

2. Part with all for him, as the wise merchant, who sold all that he had, and bought the one pearl of great price, Matth. xiii. 44, 45. Give up with your lusts and idols; renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, resting on Christ for all, for time and eternity.

3. Dwell in the contemplation of his matchless excellencies. Let it be the substance of your religion to love him, to admire him, to be swallowed up in his love. And let love to him set your souls a-moving in all holy obedience.

MOTIVE 1. Ye can never bestow your hearts so well. What is all the world in comparison of Christ, but loss and dung? Alas! that shadows should have our hearts, while the most substantial good courts it.

MOTIVE 2. Consider that it is for this end Christ is commended to you. We preach Christ, that ye may fall in love with him.

MOTIVE 3. *Lastly*, Consider how ye will answer it to him before the tribunal, that ye have preferred other lovers to the lovely one.

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#### CHRIST THE COUNSELLOR.

ISAIAH ix. 6,

*His Name shall be called—Counsellor.*

THE scope of this part of the verse being to commend the Prince presented and given to us for our Prince and Governor, this syllable of his name refers to his singular capacity for management of matters, in respect of his vast reach in point of wisdom. Other princes must have their counsellors, by whose advice they may act: but he himself is, and shews himself to be Counsellor, an oracle of government, a Prince in whose own breast is the oracle for right management of all things relating to his dominion.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ, who is presented and given to us of the Father for our Prince, is and shews himself to be the great Counsellor, an oracle of government.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. In what respects Christ is the Counsellor.

II. What is the import of this part of his name.

III. *Lastly*, Improve the subject.

I. In what respects is Christ the Counsellor.

1st, He is of the secret council of Heaven; Zech. vi. 13, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." He is a member of

the cabinet-council of Heaven, to which the most favourite angel is not admitted. He has access to the sealed book of the divine decrees; Rev. v. 5; and there is nothing transacted there, nor has been from eternity, but what he is acquainted with; John v. 20, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth." With his Father and the Spirit he is of the council.

2dly, He is the oracle of counsel for the earth; John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Matth. xi. 27, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Many counsellors are to be found in the earth; and wicked counsellors for men's destruction, as the house of Ahab were counsellors to Ahaziah, King of Judah, to his destruction, 2 Chron. xxii. 4. But he is the Counsellor for salvation, outshining all other good counsellors, as the sun doth the twinkling stars. And,

1. He is the Counsellor of the world of men; John viii. 12, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." They have all lost their way, their affairs are all in confusion, they know not how to right them. But he is,

(1.) Their Counsellor in respect of office. As the sun is set in the firmament to give light on the earth, so is Christ given for a light to the world, that whosoever will, may have his counsel, and by his counsel get the affairs of their souls retrieved; John xii. 46, "I am, come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." Whoever will consult him, are welcome; none shall be refused his wise counsel; John vi. 37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

(2.) Their Counsellor in respect of capacity, Col. ii. 3, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The multitude and variety of their cases cannot confuse him; for his understanding is infinite. Nothing can perplex him, who with one glance of his piercing eye, sees at once through all cases of all men, and can prescribe suitable remedies.

2. He is the Counsellor of the visible church more especially, Micah iv 9, and that in two respects.

(1.) He consults her interest, for her protection and preservation in the world; Micah iv. 9, "Why dost thou cry out aloud; is there no king in the; is thy counsellor perished." There are constant conspiracies of devils and wicked men to ruin her; and oftentimes their plots are laid so subtilly, and so powerfully managed, as that

the church is brought to the brink of ruin ; but he, as her Counsellor, discovers the snare, and powerfully counteracts her enemies ; so that she is still preserved. A remarkable instance of which we have in the conspiracy of Haman to destroy the whole nation of the Jews, the history of which you may read in the book of Esther.

(2.) He is still actually counselling her by his word. And her members have the advantage of Heaven's counsels, inculcated on them for their spiritual welfare. The counsel of God in providing a Saviour, is proclaimed there ; the salvation is offered, and they are counselled again and again to embrace it ; their way to happiness is cleared ; Rev. iii. 18, " I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see."

3. He is the Counsellor of the invisible church, of believers, and of every particular believer in it, Eph. i. 22, and that most especially. And,

(1.) The care and management of all and every one of them lies on him ; 1 Peter. v. 7, " Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." He is the great Shepherd who brings in the sheep from their straying, feeds and protects them, and at length completes the well-being. To him the Father has committed the charge of all the elect ; and on him it lies to bring them into himself in conversion, to manage them during their stay in the world, and to bring them all safe to glory in the end.

