

to these conferred upon thee? O bless God in the lowest ebb of outward comforts, for such privileges as these.

And yet you will not come up to your duty in all this, except you be joyful in the Lord, and rejoice evermore, after the receipt of such mercies as these, Phil. iv. 4. "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, and again I say rejoice." For hath not the poor captive reason to rejoice, when he hath recovered his liberty? The debtor to rejoice when all scores are cleared, and he owes nothing? The weary traveller to rejoice, though he be not owner of a shilling, when he is come almost home, where all his wants shall be supplied? Why this is our case, when Christ once becomes yours: you are the Lord's freemen, your debts to justice are all satisfied by Christ; and you are within a little of complete redemption from all the troubles and inconveniences of your present state.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

SERMON II.

Wherein the Union of the Believer with CHRIST, as a principal Part of effectual Application, is stated and practically improved.

JOHN xvii. 23.

I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.

THE design and end of the application of Christ to sinners is the communication of his benefits to them; but seeing all communications of benefits necessarily imply communion, and all communion as necessarily presupposes union with his person: I shall therefore, in this place, and from this scripture, treat of the mystical union betwixt Christ and believers; this union being the principal act, wherein the Spirit's application of Christ consists, of which I spake (as to its general nature) in the former sermon.

In this verse (omitting the context) we find a threefold union, one betwixt the Father and Christ, a second betwixt Christ and believers, a third betwixt believers themselves.

First, Thou in me: This is a glorious ineffable union, and is fundamental to the other two. The Father is not only in Christ, in respect of dear affections, as one dear friend is in another, who is as his own soul; nor only essentially, in respect of the identity and sameness of nature and attributes, in which respect Christ is the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. But he is in Christ also as Mediator, by communicating the fulness of the Godhead,

which dwells in him as God-man, in a transcendent and singular manner, so as it never dwelt, nor can dwell in any other, Col. ii. 9.

Secondly, I in them : Here is the mystical union betwixt Christ and the saints, *q. d.* Thou and I are one essentially, they and I are one mystically : and thou and I are one by communication of the Godhead, and singular fulness of the Spirit to me as Mediator ; and they and I are one, by my communication of the Spirit to them in measure.

Thirdly, From hence results a third union betwixt believers themselves ; *that they may be made perfect in one* ; the same Spirit dwelling in them all, and equally uniting them all to me, as living members to their Head of influence, there must needs be a dear and intimate union betwixt themselves, as fellow-members of the same body.

Now my business, at this time, lying in the second branch, namely, the union betwixt Christ and believers, I shall gather up the substance of it into this doctrinal proposition, to which I shall apply this discourse.

Doct. That there is a strict and dear union betwixt Christ and all true believers.

The scriptures have borrowed from the book of nature four elegant and lively metaphors, to help the nature of this mystical union with Christ into our understandings ; namely, that of pieces of timber united by glue ; that of a graff taking hold of its stock, and making one tree ; that of the husband and wife, by the marriage-covenant, becoming one flesh ; and that of the members and head animated by one soul, and so becoming one natural body. Every one of these is more lively and full than the other : and what is defective in one, is supplied in the other ; but yet, neither any of these singly, or all of them jointly, can give us a full and complete account of this mystery.

Not that of two pieces united by glue, 1 Cor. v. 17. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," *κολλημενος*, glued to the Lord. For though this cementeth, and strongly joins them in one, yet this is but a faint and imperfect shadow of our union with Christ ; for though this union by glue be intimate, yet not vital, but so is that of the soul with Christ.

Nor that of the graff and stock, mentioned Rom. vi. 5. for though it be there said, that believers are *συμφυτοι*, implanted, or ingrafted by way of incision, and this union betwixt it and the stock be vital, for it partakes of the vital sap and juice of it ; yet here also is a remarkable defect, for the graff is of a more excellent

kind and nature than the stock, and, upon that account, the tree receives its denomination from it, as from the more noble and excellent part; but Christ, into whom believers are ingrafted, is infinitely more excellent than they, and they are denominated from him.

Nor yet that conjugal union, by marriage-covenant, betwixt a man and his wife; for though this be exceeding dear and intimate, so that a man leaves father and mother, and cleaves to his wife, and they two become one flesh; yet this union is not indissoluble, but may and must be broken by death; and then the relict lives alone without any communion with, or relation to, the person that was once so dear; but this betwixt Christ and the soul can never be dissolved by death, it abides to eternity.

