; for indeed it was a true wonder that Isaac should be born of a dead womb, and here that a virgin should conceive. Sarah had nothing to supply moisture and juice to the fruit; and so here was nothing of a man to further Christ's conception.

I will shew why there must be this kind of conception of Christ, which will help our faith exceedingly.

1. First, Christ must be *without all sin of necessity*; for else when he took our nature, stubble and fire had joined together. 'God is a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29;' and therefore the nature must be purified and sanctified by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin.

2. And then again, in the conception, there must be a *foundation of all obedience*, active and passive, and of all that was afterwards excellent in Christ. If there had been any blemish in the foundation, which was his conception, if he had not been pure, there had been defect in all that issued from him, his active obedience and passive obedience, for every thing savours of the principle from whence it cometh. And therefore it was God's great work in this strange conception, that sin might be stopped in the root and beginning; nature might be sanctified in the foundation of it. And so that he might pursue sin from the beginning to the end, both in his life, by living without sin, and also in his death, by making satisfaction for sin.

And therefore ground our faith on this, *that our salvation* is laid on one that is mighty, God-man, and on one that is pure and holy. And therefore in his obedience active, holy; and in his obedience passive, holy.

Again, He came to be a surety for us; and therefore he must pay our whole debt, he must pay the debt of obedience; he must pay the debt of punishment. Now obedience must come from a pure nature, and his death must extend to the satisfying of an infinite justice. And therefore he must be conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of a pure virgin.

And we must know that in this conception of Christ there were two or three things wherein there was a main difference between Christ and us.

(1.) Christ was in his human nature altogether *without sin*. We are sinful in our nature.

(2.) Again, Christ's human nature *had always subsistence in the divine*, and it was never out of the divine nature. As soon as his body and soul were united, it was the body and soul of God. Now our natures are not so.

(3.) And then *in manner of propagation*. His was extraordinary altogether. Adam was of the earth, neither of man, nor woman; Eve of man, without a woman; all other of Adam and Eve; Christ of a virgin, and without a man. But setting aside his subsistence in the second person, and extraordinary means of propagation, Christ and we are all one; he had a true human body and soul, and all things like ourselves, sin and the former differences excepted.

Why Christ must be man we have already heard. He became man to be suitable to us in our nature, and to sympathise in all our troubles.

And shall call his name Immanuel. 'He shall call his name Immanuel,' saith the New Testament, Mat. i. 23. That is, he shall be Immanuel indeed, and shall be known to be, and published to be so. Whatsoever hath a name is apparent.* Christ was before he took our flesh; but he was not called Emmanuel. It did not openly appear that he was God in our nature; he was not conceived in the womb of a virgin. They before Christ, knew that he should come, but when he was conceived and born, he was then called Emmanuel.

There were divers presences of Christ before he came. He was in the 'bush' as a sign of his presence. He was in the 'ark' as a sign of his presence. He was in the prophets and kings as a type of his presence. He took upon him the shape of a man as a representation of his presence, when he talked with Abraham and the patriarchs. But all this was not 'God with us,' in our nature. He took it on him for a time, and laid it aside again. But when he was Emmanuel, and was called and declared so to be, he took on him our nature, never to lay it aside again. He was born in our nature, brought forth in our nature, lived in our nature, died in our nature, was crucified in our nature, became a curse for us in our nature, buried in our nature, rose in our nature, is in heaven in our nature, and for ever will abide there in our nature.

All their faith before he came in the flesh was in confidence that he should take our flesh in the fulness of time. Now came the time when he was called Immanuel; and then the word became flesh and took our nature on him.

From hence, that God took our nature on him in the second person, come divers things considerable.

(1.) For, first, it appears *that he hath dignified and raised our nature above angels*, because he hath taken the seed of Abraham and not of the angels;—a wonderful advancement of our nature, for God to be with us, to marry such a poor nature as ours is; for the great God of heaven and earth to take dust into the unity of his person. If this may not have a 'behold' before it, I know not what may.