(2.) He counsels them effectually, by his word and Spirit, Psalm xxv. 14, " The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." He has established a communication between him and them, whereby they have his direction and instruction in their particular cases, what way to steer their course. Prov. iii. 6, " In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." He is their oracle, whom they are to consult in all things ; and his word bears his counsel to them ; Psalm cxix. 24, " Thy testimonies also are my counsellors ;" his providence points out their way ; Psalm xxxii. 8, " I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go ; I will guide thee with mine eye ;" and his Spirit makes all effectual ; John xvi. 13, " When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

II. What is the import of this part of Christ's name ? We may take it up in these seven particulars following.

*First*, He is of singular wisdom for conduct and management of affairs, Isa. xi. 2, 3, " The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and

might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord ; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." Great is the truth committed to him, in bringing an elect world to glory ; but he has a head sufficient for the difficult task, which would be too hard for the skill of angels to manage. Nothing can be so intricate for him, but his wisdom can unfold it. For,

1. The fulness of the Spirit of wisdom is lodged in him, to fit him for the great trust of bringing many sons to glory, Isa. xi. 2, fore-cited ; and that not by measure, as saints have the same ; but without measure, to fit him for every emergency in the case of his trust ; so that he can never be at a loss to know what to do ; John iii. 34, " For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him ;" being furnished with wisdom, as the spring with waters continually.

2. He is wisdom itself, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father ; under which name Solomon speaks of him, Prov. viii. And Christ's children are wisdom's children, Matth. xi. 19.

USE. 1. How fit and suitable is Christ for us then, to conduct us through an evil world, to the place of perfect safety ? We live in a deceitful world, where we are environed with snares ; how will we ever make our way through it ? Let us betake ourselves then to the great Counsellor for conduct, the deceit of the world prompting us to go to him.

2. Put your case in his hand, and trust him with it, how intricate and perplexed soever it is. Though you cannot give a name to it, he can ; though you can find no remedy for it in the whole creation ; but all says, " It is not in me ;" the wisdom of the Counsellor will reach it.

3. See how weak and foolish things fall on and keep the way to happiness, while worldly wise men are bemisted and bewildered, that they never reach it, Isa. xxv. 8, " And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those ; the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein." The Counsellor is on their head, ver. 4 ; while those slighting him lean to their own understanding, and so wander ; Eccles. x. 15, " The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

*Secondly*, He is a prince of great and noble designs and projects, requiring counsel and wisdom. All the designs and projects of the princes of the earth are but trifles, and childish in comparison of his ; they are quite too high for creatures of the deepest reach, 1 Cor. ii. 9. We may take them up in these three.

1. He entertained, and has accomplished a design of ransoming an elect world, and so became their Redeemer; 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." This was such a high design, that no man whatsoever was able to have fallen on a method of ransoming one of them; Psalm xlix. 7, 8, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." Silver and gold could not effect it; it behoved to be by blood; that blood behoved to be of infinite value. So the great Counsellor falls on a method to effect it, his own incarnation; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without blemish and without spot."

2. He has been, and is on a project of rescuing one and all of them from the power of the devil; John x. 16, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." This is a difficult task; all the wit and power of hell is engaged against it; and what is favourable on Satan's side, is, that he is in possession; they are his captives, prisoners and slaves; and they themselves side with him against Christ, being unwilling to be rescued. Yet the Counsellor will not give over the project; but as he has hitherto, so he will to the end carry it on, till there is not one of them all left unrescued; John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

3. He is on a design to have them all together at home with himself in his Father's house, in a state of complete happiness, John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." There are mountains of difficulties lying in the way of this project; but the wisdom of the Counsellor will find a way to roll them all away. This is the building of the temple of the Lord which he has in view, Zech. vi. 12; and will perfect over the belly of all difficulties; Zech. iv. 7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." For effecting this, there are to be rolled away mountains of difficulties casting up in their case.

(1.) Before death. Their passage through the wilderness is difficult, through their manifold wants, weaknesses, snares and tempta-

tions there, that if they were not under the wise conduct of the great Counsellor, it would be impossible they could miss their carcasses falling there; but he will have all safe through; Psalm lxxiii. 24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

(2.) In death. It is hard to get safe through the dark valley; but he will have them safe there, where many split, and are broken in pieces. Be the voyage never so dangerous, he will be their pilot; Psalm xxiii. 4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Be the way never so much haunted by instruments of destruction, he will carry them safely through; Isa. xxxv. 9, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there."