Nor, lastly, that of the head and members united by one vital spirit, and so making one physical body, mentioned Eph. iv. 15, 16. for though one soul actuates every member, yet it doth not knit every member alike near to the head, but some are nearer, and others removed farther from it; but here every member is alike nearly united with Christ the Head; the weak are as near to him as the strong.

Two things are necessary to be opened in the doctrinal part of this point. 1. The reality. 2. The quality of this union.

First, For the reality of it, I shall make it appear, that there is such a union betwixt Christ and believers; it is no *Ens rationis* empty notion, or cunningly devised fable, but a most certain demonstrable truth, which appears,

First, From the communion which is betwixt Christ and believers; in this the apostle is express, 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" *κοινωνία*. It signifies such fellowship or copartnership, as persons have by a joint interest in one and the same enjoyment, which is in common betwixt them. So Heb. iii. 14. we are *μετέτοχοι*, *partakers of Christ*. And Psal. xlv. 7. *מחברים*, here the saints are called the companions, consorts or fellows of Christ; "and that not only in respect of his * assumption of our mortality, and investing us with his immortality, but it hath a special reference and respect to the unction of the Holy Ghost, or graces of the Spirit, of which believers are partakers with him and through him." Now this communion of the saints with Christ is intirely and necessarily dependent upon their union with him, even as much as the branch's participation of the sap and juice depends upon its union and coalition with the stock: take away union, and

* *Ipse venit in sortem nostræ mortalitatis, ut in sortem nos adduceret suæ immortalitatis, clarum autem est, hic agi de consortibus unctionis: quales sunt omnes fideles qui unctionis participes fiunt.* Rivet.

there can be no communion, or communications, which is clear from 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. "All is yours, and ye are Christ's, and "Christ is God's." Where you see how all our participation of Christ's benefits is built upon our union with Christ's person.

Secondly, The reality of the believer's union with Christ, is evident from the imputation of Christ's righteousness to him for his justification. That a believer is justified before God by a righteousness without himself, is undeniable from Rom. iii. 24. "Being "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is "in Christ Jesus." And that Christ's righteousness becomes ours by imputation is as clear from Rom. iv. 23, 24. but it can never be imputed to us, except we be united to him, and become one with him: which is also plainly asserted in 1 Cor. i. 30. "But of "him are ye (in Christ Jesus) who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He communicates his merits unto none but those that are in him. Hence all those vain cavils of the Papists, disputing against our justification by the righteousness of Christ, and asserting it to be by inherent righteousness, are solidly answered.

When they demand, How can we be justified by the righteousness of another? Can I be rich with another man's money, or preferred by another man's honours? Our answer is, Yes, if that other be my surety or husband. Indeed Peter can not be justified by the righteousness of Paul; but both may be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them; they being members, jointly knit to one common Head. Principal and surety are one in obligation and construction of law. Head and members are one body, branch and stock are one tree; and it is no strange thing to see a graff live by the sap of another stock, when once it is ingrafted into it.

Thirdly, The sympathy that is betwixt Christ and believers, proves a union betwixt them; Christ and the saints smile and sigh together. St. Paul in Col. i. 24. tells us, that he did "fill up that "which was behind," τα υστερηματα,——the remainders of the "sufferings of Christ in his flesh:" not as if Christ's sufferings were imperfect, ("for by one offering he hath perfected for ever "them that are sanctified," Heb. x. 14.) but in these two scriptures, Christ is considered in a twofold capacity; he suffered once in *corpore proprio*, in his own person, as Mediator; these sufferings are complete and full, and in that sense he suffers no more: he suffers also in *corpore mystico*, in his church and members, thus he still suffers in the sufferings of every saint for his sake; and though these sufferings in his mystical body are not equal to the other, either *pondere et mensura*, in their weight and value, nor yet designed *ex officio*, for the same use and purpose, to satisfy by their proper

merit, offended justice; nevertheless they are truly reckoned the sufferings of Christ, because the head suffers when the members do; and without this supposition, that place, Acts ix. 5. is never to be understood, when Christ, the Head in heaven, cries out, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" when the foot was trod upon on earth: How doth Christ sensibly feel our sufferings, or we his, if there be not a mystical union betwixt him and us?

Fourthly, and lastly, The way and manner in which the saints shall be raised at the last day, proves this mystical union betwixt Christ and them; for they are not to be raised as others, by the naked power of God without them, but by the virtue of Christ's resurrection as their Head, sending forth vital, quickening influences into their dead bodies, which are united to him as well as their souls. For so we find it, Rom. viii. 11. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you;" even as it is in our awaking out of natural sleep, first the animal-spirits in the head begin to rouse and play there, and then the senses and members are loosed throughout the whole body.

