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THE FOUNTAIN OPENED

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS REVEALED

RICHARD SIBBES



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The Mystery Of Godliness Revealed

by Richard Sibbes

"And a Fountaine shall come forth of the House of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." - JOEL 3:18.

"He hath made knowne the Mysterie unto me, which in other ages was not made known unto the sonnes of men." - EPHES. 3:3.

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Introduction

And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up to glory.—1 TIM. 3:16.

THERE are two things that God values more than all the world besides—the church and the truth. The church, that is the 'pillar and ground of truth,' as it is in the former verse. The truth of religion, that is the seed of the church. Now the blessed apostle St Paul being to furnish his scholar Timothy to the ministerial office, he doth it from two grounds especially: from the dignity of the church, which he was to instruct and converse in; and from the excellency of the mysteries of the gospel, that excellent soul-saving truth. Hereupon he doth seriously exhort Timothy to take heed how he conversed in the church of God, in teaching the truth of God. The church of God, it

is 'the house of God,' a company of people that God cares for more than for all mankind besides, for whom the world stands, for whom all things are. 'It is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.' And for the truth of God, that must be taught in this church, that is so excellent a thing, that we see the blessed apostle here useth great words, high styles, lofty expressions concerning it. As the matter is high and great, so the holy apostle hath expressions suitable; a full heart breeds full expressions. As no man went beyond St Paul, in the deep conceit of his own unworthiness and of his state by nature, so there was no man reached higher in large and rich thoughts and expressions of the excellency of Christ, and the good things we have by him; as we see here, setting forth the excellency of the ministerial calling, being to deal with God's truth towards God's people, he sets forth evangelical truth gloriously here. 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh,' &c.

In these words, then, there is a preface; and then, a particular explication. There is a fountain or spring, and the streams issuing from it, the root and the branches. There is, as it were, a porch to this great house. Great buildings have fair entrances; so this glorious description of the mysteries of the gospel, it hath a fair porch and entry to it. 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.'

Then the fabric itself is parcelled out in six particulars:—

God manifested in the flesh.

Justified in the Spirit.

Seen of angels.

Preached unto the Gentiles.

Believed on in the world.

Received up to glory.

First, For the preface, whereby he makes way to raise up the spirit of Timothy, and in him us, unto a reverent and holy attending to the blessed mysteries that follow.

'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.'

In this preface, there is first the thing itself, 'godliness.'

Then the description of it, it is a 'mystery.'

And the adjunct, it is a 'great mystery.'

And then the seal of it, it is a great mystery 'without all controversy;' by the confession of all, as the word ὁμολογουμένως signifies. There are none that ever felt the power of godliness, but they have confessed it to be a 'great mystery.'

Godliness is a 'mystery,' and a 'great mystery;' and it is so under the seal of public confession. To observe somewhat from each of these.

'Godliness.'

1. Godliness is either the principles of Christian religion, or the inward disposition of the soul towards them, the inward holy affection of the soul. The word implieth both: for godliness is not only the naked principles of religion, but likewise the Christian affection, the inward bent of the soul, suitable to divine principles. There must be a godly disposition, carrying us to godly truths. That godliness includes the truths themselves, I need go no further than

the connection. In the last words of the former verse, the church is 'the pillar and ground of truth;' and then it follows, 'without controversy, great is the mystery'—he doth not say of truth, but—'of godliness;' instead of truth he saith godliness.

The same word implies the truths themselves, and the affection and disposition of the soul toward them. 'Truths,' to shew them that both must alway go together. Wheresoever Christian truth is known as it should be, there is a supernatural light. It is not only a godly truth in itself, but it is embraced with godly affections. These blessed truths of the gospel, they require and breed a godly disposition; the end of them is godliness; they frame the soul to godliness. Thus we see the truths themselves are godliness, carrying us to God and holiness. That I need not much stand on. But that there must be an affection answerable, and that this truth breeds this, is a little to be considered. Why is religion itself called faith, and the grace in the soul also called faith? To shew that faith, that is, the truth revealed (as we say the 'apostles' faith'), it breeds faith, and must be apprehended by faith. Therefore one word includes both the object, the thing believed, and likewise the disposition of the soul to that object. So here 'godliness' is the thing itself, the principles of religion; and likewise the disposition of the soul that those truths work, where they are entertained as they should be. Hence follows these other truths briefly.

1. First of all, That no truth breeds godliness and piety of life but divine truths; for that is called 'godliness,' because it breeds godliness. All the devices of men in the world cannot breed godliness. All is superstition, and not godliness, that is not bred by a divine truth.

2. Again, hence, in that divine truth is called godliness, it shews us, if we would be godly we must be so from reasons of Christianity; not, as I said, by framing devices of our own, as graceless foolish men do; as we see in popery, it is full of ceremonies of their own devising. But if we will be godly, it must be by reasons and motives from divine truth. That breeds godliness. It is but a bastard godliness, a bastard religion, that is from a good intention, without a good ground. Therefore the word implies both the tenet, the doctrine, and the frame of soul answerable to that doctrine. Good principles, without an impression of it on the soul, is nothing. It will but help us to be damned; and godliness, without a frame of doctrine, is nothing but superstition. Godliness in doctrine frames the soul to godliness in conversation. There are many that, out of a natural superstition (which is alway accompanied with a poisonous malicious disposition against the truth of God), they will have devices of their own; and those they will force with all their power. But if we will be godly, it must be from reasons fetched from divine truth.

3. Again, hence we may fetch a rule of discerning when we are godly. What makes a true Christian? When he nakedly believes the grounds of divine truth, the articles of the faith, when he can patter* them over—doth that make a true Christian? No. But when these truths breed and work 'godliness.' For religion is a truth 'according to godliness,' not according to speculation only, and notion. Wheresoever these fundamental truths are embraced, there is godliness with them; a man cannot embrace religion in truth, but he must be godly. A man knows no more of Christ and divine things, than he values and esteems and affects, † and brings the whole inward man into a frame, to be like the things. If these things work not godliness, a man hath but a human knowledge of divine things; if they carry not the soul to trust in God, to hope in God, to fear God, to

embrace him, to obey him, that man is not yet a true Christian; for Christianity is not a naked knowledge of the truth, but godliness.

Religious evangelical truth is 'wisdom;' and wisdom is a knowledge of things directing to practice. A man is a wise man, when he knows so as to practise what he knows. The gospel is a divine wisdom, teaching practice as well as knowledge. It works godliness, or else a man hath but a human knowledge of divine things. Therefore, he that is godly, he believes aright and practiseth aright. He that believes ill can never live well, for he hath no foundation. He makes an idol of some conceit he hath, besides the word; and he that lives ill, though he believe well, shall be damned too. Therefore a Christian hath godly principles out of the gospel, and a godly carriage suitable to those principles. And indeed, there is a force in the principles of godliness, from God's love in Christ, to stir up to godliness. The soul that apprehends God's truth aright cannot but be godly. Can a man know God's love in Christ incarnate, and Christ's suffering for us, and his sitting at the right hand of God for us, the infinite love of God in Christ, and not be carried in affection back to God again, in love and joy and true affiance, and whatsoever makes up the respect of godliness? It cannot be. Therefore it is not a cold, naked apprehension, but a spiritual knowledge, when the soul is stirred up to a suitable disposition and carriage, that makes godliness. Now this godliness is

'A Mystery.'

What is a mystery?

The word signifies a hidden thing. It comes of *muein*,[‡] which is, to shut or stop the mouth from divulging. As they had their mysteries among the heathen, in their temples, which they must not discover,

therefore there was an image before the temple with his finger before his mouth, shewing that they must be silent in the discovery of hidden mysteries. Indeed, the mysteries of the heathens were so shameful, that they did well to forbid the discovery of them. But I speak only to unfold the nature of the word, which is to shut, or keep secret.

1. A mystery is a secret, not only for the present, but that it was a secret, though it be now revealed; for the gospel is now discovered. It is called a mystery, not so much that it is secret, but that it was so before it was revealed.

2. In the second place, that is called a mystery in the Scripture which, howsoever it be clear for the manifestation of it, yet the reasons of it are hid. As the conversion of the Gentiles, that there should be such a thing, why God should be so merciful to them, it is called a mystery. So the calling of the Jews, it is called a mystery, though the thing be revealed. Yet that God should be so wondrous merciful to them, that is a mystery. When there is any great reason that we cannot search into the depth of the thing, though the thing itself be discovered, that is a mystery; as the conversion both of Jews and Gentiles.

3. In the third place, a mystery in Scripture is taken for that that is a truth hid, and is conveyed by some outward thing. Marriage is a mystery, because it conveys the hidden spiritual marriage between Christ and his church. The sacraments are mysteries, because in the one, under bread and wine, there is conveyed to us the benefits of Christ's body broken and his blood shed; and in the other, under water, a visible outward thing, there is signified the blood of Christ.

In a word—to cut off that which is not pertinent—mystery in Scripture is either the general body of religion, or the particular branches of it. The general body of religion is called a mystery in this

place. The whole Christian religion is nothing but a continued mystery, a continuation of mysteries, a chaining together of mystery upon mystery.

And then the particular branches are called mysteries, as I said before. The conversion of the Jews, and likewise of the Gentiles, before it was accomplished, it was a mystery. So the union between Christ and the church is a great mystery, Eph. 5:25; but the whole gospel is here meant, as Christ saith, Mark 4:11, 'The mysteries of the kingdom of God,' that is, the description of the gospel. What is the gospel? The mystery of God's kingdom, of Christ's kingdom—a mystery discovering how Christ reigns in his church, and a mystery of bringing us to that heavenly kingdom. So, then, the whole evangelical truth is a mystery.

For these reasons:

1. First of all, Because it was hid and concealed from all men, till God brought it out of his own bosom: first to Adam in paradise, after the fall; and still more clearly afterwards to the Jews; and in Christ's time more fully to Jews and Gentiles. It was hid in the breast of God. It was not a thing framed by angels or men. After man was fallen to that cursed state, this plot, of saving man by Christ, came not into the head of any creature, to satisfy justice by infinite mercy; to send Christ to die, that justice might be no loser. It could come from no other breast but God's. It must be a divine heavenly wisdom. Therefore it was a plot devised by the blessed Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It was hid in the secret closet of God's breast. Christ brought it out of the bosom of his Father. 'No man hath seen God at any time; Christ the only begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father,' John 1:18, he discovers the Father, and his meaning to mankind. Who ever could have thought of such a depth of mercy

unto fallen man, when God promised the blessed seed, Gen. 3:15, if God himself had not discovered it? Therefore this reconciling of justice and mercy, it is a mystery of heavenly wisdom that the creature could never think of, as it is excellently set down, 1 Cor. 2, through the whole chapter.

2. Again, It is a mystery; because when it was revealed, it was revealed but to few. It was revealed at the first but to the Jews: 'God is known in Jewry,' &c., Ps. 48:3. It was wrapped in ceremonies and types, and in general promises, to them. It was quite hid from most part of the world.

3. Again, When Christ came, and was discovered to the Gentiles, yet it is a mystery even in the church, to carnal men, that hear the gospel, and yet do not understand it, that have the veil over their hearts. It is 'hid to them that perish,' 2 Cor. 4:3, though it be never so open of itself to those that believe.

4. In the fourth place, It is a mystery, because though we see some part and parcel of it, yet we see not the whole gospel. We see not all, nor wholly. 'We see but in part, and know but in part,' 1 Cor. 13:9. So it is a mystery in regard of the full accomplishment.

5. Yea, and in the next place, it is a mystery, in regard of what we do not know, but shall hereafter know. How do we know divine truths now? In the mirror of the word and sacraments. We know not Christ by sight. That manner of knowledge is reserved for heaven. So here we know as it were in a kind of mystery. We see divine things wrapped up in the mirror of the word, and the mysteries of the sacraments. Indeed, this comparatively to the Jewish church is to 'see the face of God in Christ,' 2 Cor. 4:6—a clear sight, but compared to that we shall have, it is to see in a glass, or mirror. If we look back, it is a clear sight; if we look forward, it is a sight as it were in a

mystery. Even that little that we do know, we do not know it as we shall know it in heaven.

Quest. But is the doctrine of the gospel itself only a mystery?

Ans. No. All the graces are mysteries, every grace. Let a man once know it, and he shall find that there is a mystery in faith; that the earthly soul of man should be carried above itself, to believe supernatural truths, and to depend upon that he sees not, to sway the life by reasons spiritual; that the heart of man should believe; that a man in trouble should carry himself quietly and patiently, from supernatural supports and grounds, it is a mystery. That a man should be as a rock in the midst of a storm, to stand unmoveable, it is a mystery. That the carriage of the soul should be turned universally another way; that the judgment and affections should be turned backward, as it were; that he that was proud before should now be humble; that he that was ambitious before should now despise the vain world; that he that was given to his lusts and vanities before should now, on the contrary, be serious and heavenly-minded: here is a mystery indeed when all is turned backward. Therefore we see how Nicodemus, as wise as he was, it was a riddle to him when our blessed Saviour spake to him of the new birth, that a man should be wholly changed and new-moulded; that a man should be the same and not the same; the same man for soul and body, yet not the same in regard of a supernatural life and being put into him, carrying him another way, leading him in another manner, by other rules and respects, as much different from other men as a man differs from a beast. A strange mystery, that raiseth a man above other men, as much as another man is above other creatures. For a man to be content with his condition, in all changes and varieties, when he is cast and tossed up and down in the world, to have a mind unmoveable, it is a mystery. Therefore St Paul saith, Philip. 4:11, 12,

'I have entered into religion,' as it were, 'I have consecrated myself.' The word is wondrous significant. 'I have learned this mystery, to be content.' It is a mystery for a man to be tossed up and down, and yet to have a contented mind. 'I can want, and I can abound; I can do all through Christ that strengtheneth me.' Why? I have consecrated myself to Christ and religion, and from them I have learned this point, to be content. Therefore in the text here,—as we shall see afterwards,—not only divine truths are a mystery—'great is the mystery of godliness'—but he insists on particular graces, 'preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world:' these are mysteries.

In Christ, all is mysteries: two natures, God and man, in one person; mortal and immortal; greatness and baseness; infiniteness and finiteness, in one person.

The church itself is a mystical thing. For under baseness, under the scorn of the world, what is hid? A glorious people. The state of the church in this world, it is like a tree that is weather-beaten. The leaves and fruit are gone, but there is life in the root. So, what is the church? A company of men that are in the world without glory, without comeliness and beauty; yet notwithstanding, they have life in the root, a hidden life: 'Our life is hid with Christ, in God,' Col. 3:3. The church hath a life, but it is a hidden mystical life, a life under death. They seem to die to the world, but they are alive. This is excellently and theoretically followed by St Paul: 'As dying, and yet we live; as poor, yet making many rich,' 2 Cor. 6:9. A strange kind of people; poor and rich, living and dying, glorious and base. Yet this is the state of the church here in this world. They are an excellent people, but they are veiled under infirmities of their own, and the disgraces and persecutions of the world. So we see both the doctrine itself, and the graces, and the head of the church, and the church itself, are nothing but mysteries.

Use 1. Is it so that religion is a mystery? Then, first of all, do not wonder that it is not known in the world: and that it is not only not known, but persecuted and hated. Alas! it is a hidden thing. Men know not the excellency of it. As great men's sons in a foreign country, they find not entertainment answerable to their worth, but as they are apprehended to be by strangers: so these divine truths they find little acceptance in the world, because they are mysteries; not only mysteries in the tenet, but in the practice. Therefore the practice finds such opposition in the world: 'Father, forgive them,' saith our blessed Saviour, 'they know not what they do,' Luke 23:34. The world knows not what they do, when they hate and persecute religion and religious persons. The church is a mystical thing, and religion is a mystery. It is hid from them. Shall we be moved with the disgraceful speeches of carnal men? They speak they know not what. The thing they speak against is a mystery. Therefore what should we regard the speeches of the world, or follow the example of the world, in embracing religion? Religion is a mystery. Let the world be never so great, it is not the knowledge of great men, or of rich men, it is the knowledge of godly men; it is a 'mystery of godliness.' Shall we follow the example of the world in religion when it is a mystery, and a mystery 'of godliness,' that only godly men know and embrace? Look not, therefore, to the greatness of place, or parts, &c. It is a mystery.

Use 2. Again, If it be a mystery, then it should teach us to carry ourselves suitable to it. Nature taught even the heathens to carry themselves reverently in their mysteries; *Procul este profani*, Away, begone all profane (a). Let us carry ourselves therefore reverently toward the truth of God, towards all truths, though they be never so contrary to our reason. They are mysteries altogether above nature. There are some seeds of the law in nature, but there are no seeds in nature of the gospel. Therefore we should come to it with a great deal of reverence. St Paul teacheth us an excellent lesson, Rom. 11:33.

When he entered into a depth that he could not fathom, doth he cavil at it? No. 'Oh the depth! Oh the depth!' So in all the truths of God, when we cannot comprehend them, let us with silence reverence them, and say with him, 'Oh the depth!' Divine things are mysteries; the sacraments are mysteries. Let us carry ourselves towards them with reverence. What is the reason that there is one word in the Greek (*b*) and in other languages to signify both common and profane? Because those that come with common affections and common carriage to holy things, they profane them; because as the things are great, so they require a suitable carriage, not a common carriage. We profane the sacrament if we take the bread and wine as a common feast; as St Paul saith, 'You discern not the Lord's body,' 1 Cor. 11:29. We profane mysteries when we discern not. Beasts and beast-like men discern not the relation of things; that these outward elements have reference to great matters, to the body and blood of Christ. They do not discern them from common bread and wine, though they be used to raise up our souls to the bread of life.

So likewise when we come to the word of God, and 'look not to our feet,' Eccles. 5:1, but come to the church as if we went to a play or some common place, without prayer, without preparation; when we come with common affections, this is to come profanely. Here we come to mysteries, to high things, to great matters. Therefore when we come to converse with God we must not come with common affections; we must carry ourselves holily, in holy business, or else we offer to God 'strange fire,' Num. 26:61. 'God was in this place,' saith Jacob, 'and I was not aware of it,' Gen. 28:17. So when we come to hear the word, when we go to pray, when we receive the sacrament, God is here, and mysteries are here, and we are not aware of it. It is a shame for us not to labour to bring suitable dispositions. It is a matter of that consequent, life or death depends upon it. You know what St Paul saith, 1 Cor. 11:30, 'For this very cause some are

sick, and some weak, and some sleep,' some die. Why? For coming with common affection, for 'not discerning the Lord's body,' for not examining ourselves, for not having answerable dispositions to the greatness of the mysteries we go about. Let us not think it enough to come to the sacrament, and then let the reins loose to all kind of vanity. The very heathens would be ashamed of that. It is the bane and blemish of religion, and such a thing for which we may fear that God will give whole Christendom a purge, I mean, for our excess.

There is a lawful use of feasting* and comely recreations; but to come with unjustifiable vanities, that are not fit at any time, when we should honour God for the greatest gift that ever was, for the incarnation of his Son; to be more profanely disposed then, and to give ourselves to more loose courses than at other times, how can it but provoke the justice of God, especially it being common? Amongst other things we may justly look for the vengeance of God for this, not only upon this or that place, for it is the fault of Christendom. Shall we carry ourselves thus profanely at these times, when we should walk in a holy disposition? Is this the way to be thankful to God? Let us labour to entertain and embrace these mysteries of the gospel as we should, with a suitable carriage to them; for the gospel will no longer tarry than it hath suitable love and affections to the greatness of the thing. The gospel may leave us, we know not how soon, and go to people that are as barbarous as we were before the gospel came to us. The Romans thought they had victory tied to them, but we have not these mysteries of the gospel tied to us. If we labour not for an answerable carriage, as God hath removed the gospel from the Eastern churches of Asia, that are under the tyranny of the Turks now, so he may, and we know not how soon, take away these blessed and glorious mysteries. Let us reverence these mysteries and bless God for them, and labour to express our thankfulness in our lives and conversations, that God may delight to continue with us, and

continue his blessed truth among us. Do but conceive in your own selves what equity is it, that truths should be obtruded to men that care not for them; that live under the mysteries of the gospel with as much liberty to the flesh as if they had never heard of it; that their lives are not better than pagans, perhaps worse. When these things grow general, will God continue these mysteries to us, when there is such a disproportion of affection and carriage? Judge of these things. God should deal justly with us if he should leave us to the darkness of Gentilism, and popery, and confusion, and carry the gospel further west still, to a people that never heard of it, where it should have better entertainment than it hath had of us. I beseech you, let us labour to carry ourselves answerable to this blessed and great mystery, if we would have it continued longer among us.

Use 3. Again, Are these things mysteries, great mysteries? Let us bless God, that hath revealed them to us, for the glorious gospel. Oh, how doth St Paul, in every epistle, stir up people to be thankful for revealing these mysteries? What cause have the Gentiles, that were 'in the shadow of death' before, to be thankful to God? What kind of nation were we in Julius Cæsar's time? As barbarous as the West Indians. The cannibals were as good as we (c). We that were so before, not only to be civilized by the gospel, but to have the means of salvation discovered, what cause have we to be enlarged to thankfulness? And shall we shew our thankfulness in provoking his majesty? There is nothing in the world that is a ground of that thankfulness, as the glorious gospel, that brings such glorious things as it doth. Men are thankful to men for teaching and discovering the mysteries of their trades, and shall God discover the great mysteries of the gospel of Christ, and shall not we be thankful? Are there not thousands that 'sit in darkness?' Is. 42:7. The Romish Church, is it not under the 'mystery of iniquity?' 2 Thes. 2:7. And that we should have the glorious mysteries of the gospel revealed to us; that the veil

should be taken off, and we should see 'the face of God in Christ,' 2 Cor. 4:6; what a matter of thankfulness is it to all gracious hearts that ever felt comfort by it!

Use 4. Again, It is a mystery. Therefore it should teach us likewise not to set upon the knowledge of it with any wits or parts of our own, to think to search into it merely by strength of wit and study of books, and all human helps that can be. It is a mystery, and it must be unveiled by God himself, by his Spirit. If we set upon this mystery only with wits and parts of our own, then what our wits cannot pierce into, we will judge it not to be true, as if our wits were the measure of divine truth; so much as we conceive is true, and so much as we cannot conceive is not true. What a pride is this in flesh, in worms of the earth, that will make their own apprehensions and conceits of things the measure of divine truth, as heretics heretofore have done? It was the fault of the schoolmen in later times. They would come with their logic only and strong wits, and such learning as those dark times afforded, to speak of grace, of the gospel, of justification. They spake of it, and distinguished in a mere metaphysical and carnal manner. Therefore they brought only human learning. They were furnished with Plato and other natural learning, and with these they thought to break through all the mysteries in religion. We must not struggle with the difficulties of religion with natural parts.

It is a mystery. Now therefore it must have a double veil took off: a veil from the thing, and the veil from our eyes. It is a mystery in regard of the things themselves, and in regard of us. It is not sufficient that the things be lightsome that are now revealed by the gospel, but there must be that taken from our hearts that hinders our sight. The sun is a most glorious creature, the most visible object of the world. What is that to a blind man that hath scales on his eyes? So divine truth is glorious. It is light in itself, but there are scales on

the eyes of the soul. There is a film that must be taken off, there is a veil over the heart, as St Paul saith of the Jews; therefore they could not see the scope of Moses directing all to Christ. Naturally there is a veil over men's hearts, and that is the reason, that though they have never so many parts, and the things be light in themselves, yet they cannot see. Therefore I say the veil must be taken both from the things and from our hearts; that light being shed into lightsome hearts, both may close together.

Use 5. Again, Being a mystery, it cannot be raised out of the principles of nature, it cannot be raised from reasons.

Quest. But hath reason no use, then, in the gospel?

Ans. Yes. Sanctified reason hath, to draw sanctified conclusions from sanctified principles. Thus far reason is of use in these mysteries, to shew that they are not opposite to reason. They are above reason, but they are not contrary to it, even as the light of the sun it is above the light of a candle, but it is not contrary to it. The same thing may be both the object of faith and of reason. The immortality of the soul, it is a matter of faith, and it is well proved by the heathen by the light of reason. And it is a delightful thing to the soul in things that reason can conceive of to have a double light, for the more light the more comfort; to have both the light of nature, and the light of grace and of God's Spirit.

That which reason should do here is to stoop to faith in things that are altogether above reason, as to conceive Christ in the womb of a virgin, the joining of two natures in one, the trinity of persons in one divine nature, and such like. Here it is the greatest reason to yield reason to faith. Faith is the reason of reasons in these things, and the greatest reason is to yield to God that hath revealed them. Is not here the greatest reason in the world, to believe him that is truth itself?

He hath said it, therefore reason itself saith, it is the greatest reason to yield to God, who is truth itself. Therefore faith stands with the greatest reason that can be. For things have a greater being in God's word than in themselves, and faith is above reason. Therefore it is the reason of reasons to believe when we have things revealed in the word. That is one use of reason in mysteries, to stop the mouths of gainsayers by reason, to shew that it is no unreasonable thing to believe.

Use 6. Again, Seeing it is a mystery, let no man despair. It is not the pregnancy of the scholar here that carries it away. It is the excellency of the teacher. If God's Spirit be the teacher, it is no matter how dull the scholar is. It is a mystery. Pride in great parts is a greater hindrance than simplicity in meaner parts. Therefore Christ, in Mat. 11:25, he glorifies God that he had revealed 'these things to the simple,' and concealed them from the proud. Let no man despair, for the statutes of God 'give understanding to the simple,' Ps. 19:7, as the psalmist saith. God is such an excellent mighty teacher, that where he finds no wit he can cause wit.* He hath a privilege above other teachers. He doth not only teach the thing, but he gives wit and understanding. It is a mystery. Therefore as none should be so proud as to think to break thorough it with wit and parts, so let none despair, considering that God can raise shallow and weak wits to apprehend this great mystery.

Use 7. It is a mystery, therefore take heed of slighting of divine truths. The empty shallow heads of the world make great matters of trifles, and stand amazed at baubles and vanities, and think it a grace to slight divine things. This great mystery of godliness they despise. That which the angels themselves stand in wonderment at and are students in, that the wits of the world they slight and despise, or dally withal, as if it were a matter not worth reckoning. But I leave such to

reformation, or to God's just judgment, that hath given them up to such extremity of madness and folly. Let us labour to set a high price on the mysteries of godliness.

Quest. How shall we come to know this mystery as we should, and to carry ourselves answerable?

Ans. We must desire God to open our eyes, that as the light hath shined, as the apostle saith, Titus 2:11, 'the grace of God hath shined;' as there is a lightsomeness in the mysteries, so there may be in our eye. There is a double light required to all things in nature,—the lightsomeness in the medium, and in the sight; so here, though the mysteries be now revealed by preaching and books and other helps, yet to see this mystery and make a right use of it, there is required a spiritual light to join with this outward light. And hence comes a necessity of depending upon God's Spirit in conversing in this mystery. There must be an using of all helps and means, or else we tempt God. We must read and hear, and, above all, we must pray, as you see David in Ps. 119:18, 'Open mine eyes, Lord, that I may see wonders in thy law.' There are wonders in thy law, but my eyes must be opened to see them. He had sight before, but he desires still a further and clearer sight; and as the poor man in the gospel that cried after Christ, when he was asked, 'What wouldst thou have? Lord, that mine eyes might be opened,' Mat. 20:33, so should every one of us,—considering it is such a ravishing mystery,—cry after God and Christ, 'Lord, that my eyes might be opened, that I may see wonders in thy law;' that I may see the wonders in thy gospel, 'the unsearchable riches of Christ,' Eph. 3:8. Therefore it is that St Paul, in Eph. 1:17 and Eph. 3:3, he prays for 'the Spirit of revelation,' that God would vouchsafe that Spirit to take away the veil of ignorance and unbelief from our souls that we may see; and as it is Eph. 3:18, 'that we may comprehend the height, and breadth, and length, and

depth,' and all the dimensions of God's love in Christ. This must be done by the Spirit of God, for as St Paul divinely reasons in 1 Cor. 2:11, 'Who knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God?' Therefore we must plough with God's heifer. If we would know the things of the Spirit, we must have the same Spirit.