(3.) In the grave. There their bodies lie, when they leave this world, under the power of death. The bands of death wherewith they are held there, are mighty; the bars of the grave cannot be broken in sunder by created power; but he designs to loose the one, and break the other; Hos. xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

USE 1. Let us then, each for himself, fall in with the noble and great designs of this prince. Satan, the prince of this world, is carrying on designs of destruction; and men fall in with his designs, pursuing their worldly interest as their chief interest, and going on impenitent in their sins. Christ's designs are designs of salvation; fall in with these, seeking chiefly the advancing of your eternal interest, Matth. vi. 33, repenting, and turning every one from his evil way.

2. Let us be concerned for the prospering of his counsels; Psalm lxxii. 15, "Prayer shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised." Compare Matth. vi. 10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Satan and his agents are engaged against them, and counteract them all they can; stand not unconcerned spectators; for neutrals in this case are enemies to Christ; Matth. xii. 30, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Rejoice in the prospering of his kingdom, and mourn for the dishonours done to him.

3. They that reject and oppose his counsels, are fools, and do it to their own loss and hurt; Luke vii. 30. For all his counsels are

great and noble ; and whose set themselves against them, work for their own ruin ; Prov. viii. 36, " He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul ; all they that hate me, love death." They must perish without remedy, rejecting the counsels of salvation.

*Thirdly*, He can manage all by himself, and needs no counsel of men, the name of the wisest on earth, may be *Consultor* ; the wisest of men says so ; Prov. xi. 14, " Where no counsel is, the people fall ; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." But his name is counsellor. He is so far a Counsellor, that he is a *Consultor* of none ; Rom. xi. 34, " For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor ?" His servants are about his throne, but not to pretend to give him counsel. Consider,

1. His understanding is infinite. He sees all things at once, and he sees through every thing ; whereas the creature's capacity is but finite, seeing but some things, and but some parts of them too. There can then be no lack of counsel in him ; and if there were, we would be utterly unfit to make it up. Can the light of a small candle increase the light of the shining sun, or a drop from one's finger the waters of the ocean ? Far less can finite add to what is infinite.

2. His counsels were all concerted before we had a being. The plan and method of his government, in every part, was laid down immutably, before there was a man or angel. He hath not councils of yesterday, wherein we might give advice ; but " known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts xv. 18. The elect were chosen to the kingdom from eternity, Eph. i. 4 ; and the kingdom prepared for them, Matth. xxv. 34 ; and all the dispensations of his providence immutably laid down, Zech. vi. 1.

3. The execution of them was begun entirely without us. What a sweet surprise was the conduct of the great Counsellor to our guilty first parents in paradise ? Did he consult with the guilty pair, how to remedy their case ? No ; but he surprised them with his counsel. He made us without us at first ; and he re-makes us, not only without us, but over the belly of opposition from us, therefore he can manage us without us, both in nature and grace.

4. How often have we seen, that our counsels, had they been mixed with those of the great Counsellor, would have marred all ? David would have the child to live, but the great Counsellor would have him to die ; for had he lived, he had lived to the reproach of David. Jacob says, " All these things were against him ;" yet were they for him ; so that if they had not taken place, his family had been in ill case.

USE 1. Let us therefore wholly resign the disposal of our lot to Jesus Christ the great Counsellor; Psalm xlvii. 4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." Let us not carve for ourselves, but leave that to him; believing that to be best for us, which he sees best. First commit your souls to him for eternal salvation, and then put a blank into his hand as to all other concerns. If we are his children, let our Father dispose of us; if his subjects, let our King rule us. "The Father has committed all judgment to the Son," John v. 22. Let not us refuse for our part.

2. Let us wait on him patiently in the way of his dispensation towards ourselves, and towards the church; Isa. xxvi. 8. The church of God, and the interest of religion, are at a very low pass at this day; we are rowed into deep waters, from which no human skill can row us out again. But Christ is the great Counsellor; let him alone; he will see to his own work, and will awake as a giant refreshed with wine. Are we in depths of affliction, trials, and difficulties? The storm is never so boisterous, nor the passage so hazardous, as the pilot Christ needs to call a council what to do.

3. Let us beware of murmuring and fretting at, and quarrelling his conduct. There may be pieces of it which we cannot account for; but there is nothing in it that is wrong, Dent. xxxii. 4. Though we cannot see how all is well that he does, let us believe that he does all well, Jer. xii. 1. Murmuring is a charging of the great Counsellor foolishly, as if he were not wise enough for to manage us; and that we might pretend to direct him. Remember his name, and be silent, and satisfied in all his disposals.