Now it is impossible the saints should be raised in the last resurrection, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, if that Spirit did not knit and unite them to him, as members to their head. So then by all this, it is proved, that there is a real union of the saints with Christ.

Next, I shall endeavour to open the quality and nature of this union, and shew you what it is, according to the weak apprehensions we have of so sublime a mystery; and this I shall do in a general and particular account of it.

First, More generally, it is an intimate conjunction of believers to Christ, by the imparting of his Spirit to them, whereby they are enabled to believe and live in him.

All divine and spiritual life is originally in the Father, and cometh not to us, but by and through the Son, John v. 26. to him hath the Father given to have an *αυτοζωη*,—a quickening, enlivening power in himself; but the Son communicates this life which is in him to none but by and through the Spirit, Rom. viii. 2. "The Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

The Spirit must therefore first take hold of us, before we can live in Christ; and when he doth so, then we are enabled to exert that vital act of faith, whereby we receive Christ; all this lies plain in that one scripture, John vi. 57. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, (that is by faith applies me) even he shall live by me." So that

these two, namely, the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith, his work on our part, are the two ligaments by which we are knit to Christ.

So that the Spirit's work in uniting or ingrafting a soul in Christ, is like the cutting off the graff from its native stock (which he doth by his illuminations and convictions) and closing it with the living, when it is thus prepared, and so enabling it (by the infusion of faith) to suck and draw the vital sap, and thus it becomes one with him. Or as the many members in the natural body, being all quickened and animated by the same vital spirit, become one body with the head, which is the principal member, Eph. iv. 4. "There is one body and one spirit."

More particularly, we shall consider the properties of this union, that so we may the better understand the nature of it. And here I shall open the nature of it both negatively and affirmatively.

First, Negatively, by removing all false notions and misapprehensions of it. And we say,

First, The saints union with Christ is not a mere mental union only in conceit or notion, but really exists *extra mentem*, whether we conceit it or not. I know the atheistical world censures all these things as fancies and idle imaginations, but believers know the reality of them, John xiv. 20. "At that day you shall know "that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." This doctrine is not fantastical, but scientific.

Secondly, The saints union with Christ is not a physical union, such as is betwixt the members of a natural body and the head; our nature indeed is assumed into union with the person of Christ, but it is the singular honour of that blessed and holy flesh of Christ, to be so united as to make one person with him; that union is hypostatical, this only mystical.

Thirdly, Nor is it an essential union, or union with the divine nature, so as our beings are thereby swallowed up and lost in the Divine being.

Some there be indeed that talk at that wild rate, of being godded into God, and christed into Christ; and those unwary expressions of Greg. Naz. $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\tau\omicron\iota\epsilon\iota\nu$, and $\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\epsilon\iota\nu$, do but too much countenance those daring spirits; but oh, there is an infinite distance betwixt us and Christ, in respect of nature and excellency, notwithstanding this union.

Fourthly, The union I here speak of, is not a fœderal union, or an union by covenant only: such an union indeed there is betwixt Christ and believers, but that is consequential to and wholly dependent upon this.

Fifthly, and lastly, It is not a mere moral union by love and affection; thus we say, one soul is in two bodies, a friend is another

self; the lover is in the person beloved; such an union of hearts and affections there is also betwixt Christ and the saints, but this is of another nature; that we call a moral, this is a mystical union; that only knits our affections, but this our persons to Christ.

Secondly, Positively. And, *First*, Though this union neither makes us one person nor essence with Christ, yet it knits our persons most intimately and nearly to the person of Christ. The church is Christ's body, Col. i. 24. not his natural, but his mystical body; that is to say, his body is a mystery, because it is to him as his natural body. The saints stand to Christ in the same relation that the natural members of the body stand to the head, and he stands in the same relation to them, that the head stands in to the natural members; and consequently they stand related to one another, as the members of a natural body do to each other.

Christ and the saints are not one, as the oak and the ivy that clasps it are one, but as the graff and stock are one; it is not an union by adhesion, but incorporation. Husband and wife are not so near, soul and body are not so near, as Christ and the believing soul are near to each other.

Secondly, The mystical union is wholly supernatural, wrought by the alone power of God. So it is said, 1 Cor. i. 30. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus." We can no more unite ourselves to Christ, than a branch can incorporate itself into another stock; it is of him, i. e. of God, his proper and alone work.