Now the Spirit doth not only teach the truths of the gospel, but the application of those truths, that they are ours. This truth of the gospel is mine, the sacrament seals it to me. The preaching of the word takes away the veil from the things, and the Spirit takes away the veil from our souls. It is the office of the Spirit to take the veil off the heart, and to lighten our understandings; and likewise to be a Spirit of application to us in particular. It is to no purpose to know that these things are mysteries, unless they be for us and for our good, that we know Christ is ours, and that God is reconciled to us. Therefore, saith the apostle, 'he hath given us the Spirit, to know the things that are given us of God' in particular, Rom. 5:5. So the Spirit doth not only bring a blessed light to the Scriptures and shew us the meaning in general, but it is a Spirit of application, to bring home those gracious promises to every one in particular, to tell us the things that are given us of God; not only the things that are given to the church, but to us in particular. For the Spirit of God will tell us what is in the breast of God, his secret good-will to the church; he loves the church and he loves thee, saith the Spirit: therefore he is called an 'earnest' and a 'seal' in our hearts, because he discovers not only the truth at large, but he discovers the truth of God's affection in all the privileges of the gospel,—that they belong to us. What a blessed discovery is this, that not only reveals divine truths to us, but reveals them so to us, that we have our share and interest in them!

1. Therefore, whensoever we take the Book of God into our hands, when we come to hear the word, beg of God the Spirit: 'My house,'

saith God, 'shall be called the house of prayer,' Isa. 56:7; not only the house of hearing of divine truths, but the house of prayer. In the use of means, we must look up to God and Christ. It is impudency and presumption to come to these things without lifting up our souls to God. Therefore there is so little profit under these glorious mysteries, because there is so little prayer and lifting up the heart to God. We should go to Christ, that 'opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens,' Rev. 3:7. He hath the key of David. Go to him, therefore, that he would both open the mysteries and open our hearts, that they may close with them.

In Rev. 5:4, St John wept when the book with 'seven seals' could not be opened. He wept that the prophecy was so obscure, that it could not be understood; but then Christ takes the book and opens it. So when we cannot understand divine mysteries, let us groan and sigh to Christ. He can open the book with seven seals, and he lays open all the mysteries as far forth as it concerns us to know. God's children grieve when things are not discovered to them.

There is a contrary disposition in God's people to carnal papists. They vex, that mysteries should be discovered. God's people grieve that they are not discovered enough. They make a perverse use of this. Divine truths are mysteries; therefore they may not be published to people. Nay, divine truths are mysteries; therefore they must be unfolded. Hence comes the necessity of the ministry; for if the gospel be a mystery, that is, a hidden kind of knowledge, then there must be some to reveal it. God hath therefore stablished an office in the church, with which he joins his own sacred Spirit, that both ordinance and Spirit joining together, the veil may be taken off: 'How can they understand without a teacher?' Rom. 10:14. And 'to us is committed the dispensation to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ,' saith St Paul, Eph. 3:6–8. Therefore there is this ordinance to

unfold these depths as much as may serve for us. Profane people, they think they know enough, they need not be taught; as if this were a shallow mystery, or none at all. It argues a profane and naughty heart, not to attend upon all sanctified means; all is little enough. And sometimes God will not grant his Spirit in one means, because he will make us go to another, and from that to another, and run thorough all. He denies his Spirit of purpose in hearing, because he will have us to read; and denies it in that, because he will have us confer and practise the communion of saints; and all little enough to apprehend this glorious, excellent mystery. A man may know a profane heart, therefore, by despising the improvement of any means of knowledge. It is a mystery. Therefore God's people desire to have it taught.

2. Again, If we would understand these mysteries, let us labour for humble spirits; for the Spirit works that disposition in the first place: 'The humble, God will teach,' Ps. 25:9; the humble, that will depend upon his teaching. Now this kind of humility here required, it is a denial of our own wits,* though they be never so capacious for the things of the world. We must be content 'to become fools, that we may be wise,' 1 Cor. 4:10. We must deny our own understandings, and be content to have no more understanding in divine things than we can carry out of God's book, than we can be taught by God's word and ordinances. This humility we must bring if we will understand this mystery.

3. And bring withal a serious desire to know, with a purpose to be moulded to what we know; to be delivered to the obedience of what we know; for then God will discover it to us. Wisdom is easy to him that will. Together with prayer and humility, let us but bring a purpose and desire to be taught, and we shall find divine wisdom easy to him that will. None ever miscarry in the church but those that

have false hearts. They have not humble and sincere hearts, willing to be taught. For if they have that, then God, that hath given this sincerity and will, this resolution, that they will use the means and they will be taught, he will suit it with teachers. God usually suits men with teachers fit for their dispositions. Let a man have a naughty[†] heart, and he shall find flatterers to build him up in all violent and naughty courses. God in judgment will give him teachers that shall suit his disposition. But if he be a child of God, and have a sincere heart to know the truth, he shall meet with some that shall be as sincere again to tell him the truth. Therefore we should less pity men when we see them run into errors. God sees that they have naughty dispositions; indeed, if they be silly fools, God will have mercy on them, if they be sincere, though they be in error; but if we see men that may know the truth, and yet run into errors, know that such a man hath a poisonous heart, a malicious bent of heart against the truth, or else God would not give him up to such and such things as he is carried with. There is much in that man's disposition that is carried away with false teachers; I mean, where light is discovered. But where God gives a willing mind, there he opens his meaning. Wisdom is easy to him that will understand.

4. And take heed of passion and prejudice, of carnal affections that stir up passion; for they will make the soul that it cannot see mysteries that are plain in themselves. As we are strong in any passion, so we judge; and the heart, when it is given up to passion, it transforms the truth to its own self, as it were. Even as where there is a suffusion of the eye, as in the jaundice, or the like, it apprehends colours like itself; so when the taste is vitiated, it tastes things, not as they are in themselves, but as itself is. So the corrupt heart transforms this sacred mystery to its own self, and oftentimes forceth Scripture to defend its own sin, and the corrupt state it is in. It will believe what it list. What it loves, it will force itself to believe,—

although it be contrary to divine mysteries,—when the heart is deeply engaged in any passion or affection. Let us labour therefore to come with purged hearts (it is the exhortation of the apostles James and Peter*) to receive these mysteries: they will lodge only in clean hearts. Let us labour to see God and Christ with a clear eye, free from passion, and covetousness, and vainglory. We see a notable example of this in the scribes. When they were not led with passion, and covetousness, and envy against Christ, how right they could judge of the gospel, and the unfolding of the prophecies to the wise men. They could tell aright that he should be born in Bethlehem. But when Christ came among them, and opposed their lazy, proud kind of life, that kept people in awe with their ceremonies, &c., then they sinned against the Holy Ghost, and against their own light, and maliced † Christ, and brought him to his end. So it is with men. When their minds be clear, before they be overcast with passion, and strong affections to the world, they judge clearly of divine things; but when those passions prevail with them, they are opposite to that truth that before they saw, in God's just judgment, such is the antipathy and emulation of the heart against this sacred mystery. The heart of itself is an unfit vessel for these holy mysteries; let us desire God to purge and to cleanse them. It is said of the Pharisees in the gospel, that when Christ spake great matters they scoffed at him. But what saith the text? Luke 16:14, 'They were covetous.' Let a covetous proud man come to hear the word: he cares not to hear these mysteries. His heart is so engaged to the world, he scorns and laughs at all. And men are unsettled. Sometimes they will grant truths, sometimes they will not, as their passions lead them. As we see in them towards St Paul, Acts 22:11, before he discovered himself to be a Pharisee, 'This man is not worthy to live.' But when he discovered himself on their side, 'I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee,' Acts 23:6. Oh how finely do they mince the matter! 'Perhaps an angel hath revealed it to him,' &c., ver. 9. He was an honest man then. So men either judge or

not judge, as their passions and affections carry them. Therefore it is of great consequence to come with clean hearts and minds to the mysteries of God.

There is besides this mystery, a mystery of iniquity, that St Paul speaks of, 2 Thes. 2:7. There is the mystery of antichrist, as well as the mystery of Christ.

Quest. And why is that called a mystery?

Ans. Because there is mischief, and error, and wickedness conveyed under seeming truth, and goodness, and virtue; even as in this, grace and goodness is conveyed to the world under a show of baseness and meanness. Therefore in Rev. 17:5, it is said, the beast hath 'mystery' in her forehead. Indeed, there is the 'mystery of iniquity' in popery. It was literally performed in Julius the Second; for in his papal crown there was written 'Mysterium,' &c., till at last it was blotted out, and instead thereof was written, 'Julius secundus papa' (d). They began to smell it might be found out. This is recorded by those that saw it. It is a mystery indeed, but a 'mystery of iniquity.' But more particularly;—

Quest. How a mystery of iniquity?

Ans. Because, under the name of Christ and of Christian religion, he is antichrist, opposite to Christ. He is both opposite—the word signifieth antichrist—and emulus, one that would be like Christ, a vice-Christ. He is such an opposite as yet he would be his vicar. Under colour of religion he overthrows all religion; and while he would be head of the catholic church, he is head of the catholic apostasy.

These God will have in the church together—the mystery of godliness and ungodliness, of Christ and antichrist. Why? That the one may be a foil to the other. And how shall men magnify, and relish, and highly esteem this mystery I speak of, except they look by way of opposition to the mystery of antichrist, and see how contrary those courses are? Alas! the reason why they so oppose as they do the gospel, and the purity of it, is, because they are contrary mysteries. That must be maintained by ignorance. The gospel, that is a mystery, that must be revealed; and God hath ordained that it should be revealed more and more. Therefore those that would second popery, that are friends of that, they are enemies to the gospel, and to the publishers of it; they cannot carry their conveyance handsomely.* All popish spirits are enemies to the mystery of godliness, because where this is, it blows upon the 'mystery of iniquity;' as indeed the overthrowing of error is the discovering of it; for none would willingly be cozened. Popery must be discovered with the breath of Christ; that is, with a mystery which is too sharp a breath for his mystery to feel. Therefore blame them not, that they are so bitter opposites to the publishing of divine truths; the one mystery consumes the other. As Moses' rod devoured all the other rods, so truth eats up all opposite errors whatsoever. See but in experience. Wheresoever truth is planted—the gospel and ordinances, and religion of God—how Satan 'falls down like lightning,' and antichrist falls, Luke 10:18. But this by the way, to give a lustre to the other. There are many other mysteries besides the mystery of iniquity in popery. Every trade hath its mystery; and there are mysteries and secrets of state. But this is the mystery of all mysteries, that we should give ourselves most of all to understand.

'Great Mystery.'

1. That is the adjunct. It is a 'great mystery.' And here I might be endless; for it is not only great as a mystery—that is, there is much of it concealed—but it is a great and excellent mystery, if we regard whence it came, from the bosom of God, from the wisdom of God. If we regard all that had any hand in it—God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the angels attending upon the church; the apostles, the penmen; preachers and ministers, the publishers of it—it is a 'great mystery.'

2. If we regard the end of it, to bring together God and man—man that was fallen, to bring him back again to God, to bring him from the depth of misery to the height of all happiness; a 'great mystery' in this respect.

3. Again, It is 'great,' for the manifold wisdom that God discovered in the publishing of it, by certain degrees: first, in types, then after he came to truths; first, in promises, and then performances. First, the Jews were the church of God; and then comes in the Gentiles: a sweet, manifold, and deep wisdom. It was a great mystery in the manner of conveying of it from time to time, from the beginning of the world.

4. Again, It is a great mystery, for that it works. For it is such a mystery as is not only a discovery of secrets, but it transforms those that know it and believe it. We are transformed by it to the likeness of Christ, of whom it is a mystery; to be as he is, full of grace. It hath a transforming, changing power. It gives spiritual sight to the blind, and spiritual ears to the deaf, and spiritual life to the dead. Whatsoever Christ did in the days of his flesh to the outward man, that he doth by his Spirit to the inward man, even by the publication of this mystery; wonders are wrought by it daily.

5. If we consider any part of it: Christ, or his church, or anything, it is a mystery, and a 'great mystery.' It must needs be great, that the very angels desire to pry into, 1 Pet. 1:12.

6. If we regard those that could not pry into it; as it is 1 Cor. 2:6, 8, that the wise men of the world understood nothing of it: 'Where is the philosopher?' &c. There are no parts in the world that could ever enter into this. It is above the sharpest wit, the deepest judgment, the reachingest head. They are all nothing here. It is a 'great mystery.' It is a depth above all depths of natural parts whatsoever. It is a wondrous depth. It hath all dimensions, 'the depth and height of the love of God in Christ,' and the 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' saith the apostle Paul.*

7. Again, it is a great mystery, because it makes us great. It makes times great, and the persons great that live in those times. What made John Baptist greater than all the prophets and others in those times? Because he saw Christ come in the flesh. What made those after John Baptist greater than he? They saw Christ ascend gloriously; that John Baptist did not. So persons and times are more or less glorious, as they have greater or less manifestation of this mystery. Great is that mystery itself that makes all things great; that makes times and persons great. What made the times of Christ so great? 'Happy are the eyes that see that that your eyes see, and the ears that hear that that your ears hear,' Mat. 13:16. Why? Because the Messiah was come. What made the second temple greater than the first? The first, which was Solomon's temple, was more magnificent than the other. Oh it was because Christ came in the time of the second temple and taught there. So it is the manifestation of Christ's truth that makes times and places glorious. Will he not make the soul glorious then where he is? Certainly he doth. What makes these times glorious? But that we have unthankful, dark hearts, or else we

would acknowledge they are blessed times that all of us have lived in under the gospel. What makes them so glorious? The glorious gospel that shines in these times out of Egyptian darkness of popery. Little thankful are we for it, and that threateneth a removal of the gospel; for, being great things, and disesteemed, and undervalued—men living under the gospel as bad as under paganism—will God continue these great things among us, to be thus vilified and disesteemed?

Let us take heed therefore that we set a higher price on religion. It is a mystery, and a great mystery; therefore it must have great esteem. It brings great comfort and great privileges. It is the 'word of the kingdom.' It is a 'glorious gospel;' not only because it promiseth glory, but it makes the soul glorious, more excellent than other persons. Let us raise a greater esteem in our hearts of this excellent truth. It is a 'great mystery.'

8. Again, It is a great mystery, if compared to all other mysteries. Creation was a great mystery, for all things to be made out of nothing, order out of confusion; for God to make man a glorious creature of the dust of the earth, it was a great matter. But what is this in comparison for God to be made man? It was a great and wondrous thing for Israel to be delivered out of Egypt and Babylon; but what are those to the deliverance out of hell and damnation by the gospel? What are the mysteries of nature, the miracles of nature, the loadstone, &c., to these supernatural mysteries? There are mysteries in the providence of God, in governing the world, mysteries of Satan, mysteries of iniquity, that deceive the world. 'The wise men of the world all wonder at the beast,' Rev. 13:3, a great mystery. But what are all mysteries, either of nature or hell, to this 'great mystery'? I might be endless in the point.

Use 1. First of all, learn hence from blessed St Paul how to be affected when we speak and think of the glorious truth of God; that we should work upon our hearts, to have large thoughts and large expressions of it. St Paul thought it not sufficient to call it a mystery, but a great mystery. He doth not only call it 'riches,' but unsearchable riches.' So when he speaks of the fruits of the gospel, what strange words the Scripture hath: 'Peace of conscience that passeth understanding,' Philip. 4:7; and, 'joy unspeakable and glorious,' 1 Peter 1:8; 'we are brought out of darkness into marvellous light,' 1 Peter 2:9; as if all things were full of wonder in the gospel, both the thing and the fruits of it. Surely all that have the same spirit, and have their eyes open to see in any measure these excellent mysteries, they are in some measure so disposed as the blessed apostle was; that is, they have full hearts, and answerable to that, they have full expressions. Out of the riches and treasure of the heart the mouth will speak. Therefore let us be ashamed of the deadness, and dulness, and narrowness of our hearts, when we are to conceive or speak of these things, and labour to have full expressions of them.

(1.) And that we may the better do this, let us labour to have as deep conceits in our understandings as we can of that mystery of sinfulness that is in us, and that mystery of misery. It is not to be conceived the cursed state we are in by nature. It is not to be conceived what a depth of corruption is in this heart of ours, and how it issues out in sinful thoughts, and speeches, and actions every day. Indeed, there is a height, and breadth, and depth of corruption in man's heart; and there is a height, and breadth, and depth of the misery of man. For as it is said of this blessed estate, 'neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for those that love him,' Isa. 64:4. So indeed, neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the misery that

men are in by nature; only there are some flashes of conscience, to give a little taste in this world, of that misery that men in the state of nature fall into, when they go hence. Therefore the more clear knowledge we have of the mystery of corruption—how prone our hearts are to deceive us—and of the great misery we are in by nature, the more we shall wonder at the boundless and bottomless goodness of God in the mystery of our salvation. The one will sharpen the appetite of the other. And, indeed, we ought to have views of these two every day, to look to the state we are brought out of if we believe. If we be not yet in the state of grace, consider but what we are, how little there is between us and eternal destruction, that we are ready to drop into hell irrecoverably; and withal, consider again the infinite love of God in Jesus. These be things fit to take up our thoughts.

(2.) Again, If we would have large and sensible thoughts and apprehensions of these things, such as the blessed apostle, let us set some time apart to meditate of these things, till the heart be warmed; let us labour to fasten our thoughts, as much as we can, on them every day; to consider the excellency of this mystery of religion in itself, and the fruit of it in this world and in the world to come. It is a good employment; for from thence we shall wonder at nothing in the world besides. What is the reason that men are taken up with admiration of petty mysteries, of poor things? Because their thoughts were never raised up to higher considerations. A wise man will wonder at nothing, because he knows greater things than those objects presented to him, he hath seen greater measures than those; so it is with a wise Christian. Do you think he will stand wondering at great and rich men, at great places and honours, and such things? Indeed, he knows how to give that respect that is due. Alas!* he hath had greater matters in the eye of his soul, and hath what is great in this world to him, to whom the world itself is not great. What is great in this world to him to whom Christ is great; to whom heaven and

the mysteries of religion are great? All things else are little to him to whom these things are great. Christ took up his disciples, when they said, 'O, Master, what kind of stones are here?' Here are 'goodly stones and buildings' indeed. 'Oh,' saith Christ, 'are these the things you wonder at? I tell you, that not one stone shall be left upon another,' Mat. 24:2. So it is the nature of shallow men to wonder at the things of this world, to be taken with empty vain things. Are these the things we wonder at? If we would wonder, let us come to religion. There we have him 'whose name is Wonderful,' Isa. 9:6. Christ's name is Wonderful, because all is wonderful in Christ. He is wonderful in his person, in his offices, in the managing of them; to bring us to life by death, to glory by shame. He is wonderful in his government of his church, to govern by afflictions, by conforming us to himself, to bring us to glory; to perfect his work in abasement; to bring it low that he may raise it after. There are wonders every way in Christ, not only in himself, but in all his courses. There is 'peace that passeth understanding,' joy unspeakable and glorious. Religion will teach us what to admire[†] at. We see those that are under antichrist, under the mystery of iniquity, it is said, Rev. 17:8, 'They wonder at the beast.' Oh what a goodly order they have among them, one under another! What a wise fabric it is! What a linking together of things! All is wonderful. Indeed, it is fit for them to wonder at, that have not seen these wondrous mysteries of the gospel; but those that have spiritual eye-salve to enlighten the eye of their souls, to see these blessed mysteries how great they are, they will be far from wondering at any earthly thing, much less at the mystery of antichrist. It is a 'great mystery,' therefore,

Use 2. Let us bring great endeavours to learn it, and great respect towards it, and great love to God for it. Let every thing in us be answerable to this 'great mystery,' which is a 'great mystery.'

'Without Controversy'

It is so under the broad seal of public confession, as the word ὁμολογουμένως in the general signifies; by the confession of all, it is 'great.' It is a confessed truth, that the 'mystery of godliness is great.' As if the apostle had said, I need not give you greater confirmation; it is, without question or controversy, a great mystery.

Obj. What is more opposed than the mystery of godliness?

Ans. We must therefore take St Paul's meaning in a right sense. It is therefore 'a great mystery,' because it is controverted by so many great wits.* Were it altogether obvious and open, they would never controvert it. Upon these two reasons it is without controversy.

(1.) First, In itself, it is not to be doubted of. It is a great grounded truth, as lightsome and clear as if the gospel were written with a sunbeam, as one saith (e). There is nothing clearer and more out of controversy than sacred evangelical truths.

(2.) And as they are clear and lightsome in themselves, so they are apprehended of all God's people. However it be controverted by others, yet they are not considerable. All that are the children of the church, that have their eyes open, they confess it to be so, and wonder at it as a 'great mystery.' They without all doubt and controversy embrace it. Things are not so clear in the gospel that all that are sinful and rebellious may see whether they will or no. For then it were no great matter to have faith; it were no great matter to be a Christian; and then men could not be rebellious, because things would be so clear. Things are not so clear in the gospel that they take away all rebellion; and that it is not a grace to see that they are clear; to those that are disposed and have sanctified souls, they are 'without

controversy;' and things are said to be in Scripture as they are to those that are holily disposed. The immortality of the soul, it is clear by reason from nature, yet notwithstanding, ill-disposed souls will not be convinced of the soul's immortality, but live and die like atheists in that particular. The reason is clear; but it is not clear to a lumpish, ill-disposed, perverse soul. Therefore God doth carry the manifestation of evangelical truths especially, that they may be clear to those whose eyes are open, and not to others: not because they are not clear to them if their eyes were open, but because they oppose them, and raise up rebellion and stubbornness of heart against them. It is an undeniable argument to prove the Scripture to be the word of God, to a well-disposed soul, but come to another, and he will never leave cavilling. Yet a man may say, 'without controversy,' it is the word of God, because it is so to a sanctified soul. Other persons are not considerable in divine things. Therefore the apostle speaks of them, as they are to God's people, 'without controversy.' Hence then, we may know who is a true Christian; he that brings a firm assent to evangelical truths, that they are 'great without controversy.'

Quest. But is there no staggering, is there no *formido contrarii*?[†] Is there no fear that it may be otherwise?

Ans. Yes. But in faith, as far as it is faith, there is no doubting, no contrariety; for staggering and wavering is contrary to the nature of faith and believing. But because there are two contrary principles always in a believer, therefore there is doubting in a believer, and wavering. Therefore we are exhorted to grow more and more; and the end of the ministry is not only to lay the foundation of a believer at the first, but to build them up, that they be not carried away with every vain doctrine. It is a truth, confessed to be true; for divine truths are conveyed in an history, in the history of the gospel; and what ground have we to call them in question, more than the story of

Thucydides, or the story of Livy, or such like? We take them, because they are the histories of such times. So the mystery of the gospel is 'without controversy,' because it is a mystery in a history. In this respect a man is more unreasonable that denies it, than he that denies Livy's book to be Livy's, or Tacitus to be Tacitus. No man calls these into question. Why should we question this that is the 'mystery of godliness,' set down in the history of Christ, of his birth, his life, and death? &c. But not to press that further.

Use 1. I will only make that use of it that a great scholar in his time once did upon the point, a noble earl of Mirandula (f). If there be no calling these things into question, if they have been confirmed by so many miracles, as they have been in a strict sense, why then, How is it that men live as if they made no question of the falsehood of them? What kind of men are those that live as if it were 'without controversy,' that Christian truths had no truth at all in them? Men live so carelessly and profanely, and slight and scorn these great mysteries, as if they made no question but they are false (g). The lives of men shew that they believe not this. That it is out of the question true: to give an instance or two. If a man were to go through a storm for some great matter, if he did believe he should have some great preferment, would he not adventure? Certainly he would. Those, therefore, that will not venture anything for this excellent treasure, this unsearchable treasure, for his interest in the gospel, do they believe it? He that will not part with a penny for the gaining of a thousand pounds, doth he believe that he shall have so much? Certainly he doth not. There is such a disproportion between that that he parts with, and that that is promised, that if he did believe it, his heart would yield and assent to it, he would redeem it with the loss of such a petty thing; much more in this case, having such an excellent treasure propounded. Those, therefore, that will deny themselves no lust, that will part with nothing for Christ's sake, do

they believe these things that the apostle saith are 'without controversy'? Certainly they do not; for there is a less disproportion in the things I named before, than between any earthly thing and the great good things we have discovered here in the mysteries of salvation. Therefore, we may see by this, there is little faith in the world.

Use 2. Again, in that he saith, 'Without controversy,' or confessedly, 'great is the mystery of godliness:' here we may know then, what truths are to be entertained as catholic universal truths, those that without question are received. Then, if the question be, which is the catholic truth—popery, or our religion—I say, not popery, but our religion. I prove it from hence. That which 'without controversy,' all churches have held from the apostles' time (yea, and the adversaries and opposites of the church), that is catholic. But it hath been in all times, and in all churches, even among the adversaries held, the positive points of our religion, that the Scripture is the word of God; that it is to be read; that Christ is the mediator; that Christ hath reconciled God and man, &c.,—all the positive parts of our religion have been confessed, 'without controversy,' ever since the apostles' times, of all writers; and are still, even among the papists themselves, for they hold all the positive points that we do: they hold the reading of the Scripture, but not in the mother tongue; they hold that the Scripture is the word of God, but not alone, but traditions also; that Christ is mediator, but not alone. So they add their part, but they hold the positive parts that we hold. Therefore I ground that from the text: that which 'without controversy' hath been held in all times and ages of the church, and 'without controversy' held by ourselves and the adversaries, it is more catholic and general than those things wherein they dissent from us, that were neither held from the apostles' times (for they were the inventions of popes, one after another; their fooleries, wherein they differ from us, they are late

inventions, and we hold them not), they are less catholic than that that they and we and all Christians hold ever since the apostles' times. But to come to a use of practice.

Use 3. Therefore when we have the truths of religion discovered to us by the ministry, or by reading, &c., when they are conveyed to our knowledge by any sanctified means, let us propound these queries to our own souls, Are these things so or no? Yes. Do I believe them to be so or no? Yes. If I do believe them, then consider what the affection and inward disposition is; whether it be suitable to such things, and so work upon our hearts that our knowledge may be affective knowledge, a knowledge with a taste, that sinks even to the very affections, that pierceth through the whole soul; that the affections may yield, as well as the understanding; and let us never cease till there be a correspondence between the affection and the truth. Are they true? Believe them. Are they good? Embrace them. Let us never rest till our hearts embrace them, as our understanding conceives them. And let us think there is a defect in our apprehensions, that we call them into question, if the affections embrace them not; for always, answerable to the weight and the depth of the apprehension of the truth, is the affection stirred up, and the will stirred up to embrace it. A man knows no more in religion than he loves and embraceth with the affections of his soul.

The affections are planted for this end upon the report of that which is good to them, to embrace it, to join with it. Therefore let us never think our state good, till we find our hearts warmed with the goodness of divine supernatural truths. 'Oh! how do I love thy law!' saith David, Ps. 119:97. He wonders at his own affections. Let us labour to have great affections, answerable to the things; and never leave till we can love them and joy and delight in them, as the greatest things; and with blessed St Paul, account 'all as dung and

dross, in comparison of them,' Philip. 3:8. That knowledge is only saving knowledge that works the heart to a love, to a joy and delight, that works the whole man to practice and obedience; that is only spiritual knowledge. All other knowledge serves for nothing but to minister God matter of justifying our damnation; that our damnation will be just; that knowing these things, we do not work our hearts to love them, but we rest in the naked barren knowledge of them. It is a pitiful thing, to know things no further and no deeper, than to minister matter of our just damnation. Now all that have not a transforming knowledge, that have not a spiritual knowledge, they are in this state. Therefore we should labour to see spiritual things, in a spiritual light; for where spiritual light is, there is always spiritual heat; where spiritual evidence is in the understanding, there is spiritual embracing in the affections. Evidence brings quickness. Supernatural light and supernatural life, they go together. Let us labour, therefore, that our apprehension of these great mysteries may be supernatural and spiritual; and then as the judgment apprehends them 'without controversy' to be true, the affections will be present, to close with them. So much for the preface, 'without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.' Now we come to the particulars of this great mystery,

'God Manifested in the Flesh.'

This, and the other branches that follow, they are all spoken of Christ. Indeed, the 'mystery of godliness' is nothing but Christ, and that which Christ did. Christ was 'manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.' So that from the general we may observe this, that

Christ is the scope of the Scripture

Christ is the pearl of that ring; Christ is the main, the centre wherein all those lines end. Take away Christ, what remains? Therefore in the whole Scriptures, let us see that we have an eye to Christ; all is nothing but Christ. The mystery of religion is Christ 'manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,' &c., all is but Christ.

And that is the reason the Jews understand not the Scriptures better, because they seek not Christ there. Take away Christ, take away all out of the Scriptures, they are but empty things. Therefore, when we read them, think of somewhat that they may lead us to Christ, as all the Scriptures lead, one way or other, to Christ, as I might shew in particular, but I only name it in general.

He begins here with this, 'God manifested in the flesh;' not God taken essentially, but taken personally. God, in the second person, was manifested. All actions are of persons. The second person was incarnate. The three persons are all God; yet they were not all incarnate, because it was a personal action of the second person.

Quest. And why in that person?