*Fourthly,* His manner of conduct, and method of management, is deep and uncommon. Solomon tells us, that "counsel in the heart of man is like deep waters," Prov. xx. 5. Christ's name is Counsellor, pointing out his counsels as great deeps; and so they are; Psalm xcii. 5, "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." The contrivances of the greatest wits among men, are but thin and shallow, in comparison of the way of the great Counsellor; Psalm lxxvii. 19, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

1. It is not easily seen into. His way in his conduct of matters is truly mysterious; there is need of wisdom to discern it; Psalm cvii. 43, and carnal wisdom will not do it; 1 Cor. ii. 14, "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they

are spiritually discerned." Earthly princes have their secrets of government; and therefore no wonder that Christ has his secrets of government, who is the great Counsellor. It is such a deep, and so hard to be seen into, that,

(1.) Carnal, unrenewed men make wretched blunders about it, and quite mistake it. They cannot at all see into the mystery; it is as a parable to them that they cannot understand, Mark iv. 11. They are none of the king's friends, and they cannot penetrate into his counsels, nor find out his designs, in his dispensations; Psalm xcii. 5—7, "O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." Yea, they quite mistake the matter to their own destruction; Mal. iii. 14, 15, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness, are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Hos. xiv. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

(2.) Even the godly themselves are often mightily puzzled and perplexed about it, they know not what to make of it. How was Asaph plunged in the case of the prosperity of the wicked, and adversity of the godly? He was brought to the borders of Atheism by it. And there was no recovering, till he gave over looking with the eye of carnal wisdom, and looked with the eye of faith, Psalm lxxiii. 12, &c.

2. His manner of conduct, and method of management, is not to be seen through while we are here, by any whatsoever; Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Even those who see into his conduct, cannot see through it. There are many plies of the manifold wisdom of God that they cannot unfold; but will remain hid till the light of glory do discover them. By faith we may see so far as to say, "He does all things well." But when the whole web of providence being out out, is laid before the saints in the light of the upper house, they will doubtless discern a great deal of beauties therein, which they do not now see. For a swatch of these depths, you may take these.

1. Things let go on to the utmost point of hopelessness, before a

hand is put to, to work the delivery. This is not the manner of men, whose maxim is, to withstand the beginnings, before the disease grows desperate :

*Principiis obeta : sero medicina paratur,  
Cum longa per moras invaluerit mala.*

But nothing is more ordinary in the conduct of the great counsellor, than to let things go on to the utmost extremity, and then to take the opportunity; Deut. xxxii. 36, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." The chief thing in the dispensation was about himself; before he was delivered, he was dead, and buried, the stone sealed, the watch set, he lying still so long in the grave; and after that pattern, the greatest deliverances his church or any believer gets, is wrought, as in the case of Joseph.

2. The prince's friends treated like enemies, and his enemies treated like friends. Solomon observes it; Eccl. viii. 14, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." This is not the way of men neither, to caress their enemies, and heap favours on them; and to pinch, and lay their hand heavy on their friends. But this is one of the counsellor's depths of management. The ungrateful butler is at court in favour, but Joseph in the dungeon; waters of a full cup wrung out to the ungodly, but godly Asaph plagued every day; Herodias dancing and making merry, but John Baptist's head struck off in a prison.

3. The most unlikely instruments and means chosen, and the most promising laid by. This is not the way of men neither, who choose what bids fairest for the purpose; but it is the way of the counsellor. When the people choose a king, he was one that was the most stately man among them; but not so was the counsellor's choice, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. Cain was rejected, and Abel accepted. Sarah, who had no procreative faculty, is chosen, when wasted and worn with age, to be the mother of the seed promised to Abraham; and not Hagar, who was in the bloom of youth. So Mary espoused to a carpenter, and none of the ladies of Judea, was pitched upon to be the mother of our Lord. He chose his apostles from among fishermen generally, not from among the learned men of the age, Paul only excepted.

4. Things brought about by means in their own nature, and in

the eyes of men, quite contrary to the design. Neither is this the manner of men, but it is his. The blind man is cured with clay laid on his eyes. Joseph is advanced by means of his being sold as a slave, and put into the dungeon. The wheel of providence that seems to drive away from the design, doth often but take an unknown road to it.