(2.) To join altogether. For the great God of heaven and earth, before whom the angels cover their faces, the mountains tremble, and the earth quakes, to take our flesh and dust into unity of his person, and for such

* That is, 'manifested' (?).—G.

ends, to save sinful man, and from such misery as eternal misery, from such great enemies, and then to advance him to such great happiness as we are advanced, to take Christ, Emmanuel, in the whole passage of his mediation, and there is ground of admiration indeed.

(3.) But consider it specially *in the raising and advancing of our natures to be one with God*. Shall God be God* with us in our nature in heaven, and shall we defile our natures that God hath so dignified? Shall we live like beasts, whom God hath raised above angels? Let swearers, beastly persons, and profane hypocrites, either alter their courses, or else say they believe not these truths. Shall a man believe God hath taken his nature into unity of his person, and hath raised it above all angels, and can he turn beast, yea, devil incarnate, in opposition of Christ and his cause? What a shame is this! Can this be where these things are believed? A Christian should have high thoughts of himself. What! shall I defile the nature that God hath taken into unity of his person?

(4.) And as he hath dignified, and raised, and advanced our nature so highly, so likewise *he hath infused and put all the riches of grace into our nature*; for all grace is in Christ that a finite nature can be capable of, for Christ is nearest the fountain. Now, the human nature being so near the fountain of all good, that is, God, it must needs be as rich as nature can possibly be capable of. And is not this for our good? Are not all his riches for our use?

And therefore seeing our nature is dignified by Emmanuel, and enriched exceedingly by his graces next to infinite—for our human nature is not turned to God as some are conceited; it is not deified, and so made infinite—yet as much as the creature can be capable of there is in Christ-man, and so shall we defile that nature?

(5.) And from hence, that our nature *is engrafted into the Godhead*, it followeth, that what was done in our nature was of wonderful extension, force, and dignity; because it was done when our nature was knit to the Godhead, and therefore it maketh up all objections. As,

How could the death of one man satisfy for the deaths of many millions?

Secondly, It was the death of Christ, whose human nature was engrafted into the second person of the Trinity. For, because they were but one person, whatsoever the human nature did or suffered, God did it. If they had been two persons, God had not died, God had not suffered, God had not redeemed his church.

And therefore the scripture runneth comfortably on this: ‘God hath redeemed the church with his own blood,’ 1 Peter i. 18. Hath God blood? No. But the nature that God took into unity of persons hath blood; and so being one person with God, God shed his blood. It is God that purchased a church with his blood. It is God that died. The Virgin Mary was mother of God, because she is the mother of that nature which was taken into unity with God.

Hereupon comes the dignity of whatsoever Christ did and suffered. Though he did it in our nature, yet the Godhead gave it its worth, and not only worth, but God put some activity, some vigour, and force into all that Christ did. It doth advance Christ Mediator according to both natures. And from hence ariseth communication of properties, as divines call it, which I will not now speak of. It is sufficient to see that whatsoever was done by Christ was done by God, he being Emmanuel, and therefore had

* Qu. ‘one’?—Ed.

its worth and dignity to prevail with God. Hence cometh a forcible reason, that God must satisfy divine justice, because it was the action of a God-man. His great sufferings were the sufferings of the second person in our nature. And hereupon from satisfaction and merit comes reconciliation between God and us. God being satisfied by Christ, God and we are at terms of peace. Our peace is well founded if it be founded in God the Father, by God the Son taking our nature into unity of his person. These things must have influence into our comforts and into our lives and conversations, being the grand articles of faith. And therefore we ought to think often of them. We must fetch principles of comfort and holiness from hence, as from the greatest arguments that can be. Therefore I desire to be punctual* in them. God is Emmanuel, especially to make God and us one. Christ is our friend in taking our nature to make God and us friends again.

Quest. But how doth friendship between God and us arise from hence, that Christ is God in our nature? I will give two or three reasons of it.