Ans. 1. Because he was the image of God. And none but the image of God could restore as to that image. He was the Son of God, and none but the natural Son could make us sons. He is the 'wisdom' of the Father, to make us wise, and he is the 'first beloved' to make us beloved. Such reasons are given by the school-men, and not disagreeable to Scripture. For, indeed, it is appropriate to the second Person, the great work of the incarnation, 'God in the flesh.' Therefore they usually compare the incarnation of Christ to a garment made by three virgins, sisters; and one of them wears it. So all the three persons had a hand in the garment of Christ's flesh. The

Father had a work in it, and the Holy Ghost sanctified it, yet he only were it. Therefore the second person is 'God manifest in the flesh.'

By 'flesh,' here, is meant human nature; the property of human nature, both body and soul. And by 'flesh' also, is usually understood the infirmities and weakness of man, the miserable condition of man. So 'God manifest in the flesh,' that is, in our nature and the properties of it, he put that on; and not only so, but our infirmities, and weaknesses, our miseries, and which is more, he took our flesh when it was tainted with treason, our base nature after it was fallen, which was a wondrous fruit of love. As if one should wear a man's colours or livery after he is proclaimed traitor; it is a great grace to such a man. For Christ to wear our garment when we were proclaimed traitors, after we were fallen, it was a wondrous dignation.* And he took not only our nature, but our flesh. He was 'God manifest in the flesh,' that is, in the infirmities of our nature. He took our whole nature, a human body and human soul. And he took our nature upon him when it was at the worst; not in innocency, but with all the infirmities that are natural infirmities, not personal. Therefore he came to be so that he might be pitiful.

Quest. You will say, How can he be pitiful? There are many infirmities that he took not upon him; he took not upon him all infirmities.

Ans. I answer, by proportion to those that he took, he knew how to be pitiful to those he took not. He is infinitely wise. He knows how to make the proportion. It is often set down, in Heb. 2:18 and Heb. 4:15, as one end of his taking our nature upon him, that he might be a pitiful and merciful redeemer.

Obj. But some will say, Indeed, he took my nature and the general infirmities, as weariness, and hunger, and the like; but I am sick and

troubled in mind and conscience.

Ans. Though he felt not all particular grievances, yet notwithstanding, having taken our nature upon him, that he might be pitiful and merciful, according to the proportion that he felt himself, he knows how to pity us in our sicknesses, and losses, and crosses, every way. And for the chief, the trouble of mind, alas! he knew it in that great desertion, when he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!' So we may comfort ourselves that we have a merciful, and pitiful, and gracious Saviour, 'God in the flesh.' He hath taken our flesh upon him for that purpose, that he might have experimental knowledge of our infirmities and weaknesses, and from that he might be the more sweet, and kind, and gentle to us. He was not sick himself; but by experience of labour, and thirst, and the like, he knew what it was to be sick by that he felt. He knew not what it was to sin and to be troubled for sin, because he felt it not in himself; but being our surety for sin, and feeling the wrath of God for it, he had experience to be compassionate from this. He was weary, to pity those that are weary; he was hungry, to pity them that are hungry; he was poor, to pity those that are so; he was misused and reproached, to pity those that are in the like condition. You can name nothing, but he can out of his own experience be merciful and pitiful unto.

In that God, the second person, appeared in our nature, in our weak and tainted disgraced nature after the fall; from hence comes,

1. First of all, the enriching of our nature with all graces in Christ, as it is in Col. 2:3, 'All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him,' in our nature. In Christ there is abundance of riches. Our nature in him is highly enriched. Hence comes again,

2. The ennobling of our nature. In that God appeared in our nature it is much ennobled. When our nature is engrafted into a higher stock, a mean graff or syens,* into so glorious a stock as Christ, it is a high dignity. That now our flesh is married to the second person, it is a wondrous advancement of our nature, even above the angel call, 'He took not the nature of angels,' Heb. 2:16. It was a great exaltation to our nature, that God should take it into the unity of his person, for the human nature of Christ had no subsistence but in the second person. And this doth not any way debase the human nature of Christ, that it had no subsistence but in the Godhead. Peter, and James, and John, &c., had a subsistence of their own, but Christ had no subsistence but in the second person. And yet, I say, it did no way demean the human nature of Christ, because it was advanced to a higher stock, where it hath a glorious subsistence and being.

3. In the third place, hence comes the enabling of our nature to the work of salvation that was wrought in our nature. It came from hence, 'God was in the flesh.' From whence was the human nature enabled to suffer? Whence was it upheld in suffering, that it did not sink under the wrath of God? 'God was in the flesh.' God upheld our nature. So that both the riches, and dignity, and the ableness of our nature to be saving and meritorious, all came from this, that God was in our nature.

4. And hence comes this likewise, that whatsoever Christ did in our nature, God did it, for God appeared in our nature. He took not upon him the person of any man, but the nature. And therefore our flesh and the second person being but one person, all that was done was done by the person that was God, though not as God. Therefore when he died, God died; when he was crucified, God was crucified. If he had been two persons, he had died in one person, and the other had not died. Now, being but one person, though two natures,

whatsoever was done in the [one] nature, the person did it according to the other nature. He could not die as God. Therefore, because in love he would die, and be a sacrifice, he would take upon him such a nature wherein he might be a sacrifice. This is a great dignity, that our nature is taken into the unity of the person of the Son of God. Therefore hence it comes, I say, that whatsoever was done in our nature God did it.

5. Hence comes also the union between Christ and us. Whence is it that we are 'sons of God?' Because he was the 'Son of man,' 'God in our flesh.' There are three unions: the union of natures, God to become man; the union of grace, that we are one with Christ; and the union of glory. The first is for the second, and the second for the third; God became man, that man might be one with God; God was 'manifested in the flesh,' that we might be united to him; and being brought again to God the Father, we might come again to a glorious union. By this, that God was 'manifest in the flesh,' it is that he was married first to our nature, that we by union might be married to him. We had never had union with God unless God had united our flesh to him, and in that flesh had satisfied God. All that Christ did, saith Peter, it was to 'bring us back again to God,' 1 Peter 3:18.

6. Hence likewise comes the sympathy between Christ and us; for Christ is said to suffer with us. 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Acts 9:4. He is said to be imprisoned in us; and we are said to ascend gloriously with him, because he took upon him our nature. So if he be honoured, we are honoured; if we be despised, he is despised. There is a mutual affection and sympathy between Christ and us.

7. Hence likewise comes the efficacy of what Christ did, that the dying of one man should be sufficient for the whole world. It was, that 'God was in the flesh.'

The apostle may well call this, 'God manifest in the flesh,' a 'mystery,' and place it in the first rank. For God to be included in the womb of a virgin; for happiness itself to become a curse; for him that hath the riches of all men to become poor for our sake; for him that ever enjoyed his Father's presence, to want the beams of it for a time, that he might satisfy his Father's justice, and undergo his wrath for our sins—here is a matter of wonderment indeed!

Use 1. And shall we think that so great a mystery as this was for small purpose? that the great God should take upon him a piece of earth? that he should become a poor and weak man? the immortal God to take upon him our flesh and to die? that he whom heaven and earth cannot comprehend should be enclosed in the womb of a virgin? for him to be so abased as there was never any abasement like unto Christ's, because of the greatness of his person? If angels had done so; alas!* they were inferior creatures; they were servants to God; but for the Son of God to take our nature when it was so low, for so excellent a person to be abased so low! There was none ever suffered that, that 'God in our flesh' suffered. For as communion with his Father was sweeter to him than to all men besides, so for him to want communion with his Father upon the cross, when he cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' it was the greatest abasement to him, being the most sensible of it. † Therefore there was no suffering like that of Christ's. And shall we think so great a matter was for small purpose, for little sins or for few sins only? Oh no. It was to give a foundation to our faith in all extremity of temptations; to stay our conscience in the guilt of great and crying sins. Oh despair not, despair not! This great mystery the apostle speaks of, for the great God to become man, it was for great sins; that where 'sin hath abounded, grace might superabound,' Rom. 5:20. God intended in this to set down the accusing conscience, to quiet and still it. God is offended, it is true; but 'God manifest in the flesh' hath made

reconciliation and satisfaction. He was a sacrifice for sin, and God will answer God. God the Son will answer the displeasure of God the Father, because he is appointed to this office by him. He is 'set forth,' as it is Rom. 3:25, 'to be the propitiation.' Therefore in all risings of conscience in the time of trouble, in the hour of death, let us remember this great mystery, 'God manifest in the flesh.' God's purpose in this was to triumph, as it were, over all the clamours of conscience whatsoever, over all things that Satan and the power of hell can object. Let Satan object what he will, here is a shield put into the hand of faith to beat back all his fiery darts.

God in the covenant of grace, which is founded in Christ, in God in our nature, doth intend to be gracious to sinners. It is a greater mystery than that of the creation. For God there did good to a good man; he made Adam good, and continued him good while he stood; but after the fall, God intended to raise up the doubting, unbelieving soul against the greatest ills of sin and despair, and against all objections for sin whatsoever; from the greatness of sin either natural or actual. It is the glory of God in the gospel to glorify his mercy and goodness in prevailing and triumphing over the greatest ills that can be. Now he is good to sinners, and to great sinners; so that if there be faith wrought by the Spirit of God, raising up our souls to lay hold of this 'God manifest in the flesh,' let us not be discouraged with any sin. Our sins are but the sins of men; but 'God manifest in the flesh' was made a sacrifice for our sins, and hath given a price answerable. What temptation will not vanish as a cloud before the wind when we see God's love in sending his Son, and Christ's love in taking our nature on him, to reconcile us by the sacrifice of his blood? Therefore let us treasure up this comfort. It is a spring of comfort, a well of consolation, as the Scripture speaks; therefore let us suck comfort out of this breast of consolation.

We may turn over things now, in the time of peace, with ease; but in time of temptation, when the soul is touched with guilt, and Satan plies us with temptations, the soul will have no rest but in an infinite ground of comfort. The soul is prone naturally to misgive, and to forecast the worst, and to conceive hardly of God in the time of temptation, as an enemy, and Satan is then busy about nothing so much as that we should have hard conceits of God, and to make us forget the main end of the great work of our redemption; which is, to undermine our unbelief by all means, by setting before the soul such grounds as the most unbelieving heart in the world, if it did consider of, would fasten and lay itself upon. Therefore let us labour to cherish, at such times especially, large thoughts of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, and of the love of Christ condescending so low as to be manifest in the flesh for our sakes.

It is a point of wondrous comfort, that now in Christ Jesus, God becoming man, we can in him break through the justice of God. For, as I said, when conscience is awaked, there are other manner of conceits of God than when it is sleepy and drowsy. A sleepy Christian hath a slight conceit of God, as if he as little thought of his sins as he doth himself. Oh but when conscience is awaked, and when we are drawn from the pleasures of sin, and they from us, and conscience hath nothing to do but to look upon God and upon the time to come, which is eternity, then if there be not somewhat for conscience to oppose that is equal to the justice of God, if there be not somewhat about us to clothe us and arm us, to pass through the justice, what will become of us? Therefore it is a fruitful consideration, that God was 'manifest in our flesh,' and that, to give satisfaction to God, that so conscience might have full satisfaction.

This teacheth us what we should do when we find any trouble rise in our conscience for sins and unworthiness. Cast ourselves upon 'God

in our flesh,' God that became 'flesh' for us and died for us: let us stay ourselves there. I am unworthy! a lump of sin! There is nothing in me that is good. Oh but I have all in Christ. He is righteousness for me. He hath abundance for me. His fulness is for me. Therefore you have it, Col. 2:9, 'The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.' To what purpose is this fulness in him? He shews in the words following, 'In him we are complete,' ver. 10. Suppose in ourselves we be sinners and weak, that we are as ill as sin or the devil can make us in the time of temptation, yet 'in him we are complete.' And for this end 'the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.' Therefore, in all doubts in regard of sin and unworthiness, let us labour for faith (for faith is a grace that carries us out of ourselves, and plants and fixeth us in Christ), let us consider of ourselves in him, and consider of whatsoever is in him, it is for us. It is no matter what we are ourselves; in him we are in a glorious condition.

And oppose him to the wrath of God and the temptations of Satan; for all will fall before this 'God manifest in the flesh.' He is God, therefore he can subdue all; he is man, and therefore he will love us. 'I know whom I have believed,' 2 Tim. 1:12—him that is merciful, because he is man, and he hath taken my nature; and him that can subdue all enemies, because he is God, God in the flesh: a fit bottom and foundation for faith to rely upon. Let us have recourse to this therefore in all temptations whatsoever. We cannot glorify God and Christ more than to go out of ourselves and fix our comfort here.

By this we have communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This incarnation of Christ, it brings us into fellowship with the blessed Trinity; and it teacheth us what conceits we should have of God, to have loving thoughts of him. Whence is that that we can call God Father? From this, 'God manifest in the flesh.' The second person, to take away enmity, was 'manifest in the flesh.' Hence it is

that I can call God Father, that I can boldly go to God, that I can conceive of God as gracious and lovely. And whence is it that our persons are become lovely to God? From this, that God hath taken our nature upon him. Our nature is become lovely to him, and his is sweet and fatherly to us.

This should help us against Satan's transforming of God and Christ to us in the time of trouble. He presents him as a terrible judge. Indeed, so he is to sinners that will go on in sin. His wrath shall 'smoke against such,' Deut. 29:20. There is no comfort to them in Scripture. But to repentant sinners all is comfort: 'Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden,' Mat. 11:28; and, 'Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost,' Mat. 18:11; and, he came 'to save sinners,' as St Paul saith, 1 Tim. 1:15. Let us conceive of God now as lovely, as a father; and of Christ as a sweet saviour, made 'flesh' for this purpose. He is God and man, because he came to be a mediator between God and man; a friend to both, being to deal with both. Therefore we should thus conceive of Christ: as a great and mighty God, the ruler of the world, as Isaiah describes him, Isa. 9:6, and conceive of him likewise as a meek, humble man—the one, to stablish our faith, that we be not shaken, having such a great God to rely upon; and the other, to stablish our faith in his good will, 'God in our flesh.' God, a name of power; 'God in our flesh' implieth mercy and love, pity and compassion.

Therefore, let not Satan abuse our imaginations, if we have a mind to turn to God; for, as I said, there is no comfort to them that go on in their sins. God will wound the 'hairy scalp of them that go on in iniquity,' Ps. 68:21; and, 'they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath,' Rom. 2:5. There is nothing but discomfort to such: 'The wrath of God abides upon them,' John 3:36. They are in danger of damnation every minute of their lives. There is but a step between

them and hell. But for such as intend to turn to God, God meets them half-way. We see the prodigal did but entertain a purpose to come to his father, and his father meets him. 'God in our flesh' hath made God peaceable to us. If we go to Christ, and lay hold on him for the forgiveness of our sins, God in him is become a loving, gracious, sweet Father to us. Let us frame our conceits of God as the Scripture doth. When sorrow for sin possesseth our souls, take heed of going away from God, that took our nature for this very purpose, that we may boldly go to him.

Oh what boldness have we now to go to 'God in our flesh.' To think of God absolutely, without God in the flesh, he is 'a consuming fire,' Heb. 12:29, every way terrible; but to think of God in our nature, we may securely go to him: 'He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' Gen. 2:23. We may securely go to God our brother, to him that is of one nature with us, and now having our nature in heaven. Think of God born of a virgin, of God lying in the cradle, sucking the breast! Think of God going up and down teaching and doing all good! Think of God sweating for thee, hanging on the cross, shedding his blood, lying in the grave, raising himself again, and now in heaven 'sitting at the right hand of God,' our intercessor! Eph. 1:20. Conceive of God in this 'flesh' of ours, lovely to us; and now our nature must needs be lovely to him. The nature of God must needs be lovely to us, since he hath joined our poor beggarly flesh to the unity of the second person. Let us thus think of 'God manifest in the flesh.' To think of God alone, it swallows up our thoughts; but to think of God in Christ, of God 'manifest in the flesh,' it is a comfortable consideration. To see the sun alone in itself, in the glory and lustre of it, it is impossible, without hurting of the eye; but to see the sun in water, as we do in an eclipse, &c., we may do it. So we cannot conceive of God alone absolutely; but to conceive of 'God in our flesh' is to look upon the sun as it were in the water, or upon the ground. God in himself is so

glorious that we could never see him, as he tells Moses, Exodus 33:20, 'None can ever see God and live;' that is, God nakedly or absolutely. Oh but 'God manifest in our flesh' we may see; and it shall be our happiness in heaven to see him there, to see 'God in our flesh face to face,' Exodus 33:11.

We cannot too often meditate of these things. It is the life and soul of a Christian. It is the marrow of the gospel. It is the wonder of wonders. We need not wonder at anything after this. It is no wonder that our bodies shall rise again; that mortal man should become afterwards immortal in heaven, since the immortal God hath taken man's nature and died in it. All the articles of our faith and all miracles yield to this grand thing, 'God manifest in the flesh.' Believe this, and believe all other. Therefore, let us often have these sweet cherishing conceits of God in our flesh, that it may strengthen, and feed, and nourish our faith, especially in the time of temptation.

Use 2. Again, From this, that God was 'manifest in our flesh,' let us take heed that we defile not this flesh of ours, this nature of ours. What! Is this 'flesh' of mine taken into unity with the second person? Is this 'flesh' of mine now in heaven, 'sitting at the right hand of God?' And shall I defile this flesh of mine that I profess to be a member of Christ? 'Shall I make it the member of an harlot?' 1 Cor. 6:15. Shall I abuse it, as intemperate persons do? Let us honour our nature, which Christ hath so honoured; and let us take a holy kind of state upon us, to think ourselves too good, since God hath so advanced our nature, to abase it to the service of sin.

Use 3. Likewise, it should teach us to stoop to any service of Christ or our brethren. What! Did the love of God draw him into the womb of the virgin? Did it draw him to take my nature and flesh on him? And shall I think much to be serviceable to my poor brethren, for whom

God was made flesh, and not only so, but was crucified? Such thoughts will take down such proud conceits as enter into our hearts when we are about any work of charity for the members of Christ. Shall I have base conceits of any man, whose flesh Christ hath taken? Especially, when I see any goodness in him, let me abase myself to any work of charity.

Take heed of pride. God himself emptied himself, and wilt thou be full of pride? He became of 'no reputation,' Philip. 2:7, and wilt thou stand upon terms of credit? He 'took upon him the form of a servant,' and wilt thou be altogether a lord and king in thy affections, and not serve thy brethren? Did Christ do this that thou shouldst be a proud person? He came to expiate thy pride. Away with thy proud conceits! If thou be too proud to follow and imitate humble men, yet think not thyself too good to imitate an humble God. There is no spirit more opposite to the spirit of a Christian than a spirit swelling and lift up, that thinks itself too good to be abased in the service of others, that carries itself loftily. A proud spirit is most opposite to the spirit of God, that became man to expiate this pride of ours, and to work out salvation in this flesh of ours. Of all sins let us take heed of this diabolical satanical sin; let us be abased for Christ that was abased for us; and as he left his heaven—to do us good he left heaven itself—so let us. If we have a conceited heaven and happiness in ourselves, leave it, and become base and low, to do any good we can. Shall he stoop and bend to us from heaven to earth, and conceal his majesty, not to be known to be as he was; and shall not we stoop one to another to do good, and come down from our conceited excellency?

Use 4. Here we have a good ground likewise not to envy the blessed angels their greatness; nay, here we have that wherein we are above the angels themselves; for 'he took not upon him the nature of angels,' Heb. 2:16, but he was 'God manifest in our flesh.' Christ

married our nature to himself out of his love, that he might marry us to himself by his Spirit; and now, by our union with Christ, we be nearer him than the very angels are. The angels are not the spouse of Christ, but now, by reason of his taking our nature, we are kin to Christ: 'He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' Eph. 5:30, and we are 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.' We are the body, Christ is the head. We are nearer to Christ than the very angels. No wonder, then, if those blessed spirits daily pry into this great mystery, 1 Peter 1:12.

5. Lastly, Let us labour that Christ may be manifested in our particular flesh, in our persons. As he was God manifest in the flesh in regard of that blessed mass he took upon him, so we would every one labour to have God 'manifest in our flesh.'

Quest. How is that?

Ans. We must have Christ as it were born in us, 'formed in us,' as the apostle speaks, Col. 1:27. Certainly the same Spirit that sanctified Christ doth sanctify every member of Christ; and Christ is in some sort begotten, and conceived, and 'manifested' in every one that is a Christian. We must labour that Christ may be 'manifest' in our understandings, in our affections, that he may be manifest to us, and conceived, as it were, in us; as St Paul's phrase is, 'That the life of Christ may be made manifest in our mortal flesh,' 2 Cor. 4:11. The life and spirit of Christ must be 'manifest' in every true Christian, and their 'flesh' must be sanctified by the same Spirit that Christ's flesh was sanctified withal. As Christ's flesh was first sanctified, and then abased, and then glorious, so the flesh of every Christian must be content to be abased, as the flesh of Christ was, to serve Christ, to be conformable to Christ in our abased flesh. And let us not make too much of this flesh of ours, that shall turn to rottenness ere long. It

must be gracious sanctified flesh, as Christ's was, and then glorious flesh. Christ must be manifest in our flesh, as he was in his own, that when a man sees a Christian, he may see Christ manifest in him.

Obj. But how shall I come to have Christ manifest in my flesh? My heart is not fit to conceive Christ in. There is nothing in it but deadness, and darkness, and dulness, and rebellion?

Ans. Even as the virgin Mary, she conceived Christ when she yielded her assent. When the angel spake to her, what saith she presently? 'Be it as thou hast said,' Luke 1:38; let it even be so. She yielded her assent to the promise, that she should conceive a son. So when the promises are uttered to us of the forgiveness of sins, of salvation by Christ, as soon as ever we have a spirit of faith to yield our assent, let it be so, Lord, as thou hast promised; thou hast promised forgiveness of sins: let it be so; thou hast promised favour in Christ: let it be so. As soon as the heart is brought to yield to the gracious promise, then Christ is conceived in the heart. Even as Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin when she yielded her assent to believe the promise, so Christ is in every man's heart, to sanctify it, to rule it, to comfort it, as soon as this consent is wrought. We should labour, therefore, to bring our hearts to this. So much for this. Because it is of great consequence, and the leading mystery to all that follows, I have been somewhat the longer in unfolding these words, 'God manifest in the flesh.'

'Justified in the Spirit.'

These words are added, to answer an objection that may rise from the former. He was 'God manifest in the flesh.' He veiled himself. He could not have suffered else. When he took upon him to be the mediator, he must do it in abased flesh. If Christ, being God, had not

abased himself, he should never have been put to death. Satan and his instruments would never have meddled with him. Therefore God being veiled in the flesh, being clouded with our flesh and infirmities, thereupon the world had a misconceit of him. He was not generally thought to be what he was indeed. He appeared to be nothing but a poor man, a debased, dejected man; a persecuted, slandered, disgraced man in the world. He was thought to be a trespasser.

It is no matter what he appeared, when he was veiled with our flesh; he was 'justified in the Spirit,' to be the true Messiah; to be God as well as man.

'Justified.'

It implies two things in the phrase of Scripture: a freedom and clearing from false conceits and imputations, and declared to be truly, what he was; to be otherwise than he was thought to be of the wicked world. When a man is cleared from that that is laid to his charge, he is 'justified.' When a man is declared to be that he is, then he is said to be justified in the sense of the Scriptures. 'Wisdom is justified of her children,' Mat. 11:19, that is, cleared from the imputations that are laid upon religion, to be mopish and foolish. 'Wisdom is justified;' that is, cleared and declared to be an excellent thing of all her children. So Christ was 'justified.' He was cleared, not to be as they took him; and declared himself to be as he 'manifested' himself, a more excellent person, the Son of God, the true Messiah and Saviour of the world.

'In the Spirit.'

That is, in his Godhead: that did shew itself in his life and death, in his resurrection and ascension. The beams of his Godhead did sparkle out. Though he were 'God in the flesh,' yet he remained God

still, and was 'justified' to be so 'in the Spirit,' that is, in his divine power, which is called the Spirit; because the spirit of anything is the quintessence and strength of it. God hath the name of Spirit, from his purity and power and vigour. So God is a Spirit; that is, God is pure, opposite to gross things, earth, and flesh; and God is powerful and strong. 'The horses of the Egyptians are flesh, and not spirit,' Isa. 31:3, that is, they are weak. A spirit is strong; so much spirit, so much strength. So, by the purity and strength of the divine nature, Christ discovered himself to be true God as well as true man.

The word Spirit is taken in three senses especially in the gospel.

1. It is taken for the whole nature of God. 'God is a Spirit,' saith Christ to the woman of Samaria, John 4:23. The very nature of God is a Spirit; that is, active and subtile, opposite to meanness and weakness.

2. Then again, Spirit is taken more particularly for the divine nature of Christ, as it is Rom. 1:4: 'Of the seed of David, according to the flesh,' but 'declared mightily to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of sanctification,' or holiness, 'by the resurrection from the dead.' The opposition shews that Spirit is taken there for the divine nature of Christ. He had spoken in the verse before concerning his human nature. He was made 'of the seed of David, according to the flesh;' and it follows, 'declared to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' And so likewise in 1 Pet. 3:18: 'He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit.' He was put to death in his human nature, but quickened and raised as he was God.

3. The Spirit is taken likewise for the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit. And indeed, whatsoever God the Father or God the Son doth graciously to man, it is done by the Spirit. For,

as the Holy Spirit is in the order of the persons, so he is in the order of working. The Father works from himself; the Son works from the Father; the Holy Spirit from them both. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, as a common principle. Therefore, sometimes the Father is said to raise Christ's body by his Spirit. Christ is said to do things by the Spirit. Here, in this place, it is especially to be understood of Christ's divine nature, not excluding the Holy Ghost. For as the Holy Ghost, in the incarnation, sanctified his 'flesh,' the second person took flesh, but the third person sanctified it. So in the resurrection of Christ, [it was] the second person that raised itself up, but yet it was by the Holy Ghost too. So when there is mention here of Christ 'justified by the Spirit,' that is, by his Godhead and by the Holy Ghost, which he always used, not as an instrument—for the Holy Ghost is a common principle with himself, one with himself, of equal dignity, only differing in the order of persons; whatsoever Christ did, he did with the Spirit. That must not be excluded. Christ was as well 'justified in the Spirit,' as God, as 'manifest' in our nature to be man.

And this was in the time of his abasement. In the greatest extremity of abasement, there was somewhat that came from Christ, to 'justify' him that he was the Son of God, the true Messiah. There is no part of his abasement but some beams of his Godhead did break forth in it.

He was made flesh, but he took upon him the 'flesh' of a virgin. Could that be otherwise than by the Spirit, to be born of a virgin, she remaining a virgin? When he was born, he was laid in a manger. Indeed, there was God in the low estate of the flesh. Ay, but the 'wise men worshipped him,' and the 'star' directed them, Mat. 2:11. There he was 'justified in the Spirit.' He was tossed when he was asleep in the ship, but he commanded the winds and the waves, Mat. 14:24, seq. He wanted money to pay tribute, as he was abased; but to fetch

it out of a fish, there he was justified, Mat. 17:27. The one was an argument of his poverty and meanness, but the other was an argument that he was another manner of person than the world took him for, that he had all the creatures at his command. He was apprehended as a malefactor, but he struck them all down with his word, 'Whom seek ye?' John 18:4.

Come to the greatest abasement of all; when he was on the cross, he hung between two thieves. Ay, but he converted the one of them. When the thief had so much discouragement to see his Saviour hang on the cross, yet he shewed such power in that abasement, that the very thief could see him to be a king, and was converted by his Spirit. He did hang upon the cross; but, at the same time, there was an eclipse. The whole world was darkened (h), the earth trembled, the rocks brake, the centurion 'justified' him, 'Doubtless, this was the Son of God,' Mat. 27:40. He was sold for thirty pence (i), but he that was sold for thirty pieces did redeem the whole world by his blood.

Nay, at the lowest degree of abasement of all, when he struggled with the wrath of God, and was beset with devils, then he triumphed. When he was visibly overcome, then invisibly he overcame. He was an invisible conqueror when he was visibly subdued. For, did he not on the cross satisfy the wrath of God, and by enduring the wrath of God free us from it and from Satan, God's jailor, and reconcile us by his blood? The chief works of all were wrought in his chief abasement. At length he died and was buried; ay, but he that died rose again gloriously. Therefore he was 'mightily declared to be the Son of God by raising himself from the dead.' That was the greatest abasement when he lay in the grave; and especially then he was 'justified' by his resurrection from the dead and his ascension, in his state of glorification especially. So, if we go from Christ's birth to his

lowest degree of abasement, there was alway some manifestation of his justification by the Spirit.