USE I. Let us judge nothing before the time, nor be hasty in our conclusions on the conduct of providence. It will but proclaim our rashness and folly, and we will be forced at length to retract our censures; Psalm cxvi. 11, 12, "I said in my haste, All men are liars." His method of management is often what we cannot rightly judge of till we see the end; Jam. v. 11, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

2. Let us beware of penning up the great counsellor to our known roads. Hence God's people often torment themselves in vain, thinking that, because they cannot see him in all the roads within their view, he is not coming to them at all. In the meantime, he may be making speed towards them, though in a darkened road, where they look not for him, as in the conduct of Jesus towards the disciples; Matth. xiv. 25—27, "And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." There are many methods of deliverance known to the counsellor, that fall not within the compass of our narrow view; and when we are set on them, we know not whither they do lead; Isa. xlii. 16, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

3. See here the necessity of acquaintance with the Scriptures, and of faith; 2 Pet. i. 19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." There the mysteries of the kingdom are unfolded, and by faith the beauty of them is perceived. Those who are strangers to the book of the word, cannot miss to blunder in the book of providence to their own soul's hurt; and unbelief of the word makes beautiful pieces of providence look very odd; for it fixes men's eyes, as if one should stare on the wrong side of arras

hangings, having no power to turn up the right side of them ; Psalm lxxiii. 16, 17, " When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end."

*Fifthly.* He does nothing without a becoming reason. There is not one random stroke in the whole of the conduct of providence ; Eph. i. 11, " In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The red and black horses came out between the mountains of brass, as well as the rest, Zech. vi. 1, 2, and every event is written in the sealed book, Rev. v. There is a reason for every dispensation, and it is a reason that is good and valid. This appears, if ye consider that,

1. His infinite wisdom sees all things at once perfectly ; Psalm cxlvii. 5. " His understanding is infinite." The fitness of a means for compassing an end, cannot be hid to him, as it is often unto men ; and he cannot be liable to mistake in that matter, though men, through their weakness, as often pitch on means unfit as fit, Ezek. i. 18, and x. 12. Therefore he does all fitly and reasonably, since he is withal infinitely good.

2. Even those things which sometimes cannot be discerned to have a fitness in them for any good purpose, do in end appear beautiful ; those that appear confused at first, when done out appear orderly, so that in end his people are made to say, He has done all things well. So was the dispensation anent Joseph ; Gen. l. 20, " But as for you, ye thought evil against me ; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." All of them, whatever compasses they make, do by virtue of the promise concenter in God's glory and his people's good, Rom. viii. 28, and ix. 22, 23.

Thus are the mysterious steps of providence before named all managed, and may be accounted for.

1. Things are let go on to the utmost point of hopelessness, that the power of God may appear the more in bringing about the delivery, and that it may be the more signal mercy to his people, and fill them the more with joy and wonder, John xi. 14, 15. The Lord left his people in Babylon, till they were like dry bones lying about the graves ; why ? see Ezek. xxxvii. 13, " And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves." Psalm cxxvi. l. 4, " When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south." Deliverance is sweet at any time ; but the more hopeless, the more sweet and surprising is it when it comes.

2. By treating his friends with afflictions and trials, he pours contempt on the world, and all its honour, wealth, and ease; shewing to all thereby, that those things which carnal men set their hearts on, are such things as he hath no value for, else he would never dispose of them at the rate he does. Thereby he invites his enemies to repentance, and renders them inexcusable if they be not gained thereby, Rom. ii. 4. And he tries the faith, love, and patience of his own, and thereby lays up for their greater weight of glory, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

3. He chooseth the most unlikely instruments and means to accomplish his purposes, that he may stain the pride of all glory, Is. xxiii. 9, that all may be referred to himself as the first cause and last end of all things, which is the reasonable order, 1 Cor. i. 31. Therefore he "put the treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. iv. 7, and for the same reason not in the finest, but the coarsest of the sort.

4. He works by contrary means, that he may shew himself to be above means, and to have them at his beck, and to surprise his people more sweetly with the unlooked-for effect of them. The character of divine power is the more deeply engraven on the effect, that the means of themselves are not of that tendency.

USE 1. Then all that the Lord does is well done. There is nothing amiss in it, Deut. xxxii. 4; in the blackest dispensation there is a line of purity. The smoking oven is joined with a burning lamp, Gen. xv. 17. Compare Isa. lxii. 1. In the whole fabric of providence towards the children of men, there is not one wrong pin, there is nothing awry, but everything lies straight to its end.

2. When ye cannot find out the reason, a becoming reason of some dispensation towards the church or yourselves, yet believe that it is not without a becoming reason, and be satisfied in your minds that it is well done, because the counsellor has done it. When you put a straight stick in the water, it appears to your eyes to be crooked; yet you do not think or believe in your judgment that it is really crooked. That appearance is owing to your eyesight, not to the stick itself, which remains straight. So is it with us oft-times in respect of the dispensations of providence. But let faith correct the errors of sense in this matter, Jer. xii. 1.