(1.) First, It is good reason that God should be at peace with us, because *sin, the cause of division, is taken away*. It is sin that separateth between God and us, and if sin be taken away, God is mercy itself, and mercy will have a current. What stoppeth mercy but sin? Secondly, take away sin, it runneth amain. Christ therefore became Emmanuel, God with us, because 'He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.'

Before Adam had sinned there was sweet agreement and communion between Adam and God, but sin, that divided between God and the creature. Now Christ having made satisfaction for all our sins, there can be nothing but mercy.

(2.) Again, Christ is a fit person to knit God and us together, *because our nature is pure in Christ*, and therefore in Christ God loveth us. After satisfaction God looks on our nature in Christ, and seeth it pure in him. Christ is the glory of our nature. Now if our nature be pure in our head, which is the glory of our nature, God is reconciled to us, and loveth us in him that is pure, out of whom God cannot love us.

As Christ is pure, and our nature in him, so he will make us pure at length.

(3.) Thirdly, Christ being our head of influence, *conveyeth the same Spirit that is in him to all his members*, and by little and little by that Spirit purgeth his church, and maketh her fit for communion with himself, for he maketh us 'partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4. He took our frail human nature, that we might partake of his divine nature; that is, of his divine qualities, to be holy, pure, humble, and obedient as he was.

And thus Christ being a head, not only of eminence to rule and govern, but of influence to flow by his Spirit into all his members, is fit to be a reconciler, to bring God and us together, partly because our nature is in him, and partly because he doth communicate the same Spirit to us that is in himself, and by little and little maketh us holy like himself.

I hasten to the main use of all.

(4.) Then God the Father and we are in good terms, *for the second person is God in our nature for this end, to make God and us friends*. There is a notable place of Scripture which I note for the expression's sake, he speaking there of a 'day's-man': 'There is no day's-man between us, that might lay his hand on us both,' Job ix. 33; that is, a middle person to lay his hand on the one and the other. Now Christ is the middle person, as the

* That is, 'exact,' 'accurate.'—G.

second person in the Trinity. And then he is God and man, and therefore he is fit to be mediator, to lay his hand on both sides, on man as man, on God as God. And Christ is a friend to both, to God as to God,* and to man as man, and therefore he is fit to be an umpire, to be a day's-man, to be a mediator. And he hath done it to purpose, making that good in heaven that he did on earth. And therefore labour to make a gracious use of all this. I know nothing in the world more useful, no point of divinity more pregnant, no greater spring of sanctifying duty, than that God and man were one, to make God and us one. He married our nature, that he might marry our persons.

Use 1. And if it be so that God and man are brought to terms of reconciliation on such a foundation as God-man, then ought *not we to improve this comfort?* Have we such a foundation of comfort, and shall not we make use of it? Shall we have wisdom in the things of this world, and not make use of the grand comforts that concern our souls?

Use 2. But how shall *we improve it?* In all our necessities and wants go to God. How? Through Christ, God-man, who is in heaven making intercession and appearing for us by virtue of his satisfaction made on earth, and therefore we may go boldly to the throne of grace to God, being reconciled by God. God hath God at his right hand, appearing for us, and shall we be afraid to go to the throne of grace? When we want strength, comforts, or anything, go to God, in the mediation of Emmanuel, and then God can deny nothing to us that we ask with the spirit of faith in the name of Christ.

I beseech you, therefore, let this be the main use, continually to improve the gracious privileges we have by Emmanuel. Our nature is now acceptable to God in Christ, because he hath purified it in himself, and God's nature is lovely to us, because he hath taken our nature. If God loved his own Son, he will love our nature as joined to his Son, and God's nature is lovely to us. He took our flesh upon him, and made himself bone of our bone. And shall not we like and affect that which was so graciously procured by Emmanuel.

Consider of it, and let it be ground of reverent and bold prayer, in all our wants to go to God in Emmanuel.