He was 'justified' in a double regard

1. In regard of God, he was justified and cleared from our sins that he took upon him. He 'bore our sins upon the tree,' and bore them away, that they should never appear again to our discomfort. He was made 'a curse for us.' How came Christ to be cleared of our sins that lay upon him? When by the Spirit, by his divine nature, he raised himself from the dead. So he was 'justified' from that that God laid upon him, for he was our surety. Now the Spirit raising him from the dead, shewed that the debt was folly discharged, because our surety was out of prison. All things are first in Christ and then in us. He was acquitted and justified from our sins, and then we.

2. And then he was justified by the Spirit from all imputations of men, from the misconceits that the world had of him. They thought him to be a mere man, or a sinful man. No. He was more than a mere man; nay, more than a holy man; he was God-man. Whence were his miracles? Were they not from his divine power? He overcame the devil in his temptations. Who can overcome the devil, but he that is the Son of God? He cast out devils, and dispossessed them with his word. All the enemies of Christ that ever were, at length he conquered them, and so 'declared himself mightily to be,' as he was, 'the Son of God.' He healed the outward man and the inward man by his divine power; he caused the spiritual as well as the bodily eyes to see, the dead to live, and the lame to go, &c. Whatsoever he did in the body he did in the soul likewise. In those excellent miracles he was 'justified,' and declared to be the Son of God,' especially in his resurrection and ascension, and daily converting of souls by his ministry; all being done by his Spirit, which is his vicar in the world,

ruling his church and subduing his enemies. So that he was every way 'justified in the Spirit' to be God, to be the true Messiah prophesied of and promised to the church. Therefore he was 'justified' in his truth, that all the promises were true of him; and in his faithfulness, that he was faithful in performing the promises he made. He was 'justified' in his goodness and mercy, and all those attributes; he was 'justified in the Spirit.'

Obj. But you will say, it seems he was not 'justified in the Spirit.' There are many heretics that think not Christ to be God; that take not Christ to be so glorious as he is.

Ans. I answer: When we speak of the justifying of Christ, it is meant to those that have eyes to see him, to those that shut not their eyes. He was 'justified' to be so great as he was to those 'whose eyes the god of the world had not blinded,' 2 Cor. 4:4; to all that were his; as it is excellently set down, John 1:14, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.' We 'beheld his glory.' We did; others did not take notice: but they were those 'whose eyes the god of the world hath blinded,' the malicious Scribes and Pharisees, that sinned against the Holy Ghost, and would never acknowledge Christ; and ignorant people, that had not faith nor the Spirit of God. He was justified by the Spirit of God, to all that had spiritual eyes to see and take notice of his course; as St John saith in one of his epistles, 'What we have seen and heard, and our hands have handled, the Word of life, that we declare to you,' 1 John 1:1. So that he was 'God manifest in the flesh,' and he shewed himself to be the 'Word of life' to those that were his apostles and disciples, and those that were converted by him. As we see St Peter, when he had felt his divine power upon his heart by his preaching, 'Lord,' saith he, 'thou hast the words of eternal life; whither shall we go?' John 6:68.

He felt the Spirit in his preaching. And so another time, St Peter, in Matt. 16:16, he confessed him to be 'the Son of the living God.' You see to whom he was 'justified' and declared to be the true Messiah, to be God as well as man by his Spirit.

The reason why he justified himself to be so, 1. It was the more to strengthen our faith. All his miracles were but so many sparkles of his divine nature, so many expressions of his divine power. And after he was raised from the dead, at his ascension and sending of the Holy Ghost, he shewed his divine power more gloriously; and all to strengthen the faith of the elect; and, 2. To stop the mouths of all impudent rebellious persons. For, considering that he wrought such miracles, that he raised men from the dead, and raised himself; considering that he called the Gentiles, and converted the world, by the ministry of weak men, he shewed that he was more than a man. Well! to make some use of this, that Christ was

'Justified in the Spirit.' Then first of all,

Use 1. Christ will at length justify himself. This is a ground of faith. However he be now as a sign set up that many speak against and contradict, yet the time will come when he will gloriously justify himself to all the world. Now some shut their eyes willingly, and the opposites of Christ seem to flourish; yet Christ will be 'justified by his Spirit' to all his elect in every age, especially in the resurrection. For 'when he shall come and appear to be glorious in his saints,' 2 Thes. 1:10, it will appear who he is indeed. Now he suffers many to tread upon his church, and he suffers many heretics to deny him, sometimes in one nature, sometimes in another, and so to offend against him. But the time will come that he will trample all his enemies under his feet; he will be 'justified by his Spirit.' That is our comfort. There are many schismatics and heretics and persecutors,

but Christ will be 'justified' at length. 'The kingdoms of the earth will be the Lord Jesus Christ's,' Rev. 11:15. Are they not now so? They are. But truly they appear not to be so. But at length they will appear to be so. At the conversion of the Jews and the confusion of antichrist, then it will appear more and more that he is King of the world indeed. Now, as it were, his offices are darkened: his kingly office is darkened and his prophetic office is darkened; but at length it will appear that he is King of the church, and all kingdoms will be Christ's. There are glorious times coming, especially the glorious day of the resurrection. Christ at length will be cleared, he will be justified. The sun at length will scatter all the clouds. In the morning they gather about the sun, as if they would cover it. Oh, but the sun breaks through all, and gloriously appears at length. So Christ will scatter all clouds, and gloriously appear to be that which the word sets him forth to be.

Again, As Christ will justify himself, so he will justify his church and children, first or last, by his Spirit. His children are now accounted the offscouring of the world. They are trampled and trod upon, they are the objects of scorn and hatred, and who accounted so base? Will Christ endure this? No. He that 'justified' himself; that is, that declared himself, and will more and more declare himself to be as he is; will he not 'justify' his church, his mystical body, to be as they are indeed? Certainly it shall appear to the world that he will justify them, to be kings and priests, to be heirs, to be glorious, to be so near and dear to him as the Scripture sets them forth to be. Whatsoever the Scripture hath spoken of the saints and children of God, the time will come that all this shall be 'justified' and made good by that Spirit of Christ, whereby he made good whatsoever he hath said of himself.

Therefore in our eclipses and disgraces let us all comfort ourselves in this. Let the world esteem us for the present as the refuse of the

world, as persons not worthy to be acquainted with, not worthy to be regarded; we shall be 'justified' and cleared and glorified, especially at that day 'when Christ shall come to be glorious in his saints.' There is a hidden life of the church and every Christian; they have a life in Christ, but that 'life is hid in Christ,' in heaven, Col. 3:3. As the flowers in winter they have a life, but it is hidden in the root. 'When Christ shall appear,' as blessed St Paul and St John say, then it 'shall appear who we are.' Then our 'glorious life,' that now is in our Head, 'shall appear;' then we shall be 'justified to be so glorious,' as the Scripture sets us forth to be. The church shall be glorious within and without, too, at that day. Therefore let us comfort ourselves. This hidden life, though it appear not now, yet we shall be justified. And hence we may answer some objections likewise.

Obj. Some may say, How doth it appear that Christ is King of the church? We see how the church is trampled on at this day. Where is the life and glory of the church? What! his spouse, and thus used! What! his turtle, and thus polluted and plucked by the birds of prey!

Ans. I answer, Look with other spectacles, with the eye of faith, and then you shall see a spring in the winter of the church. However she be now abased and eclipsed, yet she shall be 'justified;' and it will appear that Christ regards his church and people and children more than all the world besides, only there must be a conformity.

It was fit there should be a time of Christ's abasement; how should he have suffered else? The world would never have crucified God. They could not have done it. Therefore he was abased; he veiled his Godhead under his manhood, under a base condition, so he passed through 'suffering to glory.' So it must be in the body of Christ. It must pass through the veil of infirmities, of weakness, affliction, and disgrace. How else should it be conformable to Christ? If Christ had

'justified' himself at all times in his humiliation, he could not have suffered; if we should be justified now and appear to all the world who we are, who would persecute us? how could we be conformable to Christ? Therefore let us quietly and meekly a-while endure these things, that are nothing but to conform us to our Head, knowing this, that as he was 'justified' by little and little, till he was perfectly 'justified' when he was raised from the dead, so we shall be perfectly 'justified' and freed from all imputations at the last day, when by the same Spirit that raised him we shall be raised up too.

Nay, in this world, when it is for his glory and for our good, he will bring our righteousness to light as the noonday, Ps. 37:6; he will free us from the imputations that the world lays on us; he will have a care of our credit. For as Christ was 'mightily declared to be the Son of God' in a fit time, so shall we when we are fit. Then the world shall see that we are not the men that profane, bitter, malicious persons, led with the spirit of the devil, charged us to be.

Let us take no scandal at the present afflictions of the church. Christ will justify his mystical body by his glorious power in good time. Antichrist shall not alway ruffle* in the world. Christ will be justified to be the King and Ruler of the world. 'All power is committed to him,' Mat. 28:18. But we see it now. Antichrist rages in the world, and the church seems to be under hatches.† So it is with particular Christians. Those that belong to God, and indeed are truly such as they profess themselves to be—though with much weakness—we see in what respect and esteem they are had. 'Let us comfort ourselves, beloved.' Christ justified himself by his Spirit, and will he not justify his poor church, and free it from the tyranny of antichrist? Will he not advance those that are trodden on now and made as the dirt in the street, that 'they shall shine as the sun?' Daniel 12:3. Therefore when you hear of the dejected state of the churches abroad, be not

dismayed. Consider there is a glorious King that rules the world, and he will make it appear are long. He will justify himself and his church, for he suffers in his church. He is wise. He sees cause to do this. He is working his own work. He corrects and rules and purgeth his church in the furnace of affliction. But be sure the time will come that he will bring the cause of religion to light, and he will shew what side he owns; he will justify his truth, and tread Satan and all his members under feet. This frame of things will not hold long. As verily as Christ is in heaven, as verily as he is 'justified' in his own person by his Spirit, by his divine power, so he will justify his mystical body. And as he hath conquered in his own person, so he will by his Spirit conquer for his church.

Use 2. And as he will overcome for his church, so he will overcome in his church; 'stronger is he that is' in the church, 'in you, than he that is in the world,' 1 John 4:4; and God's children will be triumphant. Though they may be discouraged in respect of the present carriage of things, yet the Spirit that is in them, above the world, will gather strength by little and little, and it will appear at length, notwithstanding present discouragements. Undoubtedly the best things will have a true lustre and glory at length, however they seem to be carried for the present. You see as Christ hath 'justified' himself to be the true Messiah, and as he hath justified himself, so he will justify all his. There is the same reason for both.

For our further instruction and comfort, let us consider, that in regard of God likewise, we shall be 'justified' from our sins in our consciences here and at the day of judgment, before angels and devils and men. As Christ was 'justified' from our sins himself, and he will justify every one of us by his Spirit, his Spirit shall witness to our souls that we are justified; and likewise his Spirit shall declare it at the day of judgment; it shall be openly declared that we are so

indeed. There is a double degree of justification: one in our conscience now, another at the day of judgment. Then it shall appear that we have believed in Christ, and are cleansed from our sins. When we shall stand on the right hand of Christ, as all that cleave to Christ by faith [will do], then it shall appear that by him we are 'justified' from all our sins whatsoever.

Use 3. Again, Christ was 'justified in the Spirit.' Then hence we may learn our duty; we ought all of us to justify Christ. To whom is Christ justified by the Spirit? Only to his own church and children; not to the reprobate world. We may know, that we are members of Christ, if we be of the number of those that justify Christ.

Quest. How do we justify Christ?

Ans. (1.) We justify Christ when, from an inward work of the Spirit, we feel and acknowledge him to be such an one as he is: Christ is God. Now, when we rely upon him as our rock, in all temptations, we justify Christ to be so; when we 'kiss the Son' with the kisses of faith, of subjection, of obedience, of reverence and love; this is to justify Christ to be the Son of God, as it is Ps. 2:12, 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry.' Those that in temptation are to seek for their comfort, they do not justify Christ; they do not live as if he were a Saviour, not as if he were a God. In temptations to despair, they justify not Christ.

(2.) Those that have Christ illuminating their understandings, to conceive the mysteries of religion, they justify Christ to be the prophet of his church; because they feel him enlightening their understandings.

(3.) Those that find their consciences pacified, by the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, they justify him to be their priest; for they can oppose the blood of Christ sprinkled on their hearts, to all the

temptations of Satan, and to the risings of their own doubting conscience. Their hearts being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, they can go to God, and the blood of Christ speaks for them 'peace;' it pleads 'mercy, mercy.' Thus we justify Christ as a priest, when we rest in his sacrifice, and do not, with papists, run to other sacrifices. This is not to justify Christ. To justify Christ, God-man, is to make him a perfect mediator of intercession and redemption, to make him all in all. They do not justify Christ, that think God was made man to patch up a salvation; that he must do a part and we must merit the rest. Oh no! Take heed of that; account all our obedience, and all that is from us, as 'menstruous cloths,' Isa. 30:22, not able to stand with the justice of God.

(4.) In a word, we justify and declare and make good that he is our king, and put a kingly crown upon his head, when we suffer him to rule us and to subdue our spirits and our rebellions; when we cherish no contrary motions to his Spirit; when we rest in his word and not traditions, but stoop to the sceptre of Christ's word. This is to justify him as a king. Thus we should labour to justify and declare to the world the excellency and power of Christ in our hearts, that we may make religion lovely, and make it be entertained in the world; because we shew it to be an excellent powerful thing. Let us examine our hearts, whether we thus justify Christ or no; that by our carriage towards him, we make it good that he is such an one as the Scripture sets him forth to be.

In particular, we justify him, that 'he rose from the dead,' when we believe that we are freed from our sins, our surety being out of prison. We justify him as 'ascended into heaven,' when we have heavenly affections, and when we consider him as a public person gone to heaven in our name. We justify him as 'sitting at the right hand of God,' when we 'mind the things that are above,' Col. 3:1, and

not that are here below; or else we deny these things, we believe them not, we justify them not, when our conversations are not answerable to the things we believe. If we be the children of wisdom, undoubtedly we shall justify wisdom. If we be the members of Christ, we shall justify our head. If we be his spouse, we shall justify our husband. Let us examine ourselves that we do in this kind, and never think our state good till we can justify Christ.

In the next place, for our direction; as Christ justified himself by his Spirit, by his divine power, so let us know that it is our duty to justify ourselves, to justify our profession, justify all divine truth. Let us make it good that we are the sons of God, that we are Christians indeed; not only to have the name, but the anointing of Christ; that we may clear our religion from false imputations; or else, instead of justifying our profession, we justify the slanders that are against it. The world is ready to say none are worse than Christians; and their religion is all but words and shews and forms. Shall we justify these slanders? No. Let us, by the Spirit of God, justify our religion; let us shew that religion is a powerful thing; and so indeed it is. For divine truth, when it is embraced and known, it alters and changeth the manners and dispositions; it makes of lions lambs; it makes our natures mild and tractable and sweet: it raiseth a man from earth to heaven. Let us justify this our religion and profession against all gainsayers whatsoever. 'Wisdom is justified of all her children.' Let us justify our religion and profession, by maintaining it and standing for it, and express in our lives and conversations the power of it.

Quest. How shall this be?

Ans. The text saith, 'by the Spirit.' For as Christ 'justified' himself, that is, declared himself to be as he was 'by his Spirit,' so every Christian hath the 'Spirit of Christ, or else he is none of his,' Rom.

8:9; and by this Spirit of Christ he is able to justify his profession; not only to justify Christ to be the true head, &c., but all things he doth must be done by the Spirit, or not at all. For as Christ, when he became man and was in the world, he did all by the direction of the Spirit. 'He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit,' he 'taught by the Spirit.' The Spirit that sanctified him in the womb guided him in all his life. So a Christian is guided by the Spirit. God doth all to him by the Spirit. He is comforted, and directed, and strengthened by the Spirit; and he again doth all to God by the Spirit. He prays in the Spirit, and sighs and groans to God in the Spirit. He walks in the Spirit. He doth all by the Spirit. Therefore by the Spirit let us justify and declare ourselves what we are; that there is somewhat in us above nature; that we have love above carnal men, and patience and meekness above the ability and capacity of other men. We justify our profession when we do somewhat more than nature, or when we do common ordinary things in a spiritual holy manner. Religion is not a matter of form, but of spirit. Let us not shew our religion only by word, but by the fruits of the Spirit; by love, and mercy, and meekness, and zeal, when occasion serves. The whole life of a Christian, as far as he is a Christian, it gives evidence that he is a Christian. The whole life of a carnal formal man evidences that he is not a Christian, because he hath nothing in him above other men; as our Saviour Christ saith, 'What peculiar thing do ye,' to distinguish yourselves from other men? Mat. 5:47. So let us ask ourselves. We profess ourselves to be the children of God, the heirs of heaven, 'What peculiar thing do we?' How do we justify ourselves? A true Christian can answer, I can justify it by the Spirit; I find I do things from other principles, and motives, and inducements, than the world doth, who only respect terms of civility and aims of the world, or to content the clamour of conscience. But, I find, I do things out of assurance that I am the child of God, and in obedience to him. Let us see what peculiar thing we do.

Alas! I cannot but lament the poor profession of many. How do they 'justify' their profession? How do they make good that they have the Spirit of God raising them above other men, when they live no better than pagans, nay, not so well, under the profession of the gospel and religion? Would pagans live as many men do? Did they not keep their words better? Were they so loose in their lives and conversations, and so licentious? Would they swear by their gods idly? Most of our ordinary people are worse than pagans. Where is the 'justifying' of religion? If Turks and heathens should see them they would say, You talk of religion, but where is the power of it? If you had the power of it you would express it more in your fidelity, and honesty, and mercy, and love, and sobriety. The kingdom of God, that is, the manifestation of the government of Christ, 'it is not in word but in power.' Therefore let us labour to 'justify' that we are subjects of that kingdom, by the power of it.

Mere civil* persons, the apostle saith of them, 2 Tim. 3:5, they are such as 'have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it.' All that rabblement that he names there, they have 'a form.' A form is easy, but the power of it is not so easy. Therefore, let us justify our religion by our conversation. Let us justify the ordinances of God, the preaching and hearing of the word of God, by reverence in hearing it as the word of God, and labour to express it in our lives and conversations, or else we think it nothing but the speech of man. Let us 'justify' the sacrament to be the seal of God, by coming reverently to it, and by finding our faith strengthened by it. So labour to 'justify' every ordinance of God, from some sweet comforts that we feel by them; and then we shew that we are true members of Christ, that we are like Christ, who 'justified himself in the Spirit.'

Beloved, it is a great power that must make a true Christian, no less than the 'power of the Spirit, that raised Christ from the dead;' as it is

Eph. 1:20, St Paul prays that they might 'feel the power that raised Christ from the dead.' It is no less power for Christ to shine in our dark hearts, than to 'make light to shine out of darkness.'

Now, what power is in the lives of most men? The 'power that raised Christ from the dead'? Certainly no. What power is there in hearing the word, when many are so full of profaneness that they altogether neglect it? What power is there now and then to speak a good word, or now and then to do a slight action? Is this the 'power that raised Christ from the dead,' when by the strength of nature men can do it? There must be somewhat above nature, to justify a sound, spiritual Christian. We must have something to shew that we have our spirits raised up by the Spirit of Christ, to justify our profession in all estates. In prosperity, to shew that we have a spirit above prosperity, that we are not proud of it. Then in adversity, then we justify that we are Christians, by a spirit that is above adversity; that we do not sink under it, as a mere natural man would do, when we have learned St Paul's lesson, 'in all estates to be content,' Philip. 4:11. In temptation we justify our Christian profession by arming ourselves with a spirit of faith, to beat back the 'fiery darts of Satan,' Eph. 6:16. When all things seem contrary, let us cast ourselves, by a spirit of faith, upon Christ. That argues a powerful work of the Spirit, when we can, in contraries, believe contraries.

Thus let us shew that we are Christians; that we have somewhat in us above nature; that when the course of nature seems to be contrary, yet we can look with the eye of faith through all discouragements and clouds, and can see God reconciled in Christ. That will justify us to be sound Christians. Therefore let us labour, not only for slight outward performances; that are easy for any to do, but by an inward frame of soul, and by a carriage and conversation becoming our profession, that we may 'walk worthy of our profession,' fruitfully and

watchfully, carefully and soberly, as becometh Christians every way. So much for that: I proceed to the next words,

'Seen of Angels.'

The word is not altogether so fitly translated, for it is more pregnant than it is here rendered, 'He was seen.' It is true. But he was seen with admiration and wonderment of angels. He was seen, as such an object presented to them should be seen, and seen with wonderment. It implies the consequence of sight. Sight stirs up affection. It stirs up the whole soul. Therefore it is put for all the rest (j).

1. They saw him with wonderment. For was it not a wonder that God should stoop so low, as to be shut up in the straits of a virgin's womb? that Christ should humble himself so low, to be 'God in our flesh? Was not here exceeding wondrous love and mercy to mankind, to wretched man, having passed by the glorious angels that were fallen? And exceeding wisdom in God, in satisfying his justice, that he might shew mercy? It was matter of admiration to the angels, to see the great God stoop so low, to be clothed in such a poor nature as man's, that is meaner than their own. This doubtless is the meaning of the Holy Ghost: they saw it with admiration.

(2.) And because he was their head, as the second person, and they were creatures to attend upon Christ, their sight and wonderment must tend to some practice suitable to their condition. Therefore they so see and wondered at him, as that they attended upon Christ in all the passages of his humiliation and exaltation—in his life, in his death, in his resurrection and ascension.

(3.) They saw him so as they were witnesses of him to men. They gave testimony and witness of him. So that it is a full word, in the

intention of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, not only the angels, but all gave witness of him, from the highest heavens to hell itself; all witnessed Christ to be the true Messiah.

In his baptism there was the Trinity; the Father in a 'voice from heaven,' the Holy Ghost in the shape 'of a dove.' He had the witness of angels, of men of all ranks, Jews and Gentiles, men and women; yea, the devils themselves oftentimes confessed him in the gospel. He was witnessed of all ranks. They saw him, and gave evidence and testimony of him that he was the true Messiah.

He was seen of angels. To declare this a little more particularly.

The angels knew of Christ's coming in the flesh before it was, for what the church knew the angels knew in some measure. When God made the promise of the promised seed, the angels knew of it. And in Daniel the angel speaks of the seventy weeks; therefore before his incarnation they knew of him. But now they saw him with wonderment in our flesh, now they had an experimental knowledge of him; for the angels, besides their natural and supernatural knowledge, they have an experimental knowledge, that is daily increased in them, in the church. They see somewhat to admiration continually in the church, in the head, and in the members. They knew of the incarnation of Christ before. You know the angel brought the news of it beforehand to the virgin Mary. The angels attended upon Christ from his very infancy. The angels ministered to him in his temptation, Mat. 4:11. Before his death they comforted him in the garden, Luke 22:43. He was made 'lower than the angels,' in some sort, as it is in Ps. 8:5; for they came to 'comfort him.' He was so low that he had the comforting of angels. Then they saw when he was buried; they 'rolled away the stone,' Mat. 28:2.

By the way in general, it is the angels' office to remove impediments that hinder us from Christ. A Christian shall have angels to remove the stones, the hindrances that are between heaven and him, rather than they shall be any impediment to his salvation.

Then when he rose there were angels, one at the head and another at the feet; and they told Mary that he was risen. And then at his ascension the angels told the disciples that Christ should come again. You have the story of it at large in the Gospel, how from the annunciation of his conception to his ascension they saw him, and attended on him, and witnessed of him.

As soon as ever he was born, when they appeared to the shepherds, what a glorious hymn they sang! 'Glory to God on high, peace on earth, good will to men,' Luke 2:14. How joyful were they of the incarnation of Christ, and the great work of redemption wrought thereby!

And, as I said, they did not only see these things, but they wondered at the love and mercy and wisdom of God in the Head and members of the church; as we see in divers places, in 1 Pet. 1:12, 'We preach the gospel, which things the angels desire to look into.' The very angels desire to pry and look with admiration into the wondrous things of the gospel. So in Eph. 3:10, 'To the intent that unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' There is somewhat done by Christ, by his incarnation and resurrection and government of his church, that the very angels look into, and wonder at the 'manifold wisdom of God' in governing his church; his wisdom in electing them, and after in restoring mankind. And in his manner of dispensation to the Jews, first by ceremonies, and then after by the body itself, Christ 'in the flesh.' There is such a world of wonders in the government of the

church, such 'manifold wisdom,' that the very angels themselves look upon this with admiration and wonder, and with great delight.

Use 1. Shall angels see and wonder at these things? at the love and mercy and wisdom of God in governing his church, in joining together things irreconcilable to man's comprehension, infinite justice with infinite mercy in Christ, that God's wrath and justice should be satisfied in Christ, and thereby infinite mercy shewed to us? Here are things for angels to wonder at. Shall they wonder at it, and joy and delight in it, and shall we slight those things that are the wonderment of angels? There are a company of profane spirits—I would there were not too many among us—that will scarce vouchsafe to look into these things, that have scarcely the book of God in their houses. They can wonder at a story, or a poem, or some frothy device; at base things, not worthy to be reckoned of. But as for the great mysteries of salvation, that great work of the Trinity, about the salvation of mankind, they tush at them, they slight them; they never talk seriously of these things, except it be as it were with a graceless grace of slighting and scorn. They account it a disparagement to be serious in these things. They make no mysteries of that which the glorious creatures the angels themselves look upon and pry into, even with admiration. But it is not to be conceived of, the profaneness and poison that is in man's nature against divine truths, as I shall shew afterwards, how it slights the means of its own salvation, and stands wondering at baubles and trifles; and so men waste away their precious time in admiration of that which is nothing but 'vanity of vanities,' whereas we should take up our time in studying these transcendent things that go beyond the capacity of the very angels. Yet these things we dally and trifle withal.

Use 2. Again, from hence, that Christ was seen and attended on and admired by angels, there is a great deal of comfort issueth to us. It is

the ground of all the attendance and comfort that we have from the angels. For this is a rule in divinity, that there is the same reason of the head and of the members; both head and members are one. Therefore what comfort and attendance Christ had, who is the head, the church, which is the body, hath the same, only with some difference. They attended upon him as the head, they attend upon us as the members. They attended upon him immediately for himself, they attend upon us for his sake; for whatsoever we have of God, we have it at the second hand. We receive 'grace for grace' of Christ. We receive attendance of angels, for the attendance they yielded to Christ first; they attend upon us, by his direction and commission and charge from him. So we have a derivative comfort from the attendance of angels upon Christ. But surely, whatsoever they did to him they do to us, because there is the same respect to head and members. Therefore the devil did not mistake, he was right in that, when he alleged out of the Psalm: 'He shall give his angels charge over thee, that thou dash not thy foot against a stone,' Ps. 91:11. He was right in that, applying it to Christ. For however it be true to Christians, yet it is true to Christ too; it is true to the members, as well as the head; and to the head, as to the members. For 'he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all one;' as the apostle saith, 'one Christ,' Heb. 2:11.

Now the care of angels concerning Christ and his church, it was shadowed out in Exod. 25:17, seq., and 26:31. There the mercy-seat, which covered the ark wherein the law was, upon the. mercy-seat there were two cherubins counter-viewing one another, and both pried* to the mercy-seat. They shadowed out the angels that look on the mercy-seat, Christ; for he is the mercy-seat that covers the law and the curse, in whom God was merciful to us. There they look upon that with a kind of wonderment and attendance, † which St Peter alludes unto in that place, 'into which mysteries the very angels pry,'

1 Pet. 1:12. And so in the veil of the tabernacle, the veil had round about it pictures of cherubins, Exod. 26:31. What did that shadow out unto us? The multitude of cherubins and seraphins and angels that attend upon Christ and his church. So he was 'seen' and attended on by 'angels;' and it belongs to all that are his, as you have it, Heb. 1:7, 'They are ministering spirits, for the good of the heirs of salvation.' They that serve the king serve the queen too. Christ is the King of his church, and the church is the greatest queen in the world. They attend upon her; nay, Christ hath made us, with himself, kings. Now, what a king is that that hath a guard of angels! As they guarded and attended upon Christ, so they guard and attend all that are his; as you have it excellently in Dan. 7:10, 'There are thousand thousands of angels about the throne continually.' All this is for our comfort, because we are one mystical body with him.

You have in Jacob's ladder a notable representation of this. Jacob's ladder, it reached from earth to heaven; and that pointed to Christ himself, who is 'Immanuel,' God and man, who brought God and man together. He was a mediator between both, and a friend to both. He was that ladder that touched heaven and earth, and joined both together. Now it is said, the angels ascended and descended upon that ladder; so the angels descending upon us, is, because they ascend and descend upon Jacob's ladder first; that is, upon Christ. 'All things are yours,' saith the apostle. What be those? God is ours, the Spirit is ours, heaven is ours, the earth is ours; afflictions, life, death, Paul, Apollos, the angels themselves, all is ours. Why? 'Ye are Christ's.' That is the ground. So it is a spring of comfort to consider that Christ was 'seen' and admired and attended by angels. They are ours, because we are Christ's. Let us consider what a comfort it is, to have the attendance of these blessed spirits for Christ's sake.