3. Wait ye, and the reason of the most mysterious dispensation will appear in a clear light at length. There is a promise for it; John xiii. 7, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Since the counsellor does nothing without a reason, he will for his own honour satisfy all his friends with it,

and silence his enemies for ever; and thereby he will bountifully reward believing waiters, and confound unbelieving quarrellers of his conduct.

*Sixthly*, He manageth all with a depth of wisdom. Counsel speaks not only a reasonable management, but a depth of wisdom; for it is to things of the greatest weight and difficulty that counsellors are required; Prov. xx. 5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out." Hereof take the following evidences.

EVIDENCE 1. His compassing a great variety of ends by one and the same means, and all these designed. What a vast variety of ends did he compass by Joseph's being sold into Egypt? Hereby Jacob was tried, the naughtiness of his sons discovered, Joseph himself proved, Jacob's posterity provided for, Christ was typified, way was made for the greatest events under the Old Testament, &c. So some suffer, and the Counsellor designs the good of many thereby; 2 Cor. i. 6, "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings, which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." In men's management there may be happy undesigned hits; but all these are designed by the infinite mind of the Counsellor.

EVID. 2. That no man can fully reach what is in the womb of providence, in the most open and obvious steps of it. He may see this and the other design in it, but still there is something beyond what he sees; Psalm. cxlii. 5, "O Lord, how great are thy works; and thy thoughts are very deep." Sober-minded men of learning will own, that they cannot have a full and comprehensive notion of the least insect; they know not but the Creator may have put in it some quality which they cannot discern. And sober-minded Christians will own the same in the most obvious steps of providence; Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

EVID. 3. The greatest variety of designs in a dispensation is guarded on every side by the wisdom of the Counsellor, that one shall not overthrow, nor interfere with another. Man's wisdom cannot prevent, that where they have many irons in the fire together, some of them must cool, while others of them are working; but every the least design of the counsellor must take, by his wise management; Isa. xli. 10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." See Joel ii. 7, 8, "They shall run like mighty men, they shall climb the wall like men of war, and they shall march

every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path : and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded." For the wheels are full of eyes round about.

EVID. 4. His bringing the greatest of things out of the smallest beginnings. O how often does the Counsellor, in the depth of his wisdom, rear up golden pillars on leaden bases, and make the cloud like a man's hand at first, cover the whole face of the heavens ? Thus he manages in the kingdom of nature ; for an instance of which, man needs not go without himself ; but consider what a minute thing it is from which this body of his, growing to such a bulk, in such comely proportion, with such a variety of organs doth take its rise ; Psalm cxxxix. 14, " I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." In the kingdom of grace ; in its beginning in a soul, and in the world, it is as a grain of mustard seed, Matth. xiii. 31. So Psalm lxxii. 16, " There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains ; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." How low were the beginnings of that kingdom which has now filled the earth ? The stone is become a great mountain, filling the earth, Dan. ii. 35.

EVID. 5. His making the most weighty and surprising turns in matters, upon the smallest of events. If we trace the turn the affairs of the church took in Mordecai's days, to the overthrowing of Haman's desperate plot, to the first spring of it ; we will find it was a vapour that had got up into Ahasuerus's head that he could not sleep, Esther vi. 1. In the smallest of things God is very great. He that hangs the earth upon nothing, often makes a very minute circumstance to be the hinge on which great things turn ; 2 Kings iii. 23.

EVID. 6. His counteracting successfully the united force of devils and men, in all ages, set for the overthrow of his kingdom ; Prov. xxi. 30, " There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." The subjects of Christ's kingdom are weak, and easily beguiled ; Satan is most subtle, watchful, and incessant in his acting against them ; the war has been carried on by hell against them through all ages ; the generality of the world is on Satan's side ; often the feet of the saints are almost slipt ; yet the church is preserved, not one of Christ's kindly subjects lost. This proclaims aloud the depth of wisdom in her King, Micah iv. 9. See Gen. iii. 15.

EVID. 7. *Lastly*, His outshooting the devil in his own bow, and

bringing good out of evil, Phil. i. 12. The malice of hell never appeared more, than in the sufferings Christ himself was put to: yet out of these was the salvation of an elect world brought; and these were they that shook the kingdom of Satan to the foundations. The very temptations and falls of the saints are overruled to some advantage, Rom. viii. 28.