There are only two ligaments, or bands of union betwixt Christ and the soul, viz. the Spirit on his part, and faith on ours. But when we say faith is the band of union on our part, the meaning is not, that it is so our own act, as that it springs naturally from us, or is educed from the power of our own wills; no, for the apostle expressly contradicts it, Eph. ii. 8. "It is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." But we are the subjects of it, and though the act on that account be ours, yet the power enabling us to believe is God's, Eph. i. 19, 20.

Thirdly, The mystical union is an immediate union; immediate I say, not as excluding means and instruments, for several means and many instruments are employed for the effecting of it; but immediate, as excluding degrees of nearness among the members of Christ's mystical body.

Every member in the natural body stands not as near to the head as another, but so do all the mystical members of Christ's body to him: every member, the smallest as well as the greatest, hath an immediate coalition with Christ, 1 Cor. i. 2. "To the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus,

“called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

Among the factions in this church at Corinth, those that said, *I am of Christ*, as arrogating Christ to themselves, were as much a faction, as those that said, *I am of Paul*, 1 Cor. i. 30. To cure this he tells them, he is *both theirs and ours*. Such inclosures are against law.

Fourthly, The saints mystical union with Christ is a fundamental union; it is fundamental by way of sustentation; all our fruits of obedience depend upon it, John xv. 4. “As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” It is fundamental to all our privileges and comfortable claims, 1 Cor. iii. 23. “All is yours, for ye are Christ’s.” And it is fundamental to all our hopes and expectations of glory; for it is “Christ in you the hope of glory,” Col. i. 27. So then, destroy this union, and with it you destroy all our fruits, privileges, and eternal hopes, at one stroke.

Fifthly, The mystical union is a most efficacious union, for through this union the divine power flows into our souls, both to quicken us with the life of Christ, and to conserve and secure that life in us after it is so infused.

Without the union of the soul to Christ, which is to be conceived efficiently as the Spirit’s act, there can be no union formally considered; and, without these, no communications of life from Christ to us, Eph. iv. 16. And as there is that *ενεργεια*, or effectual working of the spirit of life in every part, which he there speaks of, (as though you should say, the first appearances of a new life, a spiritual vitality diffused through the soul, which ere while was dead in sin) yet still this union with Christ is as necessary to the maintaining, as before it was to the producing of it.

For why is it that this life is not again extinguished, and wholly suffocated in us, by so many deadly wounds as are given it by temptations and corruptions? Surely no reason can be assigned more satisfying than that which Christ himself gives us, in John xiv. 19. “Because I live, ye shall live also:” *q. d.* whilst there is vital sap in me the root, you that are branches in me cannot wither and die.

Sixthly, The mystical union is an indissoluble union: there is an everlasting tye betwixt Christ and the believer; and herein also it is beyond all other unions in the world; death dissolves the dear union betwixt the husband and wife, friend and friend, yea, betwixt soul and body, but not betwixt Christ and the soul, the bands of this union rot not in the grave. “What shall separate us from the love of Christ?” saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. He bids defiance to all his enemies, and triumphs in the firmness

of his union over all hazards that seem to threaten it. It is with Christ and us, in respect of the *mystical union*, as it is with Christ himself, in respect of the *hypostatical union*; that was not dissolved by his death, when the *natural union* betwixt his soul and body was, nor can this mystical union of our souls and bodies with Christ be dissolved, when the union betwixt us and our dearest relations, yea, betwixt the soul and body, is dissolved by death. God calls himself the God of Abraham, long after his body was turned into dust.

Seventhly, It is an *honourable union**, yea, the highest honour that can be done unto men; the greatest honour that was ever done to our common nature, was by its assumption into union with the second person *hypostatically*, and the highest honour that was ever done to our single persons, was their union with Christ *mystically*. To be a servant of Christ is a dignity transcendent to the highest advancement among men; but to be a member of Christ, how matchless and singular is the glory thereof! And yet, such honour have all the saints, Eph. v. 30. "We are members "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Eighthly, It is a most *comfortable union*: yea, the ground of all solid comfort, both in life and death. Whatever troubles, wants, or distresses befall such, in this is abundant relief and support, Christ is mine, and I am his; what may not a good soul make out of that! If I am Christ's, then let him take care for me, and, indeed, in so doing, he doth but take care for his own. He is my head, and to him it belongs to consult the safety and welfare of his own members, Eph. i. 22, 23. He is not only an head to his own, by way of *influence*, but to all things else, by way of *dominion*, for their good. How comfortably may we repose ourselves, under that cheering consideration, upon him at all times and in all difficult cases!