And hence we have the ground of the perpetuity of it, that they will for ever be attendants to us; because their love and respect to us is founded upon their love and respect to Christ. When favour to another is grounded upon a sound foundation; when the favour that a king or a great person bears to one is founded on the love of his own son; he loves the other because he loves his son whom the other loves; so it is perpetual and sound, because he will ever love his son. The angels will for ever love and honour and attend us. Why? For what ground have they respect to us at all? It is in Christ, whose members and spouse we are. So long as the church hath any relation to Christ, so long the angels shall respect the church; but the church hath relation to Christ for ever. Therefore, the respect that the blessed angels have to Christ and to the church, it is for ever and for ever.

Well, let us think of this, so as to make use of it; that now in Christ we have the attendance of angels. We do not see them, as in former time, before Christ's incarnation. It is true; because now, since Christ is come 'in the flesh,' the government of Christ is spiritual; and we are not supported with those glorious manifestations, but they are about us in an invisible manner. We have Elisha's guard about us continually, but we see them not.* There were more apparitions† in the infancy of the church, because the dispensation of Christ to the church was according to the weak state of the church. But now Christ is come 'in the flesh,' and 'received up in glory,' and there is more abundance of spirit. We should be more spiritual and heavenly-minded, and not look for outward apparitions of angels; but be content that we have a guard of them about us, as every Christian doth. 'Despise not,' saith Christ, 'these little ones.' They are about Christians, and about little ones, little in years, and little in esteem; 'for their angels,' &c., Matt. 18:10. It is a strange thing. They are God's angels, but they are theirs for their service. 'Their angels

behold the face of your heavenly Father.' So that Christ's angels are our angels; they are angels' even of children, of little ones. Nay, let a man be never so poor, even as Lazarus, he shall have the attendance of angels, in life and death. There is no Christian of low degree, of the lowest degree, that shall think himself neglected of God; for the very angels attend him, as we see in Lazarus. There is a general commission for the least, the little ones.

Likewise, it may comfort us in all our extremities whatsoever, in all our desertions. The time may come, beloved, that we may be deserted of the world, and deserted of our friends; we may be in such straits as we may have nobody in the world near us. Oh! but if a man be a true Christian, he hath God and angels about him always. A Christian is a king; he is never without his guard, that invisible guard of angels. What! if a man have nobody by him when he dies, but God and his good angels, to carry his soul to heaven, is he neglected? Every Christian, if he hath none else with him, he hath God, the whole Trinity, and the guard of angels, to help and comfort him, and to convey his soul to the place of happiness. Therefore, let us never despair, let us never be disconsolate; whatsoever our condition be, we shall have God and good angels with us in all our straits and extremities. Go through all the passages of our life, we see how ready we are to fall into dangers. In our infancy, in our tender years, we are committed to their custody: after, in our dangers, they pitch their tents about us; as it is, Ps. 34:7, 'The angels of the Lord pitch their tents about those that fear the Lord.' In our conversion they rejoice. 'There is joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner,' Luke 15:10. At the hour of death, as we see in Lazarus, they are ready to convey our souls to the place of happiness. Lazarus's soul 'was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom,' Luke 16:22. At the resurrection they shall gather our dead bodies together. It is the office of the angels. In heaven they shall 'praise and glorify God,' together with us for ever;

for 'Christ shall come with a multitude of heavenly angels,' at the day of judgment: 'when he shall come to be glorified in his saints,' 2 Thess. 1:10. Then we shall for ever 'glorify God,' saints and angels together, in heaven. Therefore, in Heb. 12:22, it is said, 'We are come to the innumerable multitude of angels.' What is the meaning of that? That is, now in the New Testament, by our communion with Christ, we have association with the 'blessed angels, innumerable company of angels,' saith the Holy Ghost there. We have association with them even from our infancy, till we be in glory. Indeed, they are as nurses: 'They shall carry thee, that thou dash not thy foot against a stone,' as it is in Ps. 91:11. They keep us from many inconveniences.

Obj. But you will say, God's children fall into inconveniences; how then I are they attended by angels?

Ans. I answer: First of all, God's angels preserve those that are his, from many inconveniences that they know not of. And certainly we have devils about us continually, and there is a conflict betwixt good angels and devils about us continually. And when we do fall into any inconvenience, it is because we are not in our way. If we go out of our way, they have not the 'charge over us;' they are to keep us 'in our ways.' And if they keep us not from 'dashing our foot against a stone,' if they keep us not from ill, yet they keep us in ill, and deliver us out of ill at length; for they deliver us not only from evil, that we fall not into it, but they keep us in ill, and deliver us out of ill, nay, and by ill. If we suffer in the custody of angels any inconvenience, it is that we may be tried by it, that we may be exercised and bettered by it. There is nothing that falls out to God's children in the world, but they gain by it, whatsoever it is. This, therefore, doth not prejudice the attendance of angels.

Therefore let us comfort ourselves in all conditions for ourselves and for the state. Put case it be brought to a very small number, that the enemies were thousands more than we, many thousands and millions; yet, if we be in the covenant of grace, and in good terms with God, we have 'more for us than against us,' we shall have angels fight for us. You know Elisha's servant, when he saw a multitude of enemies, his eyes were opened to see a company of angels; and saith the prophet, 'There are more for us than against us,' 2 Kings 6:17, seq. So let us be to the eye of the world never so few and never so weak; let us but have Elisha's eye, the eye of faith, and we shall have his guard about us alway and about the commonwealth. This should comfort us.

But then we must learn this duty, not to grieve these good spirits. As it is wondrous humility, that they will stoop to be servants to us, that are of a weaker, baser nature than they, so it is wondrous patience, that they will continue still to guard us, notwithstanding we do that that grieves those good spirits: one motive to keep us in the way of obedience, that we do not grieve those blessed spirits that are our guard and attendance. Let us consider when we are alone—it would keep us from many sins—no eye of man seeth; ay, but God seeth, and conscience within seeth, and angels without are witnesses: they grieve at it, and the devils about us rejoice at it. These meditations, when we are solicited to sin, would withdraw our minds and take up our hearts, if we had a spirit of faith to believe these things.

Let us learn to make this use likewise, to magnify God, that hath thus honoured us; not only to take our nature upon him, to be 'manifest in the flesh,' but also to give us his own attendance, his own guard, a guard of angels. Indeed, we are in Christ above angels, advanced higher than angels. What cause have we to praise God! How are we advanced above them? We are the spouse of Christ, and so are not

angels. They are under Christ as a head of government and a head of influence. They have strength and confirmation from Christ. He is not a head of redemption, but of confirmation to them. St Paul calls them 'elect angels' that stand. They stand by Christ, they have good by him. But they are not the spouse of Christ. We are the spouse and members of Christ. He hath honoured our nature more than the angelical: he did not take upon him the nature of angels, but of men; and as he hath advanced us above angels, so his dispensation is, that those glorious creatures should be our attendants for our good; and they distaste not this attendance.

And this is that we should know, what care God hath over us, and what love he bears us; that he hath honoured us so much that creatures of a more excellent rank than we are, even the angels, should be serviceable to us in Christ. And all is, that we should be full of thankfulness.

Obj. But you will say, What need the guard or attendance of angels to Christ or to us, to head or members, considering that God is able to guard us with his almighty power?

Ans. It is true. The creatures that God hath ordained in their several ranks, they are not for any defect in God, to supply his want of power, but further to enlarge and demonstrate his goodness. He is the 'Lord of hosts,' therefore he will have hosts of creatures, one under another, and all serviceable to his end. His end is, to bring a company to salvation, to a supernatural end, to happiness in the world to come; and he being Lord of all, he makes all to serve for that end. He could do it of himself; but, having ordained such ranks of creatures, he makes all to serve for that end, for the manifestation of his power and of his goodness, not for any defect of strength in himself. He could do all by himself. He could have been content with

his own happiness, and never have made a world; but he made the world to shew his goodness and love and respect to mankind. So he will have angels attend us, though he watch over us by his own providence. This takes not away any care of his, but he shews his care in the attendance of angels and other creatures. He useth them to convey his care and love to us.

Obj. But you will say, How can the angels help our souls any kind of way? They may help our outward man, or the state where we live; but what good do they to the inward man?

Ans. I answer, The inward man is especially subject to the Spirit of Christ. It is God that bows the neck of the inward man. But yet notwithstanding, if the devils can suggest sin, angels are as strong as devils, and stronger and wiser too. They are wiser than the devil is malicious, and stronger than the devil is powerful. Whatsoever they can do in evil, the good angels can in good. Therefore no question, but they suggest many thoughts that are good They are not only a guard about us, but they are tutors to teach and instruct us; they minister good thoughts, and stir up good motions and suggestions. They work not upon the heart of man immediately, to alter and change it—that is proper to God—but by stirring up motions, and by way of suggestion; as the devils do in ill, so they in good. Therefore it is said, they 'comforted' our blessed Saviour; which I suppose was more than by their presence. So they comfort God's children, by presenting to their thoughts (we know not how, the manner is mystical; it is not for us to search into that) good motions, by stirring up to good. Only the altering and changing of our dispositions, that is proper to the Holy Spirit of God.

Let us often think of this, what a glorious head we have, for whose sake the angels attend upon us in all estates whatsoever, even till we

come to heaven.

And this should stir us up to labour to be made one with Christ. All the good we have any way is by the interest we have in Christ first. He holds it in capite. If we have not a being in our head Christ, we can challenge nothing in the world, no attendance of angels; for the angels are at variance with us out of Christ. We see presently after the fall, the cherubin was set with his sword drawn to keep the entrance of paradise, from whence Adam was shut, to shew that presently upon the fall there was a variance, and a mighty distance between the angels and us. But now the angels no longer shut paradise; no, they accompany us in the wilderness of this world, to the heavenly Canaan, to paradise. They go up and down Jacob's ladder. They attend upon Christ; and for his sake they are ministering spirits for the comfort of the elect. So that all things are reconciled now in Christ, both in heaven and earth, angels and men. It should stir us up to get interest in Christ, so that we may have interest in all these excellent things that first belong to Christ, and then to us. Whatsoever is excellent in heaven or earth belongs to the king of all, which is Christ, and to the queen of all, the church; and the time will come that there will be no excellency but Christ and his church. All whatsoever is in the world is nothing. It will end in hell and desperation; all other excellencies whatsoever.

This should teach us likewise to carry ourselves answerable to our condition, to take a holy state upon us. We should think ourselves too good to abase ourselves to sin, to be slaves to men, to flesh and blood—be they what they will be—to the corruptions and humours of any man, since we have angels to attend upon us. We are kings, and have a kingly guard. It should move us to take a holy state upon us. It should force a carriage suitable to kings, that have so glorious attendance. Undoubtedly, if we had a spiritual eye of faith to believe

and to know this, answerable to the things themselves and their excellency, it would work a more glorious disposition in Christians than there is, to carry ourselves as if we were in heaven before our time. Oh that we had clear eyes, answerable to the excellency of the privileges that belong to us.

Again, It should teach us not to despise the meanest Christians, seeing angels despise not to attend on them. Shall we disdain to relieve them, that the angels do not disdain to comfort? To comfort and relieve one another, it is the work of an angel. Shall any man think himself too good to help any poor Christian? Oh the pride of man's nature! when the more glorious nature of the angels disdain not to be our servants, and not only to great and noble men, but to little ones, even to Lazarus. What a devilish quality is envy and pride, that stirs us up to disdain to be useful one to another, especially to those that are inferiors! We know it was the speech of wicked Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Gen. 4:9. Shall I stoop to him? Flesh and blood begins to take state upon it. Alas! if angels had taken state upon them, where had this attendance been? The devils that kept not their first standing, being proud spirits, they disdained the calling they had; the good angels humble themselves. God himself, as it is Ps. 113:6, disdains not to look on things below. When the great God became man, shall we wonder that angels should attend upon the nature that God hath so honoured? What a devilish sin, then, is envy, and pride, and disdain! Let these considerations move us to be out of love with this disposition. The angels joy at the conversion of others. Shall that be our heart-smart and grief that is the joy of angels? Shall we despise the work of regeneration and the image of God in another? Shall it be the joy of angels, and shall it be our sorrow, the welfare and thriving of others spiritually or outwardly? Shall we, out of disdain and envy, think ourselves too good to do anything when it is the delight of angels?

The angels are described with wings to fly, in Isa. 6:2, seq, to shew their delight in their attendance; and wings to cover their faces and their feet, to shew their adoration and reverence of God. The nearer they come to God, the more reverence. So there is no Christian, but like the angels, the nearer he comes to God, the more he abaseth himself and adores God; as Job, when he came nearer to God than he was before, 'I abhor myself,' saith he, 'in dust and ashes,' when God came to talk with him, Job 42:6. The angels, the nearer they come to God, the more reverence they shew; the more they cover their faces in his presence. And with the other wings they fly and do their duty, to shew their expedition in their service to Christ and his church. They do readily what they do. Let us imitate the angels in this.

The angels have a double office: a superior office and an inferior. The superior office they have is to attend upon God, to serve God and Christ, to minister to our head. The inferior office is, to attend his church, and to conflict with the evil angels that are about us continually.

It is good for us to know our prerogatives, our privilege, and our strength; not to make us proud, but to stir us up to thankfulness, and to a holy carriage answerable. It is a point not much thought on by the best of us all. We forget it, and betray our own comfort. Satan abuseth us to make us forget the dignity and strength that we have. Hereby we dishonour God and wrong ourselves, and wrong the holy angels, for want of faith and consideration of these things. A Christian is a more excellent creature than he thinks of. It is necessary oftentimes to think what a great degree God hath raised us to in Jesus Christ, that we have this glorious attendance about us wherever we are. Oh it would move us, as I said, to comfort and to a reverent carriage! and, indeed, when we carry ourselves otherwise, it is for want of minding and believing these things. I have spoken

something the more of it, because we are subject to neglect this blessed truth. Therefore, for the time to come, let us take occasion to meditate oftener of this spring of comfort than formerly we have done.

'Preached to the Gentiles.'

Christ, our blessed Saviour, being the king of his church, it was not sufficient that he was 'manifested in the flesh,' and 'justified in the Spirit;' that is, declared by his divine power to be God; but he must have his nobles to acknowledge this too. Kings in their inaugurations not only make good their own title what they can themselves, but they would have others to acknowledge it. Therefore it is said Christ was seen of angels, those noble and glorious creatures.

But not only the greatest of the kingdom, but likewise the meaner subjects, must know their king. There must be a proclamation to them to know who is to rule over them. Therefore, Christ being a general catholic king, there must be a publication and proclamation of Christ all the world over. He must be 'preached to the Gentiles.' But yet that is not enough. Upon proclamation, there must be homage of all those he is proclaimed a king to. Therefore it follows, 'Believed on in the world;' that is, the world must stoop, and submit, and give homage to Christ as the Saviour of the world, as the Mediator of mankind. Thus we see how these things follow one upon another. To come to the words,

'Preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world.'

These follow one another by a necessary order, for 'preaching' goes before faith. Faith is the issue and fruit of preaching. Christ is first

'preached to the Gentiles,' and then 'believed on in the world.' The points considerable are these:

First, That there must be a dispensation of salvation wrought by Christ unto others. It is not sufficient that salvation was wrought by Christ 'manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,' but this salvation and redemption wrought, it must be published and dispensed to others. Therefore he saith 'preached to the Gentiles.'

And then this publication and 'preaching,' it must be of Christ. Christ must be published to the Gentiles. All is in Christ that is necessary to be published.

Then the persons to whom. 'To the Gentiles,' that is, to all. The church is enlarged since the coming of Christ; the pales and bounds of the church are enlarged.

And then the fruit of this. Christ being thus dispensed to the Gentiles, the world 'believes.' All preaching is for 'the obedience of faith,' as St Paul saith,' Rom. 1:5, and Rom. 16:19, 'That the obedience of the faith may be yielded to Christ;' 'preaching to the Gentiles' is, that he may be believed on in the world.'

First of all, There must be a dispensation of Christ.

See the equity of this, even from things among men. It is not sufficient that physic be provided; but there must be an application of it. It is not sufficient that there is a treasure; but there must be a digging of it out. It is not sufficient that there be a candle or light; but there must be a holding out of the light for the good and use of others. It was not sufficient that there was a 'brazen serpent,' but the brazen serpent must be 'lifted up,' that the people might see it. It is not sufficient that there is a standard, but the standard must be set

up. It is not sufficient that there be a foundation, but there must be a building upon the foundation. It is not sufficient that there be a garment, but there must be a putting of it on. It is not sufficient that there be a box of ointment, but the box must be opened, that the whole house may be filled with the smell. It is not sufficient that there be tapestry, and glorious hangings, but there must be an unfolding of them. Therefore there must be a dispensation of the mysteries of Christ; for, though Christ be physic, he must be applied; though Christ be a garment, he must be put on; though he be a foundation, we must build on him, or else we have no good by him; though he in his truth be a treasure, yet he must be digged up in the ministry; though he be a light, he must be held forth; though he be food, there must be an application. Of necessity therefore there must be a dispensation of the gospel, as well as redemption wrought by Christ; 'preached to the Gentiles.'

To unfold the point a little, seeing the necessity of it, to shew

What it is to preach.

What it is to preach Christ. And,

What it is to preach Christ to the Gentiles.

1. To preach is to open the mystery of Christ, to open whatsoever is in Christ; to break open the box that the savour may be perceived of all. To open Christ's natures and person what it is; to open the offices of Christ: first, he was a prophet to teach, wherefore he came into the world; then he was a priest, offering the sacrifice of himself; and then after he had offered his sacrifice as a priest, then he was a king. He was more publicly and gloriously known to be a king, to rule. After he had gained a people by his priesthood and offering, then he was to be a king to govern them. But his prophetic office is before the rest.

He was all at the same time, but I speak in regard of manifestation. Now 'to preach Christ' is to lay open these things.

And likewise the states wherein he executed his office. First, the state of humiliation. Christ was first abased, and then glorified. The flesh he took upon him was first sanctified and then abased, and then he made it glorious flesh. He could not work our salvation but in a state of abasement; he could not apply it to us but in a state of exaltation and glory. To open the merits of Christ, what he hath wrought to his Father for us; to open his efficacy, as the spiritual Head of his church; what wonders he works in his children, by altering and raising of them, by fitting and preparing them for heaven: likewise to open all the promises in Christ, they are but Christ dished and parcelled out. 'All the promises in Christ are yea and amen,' 2 Cor. 1:20. They are made for Christ's sake, and performed for Christ's sake; they are all but Christ severed into so many particular gracious blessings. 'To preach Christ' is to lay open all this, which is the inheritance of God's people.

But it is not sufficient to preach Christ, to lay open all this in the view of others; but in the opening of them, there must be application of them to the use of God's people, that they may see their interest in them; and there must be an alluring of them, for to preach is to woo. The preachers are paranympi,* the friends of the bridegroom, that are to procure the marriage between Christ and his church; therefore, they are not only to lay open the riches of the husband, Christ, but likewise to entreat for a marriage, and to use all the gifts and parts that God hath given them, to bring Christ and his church together.

And because people are in a contrary state to Christ, 'to preach Christ,' is even to begin with the law, to discover to people their

estate by nature. A man can never preach the gospel that makes not way for the gospel, by shewing and convincing people what they are out of Christ. Who will marry with Christ, but those that know their own beggary and misery out of Christ? That he must be had of necessity, or else they die in debts eternally; he must be had, or else they are eternally miserable. Now, when people are convinced of this, then they make out of themselves to Christ. This therefore must be done, because it is in order, that which makes way to the preaching of Christ; for 'the full stomach despiseth an honeycomb,' Prov. 27:7. Who cares for balm that is not sick? Who cares for Christ, that sees not the necessity of Christ? Therefore we see John Baptist came before Christ, to make way for Christ, to level the mountains, to cast down whatsoever exalts itself in man. He that is to preach must discern what mountains there be between men's hearts and Christ; and he must labour to discover themselves to themselves, and lay flat all the pride of men in the dust; for 'the word of God is forcible to pull down strongholds and imaginations and to bring all into subjection to Christ,' 2 Cor. 10:4. And indeed, though a man should not preach the law, yet by way of implication, all these things are wrapped in the gospel. What need a Saviour, unless we were lost? What need Christ to be wisdom to us, if we were not fools in ourselves? What need Christ be sanctification to us, if we were not defiled in ourselves? What need he be redemption, if we were not lost and sold in ourselves to Satan, and under his bondage? Therefore all is to make way for Christ, not only to open the mysteries of Christ, but in the opening and application to let us see the necessity of Christ. In a word, being to bring Christ and the church together, our aim must be, to persuade people to come out of their estate they are in, to come and take Christ. Whatsoever makes for this, that course we must use, though it be with never so much abasing of ourselves. Therefore the gospel is promulgated in a sweet manner. 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God,' &c. The law comes with

'Cursed, cursed;' but now in the gospel Christ is preached with sweet alluring. 'I beseech you, brethren,' and 'We as ambassadors beseech you, as if Christ by us did beseech you,' &c., 2 Cor. 5:20. This is the manner of the dispensation in the gospel, even to beg of people that they would be good to their own souls. Christ, as it were, became a beggar himself, and the great God of heaven and earth begs our love, that we would so care for our own souls that we would be reconciled unto him. It was fitter, indeed, that we should beg of him. It was fit we should seek to be reconciled to him, but God so stoops in the dispensation and ministry of the gospel, that he becomes a beggar and suitor to us to be good to our souls. As if he had offended us, he desires us to be reconciled. The wrong is done on our part, yet he so far transcends the doubtings of man's nature, that he would have nothing to cause man's heart to misgive, no doubts or scruples to arise. He himself becomes a beseecher of reconciliation, as if he were the party that had offended. This is the manner of the publication of the gospel. I do but touch things, to shew what it is to preach Christ.

Use. Seeing then of necessity there must be a dispensation together with the gospel, let us labour to magnify this dispensation of preaching, that, together with redemption and the good things we have by Christ, we have also the standard set up and the brazen serpent lifted up by preaching 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' unfolded to us. It is a blessed condition. Let us magnify this ordinance, without disparaging other means, of reading, &c. This preaching is that whereby God dispenseth salvation and grace ordinarily.

And God in wisdom sees it the fittest way to dispense his grace to men by men. Why?

(1.) To try our obedience to the truth itself. He would have men regard the things spoken, not for the person that speaks them, but for the excellency of the things. If some glorious creatures, as the angels, should preach to us, we should regard the excellency of the preachers more than the truth itself; we should believe the truth for the messengers' sake.

(2.) And then God would knit man to man by bonds of love. Now there is a relation between pastor and people by this ordinance of God.

(3.) And then it is more suitable to our condition. We could not hear God speak, or any more excellent creatures. God magnifies his power the more in blessing these weak means.

(4.) And it is more proportionable to our weakness to have men that speak out of experience from themselves that preach the gospel, that they have felt the comfort of themselves. It works the more upon us. Therefore, those that first preached the gospel, they were such as had felt the sweetness of it themselves first. St Paul, a great sinner out of the church, and St Peter in the church, he fell, after he was in the state of grace; that these great apostles might shew to all people that there is no ground of despair, if we humble ourselves. If they be sins out of the church, if they be sins against the first table, as Paul he was 'a blasphemer;' or against the second, he was 'a persecutor;' yet he found mercy notwithstanding, and for this end he found mercy, he saith, that he 'might teach the mercy of God to others, that he might be an example of the mercy of God to others, 1 Tim. 1:16. And so, if we relapse and fall, let none despair. Peter, a great teacher in the church, an apostle, see how foully he fell! Now, when men subject to the 'same infirmities' shall discover the mercy of God out of the book of God, it works the more upon us.

It is good for us to have a right esteem of the ordinances of God, because the profane heart of man doth think it a needless matter.

Quest. Some are ready to say, Cannot I as well read privately at home?

Ans. Yes. But the use of private exercises, with contempt of the public, they have a curse upon them instead of a blessing. It is with such men as with those that gathered manna when they should not; it stank. Hath God set up an ordinance for nothing, for us to despise? Is not he wiser to know what is good for us better than we do for ourselves? God accompanies his ordinance with the presence of his blessed Spirit. The truth read at home hath an efficacy, but the truth unfolded hath more efficacy. As we say of milk warmed, it is fitter for nourishment, and the rain from heaven hath a fatness with it, and a special influence more than other standing waters; so there is not that life and operation and blessing that accompanies other means that doth preaching, being the ordinary means where it may be had.

Obj. Ay, but this ordinance of God, 'preaching,' it is only for the laying the foundation of a church; it is not for a church when it is built. Then other helps, as prayer and the like, without this, may suffice.

Ans. Those that have such conceits, they make themselves wiser than the Spirit of God; in St Paul, we see in Eph. 4:8, seq. Christ, 'when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, he gave gifts to men, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, for the edifying and building up of the church.' So that this ordinance it is necessary for building up still, and for the knitting of the members of Christ together still. Therefore, that is a vain excuse.

Obj. Oh, but what need much, less would serve the turn.

Ans. Thus people grow to contemn and despise this heavenly manna. But those that are acquainted with their own infirmities, they think it a happiness to have plenty; for naturally we are dull, we are forgetful, we are unmindful. Though we know, we do not remember; and though we remember, yet we do not mind things. We are naturally weak, and therefore we need all spiritual supports and helps that may be, to keep the vessel of our souls in perpetual good case. The more we hear and know, the fitter we are for doing and suffering; our souls are fitter for communion with God for all passages, both of life and death. Therefore we cannot have too much care this way.

Oh let us therefore choose Mary's part, 'the better part,' that will never depart from us; and take heed of profane conceits in this kind. It is to the prejudice of our souls. We must know, that whensoever God sets up an ordinance, he accompanies it with a special blessing. And we are not so much to consider men in it, but consider the ordinance, which is his; and being his, there is a special blessing goes with the dispensation of the word, by the ministry.

Obj. Others object, they know it well enough; and therefore they need not to be taught.

Ans. The word of God preached, it is not altogether to teach us, but, the Spirit going with it, to work grace, necessary to 'strengthen us in the inward man,' 2 Cor. 4:16. And those that say they know it enough, deceive themselves. They know it not. Religion is a mystery, and can it be learned at the first? There is no mystery but it requires many years to learn. If it be but a handicraft, men are six or seven years learning it. And is religion, and the mysteries and depths of it, learned so soon, think we? There is a mystery in every grace, in repentance, in faith, in patience, that no man knows, but those that have the graces [and] what belongs to those graces. Religion consists

not in some parts and abilities to speak and conceive of these things; and yet that is hardly learned, being contrary to our nature, having no seeds of these things. Even the outside of religion, that is the preparative to the inward; there is somewhat to do to bring our hearts to these things. But, then, religion itself is a deep mystery; it requires a great deal of learning.

Let us therefore set a price upon God's ordinance. There must be this dispensation. Christ must be 'preached.' Preaching is the chariot that carries Christ up and down the world. Christ doth not profit but as he is preached. For supernatural benefits, if they be not discovered, they are lost; as we say of jewels, if they be not discovered, what is the glory of them? Therefore there must be a discovery by preaching, which is the ordinance of God for that end. Whereupon God stirred up the apostles before, that were the main converters of the world. They had some prerogatives above all other preachers. They had an immediate calling, extraordinary gifts, and a general commission. In them was established a ministry to the end of the world. 'Christ, when he ascended on high and led captivity captive'—he would give no mean gift then, when he was to ascend triumphantly to heaven—the greatest gift he could give was, 'some to be prophets, some apostles, some teachers, for the building up of the body of Christ, till we all meet a perfect man in Christ.' 'I will send them pastors according to my own heart,' saith God, Jer. 3:15. It is a gift of all gifts, the ordinance of preaching. God esteems it so, Christ esteems it so, and so should we esteem it.

And to add this further, to clear it from whatsoever may rise up in any man's mind, do but consider in experience, where God sets up his ordinance, how many souls are converted. Some are savingly cast down and then raised up again. Their lives are reformed. They walk in the light, they know whither they go. They can give an account of

what they hold. The state of those that live under the ordinance of God is incomparably more lightsome, and comfortable, and glorious, than those that are in the dark, that want it. If we had no other argument, experience is a good argument. Where doth popery and profaneness reign most? In those places where this ordinance of God is not set up; for popery cannot endure the breath of the gospel. Thus we see the necessity and benefit of preaching.