Use 3. Let us make use of it likewise in behalf of the church. The church is 'Emmanuel's land,' as ye have it in the next chapter: verse 8, 'The stretching out of his wings shall be the breadth of thy land, O Emmanuel.' The church of the Jews was Emmanuel's land, but then it was impaled within the pale of the Jews. But now the Gentiles are taken in. The church is scattered and spread abroad over the whole earth. And therefore go to God in behalf of the church. Thou tookest our nature into unity of thy person, that thou mightest be a gracious and a merciful head. And therefore look in mercy on thine own mystical body, the church. They, before Christ came in the flesh, who had the spirit of faith, knew the church of the Jews could not be extinct, because Emmanuel was to come of it.

And we may know the church shall never be destroyed till the second coming of Christ, because those things are not yet performed that God hath promised, and must be performed. And therefore we may go as boldly to Christ, and spread the cause of the church before him now, as they spread the cause of the Jews before him then; look upon thy land, look upon thy church, O Emmanuel.

* Qu. 'as God'?—ED.

That there must be a church we must believe, and we cannot believe a *non ens*. We must have ground for our faith, and therefore never fear that heresy shall overspread the face of the church, 'Emmanuel's land' shall be preserved by some way or other, though not perhaps by the way we expect. God must have a church to the end of the world. The gospel must get ground. Antichrist must fall. God hath said it, and man cannot unsay it. And therefore in all estates of the church spread its cause before Emmanuel.

When Emmanuel came once, the church of the Jews wasted. Therefore, if you will have good arguments against the Jews, this is a good one to convince them, that Christ is come in the flesh. The church of the Jews was to continue till Emmanuel, but the church of the Jews hath ceased to continue, and is now no church. There is now no family of David, and therefore Emmanuel is come.

And for a further use, let us have thoughts of the second coming of Emmanuel, as they had thoughts of the first. Christ was called the consolation of Israel at his first coming, and in the New Testament it is everywhere expressed a sign of a gracious man to look for the appearing of Jesus Christ, and to love it. Now let us comfort ourselves that this Emmanuel will appear in our flesh ere long; let us wait for the 'consolation of Israel.' Emmanuel came down to us, to take our nature upon him, and to satisfy God's wrath, that he might take us to heaven with himself, and that we might be for ever with him in glory. And therefore let us, if we would make a true use of Emmanuel, desire to be with him. Christ delighted, before he came in the flesh, to be with the sons of men, and he is with us now by his Spirit, and so will be with his church to the end of the world; and shall not we be with him as much as we may? Indeed, he loved our nature so much, that he descended from the height of majesty to take our misery and business* upon him, and shall not we desire to be with him in glory?

There be divers evidences whether we have any ground of comfort in this Emmanuel or no. This shall be one.

(1.) We may know we have benefit by the first coming of Emmanuel, *if we have a serious desire of the second coming, if we have a desire to be with him*; if, as he came to us in love, we have desires to be with him in his ordinances as much as may be, and in humble resignation at the hour of death. How shall we be with him here? Be with him in thoughts, in meditation, in faith and prayer; meet with him wheresoever he is. He is in the congregation: 'Where two or three are gathered together in his name,' he is amongst them, Mat. xviii. 20. Be with them in all things where he vouchsafeth his gracious presence. It is the nature of love to desire perfect union, and therefore the Christian soul, touched with the Spirit of God, will desire 'to be dissolved and to be with Christ, as best of all,' Philip. i. 23; 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 20; and therefore in the hour of death is willing to resign himself to God that he may go to Emmanuel, and enjoy his presence, that left the presence of his Father, to take our nature, and to be with us on earth.

(2.) But the main thing I desire you to observe, *is matter of comfort from this Emmanuel*, that now he having taken our nature upon him, that he might take our persons into unity of his mystical body, we might have comfort in all conditions. For he took our nature upon him, besides his other ends, that he might take our persons to make up mystical Christ.

Qu. 'baseness'?—ED.