Ninthly, It is a *fruitful union*; the immediate end of it is fruit, Rom. vii. 4. "We are married to Christ, that we should bring "forth fruit to God." All the fruit we bear before our ingratitude into Christ is worse than none; till the person be in Christ, the work cannot be evangelically good and acceptable to God: "We are made accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. Christ is a fruitful root, and makes all the branches that live in him so too, John xv. 8.

Tenthly, and lastly, It is an *enriching union*; for, by our union with his person, we are immediately interested in all his riches,

* Christ is the head, summit, and crown of all dignity, without whom there is nothing (truly) noble in all this sublunary world, who has heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool. The earth, I say, with all the persons of high rank and station in it are put under his feet. *Laur. Humphred. on Nobility.*

1 Cor. i. 30. How rich and great a person do the little arms of faith clasp and embrace! "All is yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22. All that Christ hath becomes ours, either by communication to us, or improvement for us: His Father, John xx. 17. His promises, 2 Cor. i. 20. His providences, Rom. viii. 28. His glory, John xvii. 24. It is all ours by virtue of our union with him.

Thus you see briefly what the mystical union is. Next we shall improve it.

Inference 1. *If there be such a union betwixt Christ and believers, Oh then what transcendent dignity hath God put upon believers.*

Well might Constantine prefer the honour of being a member of the church, before that of being head of the empire*; for it is not only above all earthly dignities and honours, but, in some respect, above that honour which God hath put upon the angels of glory.

Great is the dignity of the angelical nature: the angels are the highest and most honourable species of creatures; they also have the honour continually to behold the face of God in heaven, and yet, in this one respect the saints are preferred to them, they have a mystical union with Christ, as their head of influence, by whom they are quickened with spiritual life, which the angels have not.

It is true, there is an *ανακροαλιωσις*, or gathering together of all in heaven and earth under Christ as a common head, Eph. i. 10. He is the Head of *angels* as well as saints, but in different respects. To angels he is an head of *dominion* and government, but to saints he is both an head of dominion, and of vital *influence* too; they are his chief and most honourable subjects, but not his mystical members: they are as the Barons and Nobles in his kingdom, but the saints as the dear Spouse and Wife of his bosom. This dignifies the believer above the greatest angel. And as the nobles of the kingdom think it a preferment and honour to serve the Queen, so the glorious angels think it no degradation or dishonour to them to serve the Saints; for to this honourable office they are appointed, Heb. i. 14. to be ministering or serviceable spirits, for the good of them that shall be heirs of salvation. The chiefest servant disdains not to honour and serve the heir.

Some imperious grandees would frown, should some of these persons but presume to approach their presence; but God sets them before his face with delight, and angels delight to serve them.

Infer. 2. *If there be such a strict and inseparable union betwixt*

* If thou wouldst be called a man of power, put on Christ who is the power and wisdom of God, and in all things join thyself to the Lord, that thou mayest be one spirit with him, and then thou shalt become a man of power. *Orig. Hom. in Num. xxxi.*

Christ and believers, then the grace of believers can never totally fail; Immortality is the privilege of grace, because sanctified persons are inseparably united to Christ the Fountain of life: "Your life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3. Whilst the sap of life is in the root, the branches live by it. Thus it is betwixt Christ and believers, John xiv. 19. "Because I live, ye shall live also." See how Christ binds up their life in one bundle with his own, plainly intimating, that it is as impossible for them to die, as it is for himself; he cannot live without them.

True it is, the spiritual life of believers is encountered by many strong and fierce oppositions: It is also brought to a low ebb in some, but we are always to remember, that there are some things which pertain to the essence of that life, in which the very being of it lies, and some things that pertain only to its well-being. All those things which belong to the well being of the new-creature, as manifestations, joys, spiritual comforts, &c. may, for a time, fail, yea, and grace itself may suffer great losses and remissions in its degrees, notwithstanding our union with Christ; but still the essence of it is immortal, which is no small relief to gracious souls. When the means of grace fail, as it is threatened, Amos viii. 11. when temporary formal professors drop away from Christ like withered leaves from the trees in a windy day, 2 Tim. ii. 18. and when the natural union of their souls and bodies is suffering a dissolution from each other by death, when that *silver cord* is loosed, this *golden chain* holds firm, 1 Cor. iii. 23.