But then, in the next place, this preaching it must be of Christ; Christ must be 'preached.'

Quest. But must nothing be preached but Christ?

Ans. I answer, Nothing but Christ, or that that tends to Christ. If we preach threatenings, it is to cast men down, that we may build them up. If a physician purge, it is that he may give cordials. Whatsoever is done in preaching to humble men, it is to raise them up again in Christ; all makes way for Christ. When men are dejected by the law, we must not leave them there, but raise them up again. Whatever we preach, it is reductive to Christ, that men may walk worthy of Christ. When men have been taught Christ, they must be taught to 'walk worthy of Christ, and of their calling,' Col. 1:10, that they may carry themselves fruitfully, and holily, and constantly, every way suitable for so glorious a profession as the profession of Christian religion is. The foundation of all these duties must be from Christ. The graces for these duties must be fetched from Christ; and the reasons and motives of a Christian's conversation must be from Christ, and from the state that Christ hath advanced us unto. The prevailing reasons of an holy life are fetched from Christ. 'The grace of God hath appeared'—saith St Paul, 'it hath shined gloriously'—'teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and holily, in this present evil world,' Titus 2:12. So that

Christ is the main object of preaching. This made St Paul, when he was among the Corinthians, to profess no knowledge of anything but of 'Christ, and him crucified;' to esteem and value nothing else. He had arts and tongues and parts. He was a man excellently qualified, but he made show of nothing in his preaching, and in his value and esteem, but of Christ, and the good things we have by Christ.

Now Christ must be preached wholly and only. We must not take anything from Christ, nor join anything to Christ. The Galatians did but believe the necessity of ceremonies with Christ; and the apostle tells them, 'Ye are fallen from Christ,' Gal. 5:4. It is a destructive addition, to add anything to Christ. Away with other satisfaction. The satisfaction of Christ is enough. Away with merits. The merits of Christ are all-sufficient. Away with merit of works in matter of salvation. Christ's righteousness is that that we must labour to be found in, and 'not in our own,' Philip. 3:9. All is but 'dung and dross,' Philip. 3:8, in comparison of the excellent righteousness we have in Jesus Christ. You must hear, and we must preach all Christ and only Christ. St Paul saith, he was 'jealous with a holy jealousy' over those he 'taught.' Why? 'Lest Satan should beguile them, and draw them from Christ,' to any other thing, 2 Cor. 11:2. Why is the Church of Rome so erroneous, but because she leaves Christ and cleaves to other things? Therefore we must labour to keep chaste souls to Christ, and those that are true preachers, and ambassadors, and messengers, they must be 'jealous with a holy jealousy' over the people of God, that they look to nothing but Christ.

Christ must be preached; but to whom? 'To the Gentiles.'

Here lies the mystery, that Christ, who was 'manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,' &c., should be 'preached to the Gentiles.' What were the Gentiles? Before Christ's time they were 'dogs,' in our

Saviour Christ's censure. 'Shall I give the children's bread to dogs?' Mat. 15:27. Before Christ's time they 'sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death,' Ps. 107:10. Before Christ's time they were 'the halt and the lame,' that he, the great feast-maker, sent to bid come in, Luke 14:21. They were 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,' without Christ, 'without God in the world,' Eph. 2:12; without God because they were without Christ. It is not to be imagined in what misery the poor Gentiles were before the coming of Christ, except some few proselytes that joined themselves to the Jewish Church, for the Gentiles worshipped devils. What were all their gods but devils? They were under the kingdom of Satan when the gospel came to be preached among them. They were 'translated' out of the kingdom of Satan, into the blessed and glorious kingdom of Christ, Col. 1:13. Yet we see here, notwithstanding, they were such kind of people; the mystery of the gospel is preached to these, 'to the Gentiles.'

It was such a mystery as St Peter himself, although he were acquainted with it oftentimes by Christ, and he might read of it in the prophets, yet, notwithstanding, he was to be put in mind of it, Acts 10:13. When he was to go to Cornelius he saw a vision full of beasts, and a voice saying, 'Kill and eat,' and indeed, the 'Gentiles' were little better than beasts. They were esteemed so before they had the gospel, and the preaching of it to them. You see it was a mystery to St Peter himself.

Obj. But why did God suffer the Gentiles to 'walk in their own ways?' as the apostle saith, Acts 14:16. Why did he neglect and overlook the Gentiles, and suffer them to go on 'in their own ways,' so many thousand years before Christ came? Were they not God's creatures as well as the Jews?

I answer, This is a mystery, that God should suffer those witty* people, that were of excellent parts, to go on 'in their own ways.' But there was matter enough in themselves. We need not call God to our bar to answer for himself. They were malicious against the light they knew. They imprisoned the light of nature that they had, as it is Rom. 1:21. They were unfaithful in that they had. Therefore, besides that it is a mystery, God may well be excused. Do but look to the judgment that some of the heathens had of divine things, what reprobate and malicious judgments they had, how basely they esteemed of the Jews. The Jewish nation, saith Tully, shew how God regards them, in that she hath been overcome so oft, by Nebuchadnezzar and Pompey, &c.* What a reasoning was this. And that proud historian Tacitus, how scornfully doth he speak of Christians (k). It is not to be imagined the pride that was in the heathens against the Jewish religion, especially the Christian religion, how they scorned and persecuted it, in the beginning of it. So you see, in the best of the heathen men there was matter and ground of God's just condemning of them; therefore we need not quarrel with God against that.

Obj. But here is another mystery, Why the Gentiles, being all alike naught, † God should leave the better of the Gentiles, and reveal Christ to the worst. Were not Socrates, and Plato, and such like, more goodly moralists than the Corinthians and Ephesians? What kind of people were the Corinthians? A proud people, 'fornicators, idolaters;' as the apostle saith, 'such were some of you,' Eph. 5:8, and 1 Cor. 6:11. Here is a mystery.

Ans. It is God's sovereignty. We must let God do what he will. 'He will be merciful to whom he will be merciful,' and 'he will neglect whom he will.' Saith Austin, 'We must be very reverent in these matters;' it is most safe to commit all to God, and usurp no judgment here (l). It is a mystery; yet there is some satisfying reason may be

given why the Gentiles were called, when Christ came in the flesh, and not before; besides many prophecies foretold that it should be so, and some reason may be given why it was so.

Because they were to be incorporate to the Jews, to be 'fellow-citizens' with the church of the Jews. They were to be of God's household, as it is excellently and largely set down in Eph. 2:19. Now Christ coming took down the 'partition-wall.' Christ is the centre in whom they meet, in whom they are one. Therefore they met one with another when Christ came, because he is the Saviour of both. He is the 'corner-stone' whereupon both are built. So that now they are 'fellow-citizens' since Christ came.

And you see in the genealogy of Christ, he came both of Jews and Gentiles, as we see in Ruth. Divers of our Saviour's ancestors, they were Gentiles as well as Jews, to shew that he that came of both, he came to be the Saviour of both. But it is the safest, as I said before, in these queries, to rest in the wise, unsearchable dispensation of God, and rather be thankful that God hath reserved us to these times and places of knowledge, than to ask why our forefathers did not know Christ. We enjoy a double spring of the gospel, and the benefits of it. First, we were delivered from heathenism. What kind of people were we in Julius Cæsar's time? Barbarous people. † And after, when popery came in, God delivered us from that; there was a second spring. Yet how few give God praise, that hath had mercy on us Gentiles, that hath delivered us from Gentilism, and from the darkness of popery. But we grow weary of religion, as they did of manna, Numb. 11:6.

Let us therefore make good use of it, that God hath been merciful to us Gentiles in these later times. And let us that are born in the precincts of the church help our faith in the time of temptation this

way. Certainly God means well to my soul. I might have been born before, in times of ignorance and places of ignorance, and never have heard of Christ; but I have been baptized and admitted into the church: and by that there is an obligation. Before I understood myself, I was bound to believe in Christ. God was so careful of my soul when I understood nothing, that there should be a bond for me to believe in Christ. If God had not meant well to my soul, I should not have lived so much as to hear of the gospel. Thus we should gather upon God, as the woman of Canaan did upon our Saviour Christ, and fight against all distrust and unbelief, and all temptations of Satan, that present God as though he cared not for us. There cannot be too much art and skill to help our faith this way.

Again, the Gentiles have now interest in Christ since the coming of Christ, and not before. It is a mystery. It were not a mystery, if the Gentiles had had an interest in Christ, and been within the pale of the church before.

There are several degrees of the dispensation of salvation. There is, first, the ordaining of salvation. That was before all worlds. And then the promise of salvation. That was when Adam fell. Then there is the procuring of salvation promised. That was by Christ, when he came in the flesh. Then there is the promulgation and enlarging of salvation to all people. This was after Christ was come in the flesh. Then there is the perfect consummation of salvation in heaven. Now the execution of the promise, and the performance of all good concerning salvation, it was reserved to Christ's coming in the flesh; and the enlargement of the promise to all nations was not till then. I do but touch this, to shew that God hath had a special care of this latter age of the world. Some account the first age of the world to be a golden age, the next silver, and then an iron age. But indeed we may invert the order. We live in the golden age, the last ages, when Christ

was 'manifested.' What is the glory of times and places? The 'manifestation of Christ.' The more Christ is laid open with his 'unsearchable riches,' the more God glorifies those times and places; and that is the golden age where the gospel is preached.

Therefore, we cannot be too much thankful for that wondrous favour which we have enjoyed so long time together, under the glorious sunshine of the gospel.

Hence we have a ground likewise of enlarging the gospel to all people, because the Gentiles now have interest in Christ; that merchants, and those that give themselves to navigation, they may with good success carry the gospel to all people. There are none shut out now, since Christ, in this last age of the world; and certainly there is great hope of those Western people. We see the gospel hath imitated the course of the sun. The Sun of righteousness hath shined like the sun in the firmament. The sun begins east, and goes to the west; so the gospel. It began in the eastern parts. It hath left them; they are under the Turkish barbarous tyranny at this time. The gospel is now come to the western parts of the world.* For Christ will take an holy state upon him, and will not abide long where he is disesteemed, where the gospel is under-valued, and blended with that which is prejudicial to the sincerity[†] of it; when there is little care had what men believe. The state of the gospel and truth is such, that if it be mingled overmuch with heterogeneal stuff, it overthrows it; and Christ will not endure this indignity. Therefore, let us take heed that we keep Christ and his truth with us exactly; and let us take heed of sinning against the gospel, if we would have it stay with us, especially of sins immediately against the gospel, as for instance,

1. Take heed of joining superstition and popish trash with it, or the like, that will eat out the very heart of the gospel, and sets up man in

the place of Christ.

2. Again, Take heed of decaying in our first love. We see God threateneth the church of Ephesus, for not cherishing and maintaining her first love; that he would remove not only the gospel, but the 'candlestick,' the church itself. For security in abundance and plenty, and decay in her first love, God threateneth that he will scatter the candlestick, the church itself, into foreign places.

3. Again, A sin against the gospel is unfruitfulness under it. When men shall have the blessed influence of the gospel, the soul-saving truth, the good word to be long among them, and to be as barren under it as if they were pagans; for the gospel to have no more power over our souls than if we had no gospel at all; that there is no difference between us and heathens in regard of our conversations; to go no further then they, nay, not so far in honesty, and justice, and sobriety: let us take heed of these and the like sins against the gospel. And I say, it should be a ground of labouring the conversion of those that be savages, be they never so barbarous, to labour to gain them to Christ. There are indeed some hindrances. There be Jannes and Jambres among them, instruments of the devil, to keep them in blindness and ignorance, and then custom that they are bred in,—which prevails most with the sorriest people,—for ignorant people that have their wits determined to one way they are so strong in it, as they are not to be untaught; as it is hard to teach a beast, because he is taught to go one way, for want of variety of conceptions, being void of reason. Now, people by nature are little better than beasts. Therefore they are so fixed and determined in that way they are brought up in, and are so settled by the devil and those priests among them, and by the tyranny of those that have come among them, the Spaniards, &c., that hath hindered their conversion much, yet, take them as bad as they can be, God hath a time for them. What

were we of this nation sixteen hundred years ago? There is a fulness of the Gentiles to come in; and certainly it is not yet come fully. For it is probable, nay, more than probable, that there are some people that never had the gospel; and the fulness of the Gentiles must come in before the other mystery of the calling of the Jews. I speak it to encourage those that have interest that way, not to take violent courses with them. There is nothing so voluntary as faith. It must be wrought by persuasions, not by violence; and there is a ground of encouragement hence, that since the coming of Christ there is a liberty for all nations to come in. Christ must be 'preached to the Gentiles.'

To conclude this point. Let us consider that we are those Gentiles that have enjoyed this preaching of Christ; and it is the glory of our nation. It is not our strength, or riches, or any ornament above others, that sets us forth, so much as this, that we have the gospel 'preached' among us, that these blessed streams run so plentifully everywhere among us. Let us labour to value this inestimable benefit. Where the gospel is not 'preached,' there the places are salt-pits, despicable places, whatsoever they are else, as it is in Ezekiel.* They are under the kingdom of Satan. It is the glory of a nation to have the truth among them. 'The glory of Israel' was gone when the ark was taken, 1 Sam. 4:21. The religion and truth we enjoy it is our ark; our glory is gone if we part with that. Therefore, whatsoever God takes from us, let us desire that he would still continue the gospel of truth, that he would still vouchsafe to dwell among us, and not leave us. What were all things in the world besides, if we had not the blessed truth of God? We must leave all ere long. Therefore let us labour to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened, to conceive aright of the difference of things, and to value ourselves by this, that Christ is 'manifested' to us; and thereby we have interest in Christ, more than by any interest and part and portion in the world besides. For then

Christ will delight to be with us still, when we make much of him, and esteem, and prize, and value him.

'Believed on in the World.'

After 'preached to the Gentiles,' he joins 'believed on in the world,' to shew that faith 'comes by hearing.' Indeed, 'preaching' is the ordinance of God, sanctified for the begetting of faith, for the opening of the understanding, for the drawing of the will and affections to Christ. Faith is the marriage of the soul to Christ. Now in marriage there must not be a mistake and error in the person, for then it is a kind of nullity. Now that the person to whom we are to be married by faith may be known to us, there is an ordinance of preaching set up, to lay open our own beggary and necessity, what we are without him; and to open the riches of our husband, the nobility, and privileges, and whatsoever is glorious in Christ, that the church may know what a kind of husband she is like to have. In Rom. 10:14, seq., you have the *scala cœli*, the ladder of heaven, as a good old martyr called it; and we must not presume to alter the staves of that ladder (m). 'How can they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe without a preacher? and how shall they preach unless they be sent?' Here is preaching, and believing, and then prayer. There are some that are bitter against this ordinance of preaching, and advance another excellent ordinance of prayer, to the disparagement of this: if they would join them both together, it were well. You see what the apostle saith: 'How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe without a preacher?' without this ordinance of preaching? shewing that we cannot have the spirit of prayer without faith, nor faith without preaching. And the wise man saith, 'He that turns his ear from hearing the law' (under what pretence soever), 'his prayer

shall be abominable,' Prov. 28:9. The prayers of such men that would cry down this ordinance, how are they like to be accepted? They are abominable. We see here the apostle sets them down in this degree, hearing, and believing, and prayer; and here in this place preaching goes before believing.

Therefore the gospel unfolded is called 'the word of faith,' because it begets faith. God by it works faith; and it is called the 'ministry of reconciliation,' 2 Cor. 5:18, because God by it publisheth reconciliation. As preaching goes before believing, so it is the blessed instrument, by reason of the Spirit accompanying of it, to work faith. In the ministry of the gospel there is not only an unfolding of the excellent things of Christ, but there is grace given by the Spirit to believe. And herein this publication and proclamation differs from all other publications in the world. Men may publish and proclaim what they would have, but they cannot give hearts to believe it. But in the blessed promulgation and publishing of divine truths, there is the Spirit of God accompanying it, to work what it publisheth. It opens the riches of Christ, and offers Christ; and Christ is given to the heart with it. It publisheth what is to be believed and known, and it alters our courses. Together with it there goes a power—the Spirit clothing the ordinance of preaching—to do all. Therefore it is called 'the ministry of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. 3:8. Why? Because what is published in the preaching of the word, to those that belong to God, it hath the Spirit to convey it to the souls of God's people. Therefore he saith here, first preached and then believed.

Therefore, those that are enemies to this ordinance of God, they are enemies of the faith of God's people, and by consequent, enemies of the salvation of God's people. But the more the proud and haughty atheistical heart of man riseth against it, the more we should think there is some divine thing in it. It must needs be excellent, because

the proud heart of man stomachs* it so much. We see here it is the means to work faith. Therefore, as we esteem faith and all the good we have by it, let us be stirred up highly to prize and esteem of this ordinance of God. So much for the coherence or connection, 'preached to the Gentiles,' and then

'Believed on in the world.'

For the words themselves, we see here, first, that Christ, as he must be unfolded in preaching, so he must be 'believed on.'

Because the dispensation ministerial is not enough, unless there be an applying grace in the heart; and that is a spirit of faith, whose property is, to make peculiar that that is offered. There is a virtue of application in this grace of faith. Where there is a giving there must be a receiving, or else the gift is ineffectual. Christ is the garment of the soul. He is the foundation and food, &c. As I said before, he is our husband. We must give our consent. 'Believing' is a spiritual marriage. In marriage there must be a consent. This consent is faith. That makes up the bond between Christ and the believing soul. Therefore of necessity there must be faith; all else, without believing in Christ, is nothing. Faith is the means of making Christ our own, and no other thing whatsoever.

The papists have ridiculous means, that they understand not themselves, nor anybody else. They make the sacrifice of the Mass a means to apply Christ, and other courses; but the ministerial means to apply to Christ is the preaching of the gospel, and faith that is wrought by the ministry of the gospel; and there is no other way of application, by the Mass, or any such thing. Christ without faith doth us no good; in Heb. 4:2, 'The word that they heard did not profit them, because it was not mingled with faith.' The word of God, the gospel, it is the 'power of God to salvation;' but it is to all that

'believe,' 1 Peter 1:5. Whatsoever good Christ doth to us, he doth it by faith. It is a rule in divinity, and it is to purpose in the deciding some controversies, that a spiritual benefit, not known and applied, is a nullity; because God intends all, whatsoever we have, to be opened to us and applied, that he might have the glory, and we the comfort. We see the excellency and necessary use of this grace of faith.

How is Christ to be believed on?

1. We must rest upon no other thing, either in ourselves or out of ourselves, but Christ only. In popery they have many other things to rest on, and their faith being corrupt, all their obedience likewise is corrupt that springs from it. They dishonour Christ to join anything in the world with him. The apostle is wondrous zealous in this, to have nothing joined with Christ; as in Gal. 5:2, 'If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing;' only Christ must be believed on in matter of salvation.

2. And whole Christ must be received. 'Believing' is nothing but a taking or receiving of Christ as a Lord and as a Saviour; as a priest, to redeem us by his blood; and Christ as a king, to govern us. We must take whole Christ.

We see what manner of faith is in most men, that snatch out of Christ what they list, to serve their own turn. As he died for their sins, so they are glad of him; but as he is a lord and king to rule and govern them, so they will have none of him, but 'turn the grace of God into wantonness,' Jude 4. But Christ, as we must rest and rely on him only, so we must receive him and believe on him wholly.

Now faith looks upon Christ as the main object of it, as it justifieth. The same faith it looks upon the whole word of God as a divine truth revealed; but for the main work of it, it looks upon Christ. Christ is

the jewel that this ring of faith doth enclose; and as the ring hath the value from the jewel, so hath faith from Christ. In the main point of justification and comfort, faith lays hold upon Christ for mercy; for the distressed afflicted soul it looks first of all to comfort, and peace, and reconciliation; therefore it looks first to him that wrought it—that is, Christ. Now, the same faith that doth this, it believes all divine truths, the threatenings, and precepts, &c. Faith chooseth not its object to believe what it lists, but it carries the soul to all divine truths revealed. But when we speak of justifying faith, then Christ, and the promises, and the mercy of God in Christ, is the first thing that the soul looks unto.

Christ is the first object of faith, before any benefit or gift that we have from him; first, we must receive Christ before we have any grace, or favour, or strength, from him. And a sanctified soul looks first to Christ, to the love of Christ, to the person of Christ, and then to his goods and riches. As one that is married, she regards first the person of her husband, and then looks to the enjoyment of his goods, and inheritance, and nobilities, or else it is no better than a harlot's love. So faith looks to the person first. It knits us to Christ, to be in love with, and to embrace Christ, and then it looks to all the good things we have by him. For he never comes alone. There is a world of good things in him: all that tends to grace and glory. Yet it is the person of Christ that the soul of a Christian principally looks to. Other divine truths are the object of faith to direct and sway our lives; yet, notwithstanding, they are not the object of faith; when we look for comfort, for forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation with God, then it looks to Christ especially.

Therefore we that are ministers of the gospel of Christ should especially look to unfold the riches of Christ; and those that are God's people should especially desire to have Christ unfolded, and the

riches of God's love in Christ. The soul that ever found the sting of sin, the conscience that ever was awakened to feel the wrath of God, it accounts nothing so sweet as evangelical truths, those things that concern his Husband and Saviour. A carnal man loves to hear moral points wittily spoken of, as delightful to his ear; but the soul that understands itself, what it is by nature, that ever felt in any degree the wrath of God for sin, of all points, it desires most to hear of Christ and him crucified. Therefore we may judge ourselves by our ears, of what tempers our souls are; for 'the ear tastes of speeches as the mouth doth meat,' as Job saith, Job 12:11.

'Believed on in the world.'

By 'world,' especially here in this place, is meant the world taken out of the world, the world of elect. There is a world in the world, as one saith well in unfolding this point; as we see, man is called a little world in the great world (n). Christ was preached to the world of wicked men, that by preaching, a world might be taken out of the world, which is the world of believers. Hence we may clear our judgments in that point, that when Christ is said to redeem the world, it must not be understood generally of all mankind. We see here, the world is said to believe in Christ. Did all mankind believe in Christ? was there not a world of unbelievers?

We see here Christ 'believed on in the world'—the world that was opposite, that were enemies, that were under Satan. Who shall despair, then? Therefore, let us conceive well of Christ. Why was he 'manifest in the flesh?' and why is there an ordinance of preaching? Wherefore is all this, but that he would have us believe, be our sins what they will? Put the case that there were a world of sin in one man, that one man were a world of naughtiness; as in some sense, St James saith, 'there is a world of wickedness in the tongue,' James

3:6. If in the tongue, much more in the heart, which is the sink of wickedness. But put the case, there were a world of wickedness in one man, what is this to the satisfaction of 'God manifest in the flesh,' and to the infinite love of God, now pacified in Christ, looking upon us in the face of his beloved Son? You see here Christ is 'believed on in the world.' Do but consider what is meant by the world in Scripture, how it is set down to be in an opposite state to Christ, and look to the particular state of the Gentiles, that are said to be the world. What wretched people were the Corinthians before they believed, and the Ephesians, and the rest!

Let no man therefore despair; nor, as I said before, let us not despair of the conversion of those that are savages in other parts. How bad soever they be, they are of the world, and if the gospel be preached to them, Christ will be 'believed on in the world.' Christ's almighty power goeth with his own ordinance to make it effectual. Since the coming of Christ, the world lies before Christ, as beloved of him, some in all nations. The gospel is like the sea: what it loseth in one place it gaineth in another. So the truth of God, if it lose in one part—if it be not respected—it gets in another, till it have gone over the whole world.

And when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, then comes the conversion of the Jews. Why may we not expect it? They were the people of God. We see Christ 'believed on in the world.' We may therefore expect that they shall also be called, there being many of them, and keeping their nation distinct from others.

Now, I shall shew how this is a mystery. 'Great is the mystery of godliness, Christ believed on in the world.' This is a great mystery to join these together: 'the world' and 'believing.' It is almost as great a mystery as to join God and man together; a virgin and a mother; to

bring an unbelieving rebellious heart, such as is in the world, and believing together. It is a great mystery in divers considerations.

1. First, If we consider what the world was, an opposite and enemy to Christ; and under his enemy, being slaves to Satan, being idolaters, in love with their own inventions, which men naturally doat on; here was the wonder of God's love and mercy, that he should vouchsafe it to such wretches. We may see by St Paul's epistles what kind of people they were before they embraced the gospel. Here was God's wondrous dignation,* that God should shine upon them that 'sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death,' that were abused by Satan at his will. That the world, that is, all sorts of the world, from the highest to the lowest, should at length stoop to the cross of Christ; that the emperors should lay their crowns at Christ's feet, as Constantine and others—Christ at length subdued the Roman empire itself to the faith; that the philosophers of the world, that were witty* and learned, should at length come to embrace the gospel—for divers of the fathers were philosophers before (o); that men of great place, of great parts, and learning, and education, and breeding, should deny all, and cast all prostrate at the feet of Christ; for these to be overcome by plain preaching; for meanness to overcome mightiness; for ignorance to overcome knowledge; yet, notwithstanding, these great and wise men of the world were overcome by the gospel.

It was a mystery that the world should believe. If we consider, besides their greatness and wisdom, the inward malicious disposition of the world, being in the strong man's possession, for these men to believe the gospel, surely it must needs be a great mystery.

2. Again, if we consider the parties[†] that carried the gospel, whereby the world was subdued—a company of weak men, unlearned men,

none of the deepest for knowledge, only they had the Holy Ghost to teach and instruct, to strengthen and fortify them,—which the world took no notice of,—men of mean condition, of mean esteem, and few in number: and these men they came not with weapons, or outward defence, but merely with the word, and with sufferings. Their weapons were nothing but patience, and preaching, offering the word of Christ to them, and suffering indignities; as St Austin saith, 'The world was not overcome by fighting, but by suffering' (p). So the lambs overcame the lions, the doves overcame the birds of prey, the sheep overcame the wolves. 'I send you,' saith Christ, 'as sheep among wolves;' and how? By nothing but by carrying a message, and suffering constantly and undauntedly for going with their message; for they had cruel bloody laws made against them, that were executed to the utmost; yet by these means they overcame by preaching, and sealing the truth that they taught by suffering—a strange kind of conquest. The Turks conquer to their religion, but it is by violent means; it is a religion of blood. But here, as I said, meanness overcame greatness, ignorance overcame learning, simplicity overcame pride, baseness overcame glory; a mystery in this respect.

3. Again, If we consider the truth that they taught, being contrary to the nature of man, contrary to his affections; to enforce self-denial to men that naturally are full of self-love, that make an idol of their wit and will; for them to come to be taught to be fools, in respect of wit, and to resign up their wills to the will of another—for these men to believe things that are above belief to carnal men, as St Austin observes, it was the wonder of the world (q). What a kind of doctrine was this, to win such entertainment in the world as it did! Yet it did make men deny themselves, deny their wits, their wills, their goods, their lives. Therefore in this respect it was a great mystery that Christ should be 'believed on in the world.'

4. Again, If we consider another circumstance, it adds to the mystery; that is, the suddenness of the conquest. The world was conquered to the faith and obedience of Christ. In a short time after Christ, one man, St Paul, spread the gospel almost all the world over; he conquered almost all the world; he spread the savour of the gospel like lightning, suddenly and strongly, because there was an almighty power and Spirit accompanying the glorious gospel; and thereupon it came to be thus effectual with the world.

5. Again, It is a wonder in respect of Christ, whom the world 'believed on.' What was Christ? Indeed, he was the Son of God, but he appeared in abased flesh, in the form of a 'servant.' He was crucified. And for the proud world to believe in a crucified Saviour, it was a mystery.

6. Lastly, It is a great mystery, especially in respect of faith itself, faith being so contrary to the nature of man. For the heart of man, where faith is wrought, to go out of itself, and to embrace a beginning, and principle, and rising of life from another; to seek justification and salvation by the righteousness and obedience of another; for the proud heart of man to stoop to this, to acknowledge no righteousness of its own to stand before the tribunal of God, but to have all derived from Jesus Christ; to fetch forgiveness of sins out of the death of another; to wrap itself in the righteousness and obedience of Christ, given of God for it: the heart of man, without a supernatural work of the Spirit to subdue it, will never yield to this, because proud flesh and blood will always have somewhat in itself to doat upon, and to set it out before God; and when it finds nothing in itself, then it despairs. For the heart of man thus to go out of itself, and rely only upon the righteousness of Christ, not having its own righteousness, this is the greatest mystery. Especially for a guilty soul, that hath its eyes opened to discern of its own estate; for a

conscience awakened to trust in God, being a holy God, a just God: for these two to meet together, God, and a doubting, galled, misgiving conscience, forecasting the worst; for such a conscience to find peace by this act of faith casting itself upon Christ, this is more than can be done by any power of nature.