He married our nature to marry our persons. And therefore if he did it for this end, that we might be near him as our nature is near him, shall not we make it a ground of comfort, that our persons shall be near Christ as well as our natures?

As Christ hath two natures in one person, so many persons make up one mystical Christ, so that our persons are wonderfully near to Christ. The wife is not near* the husband, the members are not nearer the head, the building is not nearer the foundation, than Christ and his church are. And therefore comfort ourselves in this; Christ is Emmanuel, God with us in our nature. And will he suffer his church to want, that he hath taken so near to himself? Can the members want influence when the head hath it? Can the wife be poor when the husband is rich? Whatsoever Christ did to his own body, to his human nature taken into the unity of his person, that he will do in some proportion to his mystical body.

I will shew you some particulars. He sanctified his natural body by the Holy Ghost, and he will sanctify us by the same Spirit. For there is the same Spirit in head and members. He loveth his natural body, and so as never to lay it aside to eternity. And loveth his mystical body now in some sort more, for he gave his natural body to death for his mystical body. And therefore, as he will never lay aside his natural body, he will never lay aside his church, nor any member of his church. For with the same love that he loved his natural body he loveth now his mystical members. As he rose to glory in his natural body, and ascended to heaven, so he will raise his mystical body, that it shall ascend as he ascended. I beseech you, therefore, consider what a ground of comfort this is. God took our nature on him, besides the grand end of satisfaction, that he might make us like himself in glory, that he might draw us near to himself. And therefore now Christ being in heaven, having commission and authority over all things put into his hand; he 'having a name above all names in heaven and earth, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,' Philip. ii. 10, 11; that is, every subjection should be given; will he suffer any member of his body to suffer more than he thinks fit? No; seeing he is in heaven and glory, for his church's good. For all that he hath done and suffered is for the church and the church's use.

To conclude all, let us consider what we are. Let not a Christian be base-minded. Let him not be dastardly in any cause that is good, or God's. Let him be on God's side. Who is on his side? A Christian is an impregnable person. He is a person that can never be conquered. Emmanuel became man to make the church and every Christian to be one with him. Christ's nature is out of danger of all that is hurtful. The sun shall not shine, the wind shall not blow, to the church's hurt. For the church's head ruleth over all things, and hath all things in subjection. Angels in heaven, men on earth, devils in hell, all bow to Christ. And shall anything befall them that he loveth, unless for their greater good? Therefore though they may kill a Christian and imprison him, yet hurt him they cannot. 'If God be on our side, who can be against us?' Rom. viii. 30. But God is on our side, and on what grounds? God-man hath procured him to be our friend, he hath satisfied God, and therefore if we believe, we be one with Christ, and so one with God.

We have many against us. The devils are against us, the world is against us, to take away the favour of God, to hinder access to him in prayer, to stop the church's communion with God, and hinder the sweet

* Qu. 'nearer'?—Ed.

issue of all things that befall us as far as they can.' But their malice is greater than their power. If God should let them loose, and give the chain into their own hand, though they seem to hurt, yet hurt they cannot in the issue. And shall not we make use of these things in times of distress? Wherefore serve they but to comfort us in all conflicts with Satan, and in all doubtings that arise from our sinful hearts? Answer with this, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' If any be against us, name them; if not, be satisfied. And therefore come life, come death, Christ is our surety. He layeth up our dust, keepeth our acts* in the grave; and will Christ lose any member? 'Fear not, Jacob, to go down into Egypt, for I will bring thee back again.' So fear not to go down into the grave. The Spirit of God will watch over our dust, and bring us to heaven. Therefore fear nothing. God will be with us in life and death, yea, for ever; and we shall be for ever with the Lord, as the apostle saith in the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. iv. 17. And that issue of all that Emmanuel hath done, Christ was one in our nature, that he might bring God and us into favour, that we may be for ever with him in heaven, that we may be for ever with the Lord, which is the accomplishment of all the promises.

* Qu. 'bodies'?—ED.