Inf. 3. *Is the union so intimate betwixt Christ and believers? How great and powerful a motive then is this, to make us open-handed and liberal in relieving the necessities and wants of every gracious person! For in relieving them, we relieve Christ himself.*

Christ *personal* is not the object of our pity and charity, he is at the fountain-head of all the riches in glory, Eph. iv. 10. but Christ *mystical* is exposed to necessities and wants, he feels hunger and thirst, cold and pains, in his body the church*; and he is refreshed, relieved, and comforted, in their refreshments and comforts. Christ the Lord of heaven and earth, in this consideration is sometimes in need of a penny; he tells us his wants and poverty, and how he is relieved, Matt. xxv. 35, 40. A text believed and understood by very few, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Then shall the righteous answer, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, &c. And the King shall answer, and say

* He who is not moved with the condition of a brother in the church, let him be moved with the contemplation of Christ: and he who does not regard his fellow servant in straits and want, let him regard the Lord, dwelling in that man whom he despises. *Cyprian on Works and Charity.*

“unto them, verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done
 “it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it
 “unto me.”

It was the saying of a great divine, that he thought scarce any man on earth did fully understand and believe this truth, and he conceives so much hinted in the very text, where the righteous themselves reply, “Lord, when saw we thee sick,” &c. intimating in the question, that they did not thoroughly understand the nearness, yea, *oneness* of those persons with Christ, for whom they did these things. And, indeed, it is incredible that a Christian can be hard-hearted and close-handed to that necessitous Christian, in refreshing and relieving of whom, he verily believes, that he ministers refreshment to Christ himself.

O think again and again upon this scripture; consider what forcible and mighty arguments are here laid together, to engage relief to the wants of Christians.

Here you see their near relation to Christ; they are mystically one person; what you did to them, you did to me. Here you see also how kindly Christ takes it at our hands, acknowledging all those kindnesses that were bestowed upon him, even to a bit of bread: He is, you see, content to take it as a courtesy, who might demand it by authority, and bereave you of all immediately upon refusal.

Yea, here you see one single branch or act of obedience, (our charity to the saints) is singled out from among all the duties of obedience, and made the test and evidence of our sincerity in that great day, and men blessed or cursed according to the love they have manifested this way to the saints.

O then, let none that understand the relation the saints have to Christ, as the members to the head, or the relation they have to each other thereby, as fellow-members of the same body, from henceforth suffer Christ to hunger, if they have bread to relieve him, or Christ to be thirsty, if they have wherewith to refresh him: this union betwixt Christ and the saints affords an argument beyond all other arguments in the world to prevail with us. Methinks, a little *rhetoric* might persuade a Christian to part with any thing he hath for Christ, who parted with the glory of heaven, yea, and his own blood for his sake.

Inf. 4. Do Christ and believers make but one mystical person? How unnatural and absurd then are all those acts of unkindness, whereby believers wound and grieve Jesus Christ! This is as if the hand should wound its own head, from which it receives life, sense, motion, and strength.

When satan smites Christ by a wicked man, he then wounds him

with the hand of an enemy; but when his temptations prevail upon the saints to sin, he wounds him as it were with his own hand: As the *eagle* and *tree* in the *fable* complained, the one that he was wounded by an arrow winged with his own feathers; the other, that it was cleaved asunder by a wedge hewn out of its own limbs.

Now the evil and disingenuity of such sins are to be measured not only by the near relation Christ sustains to believers as their Head; but more particularly from the several benefits they receive from him as such; for in wounding Christ by their sins,

First, They wound their *Head of influence*, through whom they live, and without whom they had still remained in the state of sin and death, Eph. iv. 16. Shall Christ send life to us, and we return that which is death to him! O how absurd, how disingenuous is this!

Secondly, They wound their *Head of government*. Christ is a *guiding*, as well as a *quicken*ing Head, Col. i. 18. He is your wisdom, he guides you by his counsels to glory: but must he be thus requited for all his faithful conduct! What do you, when you sin, but rebel against his government, refusing to follow his counsels, and obeying, in the mean time, a deceiver, rather than him.

Thirdly, They wound their *consulting Head*, who cares, provides, and projects, for the welfare and safety of the body. Christians, you know your affairs below have not been steered and managed by your own wisdom, but that orders have been given from heaven for your security and supply from day to day. "I know, O Lord, (saith the prophet) that the way of man is not in himself, neither "is it in him that walks to direct his own steps," Jer. x. 23.

It is true, Christ is out of your sight, and you see him not: but he sees you, and orders every thing that concerns you. And is this a due requital of all that care he hath taken for you? Do you thus requite the Lord for all his benefits? What recompense evil for good! O let shame cover you.