There is somewhat in nature for all legal obedience. Man naturally hath some seeds, to love his parents, to hate murder, and the like; but to go out of himself, and cast himself upon God's love and mercy in Christ, there is no seeds of this in nature, but all against faith in Christ. Ofttimes when a man is cast down, all in the world seems to make against him; and then for a man to have his heart raised up by an almighty power to 'believe,' certainly this must be a mystery. I say, when all makes against him; his conscience makes against him, and the judgment of God against him, and Satan's temptations against him—all the frame of things present seems to be against him—God himself ofttimes seems to be against him, to be an offended God, justly offended with his sins. For the soul in this case to cast itself upon God in Christ, there must needs be a hidden and excellent deep work on the soul. This is the greatest mystery. The greatest difficulty is in this branch, considering how contrary to the heart of man faith is.

Let us take heed of shallow conceits of faith, as if it were an easy common universal grace to 'believe.' No, beloved! It is a supernatural powerful work. Saint Paul sets it out divinely and largely in Eph. 1:18. He calls it the 'mighty power of God.' It requires not only a power, but an almighty power, to raise the heart of man to believe. For even as the work of redemption by Christ is a greater work in itself than the work of creation, so also the work of conversion.

1. Though they be all one to an infinite power, yet the thing itself is more difficult, to make the heart of man to believe, than to make a world of nothing; for when God made the world there was nothing to oppose. There he had to do with simply nothing. But when God comes to make the heart believe, he finds opposition and rebellion. He finds man against himself. He finds the heart and conscience against itself. He finds opposition from Satan, that helps man's distrustful heart. Then all meet together, afflictions, the sense of God's anger and man's guilty conscience. Now to make such a man believe, is more than to create a world.

2. And as God shewed more power, so he shewed more mercy in the work of redemption than in the creation. In the creation there he did good to a good man; Adam was created good, and he should, had he stood, have continued in a good condition. But in the work of redemption God doth good to evil men. God transcends in his love, because the glory of his mercy reigns in the work of redemption; so that the power, and wisdom, and mercy being greater in the work of redemption, it requires a more supernatural power in the soul to apprehend this than any other truth. As the work in redemption is more glorious, so the divine grace and virtue in the soul, that makes use of this, which is faith, it must be more excellent than all other graces whatsoever. And as it must be God that must save and redeem us, so it must be God that must persuade the heart of this. As Christ, who is God, must perform the work of redemption, so it must be God the Holy Ghost that must persuade the heart, that God loves it so much, and raise the heart to apprehend it, and make use of it; no less power will do it. Let us, I say, have great conceits of this excellent grace of faith. 'All men have not faith,' 2 Thes. 3:2. It is a rare grace, a rare jewel. When Christ comes, 'shall he find faith in the world?' Luke 18:8. Certainly it is a mystery for a man to believe in Christ, for a natural man to be brought to rely upon Christ. 'To you it is given to

believe,' saith the apostle, Mat. 13:11.* He might well say, it is 'given.' It is no ordinary gift neither. Therefore let us pray with the disciples, 'Lord, increase our faith,' Luke 17:5; and with the poor man in the gospel, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief,' Mat. 9:24.

The next thing I shall touch shall be this, that faith is put here for all graces. Here, in these six clauses of this 'great mystery of godliness,' there is only this one that is within us. 'God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, received up in glory'—these are all without us. But this one, 'believed on in the world,' that is only within us, and it is set down instead of all, and indeed so it is; for it draws all other graces after it. It enlivens and quickens the soul. It is the spring of spiritual life in us. It is the first grace of all. There are some degrees of the Spirit perhaps before it; but all graces have their quickening from faith. It infuseth supernatural vigour into all the parts and powers of the soul, and into all graces whatsoever. Where Christ is 'believed on in the world,' all follows, love and patience, and courage and fortitude whatsoever; as we see in Heb. 11:2, 'By faith they had a good report.' They had a good report for patience and for courage, and other good works; but all these came from faith. Therefore, 'by faith they had a good report.' Therefore the acting of all other graces, it comes from faith. By faith, 'Enoch walked with God;' by faith, Noah and Moses did so and so, signifying that faith is the ground of all. Faith it fetcheth spiritual life from Christ for all, whatsoever is good; it knits us to the spring of life, Christ; it is the grace of union. Even as Satan, by unbelief, did infuse all his poison at the first; for by making our first parents stagger in the word of God came sin; so by faith all obedience comes; all have their rising and beginning from faith.

As it draws spiritual life from Christ, so the encouragements are by faith, to all other graces whatsoever, for patience and love, &c. Faith

must set before them the object and the reasons from the glory to come, from the love of God in Christ. When faith propounds all this, then it stirs and quickens all graces. Faith yields strong reasons and discourse, to stir us up to whatsoever is necessary. Why do I hope for the glory to come? I believe it first. Why do I love God? I believe he is my Father, in Christ. All have strength from love, and that from faith: unless I believe that God loves me in Christ, I cannot love him; unless I love him, I can express no virtue for him, no patience, no good work. So it puts life into all; therefore it is here put for all, 'believed on in the world.' It should stir us up to make much of this faith; above all graces to desire it.

And being a mystery, and so excellent a grace, we have need to discern whether we have it or no. Therefore I will touch a few evidences, some of them out of the text.

1. First, If you believe, it comes usually after preaching. We see here, 'preached to the Gentiles,' and then 'believed on in the world.' Whence came thy faith? If not by the ordinance of God, thou mayest expect it to be a bastard faith; it hath not a right beginning; especially if it be joined with contempt of God's ordinance, it is no faith, but, a presumptuous conceit. Preaching and believing here go one after another. Therefore examine how thy faith was wrought in thy heart.

2. Again, as I said, faith being a mystery in regard of such a world of opposition between the heart of man and Christ, Satan helping the unbelieving heart, here must needs be a strife and conflict with faith. Therefore those men that never had conflict with their own unbelieving heart, that never had conflict with Satan's temptations, they never had faith; for it is a mystery to have faith. It is with opposition and conflict. No grace hath the like conflict and opposition from Satan; for Satan aims, in all sins, to shake our faith

and affiance in God's love. As God aims at the strengthening of faith above all, so the devil hates it above all, and in all temptations whatsoever he aims to shake our faith at the last. Therefore there must needs be opposition to ourselves and our own doubting nature, and to Satan's temptations, and to the course of things, that sometimes are clean opposite to a man. For a sinner to believe the forgiveness of sins; for a miserable man to believe glory in the world to come; for a dying man to believe life eternal; for a man tumbled into the grave to believe that he shall rise from the dead: if there be no conflict with these things, so opposite to faith, there is no faith.

3. Then again, in the third place, it is the spring of all obedience. The apostle calls it the obedience of faith, Rom. 1:5. All preaching is for the obedience of faith. Obedience of faith brings obedience of life and conversation. Examine thyself, therefore, by the course of thy obedience, by that that comes from faith. See what it works in thy soul, in thy life and conversation. And here I might be very large; for where faith is,

(1.) First of all, after it hath been a means to justify, to lay hold upon the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ, to stand between God and us, to clothe and cover our souls, then it pacifieth the conscience. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Rom. 5:1. Faith hath a quieting power. It quiets the soul, because it propounds to the soul a sufficient satisfaction in God-man. It propounds to the soul Christ sealed by God the Father. Having done all that is necessary to salvation, it sets down the soul: for he was God, and therefore able; and man, and therefore willing to save. Faith sets Christ as wooing us first; in his ministers inviting us, alluring us, commanding us, removing objections from our unworthiness. 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,' Mat. 11:28; and objections from our want of any goodness: 'Come

and buy without money,' Isa. 55:1, the all-sufficiency of Christ. Hereupon faith comes to quiet the soul, in the sweet course that Christ takes to bring the soul to him, being so able and willing, and shewing his willingness by all means that may procure love, that the soul may rest without doubting. Saith the soul, Surely Christ intends well to me, being so able, 'God in the flesh,' and setting up an ordinance, a ministry, whereby he invites me, and allures me, and commands me; and then also I have examples before me, of wicked men that have been converted: hereupon the soul comes to be at rest. Faith hath a quieting power.

(2.) And then again, there is presently an alteration of the course: Jordan goes backward; there is a turning of a man wholly; for faith is a turning of the soul clean another way. It turns the soul from the world to God and Christ, from the present evil world to a better world. We see as soon as Zaccheus believed, his thoughts were altered, his esteem of the things of this life was altered; 'half my goods I give to the poor,' Luke 19:8. We see in the Acts of the Apostles, as soon as they believed, they burned their books, Acts 19:19. As soon as a man believes in Christ, down goes the esteem of the world, and all worldly things whatsoever, because he sees a higher excellency in Christ. The poor jailer, when he had misused the apostles, as soon as he believed, we see how he neglects all, and makes a feast for them presently.

(3.) As soon as faith enters into the soul, there is a mean and base esteem of all things, and a high esteem of Christ. 'All is dung, in comparison of Christ,' Philip. 3:8. There is a change of the soul, and an esteem that goes before that change. We work as we esteem. As soon as we believe, we esteem Christ, and the things of a better life, above all other things; and thereupon goes the whole soul, and the bent of it, that way, though with some conflict. We see in the epistles

of St Paul, before those men believed in Christ, the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Romans, &c., what wicked people they were before, and how they were changed, as soon as they believed; then they were saints.

(4.) Again, Where this faith is, it is a triumphing, a conquering grace, a prevailing grace. It overcomes the world and whatsoever is opposite, for it sets before the soul greater things than the world can. The world presents terrors. What are these 'to the glory that shall be revealed?' The world sets out pleasures to allure us, and profits, and favours, and this and that; but what are all these to the favour of God in Christ? what are they to heaven? What can the world set before the soul of a believer that is not beneath? Faith can raise the soul above all worldly things. It subdues the natural doubts and loves, the fears of troubles and cares for the world, and all the affections that were before ruling in the soul. Faith coming into the soul subdues all to itself, and makes them all serviceable. Thus it prevails, if not at the first, yet in the continuance of time. It prevails by little and little in the hearts of all believers. It is a victorious grace, as we see in Moses and Abraham, &c., how it prevailed against all obstacles whatsoever. How many discouragements had blessed Abraham to leave his father's house, and to go he knew not where, and after to sacrifice his son! Yet faith overcame all. So Moses to leave the court, and to cleave to a despised people, what a work of faith was there! Faith is victorious. Therefore when people are drawn away with anything, that the looks of any man scares them, that the very noise of danger affrights them; when the hope of any rising will make them warp to do anything, when the hope of any gain will make them crack their conscience; where is the triumph of faith? As I said before, there is a prevailing power in faith, because faith sets before the soul that which is incomparably better and incomparably worse. What is all that man can do in comparison of hell and damnation? Conscience

saith, If you do this, ye shall die. And on the other side, what is all the world can give, in comparison of heaven, which faith presents to the eye of the believer?

(5.) Again, Where this believing is, it is a working grace; it works by love. By the love to God it desires the communion and fellowship of that it desires, and it works by love to other believers. It works towards Satan hatred, toward wicked men strangeness in conversation. It is a working grace. It works by love, to all good, to God and God's people, and to ourselves. It makes us have too high esteem of ourselves to be stained with the base services of sin. It works every way; and indeed it must needs be so, when faith sets before the soul the love of God in Christ: Hath God loved me so, to redeem me from such misery by such a course as this, 'God manifest in the flesh,' to advance me to such happiness, being, such as I was before, a sinner? Oh the thought of this will constrain us, as the phrase of the apostle is, 'The love of Christ constraineth me,' 2 Cor. 5:14; and then the soul will be active and earnest in anything that may be for the honour of Christ. Hath Christ thought nothing too dear for me, not his own blood, for the salvation of my soul is the price of his blood? He came down from heaven, he was 'God manifest in the flesh,' on purpose, in love to my soul; and shall I think anything too dear for him? And hereupon faith works and stirs up love, and when it is stirred up by it, it is acted by it; it useth the love of God in all the performance of worship to God, and in doing all good to our brethren and to ourselves, to carry ourselves as we should every way.

We see the woman in the Gospel, Luke 7:47, when she had much forgiven her, 'she loved much.' All duties come from love. What need I speak of particular branches? Christ brings all to love. He includes all duties in that one, in love, because they come from love, and have

love to carry them, and to mingle itself with them; and love comes from faith. 'Faith working by love' evidenceth that we believe, Gal. 5:6. Where there is no love there is no faith. Therefore let us labour to have this affection of love kindled. If we would have love kindled, we must stir it up by faith. You see then that this believing is the leading grace.

Let us labour by all means therefore to water this root. When we would have trees flourish and thrive, we pour water to the roots of them. Now, the radical grace in a Christian's soul is this believing, this trusting in God reconciled in Christ, this relying upon Christ; a convincing persuasion that God and Christ are mine. This is the radical grace of all other. Let us water and cherish this by all means whatsoever.

And to this end, let us labour to increase in knowledge. 'I know whom I have believed,' saith the apostle, 2 Tim. 1:12, for all grace comes into the soul by the light of knowledge. Whatsoever is good is conveyed by light into the heart. Faith especially is the bent of the will to Christ, receiving him; but this comes by a supernatural light, discovering Christ. Therefore let us desire to hear much of Christ, of his privileges and promises. The more of Christ we know, the more we shall believe, and say with the apostle, 'I know whom I have believed,' 2 Tim. 1:12.

It is a fond* and wicked tenet† of the papists, to say that ignorance is the mother of devotion (r); and Bellarmine's tenet is, that 'faith is better defined by ignorance than by anything else' (s)—a fond and unlearned conceit. For howsoever the reason and depth of the things of faith cannot be searched, yet we may know the things that are revealed in the Scriptures. The more I know the things that are revealed concerning Christ, and know that they are God's truths, the

more I know, the more I shall believe. Faith of necessity requires knowledge; therefore knowledge is put for all other graces. 'This is eternal life, to know thee, and whom thou hast sent,' John 17:3, because it is an ingredient in all graces. It is a main ingredient in faith. The more we know, the more we shall believe. 'They that know thy name will trust in thee,' Ps. 9:10. Is it not so in men's matters? The more we know a man to be able and loving and faithful of his word, the more we shall trust him. Is it not so in divine things? The more we know of Christ and of his riches and truth, the more experimental knowledge we have of him, that we find him to be so, the more we shall trust him. Therefore, by the knowledge that is gotten by the means, let us labour for an experimental knowledge, that so we may trust and believe in him more and more. Let us look to the passages of our lives in former times, how gracious God hath been towards us, and take in trust the time to come, that he will be so to the end. 'He is the author and finisher of our faith,' Heb. 12:2. And let us search into the depth of our own wants and weaknesses; and this will force us to grow in faith more and more. This will be a means to increase our faith. The more we see of our own nothingness and inability, without Christ, that we are nothing, nay, that we are miserable without him, the more we shall cleave to him and cast ourselves upon him. Those that have the deepest apprehensions of their own wants and weakness, usually they have the deepest apprehensions of Christ, and grow more and more rooted in him. The searching of our own corruptions every day is a notable means to grow in faith, to consider what we are, if it were not for God's mercy in Christ; and this will make us to make out of ourselves to Christ, it will make us fly to the city of refuge. Joab, when he was pursued, he fled to the horns of the altar, 1 Kings 2:28. When conscience pursues us, it will make us fly to the horns of the altar, to the city of refuge. A search into our own conscience and ways will force us to live by faith and to exercise faith every day in Christ Jesus.

And this is to feed on Christ daily, to fly to Christ, when we are stung with sin, and hunger, in the want of grace and strength, to fly to him for supply; and so to keep and increase faith by this excellent means. Christ is all in all to those that hope to be saved by him. Christ is the ground of our life and comfort, and our happiness. Therefore we should make out to him upon all occasions, to cleave to him in life and death. We cannot press this point of faith too much. Why are Christians called believers? Because believing is all. If we can prove the truth of our faith and belief, we prove all. If we be faulty in that, all is rotten. 'Whatsoever is without faith is sin,' Rom. 14:23. All men's natural morality and civility, it is, as it were, but copper graces; but counterfeits. They are but for the outward appearance, and not in truth. They are not enlivened and quickened by faith in Christ. But I leave this, and come to the last clause,

'Received up in glory.'

This is the last branch of this divine 'mystery of godliness,' but it is none of the least. Christ 'ascended,' if we respect himself; he was 'received,' if we look to his Father; himself 'ascended,' his Father 'received' him. The Scripture hath both words: ἀνέβη, he 'ascended up,' that is, for himself; ἀνελήφθη, he was 'received up,' that is, he was assumed.* There is no difficulty in the words. He 'ascended up' as well as he was 'received up,' positively as well as passively. In his death, he was not only crucified by others, and delivered by his Father, but he gave himself to death; so he was not only 'received up in glory,' but he 'ascended up into glory.' This shews the exaltation of Christ. The apostle begins with 'God manifest in the flesh.' There is the descent; a great mystery, for the great God to descend into the womb of a virgin, to descend to the 'lowest part of the earth,' Ps. 86:13; and then he ends with this, 'received up in glory.' The ascent is from whence the descent was. Christ ascended, and was 'received' as

high as the place was whence he came down. 'God manifest in the flesh,' that is the beginning of all; 'received up in glory,' that is the consummation and shutting up of all. It implies all—his exaltation, his resurrection, his ascension, his 'sitting at the right hand of God,' and his coming to 'judge the quick and the dead;' especially is meant his glory after his resurrection, his ascension and 'sitting at the right hand of God;' yet supposing his resurrection,

'Received up to Glory.'

'Glory' implies three things. It is an exemption from that which is opposite, and a conquering over the contrary base condition. It implies some great eminency and excellency as the foundation of it, and then a manifestation of that excellency; and it implies victory over all opposition. Though there be excellency, if there be not a manifestation of that excellency, it is not 'glory.' Christ was inwardly glorious, while he was on earth in the state of abasement. He had true glory, as he was God and man; but there was not a manifestation of it, and therefore it is not properly called 'glory.' There was not a victory, and subduing of all that was contrary to his glory; for he was abased, and suffered in the garden, and died. But where these three are,—an exemption and freedom from all baseness, and all that may diminish reckoning and estimation, and when there is a foundation of true excellency, and likewise a shining, a declaring and breaking forth of that excellency,—there is glory. But Christ, after he was 'manifest in the flesh,' and had done the work here that he had to do, he was 'received up to glory;' that is, all baseness was laid aside. His glory appearing, all abasement did vanish; he was victorious over that; for, in his resurrection, that was the first degree of his glory. You know, the cloths that he was bound with were left in the grave, the stone was removed. All things that might hinder his glory, that

might abase him in body, in soul, or condition, they were removed. There was an excellency in all that was not before, in regard of manifestation. For his body, it was now impassible, an immortal, spiritual body. It could suffer no longer. It was not fed with meat and drink, as in the time of his abasement. It was a body so agile and so nimble, that he could move even as he would himself. So there was a glory put upon his body above the sun. There was a glory upon the soul. All that might hinder that, was subdued; for there was no sorrow, no fear, nor grief, as there was in his soul before he was glorified. So both in body and soul, he was more glorious.

And then for his whole condition, that was glorious. He was abased no longer, for now he was taken into the highest place of all, above the heavens; and as his place is most eminent, so his government is most eminent. For he is taken up there 'above all principalities and powers,' as it is Eph. 1:20, and 'is gloriously set down at the right hand of God,' 1 Peter 3:22. All being subject to him, he hath the domination and government of all. So that whatsoever might shadow and cloud him, all ills, either in body, in soul, or condition, all was removed, and he was glorious in all.

For excellency, the foundation of glory, that was always with him in his very abasement, but now it was 'manifested.' He was 'mightily declared to be the Son of God, by raising himself from the dead,' Rom. 1:4. He was declared to be glorious in all those things wherein he could be glorious. As no person can be glorious but either it must be in body or soul or condition, he was glorious in all; for he was 'received up' into the place of 'glory,' to heaven, to the assembly of glory, to the presence of his Father and the blessed saints and angels, and no question but there was a glorious welcome. If the angels came so cheerfully to proclaim his incarnation when he was born, and sang, 'Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, and good will towards

men,' Luke 2:14, what kind of triumph do you think was made by all the blessed company in heaven when he was entertained thither after his abasement? It is beyond our conceits to imagine.

It will not be altogether unuseful to speak of the circumstances of Christ's being 'taken up to glory.'

1. Whence was he taken? He was taken 'up to glory,' from mount Olivet, where he used to pray, and where he sweat water and blood, where he was humbled. From the place of humiliation was his ascension to glory, shewing unto us that the place oftentimes where we pray, where we are afflicted, our sick-beds, nay, the places of our abasement, the very prisons, they may be as mount Olivet to us, from whence God will take us to glory. Let no man, therefore, fear any abasement; it may prove as mount Olivet to him in this respect.

2. And when was he taken 'up to glory?' Not before he had finished his work, as he saith, John 17:4, 'I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.' Then he was taken up, when he had done all, when he had accomplished our salvation; and after his abasement, not before. So our taking 'up to glory,' it must be when we have done our 'work,' when we have finished our 'course,' when we have run our 'race,' when we have 'fought the good fight.' And also after our abasement. We must first 'suffer' with Christ, before we can be 'glorified' with him. Again, if we speak of the first degree of Christ's glory, his resurrection: he was taken 'up to glory' when he was at the lowest that could be, when he was in the grave. So God's church and children, at the lowest they are nearest to glory. We use to say, Things when they are at the worst are nearest mending. So is the state and condition of the church of God, and every particular Christian. When he is lowest he is nearest rising, as we shall see afterwards.

3. The witnesses of this were the angels. They proclaimed his incarnation with joy; and without doubt they were much more joyful at his ascending up to glory. It was in the presence of the angels. So likewise, when he shall come to manifest his glory at the day of judgment, there will be 'innumerable thousands of angels.' Those glorious creatures were witnesses of his glory, and no question but they yielded their joyful attendance and service, that were so willing to attend him at his birth and coming into the world.

4. He was carried up in the clouds, in which also he shall come again at the last day.

But before he was taken up 'to glory' he was forty days on earth, to give evidence to his apostles and disciples of his resurrection, and to instruct and furnish them in things concerning their callings; afterwards he was taken 'up to glory.' And in all that time of his abode on earth, after his first degree of glory, his resurrection, he was never seen of sinful eye for anything we see in Scripture—I mean of those that were scorers of him, that despised him. The Scribes and Pharisees and carnal people did not see him. They had no commerce at all with him after his resurrection. They that despised him in his abasement had no comfort by his exaltation.

But that which I will chiefly press in this clause shall be to shew, that, as this is a mystery, so how it is a 'mystery of godliness' to stir us up to godliness; for, as I said before, divine truths and principles they are called 'godliness,' because, where they are embraced, they work godliness, the soul is transformed into them. Where these truths are 'engrafted in the soul,' as St Peter saith, they turn the soul into their own nature. Therefore I will shew how this mystery, Christ 'received up to glory,' breeds a frame of godliness in the heart.

That it is a mystery it will easily appear. For was it a 'great mystery' that God should take our nature upon him, to be abased in it? Surely it must needs be a mystery that God will be glorified in our nature. Was our nature advanced in his incarnation? Much more was it glorified in his exaltation, when he carried it to heaven with him. Here was the mystery of the exaltation of our nature. God was as much abased as he could be, being born and dying for us. Our human nature was as much advanced as it could be, when God raised it up to heaven. God could be no more abased, remaining God; and man's nature can be no more advanced, remaining the true nature of man. This is a 'great mystery,' the advancement of our nature in Christ, that was made 'lower than the angels;' he was 'a worm, and no man.' Now our nature in Christ is advanced above the angels. Now this nature of ours in Christ, it is next to the nature of God in dignity; here is a mystery.

Among many other respects it is a mystery for the greatness of it. We see after his ascension, when he appeared to Paul in glory, a glimpse of it struck Paul down; he could not endure it. Nay, before he suffered, a very shadow of his glory, it amazed Peter and James and John; they could not bear it; they forgot themselves: 'Let us build,' say they, 'three tabernacles,' &c. If a little discovery of his glory on earth wrought these effects, what great glory is it then that he hath in heaven! Certainly it is beyond all expression.

In this glorious condition that Christ is received into, he fulfils all his offices in a most comfortable manner. He is a glorious prophet, to send his Spirit now to teach and open the heart. He is a glorious priest, to appear before God in the holy of holies, in heaven for us, for ever; and he is a king there for ever. From thence he rules his church and subdues his enemies. So that though he accomplished and fulfilled those blessed offices that were appointed him in the

state of humiliation on earth, as it became that state to suffer for us, yet it was necessary that he should enter into glory, to manifest that he was a king, priest, and prophet; for he was not manifested who he was, indeed, to our comfort, till he was 'received up in glory.' We had not the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, sent from above till he ascended; as it is in John 7:39, 'The Holy Ghost was not given, because Christ was not ascended,' to apply and to help us make use of Christ and all his benefits and riches. So that in regard of the manifestation of Christ's offices, and of application of all the good we have by it, it is by Christ 'received up in glory.' To come to some application.

1. First of all, we must lay this for a ground and foundation of what follows, that Christ ascended as a public person. He must not be considered as a particular person, alone by himself, but as the 'second Adam.' As he took the nature of man in his incarnation, so he ascended into heaven in it, as a public person. As the first Adam was, in whom we all sinned, and all came to misery and baseness, and died, so Christ must be considered as the 'second Adam,' as in other things, so in his ascension to glory.

2. In the second place, we must know that there is a wondrous nearness between Christ and us now; for before we can think of any comfort by the 'glory of Christ,' we must be one with him by faith, for he is the saviour of his body. Therefore we must be in him, we must be his members, we must be his spouse; and being so once, we are one with Christ. There is no relation in the world that is able to express the nearness between Christ and us sufficiently; and therefore, when we speak of Christ ascending into glory, we must needs think of ourselves, and of our glory and advancement. He was taken up to glory in our nature, not only for himself but for all his. As the husband of the church, he is gone before, to take up heaven for his wife. As a husband takes up land in another country for his

spouse, though she be not there, Christ hath taken up heaven for us: 'I go before to prepare a place for you,' John 14:3. So likewise he is in heaven as a glorious head, ministering virtue, and comfort, and strength to all his. All our power and strength, it comes from Christ now, as our head in heaven.

3. Again, There is a causality, the force of a cause in this; because Christ, therefore we. Here is not only a priority of order, but a cause likewise; and there is great reason. Was there the force of a cause in Adam, that was but mere man, to convey sin and misery, and the displeasure of God to all that are born and descend of him? and is there not the force of a cause in the 'second Adam,' to convey grace and glory to his, he being God and man? Therefore, whatsoever is good, it is first in Christ and then in us. Christ first rose, therefore we shall rise; he ascended into glory, therefore we shall be afterward in glory.

4. And then we must consider Christ not only as an efficient cause, but as a pattern and example how we shall be 'glorified.' He is not only the efficient of all glory within and without, but he is the exemplary cause; for all is first in him and then in us. He was first abased, and so must we; and then he was glorified, and so shall we. We must be conformable to his abasement, and then to his glory. 'He is the first-fruits of them that sleep,' 1 Cor. 15:20; he being the first-fruits, we succeed. These things being premised as grounds, I come to make some use of this comfortable point.

Use 1. Christ is received up in glory; therefore, first of all, for our information, we must not seek him in a wafer-cake, we must not look for him in the sacrament bodily: how can he be there when he is 'received up in glory'? Therefore when we come to the sacrament, let us consider we have now to deal with Christ who is in heaven.

Cannot Christ shew his virtue to comfort and strengthen us, but we must have his body in the communion to touch our bodies? The foot hath influence from the head, yet the head is distant from it in place. The utmost branches have life and sap from the root, yet they are remote in respect of place. A king spreads his influence over his whole kingdom, though it be never so large, yet he is but in one place, in respect of his person. Doth the sun in the heavens come down to the earth to make the spring, and to make all fruitful? Cannot he send beams and influence from thence to cherish the earth? Must Christ come down in his body to us, or else he can do us no good? Must there be a corporeal descent, or else we can receive no influence from him? There may be a derivation of virtue from Christ though his person be in heaven; where he shall remain till the last day, when he shall come to be 'glorious in his saints.' The sun doth more good being in heaven, than he could do if he were on the earth. If the sun were lower, what would become of the earth? But being so remote, and so far above, he hath opportunity to shine over the greatest part of the earth at once; being greater than the earth, he shineth over more than half the earth at once. Christ being in heaven, as the 'Sun of righteousness,' he shines more gloriously over all; and we have more comfort, and benefit, and influence from Christ, now in heaven, than we could if he were on earth. Must we needs make him bodily present everywhere, as the papists do, and other heterodox strange conceited men in Germany? What need we do thus when there may be influence from Christ, now in heaven, to us on earth,—as we see in other things,—without confusion of his divine properties to his body, or making his body as his Godhead is? Therefore seek him not bodily anywhere but in heaven. Those opinions overthrow three articles of our faith at once: 'He ascended into heaven;' 'He sitteth at the right hand of God;' and, 'He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.' And where is his body in the mean time? in the sacrament? No. He is 'received up in glory.'