USE I. Then whatsoever he doth, is not only well done, but best done, Eccl. iii. 14. If thou art out of Christ, whatever thou meetest with in the providence of God, it is that which for the time is best for the glory of God. If thou art in Christ, whatsoever thou meetest with, is for the time best for God's honour, and best for thee too. For all is the product of the depth of wisdom. The reason of the difference is, that the believer being in God's covenant, God's honour and his good are joint interests secured by the covenant; unbelievers are not so.

2. The believer may securely trust him to whom he has committed his soul, with the management of all that concerns him; Psalm xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Our anxiety should be confined to our duty; to be otherwise anxious, as for provision, protection, and the like, is but the fruit of unbelief; Luke xii. 29, "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." Since God stands in the relation of a Father, and is infinitely wise, there is complete ground for the security of faith; Matth. vi. 8, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

3. In the case of doubtful events, believe that the Counsellor will do what is best. This is what ye are to believe in such a case; Psalm lxxxv. 12, "The Lord will give that which is good." Here is the rest of faith in cases of a doubtful issue: and here one may securely rest waiting the issue, which the depth of wisdom shall in due time bring forth. *Dominus meus omnia, &c.*—Luther.

*Seventhly, and Lastly, He is the best Counsellor; there is none like him. There are many counsellors, nobody wants some; but his name is Counsellor, as if there were not another; for he is the Counsellor by way of eminency.*

Here we shall,

*1st, Confirm the truth of this assertion, That Christ is the best Counsellor.*

*2dly, Shew wherein he counsels sinners.*

*3dly, How he gives his counsel.*

*First, To confirm the truth of this assertion, That Christ is the best Counsellor, consider,*

1. He is of the Father's choice and nomination for a Counsellor to us ; 1 Cor. i. 30, "He is made of God unto us wisdom." When the Father from eternity, pitying fallen man in his ruined state, was thinking on a Counsellor, that might by his wisdom retrieve their sinking affairs, he pitched on Jesus Christ ; Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." The highest angel was too weak for such a burden ; but the Son, who was of the cabinet-council of heaven, was the choice ; and sinners are referred to him, Matth. xvii. 5.

2. He is the saint's choice in all ages for a Counsellor ; who all with one voice say ; Psalm lxxiii. 24, 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Men are by nature out of themselves, and so will keep the guiding of themselves in their own hands ; but as soon as they come to themselves, they renounce their own wisdom, will no more believe their own eyes, but by faith choose him for their Counsellor.

3. He never misseth the point in his counselling, Prov. xxx. 5. "Every word of God is pure : he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." The best of counsellors among men will miss at a time ; but infinite wisdom is not liable to mistake. He sees, and sees through all that is past and present, and thoroughly foresees all that is to come. How can he err in his counsel ?

*Secondly*, Wherein doth Christ counsel sinners ? He counsels them,

1. In their greatest concerns, their concerns for eternity. In these they have least skill ; in these a mistaking of their measures is most fatal ; so his counsel respects these chiefly. And he counsels them,

(1.) To the way of peace, which they know not, Rev. iii. 18. The gospel is Christ's counsel to sinners ; thereby he points them the way to the favour of God, the pardon of their sin, the securing to themselves a right to heaven, and freedom from the wrath and curse of God. He presseth and plies them to take that counsel, with the strongest arguments.

(2.) In the way to peace and happiness, how they being set on it, may keep it till they arrive at perfect happiness, Psalm lxxiii. 24. His clients are in a wilderness while in this world ; and he is to be instead of eyes to them there. In every new emergent difficulty, they have access to his counsel, what course to take in such a temptation, dark step, or case.

2. In their lesser concerns, viz. the things of time. He refuses

not to be their Counsellor in the matters of this present life. And,

(1.) In their matters of greater weight, he allows sinners to seek his counsel; and it is their sin that they neglect it, Josh. ix. 14. There is an oracle to be consulted in our temporal, as well as in our spiritual affairs; for the promise reacheth the one as well as the other; Psalm cxii. 5, "A good man—will guide his affairs with discretion."

(2.) In their smallest matters; Prov. iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." There is nothing so small but the providence of God reaches it, even to the very hairs of the head, Matth. x. 30; and on very small things great matters may depend. Things small in themselves may be very great in their consequences; therefore we have need of a Counsellor in the least.

So Christ is a Counsellor for sinners in all their matters, of whatsoever kind. And this is a peculiar excellency of this Counsellor, that he can give counsel in every thing. Men consult divines in their soul's case, physicians in the case of their body, lawyers in the case of their estate, men experienced in their occupation; but Christ is a Counsellor in them all.