Fourthly, and *lastly*, They wound their *Head of honour*. Christ your Head is the fountain of honour to you: This is your glory that you are related to him as your head: You are, on this account, (as before was noted) exalted above angels.

Now then consider, how vile a thing it is to reflect the least dishonour upon him, from whom you derive all your glory. O consider and bewail it.

Inf. 5. *Is there so strict and intimate a relation and union betwixt Christ and the saints? Then surely they can never want what is good for their souls or bodies.*

Every one naturally cares and provides for his own, especially for his own body: yet we can more easily violate the law of nature,

and be cruel to our own flesh, than Christ can be so to his mystical body *. I know it is hard to rest upon, and rejoice in a promise, when necessities pinch, and we see not from whence relief should arise; but O! what sweet satisfaction and comfort might a necessitous believer find in these considerations, would he but keep them upon his heart in such a day of straits.

First, Whatever my distresses are for quality, number, or degree, they are all known even to the least circumstance, by Christ my Head: He looks down from heaven upon all my afflictions, and understands them more fully than I that feel them, Psal. xxxviii. 9. "Lord all my desire is before thee, and my groaning "is not hid from thee."

Secondly, He not only knows them, but feels them as well as knows them; "We have not an High-priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," Heb. iv. 15. In all your afflictions he is afflicted; tender sympathy cannot but flow from such intimate union; therefore in Matt. xxv. 35. he saith, I was an hungered, and I was athirst, and I was naked. For indeed his sympathy and tender compassion gave him as quick a resentment, and as tender a sense of their wants, as if they had been his own. Yea,

Thirdly, He not only knows and feels my wants, but hath enough in his hand, and much more than enough to supply them all; for all things are delivered to him by the Father, Luke x. 22. All the storehouses in heaven and earth are his, Phil. iv. 19.

Fourthly, He bestows all earthly good things, even to superfluity and redundancy upon his very enemies, "They have more than "heart can wish," Psal. lxxiii. 7. He is bountiful to strangers; he loads very enemies with these things, and can it be supposed he will in the mean time starve his own, and neglect those whom he loves as his own flesh? It cannot be. Moreover,

Fifthly, Hitherto he hath not suffered me to perish in any former straits; when, and where was it that he forsook me? This is not the first plunge of trouble I have been in; have I not found him a God at hand! How oft have I seen him in the mount of difficulties!

Sixthly, and *lastly*, I have his promise and engagement that he will never leave me nor forsake me, Heb. xiii. 5. and John xiv. 18. a promise which hath never failed since the hour it was first made. If then the Lord Jesus knows and feels all my wants, hath enough, and more than enough to supply them, if he gives even

* *Qui misit filium, immisit spiritum, promisit vultum, quid tandem denegabit?* i. e. He who hath sent his Son, put the Spirit within us, and promised his smiles, What will he deny us?

to redundancy unto his enemies, hath not hitherto forsaken me, and hath promised he never will? Why then is my soul thus disquieted in me! Surely there is no cause it should be so.

Inf. 6. If the saints are so nearly united to Christ, as the members to the head: O then, how great a sin, and full of danger is it for any to wrong and persecute the saints! For in so doing, they must needs persecute Christ himself.

“Saul, Saul, (saith Christ) why persecutest thou me?” Acts ix. 4. * The righteous God holds himself obliged to vindicate oppressed innocency, though it be in the persons of wicked men; how much more when it is in a member of Christ? “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye,” Zech. ii. 8. And is it to be imagined that Christ will sit still, and suffer his enemies to hurt or injure the very apples of his eyes? No, “He hath ordained his arrows against the persecutors,” Psalm vii. 13.

O it were better thine hand should wither, and thine arm fall from thy shoulder, than ever it should be lifted up against Christ, in the poorest of his members. Believe it, sirs, not only your violent actions, but your hard speeches are all set down upon your doom’s-day book; and you shall be brought to an account for them in the great day, Jude 15. Beware what arrows you shoot, and be sure of your mark before you shoot them.

Inf. 7. If there be such an union betwixt Christ and the saints, as hath been described, upon what comfortable terms then may believers part with their bodies at death?

Christ your Head is risen, therefore you cannot be lost: nay, he is not only risen from the dead himself, but is also “become the first-fruits of them that slept,” 1 Cor. xv. 20. Believers are his members, his fulness, he cannot therefore be complete without you: a part of Christ cannot perish in the grave †, much less burn in hell. Remember, when you feel the natural union dissolving, that this mystical union can never be dissolved: the pangs of death cannot break this tie. And as there is a peculiar excellency in the believer’s life, so there is a singular support, and peculiar comfort in his death; “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” Phil. i. 21.