Therefore we must have our thoughts in heaven when we are about that business. We must 'lift up our hearts,' as it is in our liturgy, which is taken out of the ancient liturgy, 'We lift them up unto the Lord.' We must have holy thoughts raised up to Christ in heaven.

Use 2. Again, Is Christ 'received up to glory'? Here is singular comfort, considering what I said before, that he is ascended as a public person, in our behalf, in our nature, for our good. Therefore, when we think of Christ in heaven, think of our husband in heaven, think of ourselves in heaven: 'We are set together in heavenly places with Christ,' as the apostle saith, Eph. 1:20. We have a glorious life, but it is hid with Christ, in heaven. When Christ himself shall be revealed, our life shall be revealed. Though we creep upon the earth as worms, yet notwithstanding we have communion and fellowship with Christ, who is joined with us in the same mystical body; who is now 'at the right hand of God' in heaven; and he that hath glorified his natural body in heaven, that he took upon him, he will glorify his mystical body; for he took flesh and blood, his natural body, for the glory of his mystical body, that he might bring his church to glory. Therefore, we ought as verily to believe that he will take his mystical body, and every particular member of it, to heaven, as he hath taken his natural body, and hath set it there in glory.

It is a comfort, in the hour of death, that we yield up our souls to Christ, who is gone before to provide a place for us. This was one end of his taking up to heaven, to provide a place for us. Therefore, when we die, we have not a place to seek. Our house is provided beforehand. Christ was taken up to glory to provide glory for us. Even as paradise was provided for Adam before he was made, so we have a heavenly paradise provided for us. We had a place in heaven before we were born. What a comfort is this at the hour of death, and at the death of our friends, that they are gone to Christ and to glory!

We were shut out of the first paradise by the first Adam. Our comfort is, that now the heavenly paradise in Christ is open: 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' saith Christ to the good thief, Luke 23:43. There was an angel to keep paradise when Adam was shut out; but there is none to keep us out of heaven; nay, the angels are ready to convey our souls to heaven, as they did Lazarus, and as they accompanied Christ in his ascension to heaven, so they do the souls of his children.

Likewise, In our sins and infirmities. When we have to deal with God the Father, whom we have offended with our sins, let us fetch comfort from hence. Christ is ascended into heaven, to appear before his Father as a mediator for us; and, therefore, God turns away his wrath from us. We have a friend, a favourite in the court of heaven, the Son of God himself, at his Father's 'right hand:' he makes intercession for us. As Jonathan appeared in Saul's court to speak a good word and to plead for David, so our Jonathan, Jesus Christ, but with far better success, appears in the court of heaven for us, continuing our peace with God in our daily breaches, perfuming our prayers. And there is no danger of his death, for 'he is a priest for ever at the right hand of God,' to make intercession for us; his very presenting himself in heaven speaks for us. As if he should say, These persons that ask in my name, they are such persons as I was born for; such as I obeyed for; such as I died for; such as I was sent into the world to work the great work of redemption for; for he wrought our redemption in his abased estate; but he applies it as he is exalted. Application is as necessary as merit. We have no good by the work of redemption, without application: and for that end he appears in heaven for us and pleads for us. For even as there is speech attributed to Abel's blood—it cried, 'Vengeance, vengeance!'—so Christ appearing now in heaven for us, his blood cries, 'Mercy, mercy! These are those I shed my blood for; Mercy, Lord!' The very

appearing of him that shed his blood, it cries for mercy at the throne of mercy, which is therefore a throne of mercy because he is there. He shed his blood to satisfy justice, to make way for mercy.

In the law, the high priest, after he had offered a sacrifice of blood, he was to go into the 'holy of holies;' so Christ, after he had offered himself for a sacrifice, he went into the 'holy of holies,' into heaven, to appear before God. And as the high priest, when he went into the holy of holies, he had the names of the twelve tribes on his breast, to shew that he appeared before God for them all, so Christ being gone into the 'holy of holies,' into heaven, he hath all our names upon his breast; that is, in his heart the name of every particular believer, to the end of the world; to present them before God. Therefore, when we have to deal with God, think of Christ, now glorious in heaven, appearing for us; God can deny him nothing, nor deny us anything that we ask in his name; we have his promise for it.

It is a ground likewise of contentment in all conditions, whatsoever our wants be. What if we want comfort, houses, &c., on earth, when we have heaven provided for us, and glory provided for us; when we are already so glorious in our Head? Shall not any condition content a man in this world, that hath such a glorious condition in the eye of faith to enter into? We should not so much as look up to heaven without comfort: Yonder is my Saviour, yonder is a house provided for me. We should think and look upon heaven as our own place, whither Christ is gone before, and keeps a room for us. Here we may want comforts, we may be thrust out of house and home, out of our habitation and country and all; but all the world, and all the devils in hell, they cannot thrust us out of heaven, nor dissolve and break the communion that is between Christ and us. They cannot take away either grace or glory from us. Therefore we should be content with

any condition in this world. Christ is ascended into heaven, to keep a blessed condition for us.

Likewise, when we think of the troubles of this world, of the enemies we have here, think of Christ taken 'up to glory,' and think of Christ's order. First, he suffered, and then he entered into glory. So we must be content to suffer first, and then be glorious. We are predestinate to be conformable to Christ. Wherein stands our conformity? It is in abasement first, and then in glory. Christ entered into glory in this order, and shall we think to come to heaven in another order than Christ did? Shall we wish for a severed condition from him? If we be in Christ, all that we suffer in this world, they are sufferings of conformity to make us suitable to our Head, and to fit us for glory. And our greatest abasements, what are they to the abasement of Christ? None was ever so low, and there is none so high. As he was the lowest in abasement, so he is the highest in glory. When he was at the lowest, in the grave, not only dead, but under the kingdom and command of death, then he rose gloriously and ascended. Our lowest abasements are forerunners of our advancement and glory. This assumption of Christ to glory should help us in this respect.

In all disconsolations there is a world of comfort hence. We must not think of Christ, as if his honours had changed his manners, as it is among men; that now he is become stately, that he doth not regard his poor church. No such matter; he regards his poor church now he is in heaven as much as he ever did. The members here cannot suffer anything but the Head in heaven is sensible of it; as it is Acts 9:4, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' The foot is trod upon, and the tongue complains. Our blessed Saviour is not like Pharaoh's unkind butler, that forgot Joseph when himself was out of prison. Christ being advanced to honour now, forgets us not here. No; he is as good Joseph, that was sent into Egypt to provide for all his family

beforehand. So this our Joseph, the great steward of heaven and earth, he is gone to provide for us all, against we come to heaven. He forgets us not: 'He disdains not to look on things below,' Ps. 113:6; he considers every poor Christian. He is as merciful now as he was when he was upon earth; as you have it largely proved Heb. 4:7, 'He was man for this end, that he might be a merciful high priest;' and he is so in heaven, and pities all our infirmities. It is not here 'Out of sight, out of mind,' for, as I said, he hath us in his breast; ay, and he is with us, by his Spirit, to the end of the world. He is taken up to heaven by his body; but his Spirit, which is his general vicar, is here with us to the end of the world: 'I will send you the Comforter, and he shall abide alway with you,' John 14:26. And it is better for us to have the Comforter here, without his bodily presence, than to have his bodily presence without the abundance of his Spirit; as it was better with the disciples when he was taken up to heaven, and was present by his Spirit, than it was before. We lose nothing therefore by the ascension of Christ. It was for us. He was given for us, born for us. He lived for us, he died for us, he rose and ascended to heaven for our good: 'It is good for you that I go,' John 14:28. It was to provide a place for us, and to send the Comforter. All was for our good, whatsoever he did, in his abasement and exaltation.

Again, This administereth comfort in regard of the afflictions of the church. When the church is under any abasement, at the lowest, it hath a glorious head in heaven; and what! doth he sit there and do nothing? No. He sits 'at the right hand of God,' and rules his church, even in the midst of his enemies. If he do give the chain to them, it is for special ends. His people stand in need of all that they endure, and he measures it even to a drachm, whatsoever his church suffers; for they are his members, and he is sensible of their sufferings. He is 'a high priest that is touched with our infirmities,' Heb. 4:15. Therefore nothing can befall his church without his government. He lets loose

the enemies thus far, and then he restrains them, and subdues and conquers them, making them his 'footstool.' The enemies seem to domineer now, and trample on the church; but ere long they shall become the church's 'footstool.' Christ will govern his church till all his enemies 'be under his feet.' He is ascended into heaven for this purpose; and he is fitting his church by these afflictions, for greater grace in this world, and for eternal glory in the world to come.

Therefore, let us not take scandal* at the present sight of things. We stand amazed to see the state of Europe at this time; but for our comfort let us consider that Christ is taken 'up to glory,' and he sits in heaven and rules his church, and will guide all these wars to a good and gracious end. He sits at the stern. The ship may be tossed where Christ sleeps, but it cannot be drowned. The house that is built upon a rock, it may be blown upon, it shall never be overthrown. The bush wherein the fire is, it may burn, but it shall never be consumed. The church, wherein Christ rules and governs, it may be tossed, it shall never be overcome and subdued. Nay, by all these things that the church suffers, Christ rules, and exerciseth his church's graces, and mortifies his church's corruptions. It is necessary there should be some change. Standing waters breed frogs, and other base creatures; so it is with Christians. If there be not some exercise by afflictions, what kind of vices grow? As we see in these times of peace, what kind of lives most men live, that we may take up an admiration† that God should be so merciful to continue his truth to a company of proud base carnal persons, that lead lives, under the gospel, no better than if they were in paganism. Therefore we cannot look for any good, without further abasement. And certainly, if troubles come, we should many of us be better than we are now: afflictions would be so far from doing us harm, that they would refine us. We shall lose nothing, but that that doth us hurt; that, that we may well spare; that, that hinders our joy and comfort.

But, I say, let us comfort ourselves in respect of the present state of the church. Christ rules in the midst of his enemies, in the midst of crosses and persecutions, not to free us alway from them; but he rules in turning them to good, in strengthening and exercising our graces; and he rules in the midst of his church at this time by turning his enemies' cruelty to the good of the elect. As he ruled in the Israelites when he suffered Pharaoh to go on in the hardness of his heart, but he had a time for Pharaoh's ruin; so Christ hath a time for the persecutions of the church, as he had for all the ten persecuting emperors, that came to base and fearful ends. 'Was there ever any man fierce against God and prospered?' saith Job, chap. 9:4. Was there ever any that set themselves against the church of God and prospered? No, no. It is with the church as it was with Christ; to have looked on Christ hanging and bleeding on the cross, to have seen him grovelling on the ground in the garden, men would be ready to take offence. What! he the Saviour of the world? But stay and see him in the text, assumed to glory, and then there would be no offence taken at Christ. So it is in the church. You see the church suffers persecutions, but lay one thing with another. See the church in heaven with the Head of the church. See the church advanced. See it in glory ere long. See it refined and fitted by sufferings, to come better out of afflictions than it went in, and then none will take scandal at the afflictions of the church, as they ought not at the abasement of Christ. For though he was 'God manifest' in weak 'flesh,' yet we see he 'ascended up in glory.'

There is a comfortable speech, Jer. 30:7, 'It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be delivered out of it.' So we may say, this is the time of the church's trouble, but the church shall be delivered out of it. The enemies have their time to afflict and trample upon the church; but Christ hath his time to trample on them. Let us wait and expect with comfort better times. The kingdoms of the

world will be known to be the Lord Jesus Christ's. There will be a further subjection to Christ's kingdom than ever there was since the first times, when the fulness of the Gentiles and the conversion of the Jews shall be. Let us comfort ourselves with the times to come. Christ is in glory, and he will bring his church to further glory even in this world, besides eternal glory at the latter day. 'Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy: for though I be fallen, yet shall I rise,' Micah 7:8. Let not the enemies of the church insult* over much; though the church be fallen, yet she shall rise again 'after three days,' saith the prophet, Mat. 27:63. † Christ, though he were abased as low as possible he could be, yet after three days he arose; so the church shall rise out of her troubles after three days; that is, after a certain time that we know not; but the exact time is only in the hands of Christ. But certainly there are glorious times of the church coming.

Consider the wonderful love of Christ, that would suspend his glory so long. The glory of heaven was due to him upon his incarnation, by virtue of the union of his human nature with the divine; for that nature that was united to the Godhead, it must needs have right to glory by that very union. What should hinder, when it was so near to God as to be one person, to be taken into the union of the person? Oh but where had our salvation been then, if Christ had entered into glory upon his incarnation, if he had not shed his blood, if he had not been abased to the death of the cross? Therefore the schoolmen speak well (t), he enjoyed the presence of God affectione justitiæ, with the affection of justice and all virtues; that is, he was as gracious from the beginning, from his incarnation, for matter of grace and love of all that is good; yet not affectione accommoda. There was a nearness to God in pleasure, and joy, and comfort. This he denied himself till he was assumed to glory after his resurrection; and this he did in love to us, that he might suffer and be abased, to work out our salvation. That redundance of glory that should have been upon

his person presently upon the union, it was stayed till his resurrection, that he might accomplish and fulfil our salvation. What a mercy and love was this! So it is with the church. It is glorious as it hath union with Christ. Is not the church a glorious thing, that is joined to Christ, that is 'Lord of lords, and King of kings,' the ruler of heaven and earth? What is the reason the church is so abased then?

If the church were not abased, it could not be conformed to Christ. Christ, that he might work our salvation, he must be abased, and have suspension and stopping of the glory due to him, till the resurrection. Of necessity, we must be conformed to Christ as far as we may; and, that we may be conformed to him in abasement and suffering, there must be a stop of our glory, till we be dead and turned to dust, until we rise again, until Christ come to be 'glorious in his saints,' 2 Thes. 1:10. If Christ, as I formerly said, had shewed all his glory in his abasement, he could never have suffered. The devil himself would have done him no harm. There had been no pretence. The Pharisees would never have persecuted him and hated him, if they had seen him to have been such a person as he was; but he veiled his glory that he might suffer. If the world did but see the thousandth part of the glory that of due belongs to Christians, would they revile them, and disgrace, and malign, and trample on them? Certainly they would not. This is discovered in Scripture; but the world, to discover their atheism, that they believe not the word of God, take no notice of it. And that the children of God may be conformed to their head, and that way may be made to the malice of wicked men, to trample upon them, they go in the shape of miserable men.

Therefore let us not be discouraged for any abasement. We have a glorious life hid with Christ, which shall be revealed one day; in the

mean time, in the midst of abasement, let us believe glory. And let me add this to the rest:

As the same body wherein Christ was spit upon, and mangled, and crucified, in the same body he rose again, and in the same body ascended into heaven, so it shall be with us. The same body that suffers anything for Christ, the same body that dies, the same body shall rise, and be assumed to glory.

Hence likewise we have a ground of patience in all our sufferings from another reason, not from the order but from the certainty of glory. Shall we not patiently suffer, considering the glory that we shall certainly have? 'If we suffer with him we shall be glorified with him,' Rom. 8:17. Who will not be patient awhile, that hath such glory in his eye? Therefore let us look upon the glory of Christ in all our sufferings whatsoever. What made Moses and all the saints in all times to be so patient? They had an eye this way. What made Stephen not only patient but glorious? 'His face shone as the face of an angel,' Acts 6:15. He looked on Jesus Christ, and saw him 'sitting at the right hand of God.' What made the martyrs not only patient but triumphant in all their sufferings? They had an eye of faith to see Christ sitting in glory, and to see themselves in heaven 'glorious in Christ;' and not only to see themselves 'glorious in Christ,' but in themselves afterwards. We are not only glorious in our Head, but we shall be ourselves where he is, 'taken up in glory.'

And let it stir us up likewise not to be ashamed of religion, and to stand out in good causes for Christ and the church. 'He is not ashamed to be called our brother,' Heb. 2:11. No; not after his resurrection. 'Go tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father,' John 20:17. He was not ashamed of it when he began to be in the state of glory. He is not ashamed of our nature now, to take it up

into heaven. He is not ashamed to own us here, and at the day of judgment to set us at his right hand. And shall we now, for fear of men, for fear of shame, for any base earthly respect, be ashamed of our glorious Head? Do we believe that we have a Head that is glorious in heaven, 'sitting at the right hand of God,' that ere long will come to 'judge the quick and the dead;' and shall we be ashamed to hold out the profession of religion for a scorn, for a word, for a frown? Where is the 'Spirit of glory,' the spirit that should be in Christians that hope to be glorious? 'He that is ashamed of me here,' saith Christ, 'I will be ashamed of him at that great day.' How can we think that Christ will own us, when we will not own religion here? When we are ashamed to stand for him, shall we think to stand at his right hand? All base carnal atheistical spirits, that are afraid of disgrace, of displeasure, of loss, of anything but of him they should be afraid of; let them know there is no comfort for them in Christ's exaltation; for if they had any communion with Christ, he would infuse another manner of spirit into them. Let us therefore stand for Christ. We have a glorious head, a glorious hope, a glorious inheritance.

And let us go on with encouragement in good duties, with a spirit of faith; for wherefore is Christ in heaven but to rule his church by his Spirit; 'to lead captivity captive, and to give gifts to men,' Eph. 4:8. Let us therefore go on with confidence, that Christ from heaven will give us his Spirit to subdue our corruptions. He is in heaven to rule his church; and what is his kingdom but the subduing of our spirits by his Spirit, to be more humble, and more holy and gracious every way? Let us not think that our corruptions will be too hard for us, but go on in a spirit of faith; that Christ that died for us as a priest, he will rule us as a king; and if we be true to our own souls, we shall have strength to sustain us. He sits in heaven to rule us by his gracious Spirit. Let us not despair. Though we carry this and that

corruption about us, we shall by little and little overcome all. He will 'lead captivity captive,' and overcome all in us, as he did in his own person. He that overcame for us will overcome in us, if there be a spirit of faith to depend upon him.

Again, This mystery is a 'mystery of godliness.' It tendeth to and enforceth godliness and holiness of life. Christ 'received up to glory.' You see then our flesh is in heaven. Christ hath taken into heaven the pledge of our flesh, and given us the pledge of his Spirit. It was a dignifying of our nature that God should be manifest in our flesh. That that was an abasing to him, as God, was an honour to our nature. The incarnation of Christ it was the beginning of his abasement in regard of his Godhead, for the Godhead to be clouded under flesh; but it was a dignifying of the human nature that it should be grafted into the second person. And is it not a greater honour to our nature that now in Christ it is gone to heaven, and is there above angels? Our nature in Christ rules over all the world. And wherefore is all this? As it is for wondrous comfort, so for instruction, to carry ourselves answerable to our dignity. What! hath God taken our nature upon him to the unity of the second person, and exalted and honoured and enriched it? Is he likewise gone to heaven in our nature, and is there above all principalities and powers? All the angels in heaven attend upon him. And shall we debase and dishonour our nature that is so exalted? Let it work upon us, to carry ourselves in a holy kind of state. Shall we defile ourselves with sinful courses, and make ourselves baser than the earth we tread on, worse than any creature? for a man without grace is next to the devil in misery, if God be not merciful to him. If God have thus honoured our nature above all created excellency whatsoever, shall not this stir us up to a correspondent carriage? It is oft pressed by the apostle that we 'walk worthy of our calling,' Eph. 4:1. And, indeed, let us oft consider to what great matters we are called; for the life of

heaven it must be begun upon earth. 'Whosoever hath this hope,' to be glorious with Christ in heaven, 'it purgeth him,' 1 John 3:3. It frames him to be like the state he hopes for, and he that hath not a care to suit and fit his carriage and disposition to the state he believes, it is an empty hope; he deludes himself. Whosoever shall be glorious with Christ in heaven, is also glorious now. There is a Spirit of glory resting upon them, that is, grace; grace makes them glorious. Those that have not a Spirit of glory, that is, a Spirit of grace, to fashion and conform them, in some measure to be like Christ, by little and little, they have no right nor interest in the state of glory that shall be revealed after.

Is Christ taken up to glory, and for us as well as for himself? 'What manner of men ought we to be in holy conversation,' 2 Peter 3:11. We should 'keep ourselves unspotted of the wicked world,' James 1:27. Shall we think to have communion and fellowship with Christ in glory, when we make 'the members of Christ the members of an harlot?' 1 Cor. 6:15; when we make our tongues instruments of blaspheming God and Christ; as a company of vile wretches, that will come to the ordinances of God, and yet have not overcome their atheistical nature so much, as to leave their swearing and filthy courses? Do we think to have communion with Christ in glory, and not get the victory over these base courses? Do we profess ourselves to be Christians, and live like pagans? Hath God such need of people to fill heaven with, that he will have such unclean persons? Shall we have such base thoughts of heaven? No, beloved. These things must be left, if ever, upon good ground, we will entertain thoughts of fellowship in this glory. There is 'a new heaven and a new earth,' 2 Peter 3:13, for the new creature, and only for such. Let us not delude ourselves. There must be a correspondence between the head and the members, not only in glory, but in grace; and the conformity in grace is before the conformity in glory. Will God overturn his method and

order for our sakes? No, no; all that come to heaven, he 'guides them by his Spirit' here, in grace, and then he brings them to glory.' He gives 'grace and glory, and no good thing shall be wanting to them that lead a godly life,' Ps. 84:11; but first grace and then glory.

Therefore let not the devil abuse us, nor our own false hearts, to pretend a share in this glory, when we find no change in ourselves, when we find not so much strength as to get the victory over the base and vile corruptions of the world. The apostle from this ground infers mortification of our 'earthly members:' 'You are risen with Christ,' 'Your life is hid with Christ in God,' and 'we are dead with Christ.'* Therefore we ought to mortify our sinful lusts. For the soul being finite, it cannot be carried up to these things that are of a spiritual, holy, and divine consideration; but it must die in its love, and affection, and care to earthly things and sinful courses. Therefore let us never think that we believe these things indeed, unless we find a disposition, by grace, to kill and subdue all things that are contrary to this condition. Though somewhat there will be in us to humble us, or else why are the precepts of mortification given to them that were saints already, but that there is somewhat will draw us down to abase us? But this is no comfort to him that is not the child of God, that lives in filthy courses, that he might easily command himself in. Let him abandon the name of a Christian. He hath no interest to the comfort of this, that Christ is 'received up to glory.'

Again, The mystery of Christ's glory it tends to godliness in this respect, to stir us up to heavenly-mindedness. The apostle doth divinely force this in the fore-named place, Col. 3:1, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above.' From our communion with Christ, rising and ascending into heaven, and sitting there in glory, he forceth heavenly-mindedness, that our thoughts should be where his glory is, where our Head and husband is; and certainly

there is nothing in the world more strong to enforce an heavenly mind than this, to consider where we are, in our Head. Christ, our head and husband, is taken up into glory. There is our inheritance; there are a great many of our fellow-brethren; there is our country; there is our happiness. We are for heaven, and not for this world. This is but a passage to that glory that Christ hath taken up for us; and therefore why should we have our minds grovelling here upon the earth? Certainly if we have interest in Christ, who is in glory 'at the right hand of God,' it is impossible but our souls will be raised to heaven in our affections before we be there in our bodies. All that are Christians, they are in heaven in their spirit and conversation beforehand. Our heavy, dull, earthly souls being touched by his Spirit, they will ascend up. The iron when it is touched with the loadstone, though it be an heavy body, it ascends up to the loadstone, it follows it. The sun it draws up vapours, that are heavy bodies of themselves. Christ as the loadstone being in heaven, he hath an attractive force to draw us up. There is not the earthliest disposition in the world, if our hearts were as heavy as iron, if we have communion with Christ, and have our hearts once touched by his Spirit, he will draw us up, though of ourselves we be heavy and lumpish. This meditation, that Christ our head is in glory, and that we are in heaven in him, and that our happiness is there, it will purge and refine us from our earthliness, and draw up our iron, heavy, cold hearts.

It is an argument of a great deal of atheism and infidelity in our hearts, as indeed our base nature is prone to sink down, and to be carried away with present things, that professing to believe that Christ is risen and ascended into heaven, and that he is there for us, yet that we should be plodding and plotting altogether for the earth, as if there were no other heaven, as if there were no other happiness but that which is to be found below. There is nothing here that can

satisfy the capacious nature of man. Therefore we should not rest in anything here, considering the great things that are reserved for us, where Christ is in glory. Therefore when we find our souls falling down of themselves, or drawn downward to base cares and earthly contentments, by anything here below, let us labour to raise up ourselves with such meditations. I know not any more fruitful, than to consider the glory to come, and the certainty of it. Christ is taken into glory, not for himself only, but for all his; for 'where I am,' saith he, 'it is my will that they be there also,' John 17:24. Christ should lose his prayer if we should not follow him to heaven. It is not only his prayer but his will, and he is in heaven to make good his will. The wills of men may be frustrate, because they are dead; but he lives to make good his own will, and his will is, that we be where he is. Now, if a man believe this, can he be base and earthly-minded? Certainly no. 'Where our treasure is, our hearts will be there also,' Mat. 6:21, by the rule of Christ; 'Where the body is, the eagles will resort,' Mat. 24:28. If we did make these things our treasure, we would mount above earthly things. There is nothing in the world would be sufficient for us, if we had that esteem of Christ, and the glory where Christ is, as we should and might have.

And it is not only meditation of these things that will cause us to be heavenly-minded; but Christ, as a head of influence in heaven, conveys spiritual life to draw us up. 'When I am ascended, I will draw all men after me,' John 12:32. There is a virtue from Christ that doth it. There is a necessity of the cause and consequence, as well as strength of reason and equity. There is an influence issuing from Christ our head, to make us so indeed. Therefore, those that are otherwise, they may thank themselves. The best of us, indeed, have cause to be abased, that we betray our comfort, and the means that we have of raising up our dead and dull hearts, for want of meditation. Let us but keep this faith in exercise, that Christ is in

heaven in glory, and we in him are in heaven, as verily as if we were there in our persons, as we shall be ere long, and then let us be uncomfortable, and base, and earthly-minded, if we can.

To conclude all. As the soul of man is first sinful and then sanctified; first humble and then raised; so our meditations of Christ must be in this order: first, think of Christ as abased and crucified, for the first comfort that the soul hath is in Christ 'manifested in the flesh,' before it come to 'received up into glory.' Therefore, if we would have comfortable thoughts of this, 'Christ received up in glory,' think of him first 'manifest in the flesh.' Let us have recourse in our thoughts to Christ in the womb of the virgin; to Christ born and lying in the manger; going up and down doing good; hungering and thirsting; suffering in the garden; sweating water and blood; nailed on the cross; crying to his Father, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' finishing all upon the cross; lying three days in the grave; have recourse to Christ thus abased, and all for us, to expiate our sin; he obeyed God to satisfy for our disobedience. Oh! here will be comfortable thoughts for a wounded soul, pierced with the sense of sin, assaulted by Satan; to think thus of Christ abased for our sins, and then to think of him 'taken up into glory.'

In the sacrament, our thoughts must especially have recourse, in the first place, to Christ's body broken, and his blood shed, as the bread is broken and the wine poured out; that we have benefit by Christ's abasement and suffering, by satisfying his Father's wrath, and reconciling us to God. Then think of Christ in heaven, appearing there for us, keeping that happiness that he hath purchased by his death for us, and applying the benefit of his death to our souls by his Spirit, which he is able to shed more abundantly, being in that high and holy place, heaven; for the Spirit was not given in that abundance, before Christ was ascended to glory, as it hath been

since. In this manner and order, we shall have comfortable thoughts of Christ. To think of his glory, in the first place, it would dazzle our eyes, it would terrify us, being sinners, to think of his glory, being now ascended; but when we think of him as descended first, as he saith, 'Who is he that ascended, but he that descended first into the lower parts of the earth?' Eph. 4:9. So, who is this that is taken 'up in glory?' Is it not he that was 'manifest in our flesh' before? This will be comfortable. Therefore let us first begin with Christ's abasement, and then we shall have comfortable thoughts of his exaltation.

These points are very useful, being the main grounds of religion; having an influence into our lives and conversation above all others. Other points have their life and vigour and quickening from these grand mysteries, which are the food of the soul. Therefore let us oft feed our thoughts with these things, of Christ's abasement and glory, considering him in both as a public person, 'the second Adam,' and our surety; and then see ourselves in him, and labour to have virtue from him, fitting us in body and soul for such a condition. The very serious meditation of these things, will put a glory upon our souls; and the believing of them will transform us 'from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. 3:18.

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