*Thirdly, How doth Christ give his counsel.*

1. He proposeth his counsel in and by his word; Psalm cxix. 24, "Thy testimonies are my counsellors." If ye would have his counsel, ye must go believingly to his word. That is it by which the answer is given to those that consult the holy oracle. And there is no case can happen to one, but in the word there is proper counsel for it. This is a mystery to the formal and profane; but the exercised Christian knows it by experience to be true.

2. He clears it, and opens it, and confirms it by his providence; Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." Providence taken by itself, without respect to the word, is a very uncertain light to walk by, as in Jonah's finding the ship going to Tarshish; but when providence is considered in subordination to the word, it is of eminent use for discovering the Lord's mind in particular cases; as in the case of Peter; Acts x. 17, "Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius, had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate." And therefore all tender Christians will be serious observers of providence; Psalm cvii. 43, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

3. He makes it effectual by his Holy Spirit; John xvi. 13, "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all

truth." He shines on the word, and on the work of providence, sets both in a clear light, and enables, as well as determines the believer to follow it. So the counsel of the great counsellor is the light of life, John viii. 12; promised to all Christ's followers. Men following their own wisdom and delusive counsels, cannot expect the Spirit's efficacy; and the word and providence cannot be effectual without the Spirit; but the Spirit makes both effectual to those that wait for Christ's counsel.

USE 1. Then take him for your Counsellor, renouncing all other. And,

1. Renounce your own wisdom, do not lean to your own abilities for the management of yourself; but know your own wisdom to be but weakness and folly; Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Fallen man lost his spiritual eye-sight, and he can see nothing aright in spirituals till he go to the Counsellor, Rev. iii. 18; and he is apt to go wrong even in other things.

2. Renounce the counsel of the world, and shut your ears to it; Prov. xix. 27, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Mind it is the character of a happy man, that he "walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners," Psalm i. 1; and the character of one in a natural state; Eph. ii. 2, "to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air." They who make the way of the world their rule, must perish with the world.

3. Take Christ for your Counsellor instead of all other; Prov. xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart; and let thine eyes observe my ways." Give up yourselves wholly to his management; let him be your sole Counsellor, and that for all things; you need a guide, the Father has given him to you for that end; Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him for a leader unto the people." Close with him as your guide and counsellor.

USE 2. Follow the counsel that he is giving you. Christ is counselling you all in the gospel; even those that will not consult him, and have refused his counsel, he is counselling still. His counsels are two.

1. He is counselling you to believe in himself, John vi. 29; to come to him, to come to his market of free grace, and buy there, without money or price, Rev. iii. 18; Isa. lv. 1; to take him for a Head, and husband, for all.

2. To be holy; to give up with your sinful courses, that will ruin

you ; and to betake yourselves to the way of holiness, without which there is no seeing the Lord ; Ezek. xviii. 31, " Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" See both together ; Prov. ix. 5, 6, " Come, eat of my bread" saith Wisdom, " and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live ; and go in the way of understanding."

USE 3. *Lastly*, Then make use of Christ as a counsellor, by your consulting him daily, that ye may not walk but by his direction. And,

1. Be habitually tender in labouring to know the mind of God, as to sin and duty, in particular cases ; and in your common, as well as in your religious affairs, Isa. xxviii. 26.

2. Be upright and sincere in your consulting him, lying open to the divine determination, Jer. xlii. 20 ; compare chap. xli. 17.

3. Humbly entertain the divine determination, though it fall to be cross to your inclination. Do not, like Baalam, tempt God, till ye get an answer to your own mind, Numb. xxii.

4. Beware of going cross to duty cleared, and rejecting God's counsel given, 1 Kings xiii.

5. *Lastly*, Pray much ; ejaculatory, and secret ; and carefully observe providences, while ye are waiting for the Lord's counsel. The light is from the Lord, if it is strengthening to duty, and overpower corruptions against it.

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CHRIST THE MIGHTY GOD.

ISAIAH ix. 6,

*His Name shall be called—The Mighty God.*

THESE words in the Hebrew are, God Mighty One. This is the third syllable of the name of our Lord Redeemer ; and as this name is given to him as God-man, so this syllable of it natively respects both, as he is God, he is the true God ; as he is man, he is the mighty one ; the greatest heroes are but weaklings to him.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ, the prince presented and given to us of the Father, is and shews himself to be true God, the Mighty One.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. That Christ is the true God.