* Agesilaus was wont to say, That he very much wondered, that those were not reckoned up in the number of sacrilegious persons, who injured those who made supplication to God, or worshipped him: By which he signified, that not only those should be reckoned injurious, who robbed the gods themselves, or their temples, but even these chiefly who affronted their servants or heralds. *Æmyl. Prob.*

† To say that the temple of God, in which the Spirit of the Father dwells, the members of Christ, shall not partake of salvation, but be brought into perdition? what is it but the greatest blasphemy? *Iren. lib. 5.*

Inf. 8. If there be such an union betwixt Christ and believers, *How doth it concern every man to try and examine his state, whether he is really united with Christ or not, by the natural and proper effects which always flow from this union?* As,

First, The real communication of Christ's holiness to the soul. We cannot be united with this root, and not partake of the vital sap of sanctification from him; all that are planted into him, are planted into the likeness of his death, and of his resurrection, Rom. vi. 5, 6. viz. by mortification and vivification.

Secondly, They that are so nearly united to him, as members to the head, cannot but love him and value him above their own lives; as we see in nature, the hand and arm will interpose to save the head. The nearer the union, the stronger always is the affection.

Thirdly, The members are subject to the head. Dominion in the head must needs infer subjection in the members, Eph. v. 24. In vain do we claim union with Christ as our head, whilst we are governed by our own wills, and our lusts give us law.

Fourthly, All that are united to Christ do bear fruit to God, Rom. vii. 4. Fruitfulness is the next end of our union; there are no barren branches growing upon this fruitful root.

Inf. 9. *Lastly*, *How much are believers engaged to walk as the members of Christ, in the visible exercises of all those graces and duties, which the consideration of their near relation to him exacts from them.* As,

First, How contented and well pleased should we be with our outward lot, however providence hath cast it for us in this world? O do not repine, God hath dealt bountifully with you; upon others he hath bestowed the good things of this world; upon you, himself in Christ.

Secondly, How humble and lowly in spirit should you be under your great advancement! It is true, God hath magnified you greatly by this union, but yet do not swell. "You bear not the root, but the root you," Rom. xi. 18. You shine, but it is as the stars, with a borrowed light.

Thirdly, How zealous should you be to honour Christ, who hath put so much honour upon! Be willing to give glory to Christ, though his glory should rise out of your shame. Never reckon that glory that goes to Christ, to be lost to you: when you lie at his feet, in the most particular heart-breaking confessions of sin, yet let this please you, that therein you have given him glory.

Fourthly, How exact and circumspect should you be in all your ways, remembering whose you are, and whom you represent! Shall it be said, that a member of Christ was convicted of unrighteousness and unholy actions! God forbid. "If we say, we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie," 1 John i. 6.

“ And he that saith he abideth in him, ought also himself to walk even as he also walked,” 1 John ii. 6.

Fifthly, How studious should you be of peace among yourselves, who are so nearly united to such a Head, and thereby are made fellow-members of the same body! The Heathen world was never acquainted with such an argument as the apostle urges for unity, in Eph. iv. 3, 4.

Sixthly, and lastly, How joyful and comfortable should you be, to whom Christ, with all his treasures and benefits, is effectually applied in this blessed union of your souls with him! This brings him into your possession: O how great! how glorious a person do these little weak arms of your faith embrace!

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

SERMON III.

Of the Nature and Use of the Gospel-ministry, as an external Mean of applying CHRIST.

2 COR. V. 20.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

THE effectual application of Christ principally consists in our union with him; but, ordinarily, there can be no union without a gospel-tender, and an overture of him to our souls; for, “ How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?” Rom. x. 14.

If God be upon a design of espousing poor sinners to his Son, there must be a treaty in order to it; that treaty requires interlocation betwixt both the parties concerned in it; but such is our frailty, that, should God speak immediately to us himself, it would confound and overwhelm us: God therefore graciously condescends and accommodates himself to our infirmity, in treating with us in order to our union with Christ, by his *ambassadors*, and these not *angels*, whose converses we cannot bear, but *men* like ourselves, who are commissioned for the effecting of this great business betwixt Christ and us. “ Now then, we are ambassadors for God,” &c. In which words you have,

First, Christ's ambassadors commissioned.

Secondly, Their commission opened.